Korean Fashion Media, Beauty Ideals, and Colorism: Examining the Prominence of Whiteness
Between 2013 and 2017 in *Céci* Magazine

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Colorism refers to discrimination based on with-in race preferences (Hunter, 2005); more specifically, colorism considers how White beauty ideals permeate within races and then how this results in preferential treatment of individuals who appear more White based upon their physical or social characteristics. The purpose of this research was to critically analyze colorism within fashion magazines targeted to Korean women to examine how much or if White beauty ideals permeate Korean cultural outlets. The following research questions guided this study: (1) Are Korean fashion magazines permeated by White beauty ideals? (1a) What races are represented in Korean fashion magazines?, (1b) Do Korean models have hair styles that more closely resemble White beauty ideals?, (1c) Do Korean models have hair colors that more closely resemble White beauty ideals?, (1d) Do Korean models have facial characteristics that more closely resemble White beauty ideals?, and (1e) How are Korean model's skin tones represented in Korean fashion magazines? Cultivation theory highlights that more frequently viewing imagery in media results in belief that the messages and imagery are real (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). Therefore, understanding what images are being perpetuated in fashion media is important because it can have significant implications and negative effects on an individual's perceptions and attitudes.

We examined issues of *Céci*, the most widely read and distributed fashion magazine produced in Korea. In order to analyze beauty ideal representations, the content analysis method was used. We examined all of the images for the months January, March, June, September, and December from the years 2013 to 2017 (25 magazines). Each individual was coded in five categories including: race, facial characteristics, skin tone, hair style, and hair color. In order to code race, the following categories were utilized: Black, Asian, White, other person of color, and indistinguishable. Individuals' facial characteristics were coded into several categories including Korean-appearing, White or European-descent appearing, Black or African-descent appearing, or indistinguishable. Skin tone was analysed using the NIS Skin Color Scale where 1 is the lightest and 10 is the darkest (Massey & Martin, 2003). Hair style was coded into several categories including straight, curly, no hair, or tied hair. Hair color was coded using a hair color scale with 1 being the lightest blonde and 10 the darkest black. Two coders checked inter-coder reliability resulting in 98.4% agreement, which is an acceptable agreement rate.

In the magazines, we analyzed 2,224 (100.0%) women. When analyzing race, there were mostly Asian (75.2%, n = 1673) individuals, followed by White (24.4%, n = 543), other person of color (<1%, n = 5), Black (<1%, n = 3), and indistinguishable (0.0%, n = 0). Therefore, based on the results, the Korean fashion magazines did not use more White than Asian models. In the remaining analysis, we only examined results for White and Asian models because the overall research question was whether Korean fashion magazines are permeated by White beauty ideals.

We analyzed hair styles within the Asian race using frequencies, and the results indicated that there are more curly hair styles (38.7%, n = 648) than straight (32.9%, n = 550), tied hair (27.6%, n = 462), and no hair (39.5%, n = 13). We ran a series of follow-up tests comparing proportions within Asian models. Naturally, Asian women have straight hair, not curly hair; therefore, these two categories were included within this analysis. Results indicated a significantly greater proportion in curly hair (54.1%, n = 648) than straight hair (46.0%, n = 550) provided that the corresponding z value is 2.80 and the corresponding p-value is 0.005. Next, we performed the independent sample t-test on hair color, which resulted in a significant p-value (t = 12.304, p < .001). The hair color was significantly darker for Korean models ($M = 6.49$, $SD = 2.279$) than for White models ($M = 5.02$, $SD = 2.466$). We then grouped hair colors 1 to 3 into a single category titled "lightest," 4 to 7 in a category titled "medium," and finally 8 to 10 in the category "darkest." The results show a significantly greater proportion of Asian models in the medium category (67.5%, n = 1004) than in the darkest category (32.5%, n = 484), according to the corresponding z value which is 13.45 and the corresponding p-value is less than .00001.

We analyzed frequencies and percentages of facial features of Asian models, which resulted in most Asian models having White-appearing facial features (73.3%, n = 1084) whereas only 26.7% (n = 589) of Asian models had Asian-appearing facial features. For skin color, Korean models ($M = 2.14$, $SD = .850$) had similar skin colors to White models ($M = 2.10$, $SD = .872$). We performed the independent sample t-test on skin color, which resulted in a p-value that was not significant (t = .823, p = .411). When we compared frequencies and percentages of skin colors between Asian and White models, they had almost the same percentages in each color category. The majority of skin colors for both races were mostly represented in category 2 and the remaining individuals were represented in categories 1 or 3.

While mostly Asian women were represented in the fashion magazine, looking more closely at issues of colorism reveals that the long-standing hierarchy of a preference for White beauty ideals is still evident (curly and dyed light brown hair, and white-appearing facial features). Of note, is that the second highest representation of race are White individuals. The fashion industry, as a whole, is largely responsible as the gatekeeper for which images we see in media or not. Magazine publishers and all other professionals who are responsible for approving and promoting imagery in various fashion media outlet need to consider these findings and how repeatedly viewing imagery that perpetuates whiteness can have significant negative effects on an individual's perceptions on what is valued in relation to beauty and beauty ideals.

References

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