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

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Abstract   The purpose of this research was to critically examine beauty ideals, specifically those related to race and racial hierarchies, with a focus on fashion magazines published in South Korea targeting South Korean women. We used the content analysis method to examine *Céci* magazine from 2013 to 2017. This magazine is highly popular, widely circulated in South Korea, and produced by a South Korean publisher. Each individual pictured in the magazine was coded into four categories: race, skin color, hair color, and facial characteristics. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's chi-square were used to analyze the data. Overall, the magazines featured more Asian than White individuals, yet Asians conformed to significantly more White than Asian beauty ideals as well as other beauty ideals that are mostly unnatural to Asian women.

Introduction

According to a recent 2018 statistic, South Korea surgeons performed the "most cosmetic surgery per capita" worldwide (Bennett, 2018, para. 1). In 2007, 41% of Korean teenagers expressed a desire for plastic surgery; their interest in this surgery was rooted in their desire for Western beauty ideals, including facial shapes and appearances such as double eyelids (Kim & Chung, 2009). Hall (1997) refers to this as the bleaching syndrome where people of color internalize White appearance ideals around the globe due to colonialism and the value system rooted in slavery. In addition to influencing preferences for Anglo facial features, lighter-color skin tones and hair colors are also preferred (Fraser, 2003; Hunter, 2007). These preferences for Whiteness have significantly influenced media throughout

various countries such as in Latin America where most of the actors were White appearing unless they were service workers in which case they had a brown skin tone (Jones, 2004). Also, in the Philippines, movie stars often had light skin and round-shaped eyes (Choy, 2005; Rafael, 2000).

In the late 1980s in Korea, once the country experienced industrialization, there was a shortage of low-skilled workers. The government then began actively accepting foreign workers for the difficult, dangerous, or dirty industries, which led to an influx of people with varying shades of skin tones (Ock, 2018; Roh, 2014). Beginning in the 21st century, there was an increase in mixed-race marriages, which also contributed to an increase in darker

skin tones in the population. Kim (2020) proposed a tri-racial map highlighting the proliferation of colorism in Korea following this period of industrialization, where Koreans are at the top, below Koreans are those who are lighter skinned (e.g., Uzbekistanis), and at the bottom are those with darker skin (e.g., Korean-Black multiracials). For Korean women specifically, having lighter skin has been tied to beauty and desirability (Hall, 2010; Rondilla & Spickhard, 2007; Tharps, 2016). Kim (2010) described that Koreanness is also often associated with "black, coarse, and straight" hair (p. 21); therefore, this preference for blonde hair highlights further hierarchies for Whiteness within Korean culture. These preferences and hierarchies associated with Whiteness are evident in numerous spaces. For example, Korean textbook illustrations featured mostly light-skinned individuals with blonde hair (Kim, 2012; Lee, 2018). Additionally, reports indicated that Korea is one of the Asian countries where there is significant consumption of skin-lightening creams where about 50% of the population use the creams or would use them if economic accessibility were not an issue (Naidoo, Khoze & Klova, 2016).

Understanding the proliferation of White beauty ideals is important because there are significant privileges associated with appearing White by numerous cultures and ethnicities (Naidoo et al., 2020) including Koreans (Kim, 2020). These privileges can be motivations to engage in appearance-altering behaviors such as plastic surgery, skin-lighting cream, and hair dying and the rejection of the natural self as beautiful, acceptable, or worthy of desirability. This idealization and internalization of Whiteness and the examination of other largely unnatural beauty ideals for Asian women, including lighter dyed hair (Navales, 2015), are the underlying motivations for this study. We critically analyzed White and often unnatural beauty ideals for Asian women (e.g., lighter-colored hair) within *Céci*, a popular Korean fashion magazine for women, which is widely circulated in South Korea.

Two concepts, racism and colorism, provide a critical framework for our study. Racism is defined as a "global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority along the line of the human that have been politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries" (Grosfoguel, 2016, p. 10). The line Grosfoguel (2016) refers to marks divisions between individuals considered as human, or those above the line, where those below the line are considered as "subhuman or non-human" (p. 10). Those considered as subhuman are then denied "the extension of rights, material resources and the recognition of their subjectivities, identities, spiritualities and epistemologies" (p. 10). These lines can be "constructed through diverse racial markers" such as "color, ethnicity, language, culture, and/or religion" (10). The demarcation between who is above or below the line has shifted over time and throughout different geographic regions of the world; for example, when the British colonized Ireland, the British deemed themselves superior to the Irish based upon religious markers as opposed to skin colour (Grosfoguel, 2016).

Another term, colourism, is intricately related to racism, which refers to discrimination related to physical characteristics, where much research has found a preference or a higher status is given to individuals who have physical characteristics that more closely resemble White features (Hill, 2000; Hughes & Hertel, 1990; Keith, 2009; Klonoff & Landrine, 2000). These feature-based hierarchies are primarily based on evaluations of skin colour and include other physical features such as hair texture and facial characteristics such as the size and shape of the nose and mouth (Keith, 2009). A significant body of research has analyzed discrimination based upon the evaluation of physical features; authors have repeatedly reported the advantages and privileges of individuals whose characteristics appear more similar to White characteristics (i.e., straight hair, lighter skin colour, and Eurocentric facial features) in their physical appearance (Hill, 2000; Hunter, 2005; Keith & Herring, 1991; Terkildsen, 1993). Blair, Judd, Sadler and Jenkins (2002) argued that while category-based (different races) and feature-based (hair texture, skin colour, and facial feature size and arrangement) judgements are processed differently, they "function in complementary ways" (p. 6). Understanding if or how much these White beauty ideals are present within fashion media is important as individuals can internalize these ideals (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012) sometimes resulting in dysfunctional appearance beliefs (Baxter, 2015; Trekels & Eggermont, 2017).

We also drew upon critical race theory that purports that racism is ordinary (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). That is, race and the construct of race is a result of social thought and that these categories are developed or retired when convenient. Because racism serves important purposes and it is embedded within various frameworks throughout society, we sought to examine how much the imagery in the South Korean fashion magazine reflects the White beauty ideals of a more stereotypical White person or representations that are largely unnatural for Asian women.

Much of the work critically analyzing race and issues of colorism have centered on Black people (e.g., Hill, 2000; Hunter, 2005; Keith, 2009; Keith & Herring, 1991; Terkildsen, 1993); yet these hierarchies of appearance also influence other people of color, including South Koreans (Daniel, 2015; Isa & Kramer, 2003; Li, Min, Belk, Kimura & Bahl, 2008). In this study, past literature on beauty ideals and the concepts of racism and colorism informed our research questions. Numerous researchers have examined beauty ideals, race, and colorism, but few researchers have examined aspects of these topics related to South Korean women and fashion magazines local to South Korea. Therefore, this study's purpose is to critically analyze race, racial hierarchies, and beauty ideals (hair color, facial characteristics, and skin color) in a South Korean fashion magazine. Self-comparison to imagery in media and its potential negative impact on an individual's sense of self make our research questions important; we asked: (1) What races are depicted in South Korean fashion magazines? (2) How are Asian women's facial characteristics depicted in South Korean fashion magazines? (3) How are Asian women's hair colors depicted in South Korean fashion magazines? and (4) How are the skin colors of Asian women depicted in South Korean fashion magazines represented?

Literature Review

Diversity and Homogenization of Beauty Ideals: Race and Racial Hierarchies

Previous scholars have identified that, before globalization and the integration of cultures, each race or ethnicity created its own unique standard of beauty based on traditional viewpoints. For example, an oversized body was, and still is in some cases, the ideal body for Korean (Han, 2003) and Hispanic (Cunningham, Roberts, Barbee, Druen & Wu, 1995) cultures (Han, 2003). More recently, however, most Western cultures have defined ideal feminine beauty as that of a thin (Herbozo, Tantleff-Dunn, Gokee-Larose & Thompson, 2004) and toned body, high cheekbones (Cunningham et al., 1995), blonde hair (Yan & Bissell, 2014), round eyes, a slim face or jawline, and a pronounced nose bridge (Bissell & Chung, 2009). Kim (2010) argued that the universal, hegemonic feminine ideal of beauty perpetuated across numerous cultures is based on, or a combination of, some of these Western or White appearance ideals. Media outlets are one source of globalization acceleration that has brought about the integration of numerous cultures, according to Frith, Cheng and Shaw (2004): "The media act as agents of socialization, perpetuating certain global beauty standards such as thinness" (p. 54). The proliferation of American media, in particular for Asian cultures, has contributed to the globalization of these Western beauty ideals (Isa & Kramer, 2003).

Numerous other scholars have found evidence that the White beauty ideal has significantly influenced media in Asian and other non-Western countries, but other evidence conflicts with these findings. For example, Yan and Bissell (2014) analyzed mainstream magazines (*Vogue*, *Elle*, *Glamour,* and *Cosmopolitan*) circulated throughout North America, Europe, Asia, Latin America, and South Africa and reported that across all the magazines, from 2007 to 2010, the individuals featured were mostly representative of the Western beauty ideal (White or White-appearing skin color, thin, and highly feminine). At the same time, magazines from Asia demonstrated "relative independence from western standards" (Yan & Bissell, 2014, p. 211), which included "femininity, sexuality, body size, and glamorization" (p. 205). Han and Rudd (2015) conducted a cross-cultural study on *Vogue* magazine in four different countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Korea, and Japan. They found that across all the magazines, the models featured on the covers were predominantly White and youthful. Looking

more closely at Korea, the authors found that South Korean-distributed magazines featured "non-caucasian" models 27% of the time, whereas the remaining 73% of models were "caucasian" (p. 53). Other studies examining fashion magazines circulating in Korea found predominantly White models (Jung & Lee, 2009; Kim & Lennon, 2006). Jung and Lee (2009) studied models' races in *Céci* magazine, a magazine that is produced and distributed in South Korea. They reported slightly more Asian (52%) than White (47%) models, whereas Black models were represented in less than 1% of their sample.

These statistics on racial representations in magazines distributed in South Korea are important to consider in comparison to the country's demographic breakdown, which has been identified as largely homogenous in race. The Justice Ministry estimated that in 2016, about 4% of the population in South Korea were foreigners, and Americans (no specific race) comprised less than half a percent of the entire population. The remaining 96% were Korean (Ock, 2016). Therefore, whereas representation of Asians in magazines in South Korea have varied from 27% (Han & Rudd, 2015) to 52% (Jung & Lee, 2009), these do not reflect the population breakdown of race, resulting in a significant overrepresentation of White people in comparison with the South Korean population. This uneven distribution of imagery could suggest that White beauty ideals have influenced representation, prioritizing Whiteness over other races.

Facial Characteristics

Post globalization, in recent years, some researchers have suggested the emergence of a high cross-cultural agreement in beauty ideals based on facial features in different ethnicities and races (Cunningham et al., 1995; Jones, 1995; Kim & Chung, 2009). According to Eisenthal, Dror and Ruppin (2006), "If different people can agree on which faces are attractive and which are not when judging faces of varying ethnic background, then . . . people everywhere are using similar criteria in their judgments" (p. 120). Jones (1995) reported that some of these similar criteria are based on a youthful appearance with "large eyes, small noses, and full lips," which are seen as most attractive (p. 734). Jung and Lee (2009) stated that their results, based on an analysis of

South Korean fashion magazines, "clearly indicate a homogenization of beauty ideals across" South Korea and the United States, where "prominent facial features" are a part of the ideal (p. 284). In their study, Jung and Lee (2009) did not code the face or parts of the face; however, they claimed that "Korean pop culture idols share Westernized characteristics of being tall and thin, with big eyes, a perfectly angled nose, a small chin and long legs" (p. 276). However, other literature did not support these findings, specifically in regard to facial characteristics (eyes, nose, and chin), making Jung and Lee's (2009) claim questionable. Cunningham et al.'s (1995) comprehensive research on people's impressions of beauty based on facial analysis reported that it "may oversimplify matters to conclude that if Asians, Hispanics, or Blacks display standards of beauty that are similar to those of Whites, the cause must be their exposure to White aesthetics" (p. 276).

South Koreans and facial plastic surgery. Some of the recent data on plastic surgery consumption from 2015 indicates that about 20% of South Korean women have had plastic surgery (Lee, 2015). Eyelid surgery was reported as one of the most common plastic surgery procedures for Asians (Chen, 2006), although which Asian ethnicity they are referring to in their research is not specified. In a study from 2019, The International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery reported that South Korea had one of the highest numbers of plastic surgeons in the world. Also, the amount of plastic surgery conducted in South Korea has continued to increase since the 1990s ranking first in the per capita number of surgeries performed (Yoon & Kim, 2020).

Rainwater-McClure et al. (2003) reported that South Koreans who underwent significant plastic surgery did so to approximate White facial characteristics, starting in the latter part of the twentieth century. The authors explained that South Korean women strive to achieve White beauty ideals by altering their eyelids to a double eyelid rather than a single eyelid (see Figures 1 and 2). Branigan (2001) reported that, to achieve a Western beauty ideal, South Korean women have altered other facial characteristics, such as nose size and shape, with reconstructive cosmetic surgery in which surgeons insert implants into the bridge to give a more defined, less flattened silhouette.

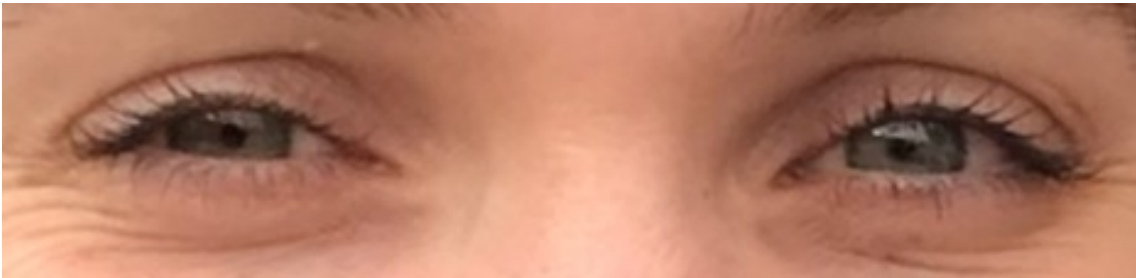Figure 1. Face featuring single eyelids. Photo courtesy of authors.

Figure 2. Face featuring double eyelids. Photo courtesy of authors.

This phenomenon where South Korean women desire to change their facial arrangement to a White one has often been noted, but few studies have examined these representations in fashion magazines. In our literature search, we found one study where the scholars analyzed the June 2014 issue of 17 different women's fashion and lifestyle magazines published and circulated in the United States (Boepple & Thompson, 2018). The authors reported that "all of the Asian women had smaller facial features. One third of Asian women had double eyelids." (Boepple & Thompson, 2018, p. 268). The number of Asian women in the study comprised less than 3% of the sample, whereas the number of White women comprised about 73% of the sample. Additionally, Jung and Lee (2009) claimed that "Korean beauty concepts have switched from mild plumpness with a round race to a thin body with prominent facial features;" yet, as previously stated, they did not indicate that they specifically measure facial features in their analysis (p. 284).

Skin Color

In addition to facial features, skin color is another part of the

appearance that is intricately tied to beauty ideals. Scholars have reported that there has been a long-standing preference for lighter skin by people of color (POC), including Koreans (Glenn, 2008; Isa & Kramer, 2003; Kim, 2020). Skin-lightening creams are frequently used to achieve lighter skin colors by East Asians (Kim, 2020), and Daniel (2015) reported that about 40% of Korean women used the creams. These preferences for lighter skin have influenced the pages of fashion magazines. Much of the work of examining skin color in fashion magazines has focused on African Americans (Mayo, Mayo & Mahdi, 2005). Few known studies have examined the ideals of skin colors for Asians in media. However, the literature outside of the analysis of media has identified hierarchies in skin colors for Asians, with light-colored skin preferred the most (Karan, 2008).

Li et al. (2008) conducted one of the few studies examining the skin color of Asians in fashion magazines. They examined four issues of six magazines from 2005 from four different Asian countries: India, Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong. This study did not reproduce their color scale. However, the scale is described as the "standardized color wheel [that] involved fourteen possible categories ranging

from soft ivory to cocoa" (Li et al., 2008, p. 446). The authors reported a majority of lighter skin colors or "soft ivory, classic ivory, and natural ivory" (Li et al., 2008, p. 447). Boepple and Thompson (2018) conducted another study that analyzed the skin color of Asian women in magazines, examining the June 2014 issue of 17 different magazines circulated in the United States. On a scale of light, medium, or dark, they reported that Asian women had 91.67% medium or light skin colors. They reported that a "skin tone chart containing 12 skin tone shades was used to determine skin tone" (p. 5) but did not reproduce the scale or identify where the scale came from.

Hair Color

Similar to other physical features, lighter hair color is also associated with White beauty ideals (Fraser, 2003; Hunter, 2005). These ideals permeate Korean textbooks that feature individuals with mostly blonde hair (Kim, 2012). Koreanness is often associated with Black hair (Kim, 2010), and some hair colors, including blonde, are largely unnatural for many Asian women (Navales, 2015). Unfortunately, during our literature review, we did not uncover published data on the true proportion of the natural hair colors and styles of Asian or South Korean women. Although we acknowledge that lighter hair may be a natural style for Asian women of various ethnic backgrounds, what is important to highlight about hair and beauty ideals is that lighter blonde hair has been a longstanding ideal in the United States (Rich & Cash, 1993; Yan & Bissell, 2014) and within Asian cultures (Fraser, 2003; Hunter, 2005; Kim, 2010; Kim, 2012).

Peer-reviewed literature on motivations to dye dark, Asian hair blonde are scant, yet numerous popular press articles discuss this topic. For example, Cheng (2018) reported in *The New York Times* that there is a recent trend for lighter hair colours amongst Asian women that may be in part due to Asian women's attention to White beauty ideals. The reporter, an Asian woman, related that she grew up in a predominantly White area of the United States and explained, "the most obvious and quickest way to subscribe to Western ideals of beauty is to lighten your hair" (Cheng, 2018, para 3). Cheng (2018) continued to report that numerous salons in the U.S. have seen an upsurge in the number of Asian

customers requesting blonde or platinum hair colours. The reporter also highlighted that Asians adopting a lighter hair colour could also be motivated by the desire to stand out or as a form of rebellion "against the Asian good-girl trope, an extension of the 'model minority' stereotype" (Cheng, 2018, para 14). The model minority stereotype suggests that "Asian Americans are more academically, economically, and socially successful than any other racial minority group" (Yoo, Burrola & Steger, 2010, p. 114). This stereotype connects Asian Americans with harder work ethics and higher perseverance as compared to other people of color (Yoo et al., 2010); therefore, when Asian women lighten their hair, they could be engaging in rebellious acts and rejecting the expected appearance practices of the model Asian woman. Tsui (2018) writing for *New York Magazine* also highlighted that Asian women dying their hair blonde or platinum could be an adoption of the "bad girl" persona (Tsui, 2018, para 1), or again, an extension of the rejection of the model minority stereotype.

Hung (2018) wrote for the *Global Comment* about her experience dying her hair blonde. Similar to Cheng (2018), she was surrounded by White women and described idealizing Whiteness, which led her to continually bleach her hair. Feelings of radicalness surmounted as she discussed hair-bleaching memories. Once she stopped dyeing her hair, people made comments such as "So, you're ready to look Asian again?" (Hung, 2018, para 42). Her personal experiences and reactions from others highlight that when some Asian women dye their hair blonde it is connected in some ways to non-Asian beauty ideals.

Because of the possible connection of lighter hair colours with White beauty ideals or other cultural perceptions such as rejecting the model minority stereotype, we consider hair colour in this research.

Impact of Beauty Ideals on Individuals

The current study's significance is rooted in the notion that viewing beauty ideals can lead to individuals being affected by these aesthetics, which in turn can affect their own sense of self (Brainthwaite, 2002). Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2012) called this process the "internalization of beauty ideals" (p. 871). It refers to how many people think about and

compare their appearance with the perpetuated norm or idealized image. Self-evaluation means that people tend to compare themselves with others based on their perceived social standards (Irving, 1990). During self-evaluation, women can use images of models or individuals from media such as television and magazines as criteria for examining themselves. Lack of similarity to those with whom they compare themselves can result in negative self-evaluations (Festinger, 1954). For example, viewing thin models can result in negative self-evaluation for women (Irving, 1990).

In contrast to the previous research, Duke (2002) found that African American girls were not susceptible to the internalization of beauty ideals perpetuated by media. They were resistant to beauty ideals presented in media that largely did not look like them because most media images depicted White women. This rejection can be explained in part by Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, where people only make comparisons to others who are more similar to themselves. Therefore, because African American girls largely do not look like women in magazines, comparisons and negative effects do not occur. Although Duke (2002) examined African American girls, in our literature search, we could not find past studies that investigated whether or not Asian or South Korean women rejected or internalized beauty ideals they viewed in media that largely did not look like them.

Method

To answer the research questions, we used content analysis, which involves systematically analyzing visual or written content using either a deductive or inductive approach (Neuman, 2011) and has been used by numerous fashion studies scholars (e.g., Kim, Kim & Hong, 2012; Lee et al., 2018). This method allows researchers to "document specific features in the content of a large amount of material that might otherwise go unnoticed" (Neuman, 2011, p. 49). Content examined can be in a variety of formats such as "words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any communicated message" (Neuman, 2011, p. 361). Researchers identify a data sample based upon their research

question, which might include "books, newspapers or magazine articles, advertisements, speeches, official documents, films or videotapes, musical lyrics, photographs, articles of clothing, Web sites, or works of art" (p. 361). Within their sample, they identify the unit of analysis, which refers to the unit that will be evaluated using the codes or coding system; for example, the unit of analysis could be the entire magazine, each page of the magazine, or each individual pictured in the magazine. Each code is operationalized in a codebook, which includes the categories, codes, and code definitions. These codes or "written rules" explain how to systemically analyze the data through careful observation. The codebook contains previously determined codes and/or categories based upon the research questions, yet codes and categories are added or revised after analyzing some of the data (Neuendorf, 2002; Neuman, 2011).

We examined issues of a popular South Korean fashion magazine called *Céci*, whose target demographic includes females ranging from their teens to their thirties and whose circulation rate is about 100,000 a year in South Korea (JTBC Plus Corp., n.d.). Yu, Park and Sung (2015) identified *Céci* as a "popular magazine" with "wide circulation" (p. 692). Magazines such as *Vogue* Korea (circulation rate of 196,000) are also popular in South Korea; however, in this study, we focused on a magazine published specifically for South Koreans by a South Korean publisher (*Vogue Korea*, 2018). We felt it was important to understand how racial hierarchies of Whiteness and other unnatural Asian beauty ideals can permeate a media outlet local to South Korea.

We examined all of the images on the covers of and within the magazine including advertisements and editorials for the months of January, March, June, September, and December from 2013 to 2017 (25 issues in all). We chose these five months to analyze images spread across the entire year, which follows similar methods of other scholars who have used content analysis (Jung & Lee, 2009; Li et al., 2008). The magazines were all available in a digital format on a magazine subscription website, which we subscribed to for the duration of data collection and analysis. Unfortunately, due to copyright issues and image rights cost barriers, no images from the magazine could be published in our manuscript.

We coded the models pictured in the magazine individually and considered each image a single unit of analysis. To be included in the sample, individuals had to have at least three-quarters of their face visible. If images were small and difficult to analyze, such as images that were less than one inch tall, they were not included.

Coding

The concepts of racism and colourism provide a critical framework for analyzing beauty ideals. We analyzed four categories: race, facial characteristics, hair color, and skin color (see Table 1 and Figure 3). As we coded, we constantly compared the images to the code descriptions in table 1 and to the hair color scale in figure 3 and the skin color scale found here: http://nis.princeton.edu/downloads/NIS-Skin-Color-Scale.pdf. The first author completed the coding, and the second author checked the analysis and acted as the debriefer when the first author had questions or needed to discuss the process. We recorded all of the data analysis in an excel worksheet. We analyzed the magazines in chronological order and documented the page numbers the individual was found on and the space on the page if there were multiple individuals pictured. We also included a brief description of the person's clothing to help us with accurate documentation and analysis.

To code race, we used the codes and code definitions published in Reddy-Best, Kane, Harmon and Gagliardi's (2018) study. These codes included Black leaning, Asian leaning, White leaning, other person of color leaning, and indistinguishable. By analyzing categorical representations of race in the magazine, we centered our research on the concept of racism, because we examined which races were mostly represented and deemed important or considered superior. We considered whether or not these categorical racial representations reflected population data regarding the overall South Korea population data available on governmental websites. Grosfoguel (2016) outlines those

Table 1. Categories, codes, and code definitions

Category	Code	Code Definition
Race	Black leaning	Dark-colored skin, larger facial features (lips and nose), and/or Black hairstyle (i.e., natural, dreadlocks, braided, and bald)
	Asian leaning	Eye is narrow, single eyelid, less exposed and darker iris, straight and dark hair, and/or flatter bridge on nose with round tip
	White leaning	White or light skin color, visible crease in eyes, and/or pupil almost entirely visible
	Other person of color leaning	Cannot determine race, but is distinguishably a person of color (i.e., darker skin)
	Indistinguishable	Cannot distinguish race
Facial characteristics	Asian leaning	Narrow eye/single eyelid (monolid), less exposed iris, darker iris, thin lip, nose with a flat bridge, rounder face, especially around the jawline
	White leaning	Visible crease in the eyes/double eyelid, iris that is mostly visible, lighter iris, pronounced bridge on nose, moderate to thick-sized lip, slimmer jawline, and facial shape
	Black leaning	A large or protruding lip; large, round nose tip
	Indistinguishable	Cannot be distinguished

Figure 3. Hair color scaled used in data analysis process. Photo courtesy of authors.

individuals considered as subhuman are denied "the recognition of their subjectivities, identities, spiritualities and epistemologies" (p.10). This recognition can refer to categorical racial representation or absence in the magazine. We analyzed all of the images in the magazines for race. We compared each image to the code descriptions and then assigned and recorded the code. While the race codes and code definitions were used to analyze a different cultural context from Reddy-Best et al. (2018) since they analyzed textbooks, our purpose was the same in that we wanted to categorically code race. Therefore, these codes and code definitions align with our study's objective.

Categorizing race in such an essential way (e.g., "Black") brings up important points that need some critical reflection. Although we aimed to analyze racial representations, philosophically, this can create an essentialist view of race where someone is one race or another. The notion that race, and thus identity, is a continual and evolving process was best expressed by Kaiser and Green (2021) in their exploration of race, in which they used the phrase "racial rearticulations" to express and disentangle the complexity of race in addition to our other subject positions (sex, gender, sexuality, etc.). We acknowledge that analyzing someone as a single race category is limiting, yet representations within magazines do project an image or essence of one particular race or another. Therefore, after careful reflection and consideration of the concept of race, as well as of our own biases, we moved forward by including race in our coding guide because understanding who is or is not represented is important when highlighting whether the perpetuation of a particular beauty ideal involves racial hierarchy. The complexity of defining race led to our usage of the term "leaning" with each code.

We further analyzed physical features (skin color, facial features, and hair color) for whether and how Whiteness or White physical characteristics permeated the individuals represented; these physical features are deeply tied to issues of colourism, and hence issues of racism because these two concepts are tightly intertwined. A desire to change one's skin colour is entrenched in people's interest in fulfilling the White beauty ideal of lighter skin (Isa & Kramer, 2003). Similarly, people have facial features they desire that more closely

resemble people within the White race (Boepple & Thompson, 2018; Branigan, 2001; Rainwater-McClure et al., 2003).

The facial characteristic codes were developed for this study by the authors. Developing codes during the coding process is a valid means of developing coding categories (Neuman, 2011). We first examined past literature that coded facial characteristics and used those descriptions as a basis for our code definitions (Boepple & Thompson, 2018; Jung & Lee, 2009). Then, we followed Reddy-Best et al.'s (2018) process of examining cosmetic surgery websites to develop the descriptions of these codes during the coding process. We assigned codes in this category to women who were assigned Asian leaning in the race category. The codes were assigned based on the overall analysis of the women's characteristics and whether they met at least two or more of the criteria. For example, if they had a single eyelid, and a darker iris, we coded the woman as Asian leaning. In most cases, they had much more than one characteristic for a single code. However, we included "indistinguishable" as a possibility if the image contained more than two descriptors in any two categories. For example, if the person had a single eye led, less iris exposed, slim jawline, and thick-sized lips, we would have coded the image as indistinguishable; however, we did not have to use this code in the analysis process because all of the women fit within Asian leaning or White leaning. To complete this analysis, we compared each image to the coding descriptions to determine the assigned code.

We searched for numerous ways to analyze skin colour. The peer-reviewed literature offers very few scales from which to choose; however, we found three different scales: the Fitzpatrick Skin Type Classification Scale (Fitzpatrick, 1988), the Taylor Hyperpigmentation Scale (Taylor, Arsonnaud & Czernielewski, 2005), and the NIS Skin Color Scale (Massey & Martin, 2003). We were unable to find in a peer-reviewed publication the visual image of the Fitzpatrick Skin Type Classification Scale, and the Taylor Hyperpigmentation Scale did not appear to be the correct scale for our study because the lightest colour on the scale did not reflect someone who was possibly using a skin-lightening cream or had very white skin colour.

We also looked for scales in previous literature that analyzed skin colour. Keenan (1996) analyzed skin tone by

developing a five-point scale using the Pantone Matching System; however, the author did not include a visual of the scale. Similarly, Conrad, Dixon, and Zhang (2009) analyzed skin tone in rap music videos. They developed a scale that ranged from "light caramel brown" to "black" but did not provide a visual of their scale or any further descriptors (p. 145). As previously mentioned, scholars analyzing skin colour of Asians did not include visuals of their skin colour scales (Boepple &Thompson, 2018; Li et al., 2008).

To analyze skin color, we chose the NIS Skin Color Scale for a variety of reasons. First, the visual of the scale was available online as many other publications that analyzed skin color did not publish their instrument. Readers can search the internet for "NIS Skin Color Scale" and it will appear, or they can view it in the link found in the reference list. Second, the scale was published by reputable researchers at Princeton University, which highlights its validity. On the scale, 1 is white, and 10 is darkest (Massey & Martin, 2003). Although the scale is based on brown or black hues, we used the scale for its reference to lightness or darkness. People of all races have a variety of hues in their skin colour; therefore, in the coding process, the skin colour was not necessarily the exact hue match to the skin colour chosen on the scale, but it was the closest match to the lightness or darkness of the skin colour. We only analyzed the skin color of the individuals we assigned as Asian leaning for race. To complete this analysis, we compared each image to the scale images to determine the assigned code.

We maintained a critical viewpoint by considered hair colour in data analysis. Hair colour, in some ways, can arguably be guided by the framework of colourism (e.g., Cheng, 2018; Fraser, 2003; Hung, 2018; Hunter, 2007; Kim, 2012). Lighter hair colours for Asian women can also be seen as a rejection of the model minority stereotype (Tsui, 2018); therefore, we considered it as part of this study. We coded hair color using a hair color scale, with 1 being the lightest blonde and 10 the darkest black. In addition to the colors on this scale, hair color was coded into "other color" when hair was a color such as purple and "no color" when there was no hair present. We created the scale using Photoshop (see Figure 3) based upon hair color scales on beauty websites. We only analyzed the hair color of the individuals we

assigned as Asian leaning for race. Again, to complete this analysis, we compared each image to the scale images to determine the assigned code.

Reliability

To maintain consistency, we continually referenced the coding guide in Table 1, the NIS scale, and the hair color scale. We referenced the coding guides for every single image for consistency. Before we began coding the entire sample, the first and second authors checked inter-coder agreement. The coders independently analyzed 20% of the individuals pictured in each issue and then divided the number of coding agreements by the total number of coding decisions, a method previous scholars have used to check inter-coder reliability (Podmore & Ogle, 2018). In the current study's case, this resulted in 98.4% agreement, an acceptable agreement (Neuman, 2011). We negotiated all disagreements and then finished analysis after these reconciliations. We re-checked all of the coded data after all disagreements were negotiated and the coding guides were solidified (e.g., the facial characteristics codes and code descriptions). If the first author had questions about an image, the second author served as a debriefer.

Results and Discussion

What Races are Depicted in South Korean Fashion Magazines?

We analyzed 2,224 representations of women in the magazines. The women were mostly Asian leaning (75.2%, n = 1,673), followed by White leaning (24.4%, n = 543), other POC leaning (<1%, n = 5), Black leaning (<1%, n = 3), and indistinguishable (0.0%, n = 0).

According to Kim (2010), a Whiteness-centered universal beauty and appearance norm permeates the current media, which suggested that we would find more White leaning than Asian leaning models within *Céci*. This was true for Han and Rudd (2015), who analyzed *Vogue Korea* and found that 27% of models were Asian, whereas 73% were White. Yan and Bissell (2014) found the "domination of

western fashion and beauty culture" in their sample of magazines, including those circulated in Asian countries (p. 201); the authors did not provide any further breakdown of racial representations within the Korean-distributed publications. Other research found conflicting results: Jung and Lee (2009) examined race within *Céci* and found slightly more Asians than Whites. These differences in representation could be attributed to the type of magazine. *Vogue* is an international magazine, and *Céci* is a domestically published magazine. Our findings, which expand on previous studies, provide a more recent analysis of racial representations within *Céci* and indicate that there is a growing number of Asian leaning individuals being represented as compared to when Jung and Lee (2009) conducted their study.

From a one-dimensional perspective of race, one could arguably state that *Céci* has not been significantly influenced by White beauty ideals. However, it is important to note that the race of the models represented with the next-highest frequency throughout the magazine was White leaning, followed by almost no other women of color leaning. This centers Whiteness as important in relation to other women of color and highlights how White beauty ideals have, in some way, permeated the beauty ideals in this particular magazine. This highlights the notion that racism is ordinary (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) and could be interpreted here that it is convenient to include more White leaning individuals because they are seen as more beautiful and desirable (Hall, 2010; Rondilla & Spickhard, 2007; Tharps, 2016), thus potentially selling more magazines or gaining more viewers. Looking comparatively at the demographics of the country, where 94% of the population is Korean and less than 0.5% of the population is American (it was not determined whether these Americans were White, so arguably these Americans could be POC), we can say that this magazine over represents White people given their minor presence in the South Korean population as a whole. Yam and Bissell (2014) reported that some Asian countries were independent of White beauty ideals; our research results on race do not support this finding. Although we found that most models were Asian leaning, the next highest representation was White leaning, which indicates some preference for Whiteness or for appearing White.

How are Asian Women's Facial Characteristics Depicted in South Korean Fashion Magazines?

We analyzed the frequencies and percentages of facial features of Asian individuals and found most Asian individuals had White-leaning facial characteristics (73.3%, n = 1,084), whereas only 26.7% (n = 589) of Asians had Asian-leaning facial characteristics. We conducted follow-up binomial tests to determine whether the proportions for White-leaning and Asian-leaning facial features among Asians were significantly different. We identified the null test proportion at .50 to represent an even distribution across facial features, with p-values reported for the two-sided test. The results showed a significantly greater proportion of Asian individuals in the White-leaning (73.3%, n = 1,084) than in the Asian-leaning category (26.7%, n = 589), according to the corresponding z-score (12.1)). The corresponding p-value was less than .00001.

Many Asian women have a single eyelid, whereas most White individuals have a double eyelid. Rainwater-McClure et al. (2003) reported that a significant number of Korean women have had plastic surgery. These surgeries largely include eyelid reshaping to achieve a double eyelid (Chen, 2006; Kim & Chung, 2009). Plastic surgeries desired and frequently completed by Koreans and other Asians of different ethnic backgrounds also include manipulation of the nose to create a more defined bridge, a White-leaning facial characteristic, because Asians often have a naturally flattened nose bridge (Branigan, 2001). The desire for and decision to undergo plastic surgeries, which are arguably intended to appear more White ("White" here meaning the racial category), such as by obtaining a double eyelid and higher nose bridge (Kim & Chung, 2009), are reflected by many of the Asian leaning models in *Céci*.

Considering other possibilities is also important: for example, some of the magazine images may have been altered with Photoshop, or the angle of the picture may have influenced the shape of the face. It is also possible that some models' faces may be naturally White leaning; not all Asians are born with more stereotypical Asian features such as single eyelids. It is also unknown whether or not the publishers were conscious of their choices, or whether the individuals featured in the magazines may simply have had

more White-leaning facial features. One possibility is that if the publishers were aware of the literature on physical attractiveness and the face, they might have purposefully chosen images that they thought represented a more attractive face to sell more products. A more generous interpretation could be that the publishers unknowingly published magazines with more White-leaning individuals, possibly due to their own internalization of the bleaching syndrome (Hall, 1997).

A previous study that analyzed faces in fashion magazines in 2014 in the United States reported that all of the included Asian models had small facial features, and one third had a visible double eyelid (Boepple & Thompson, 2016). Our scales were slightly different from the one used by these authors, who measured the features' sizes and separately categorized eyelids. It would be too simplistic to say that U.S.-circulated magazines had more or fewer White-leaning Asian faces than South Korean-circulated magazines. Results from both studies showed that more Asians with White-leaning than Asian-appearing facial features were represented.

How are Asian Women's Hair Colors Depicted in South Korean Fashion Magazines?

The average hair colors of Asians were assessed using a hair color scale (Figure 3) where 1 was the lightest blonde, and 10 was the darkest black ($M = 6.49$). We grouped hair colors 1 to 3 into a single category called "lightest," 4 to 7 in a category called "medium," and finally 8 to 10 in a category called "darkest." "Lightest" refers to hair colors that are mostly unnatural or difficult to achieve with hair dyeing techniques for Asian individuals. "Medium" refers to only slightly dyed hair and to hair colors that are more easily achieved by Asian women through hair-dyeing techniques. "Darkest" refers, presumably, to the most common and natural colors for Asian women, although statistics on this are not available. Based on the findings, most Asian leaning individuals were in the medium category (60%, n = 1,004), followed by darkest (29%, n = 484) and lightest (5%, n = 84). The remaining women had either no hair or hair of another color (6%, n = 101).

The lightest category (1 to 3) yielded only 5.3% (n =

84) of the sample; therefore, we dropped it from further analysis. Then, we performed follow-up binomial tests to determine whether there were significantly different proportions between the medium and darkest hair color ranges for Asian leaning individuals. We identified the null test proportion at .50 to represent an even distribution across hair color groups, with p-values reported for the two-sided test. The results showed a significantly greater proportion of Asian leaning individuals in the medium category (67.5%, n = 1004) than in the darkest category (32.5%, n = 484), according to the corresponding z-score (13.45). The corresponding p-value was less than .00001.

Examining the representation of hair color also answered questions related to White beauty ideals because lighter, blonde hair has been an ideal in the United States from the mid-twentieth century until recent times (Rich & Cash, 1993; Yan & Bissell, 2014). No known research has examined South Korean women's hair color, and the data on natural hair colors for South Korean women are largely unknown; therefore, to say that South Korean women dye their hair blonde to try to achieve White beauty ideals would be an overstatement. The popular press suggests that blonde or lighter hair is mostly unnatural for Asian women (Cheng, 2018; Navales, 2015). The lack of women in the lightest category is not too surprising, given that dyeing black Asian hair to a blonde color can be difficult (Cheng, 2018). Our findings suggest that lighter hair (possibly dyed or natural) may be a prevailing beauty ideal for South Korean women given its representation in *Céci*, and this could possibly be related to the White beauty ideal of blonde hair (Cheng, 2018; Hung, 2018; Rich & Cash, 1993; Tsui, 2018; Yan & Bissell, 2014).

Another explanation for the limited representation of women in the lightest hair-colour category, or platinum blonde, could be related to the connection between Asian women with blonde hair and a rejection of the model minority stereotype (Yoo, Burrola, & Stegar, 2010). Asian women with blonde hair can be interpreted as a rebellious act (Tsui, 2018). It is possible that the magazine editors chose to reject this hair-colour aesthetic to avoid these types of assumptions about the magazine and the type of women they represent. While most women were represented in the

medium-brown colour category, they were not platinum blonde, which is most connected to the "bad girl" persona (Tsui, 2018, para 1).

How Are the Skin Colours of Asian Women Depicted in South Korean Fashion Magazines?

We assessed the average skin colour of Asian leaning individuals depicted in the magazine using the NIS Skin Colour Scale (M = 2.14). The majority of skin colours were mostly represented in Category 2 on the NIS Skin Colour Scale, and the remaining individuals were represented in Categories 1 or 3, which are the lightest skin colours on the scale.

Previous scholars indicated that the preference for lighter skin is common among East Asian cultures (Karan, 2008). The preference for lighter skin among other POC was evident from the fashion magazines in previous studies, in which most Black individuals were represented with lighter skin colors (Mayo et al., 2005) and Korean women had the palest ivory skin (Li et al., 2008). The findings from the current study confirm that in this media outlet, *Céci*, there is a preference to depict Asian leaning women with lighter skin colors as represented on our scale, although they did not have the most representation in the lightest or palest skin color categories. Category 1 would arguably be achieved through skin-bleaching practices. If most South Korean individuals had been pictured in the magazines had been represented in Category 1, we could have argued that colorism/racism related to skin color was evident in the magazine. However, based on the findings, issues of skin-color-related colorism/racism might only be moderate or even nonexistent. It is also important to note that we were analyzing the representation of skin colours in magazines, which could have been altered. Therefore, it is not necessarily the true skin colour of that individual.

Discussion of Beauty Ideal Imagery, Fashion Magazines, and Social Comparison

Media imagery has significant power and influence on viewers (McManis et al., 2001). Past studies inform us that women engage in social comparison by analyzing imagery in media and then engage in judgments and self-perceptions

about their bodies. These comparisons can result in negative self-evaluations when the factors for comparison are not similar (Festinger, 1954). However, for some POC, these comparisons may be irrelevant and thus do not result in negative self-evaluations (Duke, 2002). In this study, we first investigated how many individuals from each racial category were represented in *Céci*. An analysis from the perspective considering colourism, and hence racism, in addition to unnatural or difficult to achieve beauty ideals for Asian women showed that in most categories, including hair colour and facial features, White or unnatural beauty ideals were largely prevalent. For South Korean women, viewing images of Asian women who are more White-leaning than Asian-leaning could result in negative self-evaluations. Social comparison theory explains that because they are viewing people within their race, their comparisons could be relevant and could affect them negatively (Festinger, 1954).

Conclusion

Our research contributes to the literature by providing evidence about the prominence of Whiteness or unnatural beauty ideals based on a careful analysis of imagery in a popular domestically produced South Korean fashion magazine, *Céci*. In sum, throughout the years (2013 to 2017), the magazine has featured more Asian leaning women than women of any other race. However, following Asian leaning women, White leaning women have had the next highest representation, whereas other races have largely not been pictured, suggesting that being or appearing White is valued in South Korean culture. When analyzing issues related to appearance features, we found that White-leaning facial characteristics permeated much of the imagery. The individuals also had features that were arguably unnatural to Asians, such as hair dyed light blonde or light brown. Our results raise the possibility that the publishers of one of the popular domestically produced magazines in South Korea place some value on Whiteness whether it was consciously or unconsciously.

We contextualize our findings within Cunningham et al.'s (1995) study, which reported that it "may oversimplify

matters to conclude that if Asians, Hispanics, or Blacks display standards of beauty that are similar to those of Whites, the cause must be their exposure to White aesthetics" (p. 276). Several researchers have supported the notion of the globalization of beauty ideals based on the Western aesthetic (Isa & Kramer, 2003; Jung & Lee, 2009), but this explanation may be too simplistic for our study because other unknown factors could be influencing the images in the magazines. Our findings suggest that White beauty ideals are evident throughout the magazines and that some value is placed on appearing White, because having representation provides recognition of subjectivities and identities (Grosfoguel, 2016).

Limitations

The study is limited by several factors. We only analyzed four characteristics, largely focusing on aspects of the individual related to the face and hair. There are many more characteristics that can be analyzed such as body size, breast size, and clothing style. Additionally, the context of each image was not analyzed. Analyzing only *Céci* was also a limitation because many more domestic South Korean fashion magazines are available for analysis. Further, this study was limited to magazines published between 2013 and 2017 because we were interested in the most current ideals being depicted at the time of analysis. Last, the content analysis method only analyzed the question of *what* was present; it did not analyze *why* the images or contexts were present in the pages.

Implications

Future studies should ask South Korean women to evaluate their attitudes towards imagery in South Korean fashion magazines. Understanding their impressions could help shed light on their related self-evaluations.

Magazine publishers, marketing agents, and other professionals who are responsible for approving the imagery in fashion media outlets must consider our findings for the future. Do they consider issues related to beauty ideals when choosing or approving the individuals depicted in the magazines? Do magazine publishers request that women be Photoshopped? Do publishers understand the effects that repeatedly viewing imagery can have on an individual? Because viewing media can have significant negative effects, training related to these topics could be quite useful to educate fashion industry professionals and raise their awareness of the implications of their choices. They can then work towards creating magazines that do not perpetuate unnatural or White beauty ideals that could have a potential negative effect on South Korean women (Festinger, 1954).

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