

Name of Program: Why do we Care so much about Hair? An exploration in societal pressures on hair expression

Target Audience:

All – Can be adapted to focus on different communities depending on the wing the discussion takes place in – LGBTQIA+/POC/female/male

Strategy for Implementation:

-Group discussion with facilitation to deepen and support, but not “lead”

Time of Year to Implement:

Any time

Relevant Learning Goal:

Intrapersonal Intelligence

Specific Lesson Outcomes:

Students will explore personal values and identity/diversity

Purpose:

To create an environment for engaging organic conversation that may result in students learning to:

- transcend the stereotypes we have been taught about hair (including body hair)
- recognize where these stereotypes come from and how they have affected us personally
- recognize where the ideals/standards of how hair “should be” and what type of hair is “ideal” or “acceptable” come from and to challenge that ideology
- recognize which communities are disproportionately affected by hair stereotypes
- learn about instances of discrimination based on hair and recognize the biases deeply engrained in our culture that cause these biases
- delve into the discrimination faced by different populations: men, women, LGBTQ, different races (particularly black hair), different religions

Planning and Preparation:

- No cost/materials.

Preparation:

- Facilitators should read the provided articles (this step is very important) AND also find some of your own/do your own research. The provided articles will no doubt contain biases I was not able to see and may leave out things you find important or have personal experience with.

- Have wing liaison/facilitators read some reference articles or find their own to add. - - Have wing guides help come up with discussion questions/facilitation guide and tailor the discussion to the wing you have and to what you and your wing guides know about your wing.

I will provide examples, but this program is not one size fits all, so please make it your own and let it go the way it goes in the discussion. Lots of cool things should come out because everyone has their own unique experiences!

SAMPLE ONLY, please make this your own:

- What have you wanted to change about your hair (head or body)?
- What does your hair say about you?
- What does society feel about your hair?
- What hairstyles and hair choices do you notice that society doesn't "approve" of? How do you know this?
- Where did you receive messaging about what type of hair is beautiful? Cool? Acceptable? Dirty? Scary?
- What hair styles are associated with different cultures/religions/identities?
- How are societal standards about hair harmful? In school? In the workplace? In day to day life?
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ADD YOUR OWN – The above are a jumping off point. The point of the discussion is not to get through all the questions, but to have questions ready when the discussion goes in that direction or to revive the conversation when one discussion naturally fades out

Execution:

-Introduction: Establish ground rules for a safe and productive discussion. Eg. Speak from your own perspective, respect the viewpoints of others, don't make assumptions about what people are saying, do not interrupt others, if you have participated in more than 3 exchanges in a row, allow someone else to speak, etc (more examples in resources)

-Body of Program: Ask students what they have faced or continue to face when they think about how their hair should be (hair on the head/face/body, etc) Allow this discussion to go on as long as there is engagement! This may end up covering a lot of the topics organically.

The Facilitator (wing liaison or RC) can sprinkle in questions from their facilitation guide based on the direction of the discussion:

Examples: If many students are talking about feeling like they needed to have straight/relaxed hair or short hair or a certain type of hair: Why do you think so many people here have felt like they needed to change their hair? Where did this ideology come from?

If students are talking about discrimination against hair styles such as men with long hair/ people with locs/ religious head and hair coverings: Do you think this is legal? Who decided what normal was? Or if it's fizzling out you can ask: What about body hair?

If students are not giving much in terms of discussion, you may need to experiment with throwing out questions until people have more to say about a specific topic and then let the discussion run its course on that topic. Do not feel like you need to get through your facilitation guide or all the questions you came up with.

This is why doing the research/reading first is essential for this program; it will make it easier to facilitate and deepen the discussion while allowing it to feel like an organic conversation.

-Conclusion: Ask students if society had no say/opinion on what was considered more beautiful or acceptable with hair, what would they do with their hair (body or head)? Should get some fun responses! IMPORTANT: Ask if anything anyone said was hurtful to anyone or if anyone felt misrepresented and allow them to express themselves if they would like so that we can all learn.

Assessment:

Engaged discussion is the measure of success for this program. It's about the process not the result. Everyone does not need to take away the same thing from this program and this program will look very different in different wing communities. If facilitated well

(the facilitation aids the discussion rather than leading it), the discussion should naturally plant the seed of new perspectives in some way.

References:

How to Facilitate Conversation:

<https://web.stanford.edu/group/resed/resed/staffresources/RM/training/facilguide.html>

Brief overview of why hair matters: <https://www.humanities.org/blog/why-does-your-hair-matter-to-society/>

Body Hair: <https://time.com/5300646/body-hair-shaving-waxing-ethics-beauty/>

Queer Hair: <https://www.instyle.com/beauty/queer-people-and-hair-identity>

Eurocentric Beauty Standards/black hair: <https://yr.media/identity/i-like-your-hair-better-straight/>

Black Hair (women): <https://www.allure.com/story/beauty-of-black-hair-portraits-and-interviews>

Men's Hair: <https://blog.thelonghairs.us/boys-hair-discrimination/>

Embracing Natural Curls (men): <https://www.naturallycurly.com/curlreading/men/this-is-what-the-mens-natural-hair-movement-looks-like>

Hair/People of Color: <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2018/9/28/17916056/workplace-beards-facial-hair-black-men-sikhs-publix-chick-fil-a>

Other Related Topics:

Native American Hair (men-long hair), Head Wraps, Turbans, Head Scarves