Hair representations among Black South African women: Exploring identity and notions of beauty

by

Jenna-Lee Marco

submitted in accordance with the requirements for

the degree of

Master of Arts in Psychology with specialisation in Research Consultation

at the

University of South Africa

Supervisor: Dr Desmond Painter

Co-supervisor: Professor Martin Terre Blanche

November 2012

I declare that **Hair representations among Black South African women: Exploring identity and notions of beauty** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

_____   _____

SIGNATURE   DATE

(Miss J Marco)

Acknowledgements

Table of contents

Abstract

South Africa is a country of diversity, culture and various identities; and beneath this diversity, lays the complexity of defining and owning a space for oneself. This study was motivated with the intention to understand Black women's representations in South Africa as well as the social interactions evident in the relationship between a Black woman and her hair. Literature elucidates on the historical richness of representation for Black people as well as the contemporary relevance of representation for Black women in particular. Furthermore, beauty discourse extends beyond the merely corporeal and finds meaning in historical, political, and circumstantial frames of thought. Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with Black women. These interviews generated three discursive themes – hair and politics, hair and media and finally, circumstantial self-representation. Exploring these themes revealed that hair, as a projection of the self, is constantly redefining itself and its meaning in a progressive social culture. Furthermore, women assume agency and a degree of importance and identity from the hairstyles they choose to wear on a daily basis.

Resilience

Perfectly patterned particles

push perpetually,

emerging: emancipated, elated,

enthusiastic.

Pushing proudly

up through layers upon layers of denial.

Past denaturing chemicals

and excessive heat;

curls emerge: triumphant.

Blatant refusal

to be ignored.

Blatant defiance of standards.

Despite countless chemicals

and incessant heat curls return:

a complexly simple statement

and reminder

of identity and culture.

Our hair is

as our land is

as we are:

EVER BEAUTIFULLY

RESILIENT.

By NaturallyCurly.com (n.d.)

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

I am not my hair, I am not this skin, I am not your expectation… I am not my hair, I am not this skin, I am the soul that lives within   India Arie (2005)

Background and Rationale

Beauty has been imagined as part of people's social and psychological lives in various ways since antiquity. Hair representation is only one vein of beauty that has permeated many avenues of life, including music, through its lyrics, such as India Arie's *I am not my hair*. Her lyrics speak to constructions of hair, which speaks to interpretation of the self, interpretations of others and interpretations of relationships between people.

This study aims to determine and explore the "social interactions" which take place between Black women and their hair. It explores how black and coloured women represent their hairstyle choices in contemporary society. It specifically addresses hair straightening (use of "relaxers") and weaves and explores the underpinning factors linked to these representational practices for Black women. It would appear an extremely obvious notion that hair styling and performance has become an important and constantly developing cultural practice. Furthermore, Black hairstyling and hair performances are founded in the research and scholarship of Black African, American and British scholars.

Zimitri Erasmus's (1997) '*Oe my hare gaan huistoe': Hair-styling as black cultural practice,* highlights that manipulation and tedious effort of hair-styling is not exclusively located in African Black experiences, such as her personal example of growing up as a young coloured woman in South Africa. Rather she stresses that these experiences are equally represented among women and more specifically Black women globally. According to Erasmus (1997), discourses of good hair do not only talk, but they are as biological as can be, as it is often associated with other biological aspects of a Black woman's stereotyped body, such as big lips and round buttocks.

Erasmus (1997) discusses the 17 steps for coloured women to attain good hair. Her *wash, curl* and *swirl* process encompasses these 17 steps. I can identify with the 17 steps highlighted by Erasmus, as these are, to me, relatable performances, in order to attain sleek hair and aspiring to be perceived as beautiful. Lester (1999) maintains that the popular perception of "good" hair is hair that is closest to what looks like white people's hair. This is hair that commonly fits the criteria of "long, straight, silky, manageable, healthy and shiny" (p. 175). "Bad" hair is described with criteria that juxtapose perceived good hair. It is described as hair that is "short, matted, kinky, woolly, coarse, brittle and nappy" (p. 175). In a discussion of black and coloured women's hair, there is a natural racial undertone, and such a discussion cannot be separated from race, culture and politics. Hall (1990), well known for his theory on cultural identity, claims that Black hair is irrevocably linked to racial and political spaces.

With beauty being a central construct in this study, it is useful to explore its nature in general and its relationship to this discussion. Some feminist scholars have argued that beauty standards are culturally arbitrary; in other words definitions of beauty are argued as rather subjective and uninformed (Singh & Singh, 2011). However, evolutionary theory and its theorists do not believe in the arbitrary nature of beauty; rather they assert that certain traits, which are assumed beautiful, have various meanings and communicative information (Singh & Singh, 2011). According to Murray (2012) there is a popular feminist scholarly argument, that physical appearance is more important for women than for men. Murray (2012) links this perspective to a "gendered dualism" (p. 91), which highlights that women are associated with the physical (bodily aspects), while men are associated with the psychological (the mind) and culture.

Relating to the focus of this study, Imani Perry (2005 as cited in Murray, 2012) highlights that being female as well as Black has historically been marked as inferior. Perry (2005 as cited in Murray, 2012) postulates that while white women also make concerted efforts to ensure maintenance of the most superior form of a white image they can produce, the pressure of conforming to a particular beauty standard is heavier for Black women, as they require more "alterations" in order to reach the assumed ideal beauty image. Beauty through hair is just one aspect of the diverse beauty discussion in the dialogues of society.

As previously mentioned many scholars and writers (such as bell hooks and Maya Angelou) have grappled with identity and representations of Black people and have addressed this topic within various periods in society, including slavery, colonialism and more contemporary and social spaces. American scholarship has presented a large body of research on Black identity, as well as British scholars, such as Kobena Mercer and Stuart Hall. However, South Africa is not devoid of its own literary scholars who grapple with black and coloured identity as there has been extensive work done on slavery, colonialism and race, such as *coloured-ness* and *blackness*. Individuals such as Gabeba Bederoon, who draws on her own experiences as a Muslim/ Cape Malay, Zoe Wicomb, and Pumla Gqola are a few South African females of colour, who produce scholarship of this nature.

This study focuses on South African women. Having said this, one cannot ignore the rich historical discourses of South Africa. Furthermore, South Africa's "non-white" (Black) inhabitants have experienced their fair share of ridicule, ostracising and classification. This text can therefore not deny the importance of terminology, when grappling with race and identity for South African Black women. Gqola (2010), in her exploration of postcolonial and slave memory in post apartheid South Africa, is very careful in using terms in contemporary text that carry different meanings in relation to the past. Through this she extends the importance of terminology within the rubric of racial identity, in contemporary South Africa. I will use the capitalised "Black" to refer to women of colour under the Population Registration Act of 1950 during the National Party's apartheid rule. This term "Black" refers to black/African, coloured and Indian women. However, Indian women are purposefully exempted from this study, because of this study's specific focus. Therefore, when the term "Black" is used, it will only be in relation to black/African and coloured women. I will use small letters "black" and "coloured", to specifically differentiate between black/African women and coloured women. At times, the terms black/Black and coloured/Black will be used. This is meant to describe that the individual being spoken of is considered an African black woman as well as a Black woman, in terms of the Population Registration Act of 1950. This is similarly done in the case of a coloured woman, also considered Black under the Population Registration Act of 1950. A large body of the literature to be explored further draws from African American scholarship, therefore the capitalised "Black" will refer to the ancestors and descendants of the transatlantic slave trade.

In the same breath, the word *agentic* is used in this research as a particular type of terminology. Tate's (2007) writing states:

> Women's readings of experience mediate racializing discourse of belonging and exclusion while simultaneously articulating subjectivity and agency. (p. 300-301)
>
> Women disidentify from unnatural black beauty and their critique constructs their subjective agency. (p. 305)

The word *agentic* is used in this research study to describe Black women's performances of agency, as subjective agents. It is scholarship such as Tate (2007) and Banks (2000) that provides the foundation for articulating agency in this study.

Constructs such as identity, gender, race and culture are heavily contested issues in South Africa, especially because of South Africa's volatile history of colonialism and apartheid, which prohibited assimilation of all cultures and races into the then "mainstream" idea of society. Joyner (1988) explains culture as learned behaviours, where individuals or members of a group share values and beliefs. These beliefs are generational, as they are "transmitted" from families or elders onto younger members. These beliefs and roles are also socially constructed. Both Joyner (1988) and Erasmus (1997), maintain that these practices of belief filter through generations, with newer beliefs being as a result of newer cosmetics or innovations in hair. This study discusses how the 'issues' surrounding Black women's representations are loaded with meaning. Furthermore, discourses surrounding notions of beauty and representation are constantly being grappled with, consumed and challenged within social spaces.

Chapter outline

Chapter 2: Literature review. This chapter presents an overview of literature relevant to the study. It focuses on scholarship pertaining to representations and identity for Black women. It provides a broad overview of the importance of hair for Black women in South Africa and globally. It further explores the historical aspects of Black hair and its relationship

to Black people's (and Black women's) agency throughout history. Finally it briefly explores contemporary performances of Black women's representations and their Black hair practices.

Chapter 3: Theory. This chapter explores the theories of identity and performativity. More specifically it focuses on the theoretical frameworks of Stuart Hall and Judith Butler. Stuart Hall's cultural identity and Butler's performativity are relevant frameworks in this study, as they can be discussed within the realm of identity for Black women and their representational hair "performances" in particular.

Chapter 4: Method. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the methods employed in this research study. It discusses the methodological approach and sampling methods employed in the study, as well as a brief overview of the voluntary participants. The data collection procedure is discussed as well as a rich exploration of the analysis employed in this study, which is discourse analysis. The chapter assumes a reflective approach, by acknowledging the researcher's agency in this study as well as the study's strengths and weaknesses. Finally, the ethical implications and considerations for this study are detailed.

Chapter 5: Results and discussion. This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the main themes and discourses discovered in the study. The chapter focuses on three discursive themes: Hair politics, Hair and media, and Circumstantial self-representation. Each theme reveals how black and coloured women have contextualised their own hair in contemporary contexts. It also explores how women rationalise hair performances in relation to these various themes. Finally it explores how Black women use these themes in negotiating their own agency and their hair practices in contemporary society.

Chapter 6: Conclusion. This final chapter presents a summative conclusion to the findings of this study. Furthermore, it addresses the limitations of the research and presents recommendations for future areas of study.

Significance of the study

Jere-Malanda (2008) reveals that hairstyle practice and perceptions about hairstyling are unequivocally linked to historical, political and social factors. This research elucidates on

each of these points of discussion in the realm of performative hair practices of Black women in South Africa.

This research is important and significant, because it sheds light on Black women's representational performances, with specific focus on Black hair practices. This study addresses general "hair talk" from the perspectives of black and coloured women and further discusses the perceptions of conformity and individualism pertinent to Black hair performances. It addresses how Black women challenge perceptions about hair representation. It further explores how ideas of beauty are not completely separate from the influences of politics, media and circumstances. However, they are neither overarching themes that wholly influence the perceptions of Black women about beauty as well as their representational performances.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The aim of this literature review is to explore international as well as South African scholarship that addresses Black women's hair representations. The focus of the review is specifically on how representations of Black hair draw on racial, gendered and political ideas. It takes a historical perspective, covering South African, American and British scholarship, to flesh out the complexities of representation for Black women throughout history.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the importance of terminology when exploring concepts such as identity, representation and gender linked to political spaces, must be acknowledged and is specific to its meaning. Therefore, to reiterate, capitalised "Black" will be used to refer to black and coloured women. Specific reference to "coloured" and/or "black" women will be used to differentiate the racial identities. When specifically discussing African American scholarship, capitalised "Black" will also be used.

The literature review will offer a thematic presentation of the material. It will address some of the following: The importance of hair grooming as a practice and a performance for women and Black women in particular; how hair has been differently represented throughout various historical spaces; Black hair as, or as part of, popular culture; and an exploration of Black hair within professional contexts for Black women. The literature reveals that hair is a socially complex phenomenon that extends beyond the merely corporeal. In addition, I suggest that hair functions as a commodity within capitalist industry and society, and is an identity of racial constructions. There is not a rich body of literature that pertains to scholarship on hair as an issue in a South African space for black and coloured women. Nevertheless, many discursive (and performative) similarities can be generalised and communicated across nations.

HAIR Obsession, HAIR Possession, HAIR Race

Joyner (1988) highlights that the physical, tangible and biological structure of hair can be classified into three hair 'shapes': straight hair, wavy hair and natural kinky hair. Other scholarship suggests, that this simple summation of the tangible object on top of our heads is a much more loaded concept. Zimitri Erasmus (1997), author of the article on the complexities of hair as history and experience as a coloured woman, also speaks of this blatant physical aspect of hair, going even further to stress the terminology so often flung around to classify women's hair, including "stick straight, fine wavy, *kroes* and *peper korrels*"[1] (p. 12).

Literature from individuals such as Joyner and Erasmus makes clear that hair is not only physical but fulfils a symbolic function as well, especially in how hair is socially constructed in society and its meanings manifest within social spaces. Literature about the symbolism of hair explores how hair is socially embedded and represented in historical Black societies as well as in contemporary society where there remain political and colonial undertones.

According to authors like Rosette and Dumas (2007) and Berry (2008), the social meaning of hair often reflects cultural difference. Culture is very nuanced and literature has explored these various cultural dimensions within the realm of physical representations, including that of Indian, Asian and Caucasian women's spaces. Speaking to cultures, from a more racial perspective, Tate (2007) writes about white privilege with regard to setting the standards for notions of beauty as she discusses how "the influence of whiteness as a yardstick for beauty has a history which extends back to slavery" (Tate, 2007, p. 301); while Berry (2008) discusses the *biraciality* concerning the mix of white and black physical aspects owned by Indian women. While it is useful to acknowledge the various cultural nuances in representation and identity for women, it is Black women who are central to this study. Therefore addressing notions of beauty are encouraged from a holistic perspective, but also from more funnelled perspectives of Black women.

---

[1] *Kroes* and *peper korrels* describes hair that is not straight, but rather worn naturally, without the use of chemicals. Peper korrels is hair considered to be short, dry, curly or unruly and also referred to as slave hair. http://hair-i-am-cas2001s.blogspot.com/p/diction-hairy.html

Rosenborough and McMichael (2009) highlight that being well groomed serves as a visual marker, which is used by men and women to find an identity and social stance to be affiliated with. Thompson (2009) also maintains that for women and especially Black women, hair is more than a mere covering or protective sheath from the cold; rather it holds 'emotive qualities' which are associated with the lived experiences of Black women. Unpacking the meanings behind the lived experiences of these women will highlight that these very experiences are embedded in discussions of politicised mandates, racial calligraphy, symbolism and cultural and generational influences. Furthermore, Black women continue to reinvent these discussions on a daily basis.

Progressing from Rosenborough and McMichael's assertions of self grooming; in Erasmus's (1997) work again, she speaks frankly about being a coloured woman in South Africa, where she highlights the discourse of owning "good" hair as being as pertinent a discussion to being a teenage coloured girl as avoiding the discourses of owning fat lips and a big bottom. Erasmus (1997) discusses the moment she realised that the struggle for Black women to obtain good hair is a global performance and focuses specifically on a process of obtaining good hair that was particularly unique to herself and her circumstances, being the use of relaxers. "Relaxing" hair is the process of straightening the roots of Black women's hair in order to make them appear naturally straight. Using a "relaxer", permanently straightens the hair because it is a chemical (Olasode, 2009). Hair has a continual growth process; therefore there is a perpetuation of this practice (of "relaxing" hair) every few months to maintain the appearance of straight hair. Olasode (2009) highlights that people relax their hair for many reasons, such as for attaining perceived beauty, social acceptability, convenience and the ease with which to manage straightened hair. Olasode (2009) also highlights advice from friends and family as well as improvement of self-esteem as impacting on the choice to use relaxers.

Erasmus (1997) acknowledges that the practice of straightening is linked to "colonial-racist notions of beauty" (p. 14). Furthermore she explores the interplay between Black women as *reactionary* and Black women as *progressive* when discussing the practice of hair straightening for them. Various scholarships, including that of Erasmus (1997) and Tate (2007) reveals colonial racism as impacting on representations. Therefore having already

acknowledged this impact, Erasmus further escalates her discussion as she challenges Black women to simultaneously address representation in contemporary society.

Thompson (2009) addresses the writing of Willie Morrow, (author of *400 Years without a comb*) who argues that race and hair are entangled concepts. He maintains that hair is an icon of attraction because it depicts what people see as the ideal and therefore aim to depict a popular style or image.

In accordance with the writing of Willie Morrow, regarding the link between race and physical representation, Shirley Anne Tate, whose work focuses on ideas such as race, gendered bodies and performativity, addresses how skin colour and the natural Afro circulates within the political discussion of inclusion, exclusion and visibility in Black anti-racist beauty aesthetics (Tate, 2007). She writes: "A dark skin shade and natural Afro hair become ambiguous signifiers as the women's talk leads to a mobility of black beauty" (Tate, 2007, p. 300). This literature thus informs us that signifiers such as skin colour and hair texture/ hairstyles creates the discussion between women, which will define what is beauty and what is not and therefore make these women agents in articulating their perceptions of 'black beauty'. Tate also touches on the political and social meaning of beauty aesthetics. She discusses how Black people throughout history have and continue to locate themselves and their performances in a framework of beauty, as both aesthetic and political (Tate, 2007).

Remaining within the realm of racial discourse and hair, Ingrid Banks maintains that the perceptions of good or bad hair are communicated with discussions of skin colour. She further asserts that these two concepts remain present in the minds of African Americans (Banks, 2000 as cited in Tate, 2007). Banks (2000) suggests that there is a "racialised hierarchy" which is entrenched in the language and discussions of hair and skin colour. She further maintains that there remains beliefs that race no longer exists in society. She touches on interplay between race and hair and according to some of her findings, there seems to be an overwhelming strength in persuasion from the *hair space*, over the *race space*. In essence, hair has become a stronger determinant for stereotyping and obtaining fortune over race today (Banks, 2000). Mercer argues that hair becomes a prominent sign of racial difference when certain racial structures in society become apparent. According to Mercer, it is here where hair becomes as noticeable as skin colour (Mercer, 1987). Tate places this social

interplay between skin shade and hair in a social constructionist realm, in which representations of hair and skin colour become branches of a larger Black social body. This denotes perceptions about beauty and self-image and finding an identity within a larger social framework (Banks, 2000; Tate, 2007).

There are many perceptions about what beauty is (as highlighted by scholars such as Olasode, Erasmus, Joyner, Tate and Banks) and what it should ideally be; which makes placing oneself in a continually changing and aesthetic driven society a complex performance. Banks therefore stresses the importance of agency of Black women to take ownership of that complex aesthetic space and define the language of black beauty for themselves (Tate, 2007). However, there is an expectation and requirement for this sense of agency to transcend physical, psychological and historical barriers, which played a role in and continues to play a pertinent role in Black women's performances in society.

An historical culture of Black hair

In the previous section the literature revealed the social nuances attached to women and particularly Black women's hair and I have presented literature on the complexity of hair in a diverse cultural society. This section will briefly explore the "roots" of the struggle and identity of hair and self-representations for Black women. It will explore American as well as South African scholarship in relation to this discussion.

Hairstyles and hair practices have evolved and changed over centuries for Black people and it is possible to trace these practices and representations to periods of colonialism as well as in a post-colonial era. Byrd and Tharps (2001) explore how during the 15th century, common to West African societies, hairstyles were worn to communicate messages and as a way of interacting with society. Even then, hair symbolised types of identity, with different hairstyles and adornments indicating, marriage, engagements, age, wealth and ranking in society (Byrd & Tharps, 2001). Hair delivered a message, but hair also elicited a degree of power and strength within culture, another form of unspoken messaging, which surpasses the physical aspect of hair as a mere object.

Africa's connections with hair were changed with the dawn of the slave trade. The slave trade meant not only the oppression and subjugation of a people, but also the introduction of new ideas and behaviours and fields of thought (Jere-Malanda, 2008; Thompson, 2009). Depictions and perceptions of beauty made a radical shift, from beauty aesthetic in elaborate hairstyles – braids and other plaited styles. White European images of beauty, described as delicate, fine, with light features, were seen as the ideal discourses of beauty in western society and Black women were seen as strong and "exuding animal sensuality" (Tate, 2007, p. 301). The femininity of Black women's hair and how it was celebrated and communicated no longer held strength as a leading aesthetic appeal in the new society. The slave trade is thus historically important to consider when discussing representation for Black women, as it was one of the main catalysts for the behavioural and psychological mind shifts which took place, regarding representations and notions of beauty for Black women.

Slavery, the history of colonialism and Black representation, are all themes that have been explored within the post-colonial feminist work of authors such as Baderoon (2011), Gqola (2010) and Wicomb (1998). Slavery and the colonial and imperialist implications of slavery have been and in some ways, as argued by the above mentioned scholars, are still prevalent in South African society. In particular, Cape Town as part of South Africa, between 1658 and 1838, was a colony of the Dutch and later the English (Gqola, 2010). Furthermore, Gqola (2010) states that many of the descendants of these slaves in apartheid South Africa would have been classified coloured.

For centuries, colonialism dominated Black culture and this system was not only critical but also derogatory in manipulating Black people's perceptions towards understanding representations of and for Black beauty; with hair being a central component. Colonialism also introduced racist systems, subjugating Black people in deliberate and cruel ways (Fanon, 1952). These systems wielded a degree of power over people's mindsets and behaviour, resulting in what Fanon (1952) would call, *internalisation.* This concept of *internalisation* explores the interplay between inferior and superior dimensions. It is basically the assimilation by the "inferior" to what they have been subjected to, which ultimately creates longevity of such a dynamic (Fanon, 1952). This makes it easier for the "superiors" to wield power over inferiors who submit to the ruling power without question. In this case, colonial

and racist rule informed structures for liberation and freedom for white people, but not for Black.

> In South Africa there are two million whites against almost thirteen million native people, and it has never occurred to a single black to consider himself superior to a member of the white minority. (Fanon, 1952, p. 68)

Fanon's seminal scholarship in 1952 questions why it is so easy for a subjected majority to be so wholly ruled by a minority. His reference can be related to the South African context decades ago, with his theory of internalisation and the "dependency complex" being related to the discussion of hair and hair representation in apartheid South Africa. Fanon's framework represents the standards to which a majority felt forced to submit to and therefore portray dependence upon a ruling minority. This was the behaviour of Black women and later Black men in order for them to be accepted by the ruling white minority; to be seen as appropriate and not be seen as members of a barbaric racial identity or being attached to antiquated representations of a racial identity.

The idea of "shame" becomes apparent in how Fanon grapples with the dependency complex and Black people's internalisation of perceived negative identities. Wicomb (1998), who writes about shame, identity and *colouredness* in South Africa, discusses miscegenation, which originates from a "discourse of race, concupiscence and degeneracy" (p. 91) and "continues to be bound up with shame" (p. 91). This shame is linked to the idea of being "coloured" and of being a race labelled as the descendants of miscegenation. Gqola (2010) further highlights that the coloured racial identity is directly linked to shame, as the system of apartheid assigned "race" because of the negativity and humiliation assigned to and assumed from the label of "coloured shame" for coloured people.

Wicomb (1998) claims "the failure or inability to represent our history in popular terms and consequently the total erasure of slavery from the folk memory presumably has its roots in shame; shame for our origins of slavery, shame for the miscegenation and shame as colonial racism" (p. 66). One Black figure that is important to the discussion of representation, Blackness, shame, identity and of course slavery in the South African context is Sara

Baartman. Baartman was an enslaved Khoi woman, who was transported to Europe (Gqola, 2010). Wicomb (1998) discusses Sara Baartman and how her identity and body was entangled in the shrouds of shame. Big bottom, big lips, non-straightened hair, are all descriptions of Sara and the idea of shame was informed by the performance of putting her body on display as an indication of barbarity, being uncultured and a non-Eurocentric image of an African Black woman. According to Gordon-Chipembere (2011) Baartman's

> Buttocks coupled with her perceived hyper-sexuality created a
> Western historical trajectory of socio cultural images/imaginings of
> Africa and the black female body as inherently inferior, and thus a
> site to be plundered. (p. 7)

After Baartman's sudden death on 29 December 1815 in the house of her owner, S. Reaux, in Paris, her body was inspected and violated, with her brains and genitals placed into jars. Her body was put on display in the halls of the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle until 1827. Her remains were thereafter moved to the Musée de l'Homme until the late 1970s. Baartman's remains remained in storage thereafter until it was returned to South Africa in 2002 (Gordon-Chipembere, 2011). The removal of Baartman's remains in the Musee de l'Homme and the eventual return of her remains to her homeland was not only a victory for the Black people's struggle, but was also indicative of the (progressive) shifted meaning of the relationship between shame and the Black woman's body.

Baderoon (2011) highlights that

> Black bodies in South Africa have been imbued with unsettling
> sexualised meaning... Black female bodies, in particular, have been
> portrayed through patterns of hypervisibility that have
> simultaneously subjected women to heightened levels of
> surveillance. (p. 214)

Baderoon's (2011) excerpt above speaks to representations of female bodies. It explores how during slavery in particular, the female body was sexualised and provided no sense of agency as a dominant gender with the ability of owning control of the self. Remnants of her

discussion on the body and representation of Black women during slavery and its continuation of representation and stereotyped body images is also linked to Wicomb's shame. However, while the exploitation of Black women's sexuality is not directly linked to this study, the writing of Baderoon (2011), Gqola (2010) and Wicomb (1998), all speak to women's agency and also lack thereof as a result of historical representations of their racial identity as well as gender.

Slavery was a system that allowed for subjugation and control of not only a racial identity, but also more specifically a gendered racial identity, where women were subjected and objectified, sexualised and represented in debasing ways. Focus put on the derogatory images of female's bodies during slavery and the shame accompanied by a racial identity as well as a gender allows us to determine a path of identity construction in contextualising how Black women grapple with notions of beauty representation in contemporary South Africa. For Black women, behaviour towards and perceptions about beauty became distorted and were inevitably altered because of the nature of political and racist systems imposed on a race. The scholarship of Erasmus (1997) supports the above assertion as she discusses how "racial hierarchies and values of colonial racism have left a deep mark on our conceptions of beauty" (p. 12).

Thompson (2009) maintains that creating straight hair and imitating a Eurocentric standard of beauty was the preferred standard of representation for Black women post slave era. With straight and long hair being the highly sought after commodity, the natural repercussion was that delineations started to erupt in Black communities. Classification and ostracising became a popular trend among people. Racial signifiers remained skin colour and hair texture; however, hair became a stronger determinant of acceptance or rejection into Black society. In some American churches:

> A fine-toothed comb was hung from the front door. All persons wanting to join the church had to be able to pass the comb smoothly through their hair. If the hair was too kinky membership was denied. This was known as the comb test. (Byrd & Tharps, 2001, p. 22)

The "comb test" is not a foreign concept for Black people in South Africa, especially those who lived during the period of apartheid. More commonly known as the pencil test in apartheid South Africa, this was one of the humiliating tests used to classify people and determine racial status. This classification was made no more apparent, than in the Population Registration Act, 30 of 1950 (Baderoon, 2011; Wicomb, 1998). This internal discrimination, which occurred amongst Black people, is known as *intraracial discrimination* and was perpetuated because of the perceived need to fit into a white society. The belief proceeded from the premise that the better one fits in with and conforms to popular trends of the dominant racial society, the better access one would have to jobs, amenities and basic standards of living.

> If you're White, you're all right, if you're Black, get back, if you're brown, stick around. (Byrd & Tharps, 2001, p. 52)

A number of other historical movements in the history of Black people can be discussed in relation to this study. Two of these include, the Black Panther liberation movements of the 1960s in the USA and the Soweto uprising of the 1970s in South Africa. During the 1960s hair began to be viewed as a political statement and a symbol of Black power and progressive social movement (Bellinger, 2007; Rosette & Dumas, 2007). Hair was worn naturally and Afros (also referred to as "small bushes" [Byrd & Tharps, 2001]) became the symbol of Black freedom, with the hope of changing racial stereotypes about people of colour (Bellinger, 2007; Jere-Malanda, 2008). During the Black Panther movement, symbolism of freedom and challenging colonialist and oppressive rule during the 60s was epitomised by many Black people wearing an Afro. Similarly, during the Soweto youth uprisings, challenging apartheid impositions was evident through physical and verbal struggles, but also the perpetuation of particular behaviour and appearance, where Black people wore their hair natural and uncombed, with the intention of indicating freedom. This was a symbolic movement, indicating freedom from oppression, and challenging stereotypes and obligatory representations to satisfy the then ruling race.

Angela Davis and Kathleen Cleaver are just two women who were central figures in challenging Black oppression in the US, known for fiercely wearing Afros during the 60s and 70s. During the youth uprising in Soweto, Black people deliberately distanced themselves from all things "white", including the use of skin lighteners and the refusal to use relaxers or

comb their hair. These hair practices, which manifested from the refusal to conform to perceived "neat" hair standards, was known as ama-Azania, and was a practice encouraged for and by Black people to continue the identity of *Black is Beautiful* (Qekema, 2010).

Shifting this discussion to hair representations in a more contemporary social framework for Black women, Bellinger (2007) highlights that hair continues to be a symbol of recognition and power, but the type of symbolic portrayal shifted from Afro to sleek and wavy.

Tate (2007) maintains,

> The only authentic black hairstyles would be dreadlocks, Afro,
> cane-row *(cornrows)* and plaits. (p. 303)

Tate's position here stems from her prior exploration of an *anti-racist aesthetic*. She understands this anti-racist aesthetic as a form of cultural criticism and clarifies the struggle of better coming to grips with experiences of Black people in relation to concepts of beauty (Taylor, 2006 as cited in Tate, 2007). Tate (2007) highlights another concept called a *negative black aesthetic,* with one significant factor of this concept being the straight hair rule. Here Tate's understanding of this straight hair rule draws on Taylor's work (2000 as cited in Tate, 2007) which assumes that straight hair is a pertinent requirement in the definition of women's Black beauty. However just as Tate's earlier scholarship argued that locks, Afros and plaits are seen as authentic black hairstyles, she cannot avoid the continuous cultural shifts which take place, making the authentic inevitably unauthentic and just another common hairstyle practice.

Mercer's earlier work is confirmed by Tate's scholarship. It is Mercer's perception that while Afros and locks are considered traditional hairstyles, these too have become popularised and can as easily be classified as merely another series of hairstyle possibilities as can relaxers and weaves (Mercer, 1987). Mercer is particularly critical in his exploration of aesthetic representations, and seems to provide minimal acceptance of any hairstyle in particular as traditional or original. His premise is that, "when hairstyling is critically evaluated as an aesthetic practice inscribed in everyday life, all Black hairstyles are political in that they each articulate responses to the panoply of historical forces which have invested this element of the ethnic signifier with both symbolic meaning and significance" (Mercer, 2004 as cited in

Tate, 2007, p. 303). In this sense, representational identities assumed by Black people in a contemporary society are politically driven, because of the very nature of the history of Black people. This nature includes structures of classification, enforced rule and "divide and conquer" strategies. Simultaneously, hair has lost much of its former political robustness.

POPULAR media… POPULAR culture… POPULAR hair

Having combed through the "journey" of Black hair, I bring the discussion to focus on contemporary representations of Black beauty. Hair has become more of a commodity in recent years. This is largely due to access to technology and media. While in previous years, word of mouth and visual communication of aesthetic ideas was privileged to convey and perpetuate images, the advantages of advertising, the Internet, television and various social networks, all play a role in shaping the way society and particularly Black women think about beauty and representation.

The literature review thus far has highlighted the complexity of hair within historical, cultural and racial spaces. This section specifically explores hair in social contemporary spaces for Black women. With an increase in overseas travelling over the decades, as well as the modern expansion of the Internet and the World Wide Web, the result is widespread exposure to cultural spaces and practices, even greater than what television and other mass media had already introduced. Dash (2006) claims that due to this increase in information and awareness of the 'other', a platform was created to assume the positions and practices of others. Media have become a popular frame of reference, from which ideal representations and descriptive identities are drawn. It is the platform from which to observe popular trends and current aesthetic images and apparel.

The literature has already shown how race, classification, location and other such concepts have impacted on how black and coloured women practice and think about representation and beauty. In this sense media, being such a prevalent and impactful space in contemporary social culture, is deemed as important as the previously mentioned concepts, to explore notions of beauty and representations among Black women.

With the rise of media and film in the late 1920s and early 1930s, there was growth in the production of a message driven space, allowing for the descriptions of an 'African' people, among others, to be elucidated on a larger, popular platform (Dash, 2006). TV was introduced to South Africa in the mid 70s. Advertising in particular perpetuates images to which its viewers could aspire (Ribane, 2006). Walsh and Gentile (2001) highlights that advertising in media is a powerful manipulative strategy, with underlying principles that effectively aim to create a desired emotional state. Furthermore, they argue that media impacts on emotions, which plays a critical role in effectively understanding and engaging with a message sent via media avenues, such as advertisements. Media is thus revealed to be a dominant tool for manipulation and influence.

Thompson (2009) explores the representations of hair in media and social interactions, as she uses "causal talk" to demonstrate how these (media and social interaction processes) mediates decisions on and choices about grooming and aesthetic value. Thompson (2009) proposes that preferences for hairstyles are to a degree embedded in prevailing changing trends, which means that people ascribe to contemporary, relevant and popular hair trends and styles. This persuasive phenomenon of modelling is particularly apparent in the narratives of popular media and media celebrities, such as Rihanna (pop singer), and Jennifer Aniston (actress). It appears that Thompson's causal talk can also be contextualised in a South African context, as one sees the social imaging that is perpetuated on local television and by local celebrities such as Bonang Matheba and actresses of day and night time dramas, such as *7de Laan* and *Generations*.

Rooks (1996) explores the popular use of propaganda in advertising, depicting *before* and *after* frames of hair textures. This practice encouraged Black women to desire to straighten their hair for themselves but also for the consideration of their communities (Byrd & Tharps, 2001; Rooks, 1996; Thompson, 2009). While advertising holds strength in the media space as a dominant and influential factor impacting on representations for Black women, it is not the only form of media which influences perceptions of and ideas about beauty. Other forms of media that wield similar influence include magazines, film, and local television. *DRUM!, Ebony* and *True Love* magazines are only a few of the many Black magazines which have for decades focussed on and continues to focus on Black women, politics, beauty and representation in contemporary society.

Addressing media through film, I make reference to movies such as *Foxy Brown,* highlighting the female protagonist sporting a wig. This hair performance is indicative of the political and social structures imminent in Black culture and society at the time. The Afro was however transformative in this female character, in that while there were political undertones and identity attached to creating the protagonist with an Afro; herself and her other characteristics were not necessarily linked to any type of political framework, but rather a social and cultural one, wherein which the Afro, became more popular and aesthetic driven than political and affirming challenge. Remnants of hairstyles being not only political but rather cultural and social as well are found in the writing of individuals such as Kobena Mercer.

A similar idea of transformation towards a more "popular" representation of an image/hairstyle can be related to wearing "dredlocks" or "dreadlocks" (Dash, 2006). Not only is the dreadlock hairstyle indicative of a religious position chosen by its wearers, but it has more recently also become a "statement" as well as a "fashion statement" devoid of association with any form of political challenging. Wearing dreadlocks, similarly to wearing an Afro today is no longer indicative of challenging oppression and colonial structures. Remnants of such behaviour may remain with such hairstyles, but it has made a considerable shift away from it, as above exemplified with the transformative nature of natural Black hairstyles. Nevertheless, this transformation is still indicative of how media has achieved success in perpetuating a particular image or identity.

In the sub-section above, the text alludes to how hair has become a commodity, as being a sought after, tangible object in contemporary society. According to Byrd and Tharps (2001) hair products and hair trade has its roots from the early 1920s, when individuals such as Madam Walker created revolutionary ideas for Black hair. As a result of years of oppression on a Black racial identity, it was no surprise that their (Black people's) feelings of fear, resentment, apprehension and lack of support from white people involuntarily created a market for Black individuals such as Madam C. J Walker and Annie Turnbo Malone (Byrd & Tharps, 2001). It is women such as these who introduced Black hair products and hair "upkeep" practices. Similar "Black relatable" marketing strategies, which were used by women such as Madam Walker, was also evident in Africa around the early 70s (Ribane,

2006); where a beauty company called *Mary King,* recruited women as consultants to work with the people. Violet Gampu, who later worked exclusively with beauty queens from various pageants, was one of the first beauty consultants hired by *Mary King*. Their work involved educating women on make up and beauty and being present at various beauty events (Ribane, 2006).

Addressing hair as a tangible and marketable product in more detail, as briefly highlighted in the above paragraph, Berry (2008) maintains that hair is both an object as well as a subject. She borrows from the writing of Bruno Latour, who claims that hair is an object, which is a subject. To him hair is an object of "external reality" while concurrently also assuming the role of "subject of society" (Berry, 2008, p. 75). Berry (2008) explores hair as a commodity, where she explores the trade of hair and hair as a lucrative industry. She maintains that hair is a tangible object, but it controls human subjects like pawns. With the removal of hair from its host's head, the hair becomes a social subject, one that performs a function. The hair (though lifeless) transitions from a dead commodity into 'something', which breathes life into its consumers. As hair becomes a commodity, it turns into a "phantom-objectivity" and a ghost like commodity, which loses every trace of its human connectedness with people once removed from the human head (Berry, 2008). The weave would be considered such a "phantom objectivity", and a commodity, which speaks to Berry's discussion above, in how the practice of weaving has become such a huge marketable performance.

Speaking to the above writing about the diversity of hair and its consistent presence in culture and society, Lester (1999) is in agreement and argues that "hair is a big deal" (p. 175) and with the diversity of hairstyle choices, including locks, twists, natural, straightened, permed and curled to name a few, hair has also become a big business and a "multimillion dollar industry" (p. 175). Fields Grenee (2011) highlights that while hair is a lucrative industry on the whole, the weave is an *extension* of what is a multi-billion dollar industry. One way in which accessing human hair for weaves and other hairstyles have become easier is through the collaborative works of companies such as Great Lengths and Indian/ Religious Temples. Their involvement in hair exemplifies the strength of hair as a lucrative object of trade.

PROFESSIONAL Hair

A final theme that the literature brings to light is *professional hair*. This literature explores Black women's negotiations with their hairstyle choices in professional spaces. It also reveals how Black women's representations are contextualised within social and professional society. Furthermore, the literature shows how concepts like race and gender also plays a pertinent role in Black women's representations in professional contexts.

Mitchell (2011) briefly explores how and why women feel forced to straighten their hair in order to find and sustain employment. Her writing explores an underlying meaning to our *performative* choices and self-representations. She maintains that the issue of changing oneself to fit into a demanding industry goes deeper than the mere "job search", but rather functions within the realm of pleasing others in order to achieve self preservation. She refers to a sub-human state of existence that is being enforced on people. Here she refers to the idea of being forced to succumb to behaviour that is not "natural", through our actions of changing ourselves to be accepted in a space that makes little room for individuality.

Patton (2006) outlines hairstyle genres for each of the three statuses or position classes within a professional context for African American women. Firstly, she addresses how for women in power and women from upper class statuses, often have straightened hair. However, this is not always the case in South Africa. Secondly, women with high paying jobs or from the middle class statuses would have long or short hair, and sometimes braids. Third and finally, women from the lower classes are reported to adorn braids and plaits as their main hairstyles choices. Patton's American scholarship is somewhat different to the South African situation. These differences are linked to historical legacies related to Black bodies and homes, and these different representations are inevitably all metaphors of personal and racial pride. There is also the discussion of wearing short and long hairstyles while occupying various occupational positions and the messages this articulates in that professional space. This inevitably touches on gendered identity, success and the "glass ceiling" for women's achievement in professional contexts.

> Straightening does to our racial identity what the chemicals in relaxers or the heat of pressing combs does to our hair – makes us seem whiter. (Morrison, 2010, p. 86)

Morrison, who writes on the hair dynamics present in a professional academic law environment, maintains that human hair travels a similar path to human identity. She maintains that where hair is chemically relaxed to "tame" unruly and kinky/ *kroes²* hair, the Black person is also culturally 'corrected' and the straightened hair serves as a marker for successful assimilation of the self into a white domain. Morrison (2010) highlights that the performance of hair straightening is given agency because of the perception that it allows Black women to perform more successfully in a white dominated society.

Rosette and Dumas (2007) maintain that Black women, already a minority in the professional sector, are because of their gender also subject to what is called a *double–bind*. Here the challenge for women is how to groom themselves in order to achieve success in a male dominated industry and to crush the glass ceiling. There are two binaries which come to play in a woman's conception of this *double–bind*: Firstly, where classic characteristics of a corporate environment are considered, including aggressive tendencies, extreme ambition and competitiveness, most often associated with a male character – here a woman would choose to hide her femininity, and rather display more masculinity in her dress and hairstyle choices. The second binary grapples with the explicit representation of a woman's femininity and "soft" feminine features. According to Rosette and Dumas (2007) it is women who place themselves in the second binary who tend to receive more job offers and progress better in the professional industry. For minority women (in this case Black women), the challenge to achieve success as a woman is accompanied by the negotiation of their racial identities in the workplace. The challenge is how to express one's racial identity, with one aspect of this being how to assume one of the two binaries mentioned above. Therefore, for Black women in the workplace, clothing and hairstyling is particularly important for self-definition in a predominantly white male industry.

The scholarship of Mitchell (2011), Morrison (2010) Paton (2006) as well as Rosette and Dumas (2007), all speak to the complexity of how Black female roles in the workplace grapple

---

² *Kroes* hair is hair that is considered not straight, very curly, coarse and dry.

with status and perceived class representation. They highlight how Black women mediate their images within their workspaces and how their performances are indicative of experimentation as well as containment of the self and their self-representations in a continually growing industry driven society.

Conclusion

Based on the literature presented in this literature review chapter, I have argued the historical and contemporary complexity of Black hair as an object and the subjective implications of hair. It has grappled with the physical, social and cultural aspects from which hair discussions can be drawn. Furthermore, it investigated 'colonial' hair and its impact on Black women. More specifically it explored the work of South African female scholars on representations for black and coloured South African women's bodies today. The literature highlighted that political and colonial structures inform a large part of Black representation in the past as well as in the present. It further revealed that concepts such as race, identity, gender and performativity inform a large part of Black representations and emphasises these concepts as functioning within the wider discussion of Black women's hair performances in South Africa.

It is interesting to acknowledge that Erasmus (1997) and Wicomb's (1998) texts were written in the 90s, yet their exploration of representation of coloured and black women can still be identified in contemporary racial and aesthetic spaces. It is scholarship produced by authors such as these, which have brought to light Black women's issues about representation from historical exploration to contemporary. Furthermore, they together with other female scholars continue to explore and produce scholarship surrounding these cultural, racial, social and gendered dimensions within the realm of Black female representation and identity.

The literature review also addressed contemporary manifestations of representation and popular media as playing a pertinent role in Black women's contemporary self-representations. It revealed a relationship between professionalism and representation for Black women as well as the complex interactions which take place in white male dominated spaces for Black women. It further highlights how they negotiate themselves and their

physical representations in these spaces. Finally, this literature review has explored hair as subjectively important to Black women and how hair plays a role in locating identity and adequately representing the self in public spaces, while simultaneously acknowledging the impact of concepts such as politics, race and gender.

CHAPTER 3

Theory

This chapter will discuss two theoretical frameworks. It will focus on Stuart Hall's concept of *Cultural Identity* and Judith Butler's concepts of *Performativity* and *Gender Diaspora.* I am making use of two theories of diaspora – cultural diaspora (Hall) and gender diaspora (Butler). Hall and Butler's concepts are explored as relevant to and negotiated within the study of hair and hair representation for Black women. Both frameworks are discussed as playing a critical role in addressing the meaning behind hairstyling practice and representations for Black women. It also addresses the transformative nature of hairstyling practices as functioning in contemporary society. Furthermore, these theories can be helpful in understanding the interaction between Black women and their hair.

Our Propensity for *IDENTITY*

Huddy (2001) proposes two kinds of identity: identity that we are born into (acquired identity) and the type of identities we choose to enter into (ascribed identity). Brubaker and Cooper (2000) offer a more analytical frame for understanding identity. This analytical frame clusters identity into two categories. These are the category of practice and the category of analysis. The first category, *practice,* defines everyday social experiences, and describes identities as how laypersons, as actors, make sense of themselves, their actions, behaviours and interests, as similar to and different from others (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). The category of analysis is distinguished from this, in its rather 'experience-distant' nature. It is the scientific and analytical stance of terms such as ethnicity, race and tradition (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). The assumption in this category is that identity is drawn from mere participation or being in constructs such as tradition, a race or ethnicity. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) maintain that an identity that can be practiced is also one that can be analysed. Therefore, both categories – category of identity as practice and identity being analysed – are intertwined, with regard to defining it and exploring it in society.

Terms such as *ethnicity, democracy, class, tradition* and *community* are inherent in discussions of social sciences and South Africa's history. These terms all underlie both social and political categories of practice and analysis.

Some scholars have discussed particular kinds of identities. Stuart Hall is one such scholar. He defines identities as that which contextualises and/or labels how we as humans position ourselves and are inadvertently positioned by our past narratives (Hall, 1997 as cited in Lewendal & Levendal, 2004). In his *Cultural Identity and Diaspora,* Hall focuses on cultural identity in particular. He highlights that this identity should not be seen as a factual thing that has been determined and cannot be changed by other forces. Rather cultural identity should be seen as a "production", a complex and continuous process that never has a foreseeable end (Hall, 1990). He further highlights that this identity process functions within the very fabric and nature of human representation (Hall, 1990). His formation of these viewpoints makes sense within the spectrum of culture, which is complex, always changing and not attached to stagnant structures and expectations. Hall proposes two ways in which to think about cultural identity. The first position understands cultural identity as a collective awareness and shared identity among a group of people. It is assumed to be the true self that lies beneath the superficial masks that we wear and identities we assume on a daily basis. It is in this position where one would find cultural heritage and cultural rituals, which are ingrained in us, but which as previously explained are not always the visible facets portrayed to onlookers (Hall, 1990).

The second position of cultural identity acknowledges similarity as moulding the identities we assume, but simultaneously also acknowledges difference as playing as pertinent a role in identity formation (Hall, 1990). This position of cultural identity would most likely have stronger support with liberal thinkers and in more contemporary spaces. It is the similarities that join us, but it is also the differences that describe who we really are. Therefore, while an identity group could from far be viewed as a group similar in performances and characteristics, closer inspection reveals the subtle difference within the seemingly similar demographic, which is more proudly and vociferously represented. The second position of cultural identity supports both ideas, of an individual as being, as well as of an individual who is still becoming (Hall, 1990). It addresses all spaces – a past space, a present one and possible future spaces. The basic premise for the second position of Hall's cultural identity is

to remain realistic and to understand that any identity, especially one intertwined in culture, is not stagnant but rather influenced by past, present and future contexts and circumstances and is above all else transformative (Hall, 1990).

While Stuart Hall's focus is identity, another prominent theme is elucidated in his scholarship, namely that of race. He grapples with race and more specifically with how racial discourses are negotiated with identity and in society and various cultures.

Continuing to explore the two positions of cultural identity as proposed by Hall, he maintains that it is the second position of cultural identity that can provide a better understanding of the traumatic experience of colonialism for Black people. Hall (1990) writes:

> The ways in which black people, black experiences, were positioned and subjected in the dominant regimes of representation were the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalisation. (p. 225)

Black people were seen as the "other", as different and therefore in need of control. Furthermore, colonialism assumed this control by employing strategies to subjugate a racial identity. Assumptions of normalisation only fit with representations of the dominant regime, a white European regime. Hall leaves no room for elusion or speculation. He maintains that the constant European presence, from a colonial period surrounding the idea of visual representation, and beauty, purposefully positioned Black people's perceptions and thus performances towards dominant regimes of beauty (Hall, 1990). In other words, European colonial structures created expectations of beauty that were popularly followed. Inevitably, these popular structures of beauty influenced Black people to assume similar identities.

Considering the writing presented thus far, we can concur that performances of Black people to position themselves and identify themselves within a white regime were due to colonial structures. Hall's scholarship supports this, as he maintains that cultural identities, which exist today, have been and continue to be influenced by historical and cultural discourses. Therefore considering the history of Black people, identities are irrevocably linked to politics and positioning the Black self in this political culture is constant.

Brubaker and Cooper (2000) offer a similar exploration of identity to Hall. They maintain that the term "identity" is used far too loosely. They further argue that it is a relatively ambiguous concept, which can be understood differently in different contexts as well as moulded to fit various contexts. They define some of the key ways in which identity is understood. One way in which to understand it is as a basis for political and/or social action. Another understands identity as a collective phenomenon. Identity is often a perceived social expectation of life, where the assumption is that individuals 'have to' have an identity to define themselves and meaning in their lives. Similar to how identity can form a foundation for social or political action, it can also be the product of such collaborative action. Finally, identity reminds us of our human-'ness', and takes responsibility for fluctuations, contradictions and instability of the self. An example, which can corroborate the aforementioned definitions of identity, including Hall's (1990) cultural identity as well as Brubaker and Cooper's (2000) identity, can be seen in South Africa's political history of apartheid. This example highlights how certain identities were imposed onto Black people because of colonial structures, which delineated race. It further addresses the reactive performances of Black people to this regime, to present a collective identity. During and as a result of apartheid, Black people rallied together and found meaning in a collective similarity, which was their race. This race was defended because of the idea of having an identity, someone and/or a group with which to similarly identify the self. They found identity in 'sameness' and in numbers and at the same time this identity formed the basis for social and political action (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000).

Butler's *PERFORMATIVITY*

> It would seem imperative to consider the way in which this gendering of the body occurs. My suggestion is that the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time. (Butler, 1988, p. 523-524)

Hall brings the ideas of culture, race and colonialism into the discussion of identity, while proclaimed postmodernist and feminist Judith Butler has a strong focus on gender studies. She specifically brings the idea of gender into the discussion of performative identity. Her theory of performativity is relevant to the study because it assists in exploring the

representational performances of Black women. Her strong focus on gender also speaks to the focus of this study, which is representation of Black women. Hall's (1990) theory of cultural identity resonates with Black women's identity formation through their representations and hairstyles they choose to convey. Butler's theory of performativity presents a further strong argument for exploring Black women's perceptions about beauty and performative representations, making it a relevant theory to discuss in the parameters of this study.

The discourse, of "long luscious" hair as an indicator of societal beauty, is a popular theme in discussions of human interaction, relationships and social being. This discourse is thus an important one to examine for the discussion of hair and identity. Furthermore, Butler's ideas on gender performativity more specifically shed light on the discussion of hair as an act or performance. A simple example of such a performance was explored in Butler's text, where the skinhead look became a fashion statement worn by homosexual men. This performance challenged the perception that "skin heads" portrayed only predetermined, heterosexual, masculine roles. The "skinhead" depicted more than a mere style choice, it depicted a chosen way of life, a performance, a challenge to the 'norm' and the formulation of a progressive identity (Lloyd, 1999).

Before going into more detail on Butler's views on gender performance, Johnson and Repta (2012) discuss sex and gender as separate and interconnected constructs. Johnson and Repta (2012) maintain that one's sex is a "biological construct that encapsulates the anatomical, physiological, genetic and hormonal variation that exists in species" (p. 19). They further argue that as human beings have become more diverse and been introduced to more diverse cultures and populations, people's knowledge and understanding of "sex" has changed. Johnson and Repta (2012) maintain that gender is a multidimensional construct. This construct refers to "roles, responsibilities, limitations and expectations provided to individuals as based on their presenting sex/ gender" (p. 20). Johnson and Repta (2012) further highlight that gender gives meaning to sex, by categorizing individuals and assigning labels such as *man, woman* or *transsexual*. Finally, they argue that sex and gender are socially constructed and are thus able to change. Terms such as *male, female* or *intersex*, are not biologically a given, but are rather related to location and time.

Butler focuses on gender as more than a mere social category or characteristic. Rather, she reveals gender as a performance, an action and something that "you do" (and not just something that you are) (Thomas-Williams, 2008). Coming from a Jewish background, trying to negotiate a space within a very American lifestyle, Butler drew on the gendered performances of her own parents and family to exemplify how they overrepresented their genders as based on stereotyped roles in films. More specifically their representations of exaggerated pre-determined, *Hollywood* stereotyped gender roles. It was at this point where Butler became aware of her parents failed gendered performances and thus sparked the fascination in gender performance and identity articulation (Thomas-Williams, 2008).

Gender informs a large part of Butler's writing and thought processes as a postmodernist. She acknowledges Simone de Beauvoir's belief that we are not *born* women, but rather *become* women and that being a woman is not a natural fact, but rather a historical idea (Butler, 1988; Murray, 2012). She thus postulates that gender is not a stagnant agent or identity that forms the foundation of performances to follow. Rather, gender is the identity that manifests from a stylized repetition of acts (performances) (Butler, 1988; Butler, 2009). She further maintains that it is the humdrum of behaviour and gestures of the body together with how the body is stylized that creates these genders, which appear to be abiding by social constructions. These performances of gender are an illusion, which society needs to continue existing in order to create structure and make sense of the numerous agents who need to find meaning and purpose in society. This premise, therefore speaks to Butler's exploration of the idea that gender is not stagnant, nor is it a definite identity, but rather a socially constructed, complex and ultimately a choice driven one.

In Butler's quote above (at the beginning of the exploration of her theoretical framework), she claims that gender is not a fact; rather gendered acts in a repetitive manner, create the idea of a gender. Butler (1988), who draws on de Beauvoir's feminist and existential ideas, explores and rationalizes gender as a result of history as well as social systems. The feminist theorist believes that the personal is political, and as this personal makes room for and is affected by political structures, the very acts which manifest from this personal political relationship becomes a gender that is formed and perpetuated. She maintains that the subjective experiences of being gendered is politically driven and structured by political incidences, and that genders in turn also structure and affect political incidences.

Salih (2002) more closely explores Butler's scholarship on gender as a performative identity. In agreement with Butler's scholarship, Salih (2002) maintains that there is a degree of repetition in the act of performance, and further postulates that performance, such as that of gender identities are constructed and constituted by language. There is ultimately no identity without language, that is, "discourse and language 'does' gender" (Salih, 2002, p. 56). There is the notion that discourses are productive – i.e., they produce objects and position subjects in specific ways. Brickell (2005) maintains that repetition of discourses through spoken language, fuels the preconditions that people have to adhere to one or other social construct(s) and therefore adhere to and be invested in its meaning. Discourses are maintained in other ways and perpetuated through means other than spoken language. For example beauty discourse is also evoked and perpetuated through media, modelling and intergenerational family positions on beauty.

Boucher (2006) highlights Butler's work as prominent in the discussion of "identity politics and cultural recognition" (p. 112). He further reveals how her inquiry into performance of social structures creates the potential for challenging hegemonic norms (Boucher, 2006).

Butler's gender studies explore concepts of *performativity, precarity* and *agency* (Butler, 2009; Salih, 2002). According to Brickell (2005) performances are enactments while *performativity* is a "constitution of regulatory notions and their effects" (p. 28). More simply, performance describes the action or behaviour, while performativity looks at the longevity and effects of such an action, as well as the meaning and social rhetoric assigned to the performances. The third concept, agency, is prevalent in Butler's work as well. Butler proceeds from the premise that both gender and sex are performatively re-inscribed (carved out) in ways that would accentuate its construction (how it came to be) as opposed to its existence (as a given). Salih (2002, p. 55) maintains that these re-inscriptions "constitute the subject's agency within law". This means that agency signifies opportunities for the subject or agent to challenge radical laws and social positions.

Brickell (2005), who is in agreement with Butler's scholarship on gender and representation, highlights Butler's contestation that performances such as gender representation are individual. Rather, he maintains that these performances are from a collective standpoint. He

also explores Butler's findings and positions on performance as rooted within the writing of John Austin (author of *How to do things with words*, 1962). From Austin's works on gendered categories, such as male/female, boy/ girl, Butler posits that these categories are not adopted into culture and society through nature, but are rather socially shaped and constructed through discourses (Brickell, 2005). For example, definition and behaviours of males and females are socially constructed through discourse, which is then collectively adhered to, and thus performed, by groups of people.

Butler equates the body to gender, maintaining that the body is not a mute fact, but is, like gender, also produced by and perpetuated through discourse (Salih, 2002), as well as through political and historical structures (Butler, 1988). The argument of hair representation as a social position and performance can be discussed in a similar way as the gender paradigm would. Hair can be exemplified in the way in which Butler equates gender and body performance, in that long, straight and "luscious" hair is socially constructed through language and discourse as beautiful and therefore yearned for by a collective and performed in accordance with that popular, social norm. Butler's scholarship on how historical, political and colonial structures impact on our representational performances can be used to address the manner in which hair and more specifically Black women's hairstyle choices are conveyed as a result of colonial and racial regimes.

Goffman is also referenced as presenting scholarship on performativity that speaks to Butler's work. Goffman maintains that one's representational performances, manifest because of one's control and management of self-impressions articulated in response to other individuals, within the interaction process (Brickell, 2005). This relates to Butler's point of performativity, which focuses on the construction of such performative discourses, more than its mere existence.

The argument that performances are socially constructed, questions whether any of our actions (performances) are our own. Or whether all actions are rooted in and driven by external factors, such as contexts and circumstances, media and the perspectives of opposite genders. In the exploration of hair performance, a straightened hairstyle would therefore be driven by factors such as media; male opinion of what is beautiful, family influence and habitual cultural behaviour. Butler's ideas inform the premise that hairstyles and ways of

expressing one's hair and why, is, as gender is – socially constructed and not merely a distant object. From Butler's theoretical perspective, one can address hairstyling practices as performances, while concurrently being interested in the discourses explored and the underlying meaning of and rationale behind hair discourse, including the history of Black people. One can also argue that language perpetuates the ongoing discussion of hair. More specifically what hair is, what it can do and what shapes and identities it can and cannot assume.

Having grappled with scholarship from the previous chapter, and taking Butler's theories as a point of departure, it appears that behaviour is rarely, if ever, individualistic. Rather, behaviour is based on external factors impacting on the self, one's self-perceptions and the desire for self-preservation. Behaviour can be justified by how the literature rationalises Black women's beauty performances within various contexts of political history. Furthermore, patterns of repetition in how women are affected by different forms of media are also found, which inform their created identities surrounding self-representation and hairstyle practices.

Butler acknowledges how social interaction is undeniably involved in representational discourses and how these representations are performed in society. Goffman's scholarship is in agreement with Butler's, as he argues that the self and how it is represented, is created and perpetuated through ongoing social interactions and continuous reference to and reflections upon the social world (Goffman, 1963 as cited in Brickell, 2005).

Finally, Butler's belief that identity is constructed and constituted by language is so strong that she suggests that there is no identity without language. She works from the premise that discourses, such as gender, are socially constructed. Brickell agrees with her in his belief that performances of gender are in fact a collective behaviour and not an individual action. He is also in agreement with Butler in his opinion that discourses are perpetuated though spoken language. This as well reminds of Goffman's account of the self and performances as contingent upon and a result of someone else's perceptions of you.

Butler holds her own set of beliefs regarding identity, performance and discourse, with special reference made to her 2009 scholarship on performativity, precarity and agency.

Lloyd (1999) also takes a pragmatic approach to gender and self-identification, in highlighting the fact that choices, such as which gender to belong to, are exactly that, a choice. More specifically it is a socially constructed gendered suggestion from which a decision is made. If one addresses gender without intergenerational influences and social underpinnings, one may realise that there is a choice in gender constructs. Lloyd (1999) maintains that we are persuaded to adhere to the gender, which is best associated with a particular sex. Therefore, there is now a discussion of conscious and subconscious underpinnings in the dialogue of performance as well. In Lloyd's article, it is made clear that the performance of gender is inescapable, but the identity associated with gender rhetoric and the decisions to adhere or conform to one or the other will always invite an open discussion.

Conclusion

While Hall and Butler have different areas of focus, the common idea apparent in both focus areas, is the similarity in how their theories of Identity and Performativity are based on and positioned within past as well as present narratives of performance. Hall's theory in particular acknowledged history and colonial structures, especially for race, as impacting on the identities and performances of contemporary society. Furthermore, his delineation of cultural identity aims to rationalise identity formation, for Black people, as manifesting from historical, political and racial discourses.

Butler, who focuses primarily on gender, its creation and its performance in society, also draws on political history and colonialism to explore the performances of "genders". She further maintains that genders are socially constructed and constituted through language. Her scholarship encourages the idea that gender be explored as a chosen identity manifested from historical regimes, language and society.

Hall's cultural identity and Butler's performativity can assist in the exploration of Black women's representational performances of beauty and hair practices in society. It also assists in exploring how and why Black women identify with and create identity from the various hairstyles they choose to portray.

The literature grappled with in chapter two presents history, colonialism, political and racial systems as informing ideas about representation for Black women, as well as their performances in the past and the present. These ideas are also prevalent within Hall and Butler's theories.

CHAPTER 4
Method

Introduction

This chapter explores the methodological approach that guided this research study. Qualitative methodology was chosen for this study, because of its ability to grapple with subjective information and in its acknowledgement of human beings as subjective agents. This methodological approach was gleaned most appropriate, in allowing the researcher to investigate as much subjective data as possible. A more extensive exploration of this methodology will be addressed below. This chapter will also explore the details of the participants in this study and the data collection method and procedure followed in order to retrieve this data. This chapter will address the type of data analysis that was chosen and more specifically how it was implemented in the analysis process. The narrative and discursive nature of this study, lead to the choice of analysis – discourse analysis – as most appropriate. Finally this chapter discusses reflexivity, by addressing the role of the researcher in this study as well as the ethical considerations followed during the research study.

Research design

A qualitative design was implemented in this study. The primary reason for choosing a qualitative framework is because of the manner in which meaningful qualities of human experience and actions are presented and interpreted within it (Parker, 2005). Furthermore, qualitative research acknowledges the subjective view of participants in scientific research, while additionally allowing phenomena to be studied within its natural settings. It further allows for in depth comprehension and analysis of data (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). Finally, Anfara et al. (2002) stresses the importance of audience engagement with the research process and how researchers must acknowledge the importance of public inspection in the investigations of research.

This study focuses on representations of Black women and how they "perform" identity. Furthermore, it explores the meanings attached to hair practices in contemporary society, especially related to Black women. Therefore, a qualitative methodological framework was most appropriate for this study.

The qualitative approach adopts an idiographic methodology – a science that is a representation of an individual's event of discussion, or a limited reality – where comprehension is individualized (Gelo, Braakman & Benetka, 2008). It also functions within a constructionist paradigm. A social construction viewpoint emphasises the social context of an individual, where feelings, thoughts and experiences of an individual are located within the social realms of human functioning rather than on an individual level. In addition, social constructionists maintain that individuals, along with their thoughts, feelings and experiences are also the product of social processes (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006). Having said this, the scholarship that has been grappled with in chapter two as well as the theories of Hall and Butler; all provide extensive literature on how identities and performances are socially constructed. Finally, a social constructionist framework, in this qualitative approach, allows one to explore the contextual paradigms of the subjective agents explored in the study and more specifically how these social contexts and circumstances impact on their thoughts about beauty, representations and hair practice.

Participants

Non-probability sampling was employed in this study. More specifically, purposive as well as snowball sampling was used. According to Tongco (2007) purposive sampling involves deliberately choosing each participant because of certain qualities this participant possesses. This sampling method was deemed appropriate because of a number of specifications, which were mandatory for inclusion in the participation of this study. These specifications include the fact that participants had to be female and had to be considered Black (where "Black" refers to "black" and "coloured" women) in South Africa. This delineation thus excluded Caucasian, Asian or any other European/ Asian ethnicity. Females were chosen, because hair plays a more prominent role in their day-to-day lives and daily representations than men. Black women were chosen, because they can relate to, or at least understand the intimate and complex relationship between a Black woman and her hair. In addition, Black women were

chosen because of the importance placed on displaying ideal representations – not natural straight hair – in their intimate social environments that mirror Eurocentric notions of beauty.

Snowball sampling was also paramount in this study. This method is considered "bias-full" because it is a method of referral sampling (Johnston & Sabin, 2010). Some of the participants were located through acquaintances of the researcher and thereafter referrals from already interested participants were made to other parties who were believed to have an interest in the subject as well. More simply put, the women, who were first approached, referred this study to their acquaintances, thus creating interest through word of mouth as well.

Eight Black women were interviewed for this study. More specifically, six coloured women were interviewed and two black women. The ages of the women ranged between 23 and 40. Considering the second technique used to source participants (snowball sampling), the fact that the majority of participants were coloured highlights that I (the researcher), being a coloured woman and the initial source of this study, together with my racial status may have indirectly specified the racial dominance of the participants in this study. The implications of this is, the participants who were approached by interested parties were mostly coloured women. This indicates the very close racial comfort zones people still maintain, and furthermore creates a more powerful perspective from a coloured viewpoint, than a collaborative Black viewpoint on beauty and representations.

A summary of each participant (at the time of the interview) is as follows:

Participant 1 is 27 years of age, considered herself of "mixed race" and is an Operations Manager in the fashion industry.

Participant 2 is 28 years of age, considered herself "coloured" and is a student (with 2 tertiary qualifications).

Participant 3 is 25 years of age, considered herself "mixed race" and is an Assistant Product Developer and a student.

Participant 4 is 38 years of age, considered herself "mixed race" and is a hairdresser.

Participant 5 is 27 years of age, did not have any way in which to ethnically describe herself, and works in publishing and advertising. (For the purposes of the study, she was considered coloured/ mixed race).

Participant 6 is 23 years of age, considered herself "coloured" and is currently completing a Masters degree at a university in the Western Cape.

Participant 7 is 25 years of age, considered herself a "black African" and is a candidate attorney.

Participant 8 is 40 years of age. She was unable to be reached for details on her chosen ethnicity. She works for an independent election institution in South Africa. (For the purposes of this study she was considered black).

Seven out of eight participants in this study were comfortable having their real names used during the data collection process, analysis and final writing of the dissertation report. Participant 7 specifically chose a pseudo name. Furthermore, for the purposes of confidentiality, the researcher chose to use pseudo names for all the participants in this study.

Data Collection

An in depth, unstructured interview was conducted with each participant. Interviews are considered the most effective way to obtain meaningful information from research participants, as it allows one to gather comprehensive information from a direct source (Parker, 2005; Wimmer & Dominick, 1994). Furthermore, Parker (2005) maintains that interviews provide the opportunity and spaces to question the contexts being studied and the relationships between the individual and his/her context(s). As this study investigates subjective opinions on representations and identity, I felt an in depth interview would better suffice to achieve the intention of the study. It would be more appropriate than a questionnaire or survey because it allows room for probing of questions, which is beneficial in a discursive study such as this one. The interviews were unstructured, to allow the participant to direct the discussion. This was done so that the participants would present themes of

discussion as most apparent to their situation and their thoughts about the context of this study.

While there was no interview schedule drawn up, the researcher chose to begin each interview with a relatively open ended statement/question. After this she used probing questions in relation to the information brought forward by each participant during the interview. Furthermore, the researcher tried to avoid framing questions in any kind of structured format and rather chose to keep the interview light and at the pace and direction of each participant.

Opening Statement used by the researcher for each interview:
1. Tell me about your hair today

The interview aimed to address:
- How the participant talks about herself
- How the participant talks about her own hair
- Finally, how the participant talks about hair in general

The researcher took great care to avoid as far as possible using leading questions or postulating personal ideas and subjects of thought within the discussion. This was done, so that the data gleaned was most comprehensively from the perspectives of the participants themselves. However, the researcher did share certain personal stories and honed in on some of the participants' verbalised experiences in order to better interact with and relate to each participant.

Two interviews were initially conducted, after which pre-analysis was done to determine if the types of probing questions used in the interview and flow of the interview discussion were sufficient in producing usable rich data. Finally, all eight interviews were conducted in English; however, some phrases expressed by a few participants were in Afrikaans. The Afrikaans statements were acknowledged within its context and for the purposes of this study translated into English.

Procedure

Once permission was received to conduct this research study from the University of South Africa, participants for the study were found by means of purposive and snowball sampling. Each interview took place in a quiet environment, of the participant's choice. Six interviews were conducted in the private homes of the participants, one was conducted at an academic institution in the Western Cape and one interview was conducted at the place of work of the participant.

I liaised with each participant via telephone and email. It is through these communication processes where permission was sought for the use of a digital voice recorder as well as providing basic information about and clarification on the rights of the participant in the study. The ethical responsibilities of the researcher in the study were also communicated.

Commencing each interview, permission was once again sought for the use of a digital voice recorder. There were no objections to this request. The researcher again gave a very brief overview about the context of the discussion, so that no prior assumptions could be made about the research study, which could have impacted on the discussion, which followed. Each participant was reminded of her voluntary involvement in the interview and was informed of her right to not answer certain questions if she so chooses. Each participant was also informed of her right to discontinue participation at any time. Furthermore, each participant was ensured confidentiality of data gathered in the interview, as well as the use of a pseudo name. Seven out of eight participants were comfortable with the researcher using their real names. However, to maintain confidentiality and consistency, all the women were given pseudo names in this study. Thereafter, each participant was given a written Informed consent form as well as a digital voice recording consent form. Each form described what was already verbally explained to each participant at the beginning of the interview. Written permission was also sought to take a photograph of each participant's hair/ hairstyle. Only 6 out of the 8 participants agreed to have a photo taken, (see Appendices 1 to 4). Each participant was given the opportunity to ask questions before the interview began. All the interviews were digitally recorded and thereafter transcribed.

Data Analysis

Discourse analysis was used as a method of data analysis. Discourses organize reality in a certain way, and it enables knowledge production. Cheek (2004) further maintains that discourse analysis allows one to isolate certain realities and hone in on these realities, while simultaneously excluding other realities from impacting on those isolated ones. Cheek (2004) reveals that discourses and discourse analysis remains within the realm of confusion, and maintains that in a qualitative research paradigm, this is not necessarily a bad thing. She highlights that once a concept is understood, it is oversimplified and thus creates the realm of complacency, which should not become a norm within the very open ended and explorative nature of qualitative research. Jones (2012) claims that discourse analysis is the study of language. More specifically, discourse analysis is one way in which to look at language that focuses on people's daily interactions as well as the groups people assign themselves to. Afroze (2010) maintains that discourse analysis is a way of understanding social interactions. It (discourse analysis) differs from the basic thematic analysis, as the former is interested in text and talk that naturally occurs in social spaces.

In this study, I adopt Parker's definition of discourse analysis. He posits that discourse is a system of statements, which constructs an object (Parker, 1992 as cited in Cheek, 2004). Similar to Jones (2012), Parker (2005) maintains that discourse analysis encourages the exploration of different language uses in society and that it enables people to reconsider power relations through different kinds of language. Discourse places paramount importance on how words, phrases and images are linked. It looks deeper into the context of study, as it not only addresses the "what", but the "how" and "why" as well. Another unique aspect of discourse analysis is that it addresses what is termed "phenomenological immediacy", which looks not only at terms and relations on the surface level, but at the latent assumptions of them (terms and relations etc) which can provide richer meanings (Parker, 2005).

According to Parker (1999), discourse analysis is a methodological framework, which allows further questioning into the complex relationships in a progressive western culture. Furthermore, discourse analysis looks at language and meaning as more than just an extracted theme of dialogue, as it also looks at the underpinning strengths of dialogue. It addresses the way in which such dialogue is expressed, and the latent assumptions inherent

in the tone of such dialogue (Parker, 2005). Finally, this type of analysis is effective in highlighting how powerful self images are apparent and fluid in society, while additionally providing an avenue to challenge and question those images (Willig, 1999 as cited in Parker, 2005).

Parker has a 20 step analytical process to discourse analysis. However, while his process guided the researcher, it was not rigidly followed in this study. Parker (2005) highlights that qualitative research which uses discourse analysis must acknowledge the historical aspects of how certain language forms organise social relationships. Given the nature of this study, that is, a degree of focus on a political and historical acknowledgement of race and identity formation within race, his perspective is a pertinent and thus suitably justifiable one for the use of this discourse analysis. Parker (2005) maintains that no language within a text comes from nowhere; rather, everything that has meaning, inevitably has historical preconditions. Parker (2005) further states, "for everything that has meaning has a place in patterns of physical harm or well-being, of material oppression and the attempts to challenge it" (p. 91).

A few specifically relevant steps from Parker's 20 Step analytical process includes step 7, 8, 11, 13, 14 and 20. Step 7 looks at the networks of relationships expressed in the text. These could be relationships between objects or subjects, or collaborative relationships between both. (This collaborative relationships between subject and object reminds of Berry's [2008] discussion on hair as a subject and object in relation to women, and more specifically Black women's hair). Not only do we address the clearly evident relationships, but step 8 also challenges the researcher to imagine how these relationships and worldviews will be preserved and defended if challenged or attacked (Parker, 1999). Step 8 speaks to Parker's (2005) above assertions concerning language within texts and its historical preconditions. Parker's (1999) tenth step looks at similarities or a common thread in talking about the same object. Step 11 concentrates on how different discourses approach different audiences. Step 13 looks at the history of how discourses from the text have emerged, while step 14 looks at the origins of these discourses. Step 20 involves justifying the discourses as relevant in present contexts (Parker, 1999).

The researcher acknowledged these steps throughout the process, with special deliberation given to addressing the origin and historical elements of various discourses, which emerged,

because of the historical and past political strengths of this study. A few of the steps used during the analysis process in this study include, audio data transcribed to text data; exploring discursive undertones through participants' and analyst's free association; clustering common objects identified in the text, addressing relationships within the text – relationships between subjects and objects (for example a Black woman and her hair). I also focussed on exploring oppositions and challenges in the text with regard to views and opinions on the subject matter; labelling discourses and finally addressing the history of how the discourses immerged and are continued. The aim was to encompass the majority of Parker's steps in the most simple and fluid manner.

All transcribed data was read and reread at least 3 times per interview transcription. Common discursive themes were lifted from the transcriptions. In addition, language usage and more specifically common words used by the participants were noted from the transcriptions. The participants' "talk" about this subject were acknowledged, as well as how this "talk" manifested in their speech. Relevant quotes taken from each interview transcription, which spoke to the discursive themes brought to light, were categorised and clustered per theme and thereafter discursively analysed. The researcher addressed the specific language used by each participant when talking about hair and how each discursive theme was used to justify or challenge hair representation and the self. Discourse analysis was also used to address how similar ideas, titles and labels are understood and expressed differently. It was also used to address how various contexts and circumstances impacted on the manner in which participants explored hair and hair practice as well as their contradicting arguments on the subject of hair. These contradicting arguments became apparent in each individual discussion as well as contradictions in participant thought processes across the interview discussions.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is paramount in research and especially qualitative research. Its role requires one to acknowledge the researcher's contribution to the construction of meaning throughout the research process (Parker, 2005; Terre Blanche, et al., 2006). Parker (2005) further argues that reflexivity is more than a mere subjective framework, which the researcher (in qualitative research) assumes.

I, the researcher, am personally connected to this study and the context of this study because of personal experience with the topics and themes the literature brought to light, even before the interviews took place. Therefore, it was important for me to continually monitor myself as well as my aims for this study throughout the discussion. This was done in order to avoid any bias from my side, as well as imposition of personal ideas onto my participants. The fact that my race was shared with a number of the participants was beneficial to this study, as they knew I could understand the issues they were presenting. One could particularly see this in how comfortable they were when describing hair rituals and practices to me, which I, a coloured/Black woman, am assumed to understand and be able to relate to. Their non verbal cues and facial expressions, which were not picked up on by a digital recorder was also paramount in highlighting their sense of connection with me as a coloured/Black woman, who has what is considered "non-straight" hair.

Having said this I took great care to avoid wearing any perceived "eccentric" hairstyles, choosing to rather tie my hair back. While this performance could in itself be considered one that can elicit messages and bias to my participants, I felt the need to keep my hair as neutral as possible, in order to avoid, as far as possible, my physical appearance from presenting any uncontrollable bias. Furthermore, as I could personally relate to the context of this study, I had to continually remind myself about the aim of the study and refer back to the importance of speaking to the study's questions and purpose and not my own inquiries and expectations. This had to be monitored throughout the interview discussions as well as during the writing process of the research report. However considering the qualitative and subjective nature of this study, the researcher could not be expected to maintain complete objectivity and lack of bias throughout this study. Having said this, the researcher acknowledges her initial interest in studying Black hair and its performances in society, because of her own relationship with her Black hair and her representations in society. Furthermore, her personal knowledge and experience of owning Black hair as well as her strong assertions towards Black hair practice assured the researcher's steadfast role in this study and presents a degree of subjectivity in this study.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations are an important aspect of research, because it is here where the research aims to safeguard the research participants and ensure that no harm is done to those involved. The four Belmont principles for ethical research include Autonomy, Non-Maleficence, Beneficence and Justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Ethical considerations were respected and upheld throughout this research study. Each participant was briefed on the aims and rationale of the interview discussion and was made aware of her autonomy and ability to leave the study if discomfort arose at any time during the study. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the data collection process as well as the safeguarding of the data. Consent was sought for conducting the interview as well as the use of a digital voice recorder. Consent was also sought for photographs to be taken. Confidentiality for participants and of this data will continue to be maintained and all data safeguarded. As the subject of discussion dealt with beauty and identity, the researcher was aware of the possible impact that such a topic could have on personal evaluations of the participant's self and her representations. Therefore if any signs of trauma became apparent or was verbalised by the participant, a counsellor would have been made available for debriefing and consultation with said participant(s).

CHAPTER 5
Results and Discussion

I will explore three discursive themes in the analysis chapter. The theme titled "Hair Politics" is the first thematic segment of this study's analysis. "Hair and Media" will inform the second thematic segment of this chapter and finally, what I have termed "Circumstantial Self-Representation", or "CSR" informs the third thematic segment of the analysis chapter. Each of the themes are unique, but also feeds into each other as it highlights how contemporary black and coloured women have contextualised their own self-representations and hair in today's context. It also addresses new ways in which Black women have come to think about representation for themselves.

As the discursive theme of hair politics was a very popular theme gleaned from the interview discussions as well as from different scholarly works, I felt it useful to commence the analysis chapter with this theme. Hair politics as a title and theme provides a picture of the way in which participants view the styling of hair in relation to the political influences of the past. In this sense it becomes clear that the participants acknowledge politics viewed through the lenses of past colonialism, apartheid and racism as impacting on contemporary thoughts about beauty and representations for Black women. What is also evident is how the women who were interviewed attempt to depoliticise situations when it comes to justifying their representations. The participants highlight how so called "white standards" of beauty in the past impacted on Black representations for various benefits, however this behaviour has not ended as the era of colonialism has. Rather such remnants of colonialism remain in the form of gendered beauty and identity. Some women even highlighted the difference between coloured and black women in negotiating this struggle to identify and represent the self. It is clearly demonstrated in the interviews that the hair politics theme is informed by white dominant cultural influences and even if depoliticised by separating the political experiences of the past from the cultural domination – it remains a constant as far as it impacts on the representations of the Black woman's self identity.

In the second thematic segment, "hair and media", ideas of shame and the female body spoken about in the literature is acknowledged while media also shows how women's ideas regarding beauty has changed as years have passed. The participants argue that what is popularly portrayed in the media has a profound impact on their desire; even though they report that the image being portrayed is not "natural", it still remains a desired one. Furthermore, the participants highlight that media creates choice while removing itself from politicising or depoliticising an image.

Circumstantial Self Representation – CSR" – is a theme that I found to be more personally connected to women's representations. In this theme I locate women's justification for representation of the Black woman's body as linked to more personal contexts, including location, family, professions, peers etc. In this sense, the circumstances that women find themselves in, define their self-representations. It is under this theme where I highlight how women present arguments about their representations and performances of beauty in contemporary spaces. New ways of thinking about the self are grounded and moulded by these contexts and circumstances, such as creative and corporate professional spaces.

The analysis chapters are thematically structured and discursively explored in the form of a funnel discussion. This means that the analysis purposefully addresses politics first, as a larger or broader discursive theme impacting on thoughts and representations for Black women spanning over decades. It then addresses media, as a more contemporary agent of representation impacting on Black women's ideas about representations. Finally it explores CSR, which as previously explained is a more personal theme, addressing the female Black agent as an individual whose thoughts and representations are impacted by contexts closer to the performative body.

In unison, the themes touch on how my Black participants understand their own self-representations today. They acknowledge the past circumstances of a race and a gender, as well as media, personal contexts and structures and how all these impact on the corporeal representations of the Black female agent or Black woman today. Each theme also speaks to women's agency to challenge common perceptions surrounding Black representation that have already carved a space in the discussion of representation for Black women.

1. Hair Politics

> The beauty industry in this country has always tried to claim it is
> apolitical. But the truth is that the beauty scene, like everything else,
> is riddled with politics. (Ribane, 2006, p. 5)

Introduction

Amidst new thoughts and ways in which Black women come to understand their representations, politics is a seminal theme to the discussion and continues to play a major role in performances of the Black female agent in society today. This section of analysis, mediated through ideas such as politics, shows how Black women discuss their representations today. The analysis looks at how Black women continue to politicise hair practice in South Africa; because of the history of a race, but also how women purposefully depoliticise hair practice in how they address and perpetuate new ways of thinking about their hair and their agency.

This branch of analysis shows how politics, through the lenses of colonialism and apartheid, have impacted on Black women's representations. It also looks at how contemporary manifestations of these periods (as in white hair is beautiful and straight hair is attractive) continue to impact on the mindsets of Black women, especially with regards to their representations and notions of beauty. Finally it will address how Black women negotiate their representations and mediate themselves within social spaces through these representations.

Colonising the mind

When discussing the politics or history of South Africa, there are the overarching themes of race, classification and agency, which cannot be over looked from the discussion. Mercer (1987) aptly states:

> Where race structures social relations of power, hair – as visible as
>
> skin colour, but also the most tangible sign of racial difference –
>
> takes on another forcefully symbolic dimension. (p. 35)

Race therefore structures social relations of power. It defines it and determines inferiority or superiority and purposefully aligns in this discussion certain types of hair to become the dominant features and demonstrations of beauty. The information gathered from the participants explicitly references colonialism and apartheid when talking about hair, especially as far as hair becomes part of identifying elements of the social relations of power.

El, a 25 year old black candidate attorney who sports a straight wig, proceeds from the premise that these social relations which divided people in the past, are still imminent today, and that the very act of colonialism has never actually left, but rather made a transition to more subtle representations in society.

El had the following to say:

Extract 1
> Yes apartheid is dead and gone, colonialism is dead and gone, but
>
> they still colonise the mind (El)

In her statement, she highlights how for South Africa, the political practices of apartheid and colonialism came to an end in 1994 (Kynoch, 2005), and in this sense they are indeed "dead and gone", but the remnants of these practices remain within social spaces. These remnants refer to memories of apartheid, which speaks to El's excerpt above. These particular remnants have impacted on and are still impacting on Black women's psyches and perceptions towards ideas of beauty and ideals. In this sense El is correct in stating that it still "colonises the mind". Specifically, her choice of words insinuates that apartheid or colonial structures have impacted on the memory of Black women. Gqola (2010) introduces "memory" as a seminal discussion about Black representation and exploring historical slavery for Black people in South Africa. She maintains that memory "resists erasure" and furthermore notes that it is important to address how communities continue to live and reinvent itself (2010, p. 8). More specifically, one way she discusses memory is how it vacillates between past and present

representations. She further stresses the important relationship between memory and history.

Another participant, Mona, had the following to say:

Extract 2

> There is this big perception in our community where [uhm], straight is more acceptable I think than... I think it's informed a lot by apartheid and politically, because generally European people do have straighter hair normally and so they have aspired to that kind of notion of beauty (Mona)

While El highlights colonialism (in extract 1 above), Mona discusses the presence and impact of apartheid on Black women's representations. Mona highlights how Black women's thoughts about representation are directly informed by political structures such as apartheid. Scholarship suggests that justification for Black women's perceptions around representation is due to regimes like apartheid enforcing years of oppression, slavery and subjugation. As Mona highlights above, "straight" hair is more acceptable in society, and she explains that the politics of an oppressive regime have "boxed" us up to believe that there is only one way in which to "correctly" portray the Black self in relation to the more popularly presented Eurocentric body. She acknowledges that this perception is held by an entire community of people, indicating that these perceptions are prominent within community and social spaces.

Wanda had the following to say:

Extract 3

> I think it's the way we grew up hey. I think it's the whole apartheid thing and how we grew up in those years and the fact that *white is right*... (Wanda)

Wanda also speaks to how Black people's thoughts about representation are informed by political structures of the past. She specifically discusses how "upbringing" informs the ways in which people think about representations. She reiterates Mona's sentiments above (in

extract 2), as she also notes apartheid and its impact on Black people's mindsets, in justifying their partiality towards a more European standard of beauty. She exemplifies some of the perceptions surrounding representation for Black people when she highlights the past belief that "white is right". She makes her argument quite personal as she speaks about how she and others during her time of upbringing were informed about beauty in that way. She therefore appears more sympathetic towards justification for Black people's representations in the past because of the political structures enforced at that time. Wanda, similarly to El, represents an informed knowledge of the subject of "political hair". However, where El sports a straight wig, Wanda wears her hair natural (in an Afro). This paradox brings to light the differences in behaviour, which manifests from knowledge and insight into and surrounding the issue of Black hair.

Bernice's excerpt below speaks to Wanda's discussion of upbringing as impacting on perceptions on representations as well as the skewed perception of the white agent as being the ideal image of beauty.

Extract 4

So It's been passed down from generation to generation and we are firstly living in a society and a country that doesn't actually, [uhm], conform to racial segregation but yet, all of the other ideals that we have stem from an idea of whites being a little more superior (Bernice)

Bernice's argument above is similar to that of El's (extract 1), when she claims that while blatant racism has, or is believed to have ceased, there remain manifestations of it in society and one such manifestation is representation of the Black woman. This argument indicates that while deliberate racial classification and racial segregation is no longer derogatively practiced, manifestations, which arose from initial racial segregation, remains imminent. Bernice argues that while we may have stepped away from deliberate racial division in South Africa, "our" women's (black and coloured women's) current representations appear to continue to represent white/ European representations of beauty as favourable.

In extract 5, El continues to question Black women's representations as she makes comparisons between past and present practices to attain assumed beauty.

<u>Extract 5</u>

> Why are people bleaching their skin trying to be lighter? Is being lighter more beautiful? Why is having straight hair also considered beautiful? What happened to like the rustic curls with like African hair, the darker, like black beauty. Where is all that? Why is that not considered beautiful in this day and age? (El)

In extract 5 above, El speaks to Bernice's statement about Black women's partiality to portray and maintain European beauty images. El touches on racial signifiers of the past as she questions contemporary beauty standards in society. Her questions appear to allow her to depoliticise her own self-representations in choosing to wear a straight wig, as she postulates the reason for why straight hair is considered beautiful and the natural rustic curls are not as idealised anymore. She indicates that this interplay between *right* and *wrong* for Black women in how to think about representations is still prevalent. Seen especially in how Black women choose to continue to wear and create long straight hairstyles instead of natural hairstyles. El addresses the use of skin lighteners and hair straighteners, which are still commonly practised by Black women. Here she acknowledges issues of representation from a political era and not necessarily a contemporary one. However, by acknowledging this, she highlights its continued prevalence in contemporary social thought. She acknowledges the past and present difficulties of representations for Black people. Furthermore, she reiterates in her argument how political structures such as colonialism and apartheid may be gone, but manifestations of its rule continue to function in more contemporary social spaces.

El's knowledge about the impact of politics on representation allows her to remove herself from the idea of having a colonised mind. This therefore allows her more freedom in her own representations and gives her agency in wearing a straight wig.

The above section of the analysis highlighted Black women's awareness of the relationship between Black women's representations of hair and political structures like colonialism and apartheid. What it has also done is bring to light a contradiction between how Black women

feel they can present themselves in relation to what they say regarding the topic of hair in Black culture, because of insight into the discussion of Black hair as being political.

Hair – Root of struggle

The participants often appeared to equate hair with a struggle, being shackled or being in a battle. Some women highlighted their willingness to participate in that "struggle" for representation that does not agree with popular culture, while others highlight being comfortable with staying away from a "struggle", to instead maintain a hairstyle that concedes to past representations for Black women. Similar to what the literature review has revealed in an earlier chapter, there are Black women who are willing to challenge a system and then simultaneously there are those who choose to remain bystanders of this system. This finding again shows awareness of the struggle imminent in the discussion of representation for Black women, which allows some Black women the confidence and freedom to continue wearing straight hairstyles.

Consider the following extracts:

Extract 6

> I spent a lot of time conforming to the ideal of, you know, having straighter hair meant that I looked, [uhm]... yes, there... I felt like I was conforming to a particular look... it just felt like I was, it was shackling; like I felt shackled to the idea of I have to straighten my hair to make it manageable, and to make it not seem like I'm a total hippie and or, total Afro-centric (Bernice)

Extract 7

> And I think the whole thing of why should we always be in a struggle to have that unity. Why should we always be struggling against something and be in some fight or something to actually be united... We still not free. We're not free with small things, I mean with small things like our hair. We're not free at all hey. We are chained and we're shackled (Wanda)

Extract 8

> You know like it's a, it's a real struggle. You know I've always associated hair with struggle... more often than not I would be dressed and ready in the morning and I'm trying to figure out what I'm gonna do with my hair and I would be lamenting the fact that like, [uuurg] I have no idea what to do with my hair. And presentable on whose terms? (Andy)

In extract 6, Bernice makes reference to how she felt she was conforming to a particular look. The fact that she felt "shackled", indicates that her choices are limited, or highlights her inability to express her representations in "other" ways. Being shackled also indicates her feelings of limitation regarding her performances. She is conscious of the pressure of being shackled, in so far as she correlates the pressure with her conforming to a particular look/image. Shackling is a very loaded word. One definition of "shackle" is, something that prevents free action (Merrian-Webster.com). Bernice uses the word "shackling" to demonstrate how she is prevented from being free or being herself. Her reference to "shackling" even refers to the difficulty of performing certain images in various situations. For Bernice the "shackling" also refers to how she and black women straighten their hair to make it manageable and in essence "straighten" the self to make the Black body more acceptable to a public space. Where some women are capable of maintaining this belief system and remaining in the "shackled" system of representation, some Black women like Bernice could not. For Bernice her self-negotiation has a lot to do with context, which will be grappled with in the third segment of this analysis chapter.

Bernice explains that in order to represent the look that you are comfortable with, you need to be aware of yourself and maintain clarity of conviction in the hairstyle you choose to portray. This is because of society's expectations when it comes to women's representations. She further maintains that stepping away from the straight hair ideal would be assumed as being either a "hippie or an Afro-centric". She therefore attaches negative connotations to both representational discourses.

Wanda (in extract 7) also makes reference to the shackling and chained lives we live, with regards to our hair. She maintains that we are not free because we are chained through our mindsets, in that there is no true acceptance of the self. Wanda's conceptualisation is aptly addressed in the previous chapter, with specific reference to Wicomb's (1998) "coloured shame" that is associated with the racial label of "coloured" and the political manifestations of representation because of being coloured.

Wanda's grappling with the idea of a struggle for "unity" highlights the classification and delineation that remains within a community of Black women. Her questioning as to why we "should" always be in a struggle, again speaks to a community and ultimately a race who has been subjected to, and subjects themselves to a realm of conflict and dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction relates to skin colour, representations and ways of thinking about beauty. Similar to El's much earlier extract (1), Wanda questions the discourse of coloured/Black beauty; again indicating insight into the presence of politics in representations for Black women.

In extract 8, Andy also makes an association between hair and struggle. More specifically she indicates having "always" associated her hair with struggle. She highlights that negotiating her hairstyle choices is her way of dealing with this struggle in her personal life. She uses the personal example of preparation in the morning to highlight how important we find our self-representations to be for others. She appears to allude to the fact that we are also chained by our perceptions of what society thinks, and it is this perception that informs so much of our choices about representation. She is however aware of negotiating the self to please a regime or a community of people as she questions on whose terms these representational efforts are made. Her lamenting on how to represent her own self indicates that she is confused by the very act of representation. This does seem to suggest that the identities and spaces that need to be pleased are so overwhelming that the ways in which Black women understand and perpetuate representation today are based on factors outside of the personal self. Such factors include, peers or acquaintances, ideas and diverse spaces. It also highlights a realm of confusion, which seems apparent among Black women when it comes to representation. Andy's performances regarding representation introduces a new idea into this analysis, that of negotiation.

Many participants of this study have highlighted the relationship between hair and struggle. Another relationship to be explored is that between hair – struggle – and the "root". Some women discussed the perceptions of and impact of that "struggle" on the self, while Andy discusses negotiation and intervention towards that struggle.

Rooks (2006) explores *Rio*, a product used by Brazilian women to straighten their hair. This product was introduced to African Americans in the mid 90s. Rooks (2006) discusses Black women's engagement with this product as "powerful". The advertisements of this product alluded to natural hair being Black people's bondage and that this product would free them from that bondage. It continues to display its poignant beliefs that if hair doesn't move or shake it isn't free. This advertising created the illusion of struggle, bondage, antiquated representation and slavery with Black hair. By surrounding it with negative connotations, it exemplifies a perceived need for Black women to step away from the political "struggle of hair" and into a "contemporary freedom". A common perception thus far, is a belief that natural Black hair is indeed a sign of primitive representation. The belief of slavery and racial bondage continues to be associated with natural Black hair and that straight hair is indicative of reinvention of the self and ones ideas about representation. In essence straightening then rids the Black self of this bondage; allowing the self to be, as Rooks (2006) notes, "free". One participant in particular showed a great deal of gratitude and appreciation for straight hair. She idealised this image and denoted all natural hair or display of the coloured or black woman's (hair) root as belittling. For her, presentation of the self in a public space is very important. Straightening of the hair allows her this level of comfort within that public space. In response to my question as to "what good hair is", Lauren had the following to say:

Extract 9

> Clean hair, blow-dried hair, if it was a good time when I did my hair, then possibly GHD it... Your hair just looks nicer when it's blow-dried... If you do the roller thing then you have the roots, it's not proper, so only blow-drying normally fixes the roots, or flat ironing
>
> (Lauren)

Two discussion points become apparent from extract 9. Firstly, Lauren's use of the word "proper" to highlight her understanding of what acceptable hair representation is. Secondly

her use of the words "roots" and "fixes" to associate with satisfactory representation. Use of the word "proper" to indicate satisfactory presentation is quite descriptive of the style of straightening, to which she refers. Here "proper" would be more likely related to hair that is flat and straight and not hair that is curly or *kinky*. Her description of proper hair is the style she prefers for herself. Furthermore, Lauren's use of the word "proper" also refers to negating the revelation of Black women's natural hair "roots", therefore creating the illusion that there is no Blackness.

The second point I raise is her use of the words "root" and "fix". With regard to "roots" I encourage you to address the word with bilateral meaning. "Root" referring to the root, earth and foundation for a living organism (i.e. a plant). This root is a strong force with its intention being to maintain a solid ground underneath the earth for the living organism outside of the earth to survive. Then we can address root in the more figurative manner, being the "root" of a people, a culture, or a family heritage or ancestry. She seems to highlight a problem with the idea of even owning this root, let alone putting it on public display. The root of hair is usually where one can most often identify the true texture of the person's hair. It is this that grows, and creates a "re-growth" if straighteners are used. "Re-growth" is the new hair that continually grows from the human scalp. It cannot be avoided or stunted. Therefore in order to continue to deny the root's public exposure, straighteners are continually used, in the form of chemicals, blow-drying and flat ironing hair. Denying her root can be understood as denying her "roots", her heritage, and her ancestry.

Her pervasive encouragement of straightening out the root and the hair is indicative of a strong intention to divorce herself from her coloured/Black culture. While performances of skin bleaching and other such behaviour to associate the self within a Eurocentric public space are not as prevalent anymore, her actions are indicative of still holding on to these beliefs. Her perceptions regarding beauty and representations again speak to the text above, highlighting political manifestations of representation in contemporary spaces.

Lauren speaks about fixing roots, which again says to the reader that there is something that was incorrect, or as she put it "not proper" to begin with. In literal terms, poor roots can result in poor structure and poor growth of an organism. With regard to the other delineation of "roots" above, denying ones roots can be descriptive of low confidence, and self-esteem.

Lauren, a coloured woman who frequently straightens her hair, showed great insight into maintaining an "ideal" appearance to satisfy a public space. Her perceptions of and interactions with her own hair indicated a degree of shame in the relationship between herself and her hair. However, she allows herself to feel no shame in constantly straightening her hair because of her perceived insight into the topic of Black hair and representation. Most of my participants presented with great knowledge on the political implications of Black women's hair, thus fore-grounding their own representations. While Lauren's insight – specifically into the political implications on Black hair – seemed thin, her awareness of the system allows her greater agency in perpetuating her ideas about beauty, which for Lauren is the preference to carry straight hair instead of natural hair.

   CLASS – a struggle to fit in

One interviewee argued class to be one of the main factors linked to how we choose to represent ourselves.

Extract 10

   Course hair... say lower class representation. If you have course
   hair people will tend to think that you're sort of lower class. People
   would think that you don't take care of your hair or yourself
   (Lauren)

Extract 11

   Straight hair is linked to being seen as being of a higher class, so
   they'll go out and get the weave coz if you have the weave then
   you're gonna look better than the average other black person and
   you are gonna be seen as of a higher class (Lauren)

According to Tate (2007), while it is sometimes difficult to determine class from race, Black nations' colonial backdrop insinuates that straight hair and light skin continue to dominate the majority of society. According to Seekings from the Centre for Social Science Research at the University of Cape Town, apartheid saw a societal shift from race to class, where white people remained privy to a more lavish lifestyle due to their class, and some Black people were also allowed the space to function within a higher class due to social rankings. In the

new South Africa class has become the dominant form of inequality in society, with one major shift being Black people taking a more prominent role in the middle and higher classes, while paradoxically also occupying the lower to poverty stricken classes in high degrees, in employment and social spaces (Seekings, 2003).

Lauren denigrates the discussion of class back to antiquated racial classifications, by using physical references to assign class to people. In her opinion wearing one's hair straight places one in a higher-class status. She highlights that making the choice to portray a more Eurocentric (straight) hairstyle will not only result in one fitting into, or being perceived as fitting into a higher class, but in essence you will be perceived as "better" than another Black woman who chooses to go natural. Lauren assigns a negative connotation to a Black woman who wears her hair natural, when she says, "you don't take care of yourself". She perpetuates very negative and loaded assumptions of natural hair. Her argument contradicts some of the opinions of other participants who highlight showing more appreciation of their natural hair as society has become more open to the suggestion of embracing the "natural". Lauren's perceptions reiterate performance based on popular culture in the public sphere. There is nothing personal in how she chooses to represent herself. This is evident in how she constantly perceives the opinions of others.

Finally, what can be surmised from Lauren's statements is how she highlights the performative nature of Black women to present themselves in order to please an audience.

The GHOST

Extract 12

> So what we think is gone, it's still there. That ghost is still there and
> we have kept it alive because of not wanting to change.
> I think we've; it could have been gone long ago if we haven't kept it
> there. We have chosen it to be a part of our lives. And I refuse to
> kind of be part of that group of people who are still set in that way
> of thinking (Wanda)

Wanda's extract (12) speaks to her earlier discussion about political structures in the past that impact on the way we think about representations today. For Wanda, it's not only

oppression of our representations, but is more specifically the control over our perceptions about it.

A ghost is in layman's terms, a soul or spirit of an individual or other living creature that has passed on/ died. It is a manifestation of something that was once present, but has not fully left the living space. What Wanda verbalises is twofold. Firstly she does not take full ownership of her statement but she rather creates a sense of racial fellowship in the sense that she uses the word "we". In this way she lightens the implication she is making about the mindsets of Black people. For Wanda, "we" could refer to her coloured identity, as well as her membership in a political Black group. She attempts to justify that all coloured/Black women are to be blamed for the space in which they currently find themselves. Secondly, while stepping away from being the protagonist in this statement, she still forces ownership onto coloured/Black women, maintaining that there has not been a physical, nor psychological shift from the struggle of representation for Black women. Equating it with her "ghost" metaphor then, the "ghost" preserves its presence in society. A ghost is believed to be invisible or translucent, therefore giving the idea of something that is present but not visible. Another equation can be made with how the idea of a ghost is often negated in public space, similar to the denial of political racist manifestations of representation for Black women today. Wanda associates herself within the generic performances of coloured/Black women, with her use of words such as "*we*". However, she makes it clear that she wants to divorce herself specifically from "*that group of people*" who are representing the entire racial group in a perceived singular way. Again, Wanda's insight into the discussion of political hair allows her to strongly identify with various Black hair practices as well as remove herself from them.

Political systems such as apartheid and its antecedents such as racial classification and oppression can be equated with struggle and a battle. The shackles and chains which some participants brought up as psychologically damaging when thinking about their self-representations can also be equated with the damaging reality of shackles and chains during the slave trade. Wanda highlights the difficulty for coloured/Black women to own the idea of change after living and growing up in oppressive physical and psychological structures.

> I think after 94' people have been more, society's been more open
> and things have changed and people need to accept themselves, but
> I think its still, its still difficult for coloured women to break that
> mould (Wanda)

In extract 13 Wanda reveals that while society has through history made room for difference and change, women occupying social spaces have not been as willing to own the current freedom and room for change that has been provided. She highlights that people are often more comfortable maintaining familiar performances, as apposed to making changes and stepping into the "unknown" so to speak. The fact that society has become open to change, foregrounds her idea that people are not ignorant about the discussion of hair for Black women. However, she does present a necessity in the fact that coloured/Black women must be open to embracing the space of "change", saying that people "*need to*" accept themselves. Wanda also brings to the discussion the "mould" which cannot be broken by coloured women. For Wanda, the "mould" she refers to, is the ideology of apartheid and Eurocentric beauty standards. She associates herself with the coloured space as she speaks with insight about the difficulty for coloured women to break free from the mould. Being a hairdresser, she also speaks from an educated position on hair.

Remaining within a racial mode for the representations of Black women, a number of participants grapple with the distinction between black and coloured women's negotiations with how they justify their representations in contemporary spaces. The "mould" which Wanda addresses above is exemplified in Lauren's excerpt below

Extract 14

> In the past many coloured people wanted to be white and obviously
> sleek hair was white and if you could attain sleek hair, then that
> would bring you closer to white (Lauren)

According to scholarship such as Byrd and Tharps (2001) Black people have in the past made concerted efforts to attain the benefits of being lighter skinned. Such efforts included skin bleaching and (for the purposes of this research) hair straightening. Lauren brings to light the

unwavering behaviour of coloured women to attain straighter hair if it was in their power to do so. She also provides a belief system held by coloured women regarding the benefits of attaining "sleek" hair bringing them closer to whiteness.

In extract 14, Lauren's insight into the dynamics and difficulties associated with representation for coloured women gives her the agency in maintaining this mould. Her excerpt also brings to light how coloured people are psychologically willing to break away from that mould and be open to understanding and embracing natural hair. However, the difficulty comes with physically breaking away from that mould.

KasiTimes writer Poppy 'Pops' Vilakazi in her piece, *The dark bleach while the white tan*, remembers her childhood days where she would be scrubbed Friday's after school in the hope that her "dirty" exterior would eventually vanish. She maintains that apartheid is to blame for skin bleaching in the past and she is of the opinion that the "hidden sins of apartheid" are to blame for perceptions about beauty and representation today. In her piece she reminds the reader that a lighter skin equalled more opportunities as well as a higher probability of being liked by white superiors. It also indicates that these desires to be white could be achieved if one passes the infamous "pencil test" (Vilakazi, 2011). Mona explains the pencil test:

Extract 15

> They would put a pencil in your hair and if it fell out your hair was
> straight and if it didn't you had a coarser type of hair (Mona)

Vilakazi maintains that people of colour bleached their skins to look whiter; they changed their hair to feel whiter; and they changed their communicative language to sound whiter. She further argues that these messages of the past have impacted on the mindsets of Black people (Vilakazi, 2011).

Extract 16

> I think black women are actually stronger. I think they have a
> deeper understanding of what true beauty is than coloured women
> do. I think its been easy for coloured women to kind of get away

with the superficialities of how to place themselves on a ladder or a scale (Bernice)

In extract 16, Bernice also speaks to the discussion of black and coloured representation. She addresses how black/Black women are much more aware of themselves and their beauty choices because they have not been "spoiled" by the "easy" task of making subtle physical changes to the self in order to function within more white discursive spaces. Bernice's reference to getting away with the "*superficialities*", speaks to behaviour such as hair styling and other physical characteristics of the self that can be more easily changed and more readily accepted. Whether it is a struggle to negotiate oneself in society or justify ones representations, including hair, participants have highlighted this difficulty. They also seem to reiterate their acknowledgement of hair politics and therefore locate their agency of representation within that awareness.

Making *statements*

A hairstyle is a public statement because it is presented in a public space. There have been many periods in the past that are indicative of individual and collective statements. The Soweto uprising is one such memorable event in South Africa's history – that was a youth statement. The South African women's march to the union buildings on 9 August 1956 was another such statement. Consider the following excerpt from Wanda:

Extract 17

It (*wearing an afro in the 60s*) was making a statement. But I think even today women with dreadlocks, women with Afros, with just natural curly hair… By wearing it natural shows that they're making a statement. Some people think if you have the *krous* hair, you're trying to make a statement; you've come to convince yourself that. But it's not even that. Straight hair is wearing their hair in the form that it's supposed to be. It's just that the hair is straight naturally. So I think with Afro, with ethnic hair its just becomes a bit more difficult because you have to literally rebel against society to accept you (Wanda)

Wanda uses descriptive words such as "statement" and "rebel" against society, as well as more performative words such as "shows" and "have to". For Wanda wearing hair natural, where she uses words like ethnic hair or "krous" hair, makes more of a statement than straight hair, because of how society views normality and difference. By using the words "have to"; she indicates a personal or societal push to actively challenge the popular rhetoric of beauty, which leads to descriptive behaviour such as "rebelling". Rebelling against a society is again indicative of a struggle or battle as previously identified. Rebelling makes reference to adhering to something going against the norm. It is understood that in order to "maintain" peace, the immediate option would be to find a middle ground, or make certain concessions in order to please popular social spaces. Wanda further reveals that it is often public opinion that informs personal opinion.

Extract 18

> It's always deeper. Any women, any African or American woman even that wears dreads, it's somebody that is... maybe let's say an activist for something. Even if you're not physically active in the thing that you fighting against, but you are an activist in your own right (Wanda)

According to Wanda, deeper meanings are assigned to women when they wear less conservative hairstyles such as the dreadlock. She further argues that making the choice to take ownership of this type of style is in a way sending an active message to onlookers. She uses the word "activist" to identify people who actively challenge a position through physical, verbal and even emotive ways. However, she also describes activists as "active" in different and perhaps more subtle ways, by making physical statements only. In doing this, a message is being non-verbally presented. According to Wanda this is nevertheless a statement, and in no way exempts one from holding that position because it is done in less vociferous ways. Above, Wanda exemplifies her previous excerpt (extract 17) about the perception of the rebellious statement of hair.

In Mercer's earlier scholarship he argues, "there are no *just* black hair-styles, just black hair-styles" (Mercer, 1987, p. 53). His critical stance of hairstyling, whether Afro, a dread, or

straightened is in essence a result of external factors. In his belief, if the straightened look is attuned to the desire to achieve and portray more Eurocentric ideals, then so too is the Afro and the Dread a result of a particular stance, regime, or cloaked meaning. He further maintains that no Black hairstyle can be called "just" because of its appropriation in the past; especially not today when most, if not all elements of the self are influenced by outside factors.

MEDIATING our roles in a hair culture

This section of the chapter particularly explores hair as a performance. It also addresses hair as more apolitical. The latter is discussed in how women negotiate their understanding about representations in ways that differ from association with representations of hair as oppressive or conformist. The section further explores the contradictions between Black women's perceptions and behaviour, surrounding representations and beauty that have been centrally brought to light throughout the analysis thus far.

Andy reveals her ideas on how Black women have to negotiate themselves and their representations in society:

Extract 19

It's always about mediating your image… unfortunately. And I think
it's true for a lot of people, but it's true anyway… you're always
mediating like you know conversations. Like what we say and how
we say it, how we speak you know (Andy)

The literature review has already highlighted that historically Black people represented themselves in accordance with pleasing the demands of a political regime and ensuring the attainment of certain opportunities. This performance was crucial for stability and docile functioning in an unwaveringly unequal society. Mediating the self therefore became an important task and tool to survive – socially and financially.

In Andy's statement above she makes a comparison between how we mediate our conversations in society and how we mediate our representations. The way we address

people is associated with our relationships with them, and the contexts in which these interactive relationships take place. She highlights that we are very aware of how we interact with society and with people in society through the images we choose to portray. Similarly to how one can argue certain hairstyles as context related, other hairstyles are justified as self-representations that challenge antiquated political systems. So hair becomes a form of communication in representing or portraying particular images.

Andy maintains that it's "always" about mediating your image. This indicates that we are always dealing with the task of how to interact with others and with society in the form of our own self-representations. It is in instances like this that we are not only bounded by our contexts but also by mandates that are enforced upon us by outside factors such as the images of beauty society chooses to project as normative. Andy does not only discuss the performance of an image being mediated, but also how this image is being brought to the fore and mediated, as she refers to the manner in "how" we mediate our conversations. Different societal spaces require different ways in which to mediate the self, through images and through conversation. Therefore, the way in which one interacts with a friend or family member may differ from the interaction, which will take place between a supervisor and his/her employee. While verbal communication is strong in conveying a message or underlying meaning, it is physical aspects of the self that convey messages before the manifestation of verbal communication. It can therefore be surmised that individual performances of the self are both active to satisfy the self as well as an audience.

Postmodernist scholar Judith Butler speaks to the idea of interaction and mediation of the self, as a performance of the self in a social space. If conveying images and messages of oneself are done in a public space, then these acts are performative by nature.

Nancy brings to the fore another aspect of this hair discussion, where she challenges the implications of certain hairstyles and the choices to carry (wear) one or the other:

Extract 20

>Now people do not identify their hair with certain limitations. That
>if they want that hairstyle, they will make sure that they have it and
>they carry it with pride because it doesn't actually now represent a

certain hair type and a certain identity or race or anything. Which is
something that I admire. You must be brave I suppose. (Nancy)

Nancy reveals that hairstyles should not be seen as limiting within certain contexts. She highlights a movement away from the belief that wearing certain hairstyles can be limiting to one's self and goals. She further maintains that if you "want" a hairstyle and choose to carry that, it should not be representative of race, or identity, it just *is* a chosen style; i.e., it should not be easy for someone to be labelled because of carrying a certain hairstyle. Her argument is communicated with the idea of bravery. For Nancy, making the decision to carry a certain hairstyle without it being assumed too bold a statement, a racial obligation or indicative of a sense of pride or shame of the self, takes courage.

Nancy's excerpt presents hair as a statement, but it also speaks to hairstyling as a choice. Furthermore it reveals mediating ones image, by de-politicising the performance and choice of hair representation. According to her own description above, she is herself a brave person, because she wears a natural hairstyle and therefore has an understanding about and sense of agency through what she is saying.

Through discussion with my participants, there is a constant interplay between politicising as well as the act of depoliticising hair. The latter referring to the constant effort it takes to remove the history or stigma embroiled in the politics of a people who exhibit a particular look or hairstyle.

Mercer argues that race difference and basic racism created the platform for hair to be politicised (Mercer, 1987). With delineating races and enforcing levels of superiority and inferiority into races, there was the requirement for physical markers to make this process of classification even more intrusive. As a result of impudent and immoral racial classification on a universe of Black people as inferior, the physical manifestation of them was considered just as belligerent and inferior. Skin colour was of course a major marker. Hair was another.

Mercer states:
Through aesthetic stylization each black hairstyle seeks to
revalorize the ethnic signifier and the political significance of each

re-articulation of value and meaning depends on the historical condition under which each style emerges. (1987, p. 37)

Mercer highlights that hair representations are indicative of the specific historical space one addresses. If one focuses on excerpts such as Nancy's above, hair representations in the present are taking back its authority and attempting a shift from previous negative political undertones. These contemporary beliefs and perceptions about representation are taking back the authority it was denied in the past. Furthermore, Black women are reassessing their agency in relation to these "constant" ways of thinking about representation and identifying hair.

Extract 21

When people see weaves, that's what they like immediately subscribe to. So it's just, like you have to fight and defend your weave... (El)

El highlights people's assumption about conformity when seeing a Black woman with a weave. She brings to light the difficulty of representation through weaves because of this perception, making her decision about how to wear her hair a constant battle. Two poles become apparent here, Black women who are in a constant battle with society in wearing their natural hair and Black women who are in constant battle with social spaces which are judgmental about women who choose to wear straight hairstyles, such as the weave. El once again brings a sense of "struggle" to the discussion. Her motivation for her representation is not different to Nancy's. Even though they may hold different opinions on their own self-representations, the idea of "choice" is present in both arguments. Nancy, with her natural hair, encourages the idea that hair be perceived as a choice. El similarly, encourages the same idea as Nancy (in extract 20). However, El wears a straight wig. Both black/Black women however assume that sense of agency with locating hair as choice, even though their personal representations are different. El's attempt to remove herself from society's "expectation" of her as a black woman again brings to the fore a constant struggle to carve a space for herself in that society. And in doing so, there is also the expectation to present the self freely as a Black agent and away from stereotypes of beauty.

Of the participants that were interviewed, a number of women brought up the discussion of *owning* a hairstyle and how it is articulated and justified in various contexts. While many of the women highlighted professional obligations and public presentation of the self as most important, a number of women stressed agency over representations and ownership of a chosen hairstyles as simultaneously important.

Extract 22

> Mine as well still is actually by some I think, but not in my faith called *eKafferhare*. And I like to refer to it that way… Because I'm reclaiming the stigma when I use that (Nancy)

In Nancy's statement above, she takes ownership of the derogatory word "ekafferhare". By herself, a black woman using the word, she takes away the shame and negative stereotypes surrounding it. Showing her awareness of the negativity and stigma surrounding the word "ekafferhare", allows her agency to shift and change its meaning, through articulating it herself. As Nancy said, it allows the stigmas to be removed from it. Reclaiming something is indicative of having claimed something before, and claiming it once again. It alludes to having lost that something, before reclaiming could have taken place. Perhaps in the past, there was ownership of this particular type of reference but in a more obligatory manner. Mercer's scholarship identifies with Nancy's excerpt above (extract 22), in his belief that the allowance of hair to grow freely and in its natural state, the curl or kink of the hair became less a sign of stigma and more a mark of pride (Mercer, 1987).

Kobena Mercer and Angela Davis' scholarship supports the idea that wearing hairstyles such as the Afro and Dreadlock, was the reclaiming of a stigma assigned to Black characteristics at that time and reclaiming agency for Black people. This performance has once again been cultivated and encouraged in contemporary society. This is the reclaiming of social standards of beauty instead of politically regulated standards of beauty.

The majority of my interviewees all alluded to the fact that while hair has become more commercialised, aesthetic, and ingrained in popular media culture, it remains a politically loaded subject.

Together with mediating one's image in society there is the discussion of still maintaining a sense of control. The struggle between representation for the self and representation for the other is a theme that has been prevalent throughout the analysis thus far.

Consider the following:

Extract 23

> I felt really good afterwards, because it was something that I said I would always do and I hadn't done it, but that I finally did do despite whatever anybody else said and [uhm] so, ja, like it was a really, it was a good feeling. It was finally kind of I guess taking control in the furthest extent that I could (Andy)

Extract 24

> So it was like ok let me just sit back. When I could do it, I will take a chance and then not long, then it would be straight again... some people still living in the *Cape Flats*, and they're not all boxed, they are very exposed also some of them; but majority is still living with that kind of fear of not being accepted. And I think it's all about the rejection of other people (Wanda)

In extract 23, Andy expresses her feelings of liberation, which came from a change made to her hair and her self-representation. Her performance is seen as brave because of how she describes her performance as cathartic, indicating that it took a great deal of herself (her strength) to make the decision. The bravery it took to make a decision also signifies the prevalence of external factors in such a consideration of representation of the self. For Andy, because it is a public change, the public space needed to be considered. With her decision to act on her desires, came a sense of euphoria, as she pronounces that it was "a good feeling". Again a sense of catharsis may be considered. With making this change she felt she had some sense of "control" over herself and her own representations. Andy's decision to make a change is indicative of negotiating and mediating herself within that public space. The control she mentions having experienced highlights her sense of agency that came from her decision, concerning her self-representations.

Her liberation did not only come with the fact that she made the concerted effort to make the change, but liberation was in the act of "cutting away" as well; in that she cut away most of the stigma, pain, difficulty, worry and struggle that she and others attached to her hair. Andy's physical act allows for her psychological liberation of the mind and a continued shift in ways of thinking about beauty and representation.

In extract 24, Wanda highlights her apprehension towards stepping too far away from a neat, "ideal" perception of beauty when she was younger. She highlights that she made small enough changes to feel liberated and momentarily "free", but still close enough to a popular standard of beauty in order to make a quick transition back. Her forbearance towards "sitting back", insinuates slight expectation and assumption that others will take the lead to experiment before she would, allowing her to observe without experiencing negative consequences that could occur from such public exploration.

Wanda focuses on a group of people in a particular area in Cape Town, the *Cape Flats* – predominantly coloured areas within Cape Town. She claims that there is a mentality of maintaining physical similarities with others in one's surroundings. Such similarities are physical as well as psychological. The latter would therefore refer to perceptions about notions of beauty and about representations. Wanda argues that breaking away from popular notions of beauty, such as hair straightening, is not a common occurrence, because of fear of exclusion from peers and the social space a woman has already familiarized herself with. However, Wanda does acknowledge that the space is open to further discussion for a more specific group of people within "the coloured *Cape Flats* community". Wanda uses the word "exposed" to describe this group of people. The word exposed, can be coupled with other words, such as "opportunity", "introduction" to other frames of thought, perceptions and behaviour. It also requires the openness to be introduced to these different, sometimes unknown spaces. For Wanda, some coloured people are more open to experimenting with various aesthetic representations that challenge the popular images in those communities. Having said this, townships are often viewed as isolated. Exposure to new ideas and behaviour can create a sense of inquiry and comparison into one's own behaviour and contexts.

Extract 25

> I care a lot about what people think about me, so perhaps the need
> to have control over my hair is really the need to control whether
> other people will then engage with me, in that particular sense. Like
> how they will engage with me and what they are seeing. And that's
> even superficial, cos that's not letting go and just allowing it to be.
> You know that's still wanting it to look good (Andy)

In Andy's statement above there is an awareness of the "other", as she includes others in her frame of reference when making personal decisions of and for herself, with her words "I care a lot about what others think of me". There is once again reiteration of the perception that self-representations are not based on personal desires alone. With the cutting away of her hair (expressed in extract 23), Andy took ownership of her control and away from "others" who were indirectly controlling her appearance. In this way she is mediating her image as well as taking ownership of this mediation. She negotiates and mediates her engagements with others through the manner in which she portrays herself through her hair. She compares her act of controlling her hair to "negotiate" herself in public spaces to how she will control others' engagement with her. Furthermore, she articulates through her representations how and what she feels and wants others to understand about herself. In this way she has an expectation of the feedback she will get from the people she engages with. The ideas of taking control and ownership of self-representations, takes the power away from the psychological impact of political structures on people's mindsets.

Extract 26

> I do want to be different and at the same time I just wanna be
> myself. So trying to figure out how to marry the two; be yourself
> and be different at the same time (Andy)

In extract 26, Andy's statement again addresses the difficulty an individual experiences with having to please the expectations of others, which according to Goffman (in Brickell, 2005) is what our performances are actually based on. Goffman further maintains that these expectations have definitive power over one's own choices and owning those very choices. Andy highlights a constant juggle between the two elements of "self" and "other", and how it is

difficult to find the middle ground where all parties can be satisfied. This control of the self and controlling the ideas created by observers is also highlighted by Goffman, in the discussion of performance and representation.

In extract 27 however, Nancy highlights that there is no longer a pressure to have to feel that you are either conforming to or standing against something when you choose to carry (wear) a certain hairstyle. She postulates agency for Black women and how they style their hair. Indicating that they no longer have to fit into "poles" created by politically driven assumptions of beauty. She maintains that the political harsh undertones of change are no longer prevalent. She therefore depoliticizes Black women's representations.

Extract 27

> In this day and age with the chemicals, you know, you carry the look that you want. It's not like a pressure that previously would probably, that one would look at your Afro and they'll be like, there goes a *nigger* or something like that. Today it's like you're carrying your Afro because you don't want your hair to be chemically kind of tampered with. But it's just a look basically. If you want to keep it natural, you will. You have a choice now. But you're not going to feel ashamed…I think it's coming back to being normal (Nancy)

Nancy makes reference to stigmatised pressure to own the look you choose to carry (wear), but while owning it, being fully aware of the negative undertones that may be perceived from any style. She specifically highlights the Afro as the hairstyle in the past, associated with being a *nigger*[3]. Now however there has been a shift in thinking, with people being more privy to information regarding this hairstyle as more of a fashion statement instead of a racial statement. She maintains that this shift has a lot to do with choices about how to handle one's hair away from using chemicals. If one addresses her insinuation that stepping away from chemicals is the reason for the major shift in perceptions; similarly then, a movement away from Eurocentric images of beauty also indicates a shift in perception surrounding representations for Black women. These new ways of thinking allows the "freedom" to

---

[3] Colloquial, Americanised term for a Black person – used as a derogatory word in the past, but used more commonly in social contexts in the present.

embrace natural aspects of the Black self without feeling the "pressure" of owning the title of "Black" just because of a chosen Black hairstyle. It is also a movement away from being lambasted as Black, because previous perceptions of wearing natural hairstyles are assumed to be a message of challenge or anger. In extract 27 Nancy depoliticises the discussion of Black hair and specifically notes the shift in perception about Black women's hair representations. Not only does it depoliticise the performance of hairstyling, it specifically relegates it to mere choices about how to wear one's hair.

In extract 28 below, Bernice alludes to the fact that making a choice to wear hair curly one day and straight the next should not be understood as a form of disapproval or misunderstanding of the self. Rather, she asserts that one should be allowed the freedom to embrace and enjoy such choices. However she does stress the importance of accepting one's black/Black, coloured/Black culture and heritage, before we could without guilt be free to make such choices.

Extract 28

> Not that you can't do certain things. I'm just like you at some point you need to accept that I came from a line of Khoi-San blood and of Settlers blood and this is what I look like... and I'm ok with that. I feel like doing my hair curly one day and I feel like doing my hair straight tomorrow I'll do it (Bernice)

She encourages coloured/Black women to "accept" their heritage and accept the hair they were born with and even encourages women to embrace their real hair. Bernice vacillates between curly and straight hairstyles, and therefore doesn't claim that natural hairstyles need to be worn all the time. Finally, I would like to highlight her words "I'm ok with that", which individualises her performance and her choice to perform hairstyles in her own ways. Her entire extract speaks to a very individualistic action of first making a realisation of one's heritage and making peace with that fact. Furthermore, she stresses the importance of acknowledging one's own feelings towards representation, separated from perceptions about and the rationale behind wearing certain hairstyles. By showing acceptance of her own heritage, it allows her to divorce herself from the space of women who do wear straight

hairstyles, because of the psychological impact of deep rooted political regimes. Her insight also allows ownership of her performances and agency over her representations.

Rooks (2006) addresses how from the early twentieth century hair became the site of struggle for Black women in defining an identity for themselves, for defining relationships with the opposite sex and grappling with class. Nancy (in extract 29 below) reveals her perceptions about the struggle to define the self and one's identity, especially in a social era that idealises straight and long hair. She challenges this idealism again below.

Extract 29

> You can carry it as an Afro if you want. You can have it down if you want. But that to me is much more natural looking for someone of my identity, let me put it that way. But if you go to the straightener type of look, then you're going towards a certain kind of… extremely Western, if I were to put it that way; because we are not naturally born with that silky hair (Nancy)

Nancy's constant use of the words "if you want", gives the indication that she is aware of the authority of choice and encourages it among Black women, as active agents of their own self-representations. She thus allows women to make their own choices regarding their representations. Nancy also makes comparisons between certain hairstyles and certain identities. Here she refers to her identity and specifically which hairstyles would be appropriate for her identity at this time of her life. She makes reference to straightened hair as being a more western and Eurocentric aesthetic ideal. While Nancy encourages choice, she also asserts how some hairstyles are inappropriate for her own representations. She presents a degree of judgement about certain hairstyles while simultaneously proposing choice. Specific reference is made to this subtle contradiction, as she encourages freedom, choice and agency for Black women's representations, but does not want to be associated with "denial" of the natural self either.

Nancy is fully aware of the fact that having one's hair straightened is not in a sense realistic for maintenance because it is not something Black women are privy to from birth. She thus questions why Black women should make the decision to conform to it at all. She discusses the

basic features of the Black self, in that Black women do not have straight hair. While there are many avenues to attain relatively straight hair and mimic a more Eurocentric beauty identity, I felt that a strong point Nancy wanted to bring to the fore is for Black women to acknowledge natural Black characteristics of the self.

Conclusion

Tate (2007) is interested in how women engage with and produce understandings of Black beauty. She further maintains that Black beauty is an action; it is a performance. One participant who chooses to wear her hair straight and ensure that this is the only image that others observe her portraying, is one type of performance and is an indication of one viewpoint of beauty. Another participant who chooses to wear her Afro proudly, without being hindered by the criticism and feedback she may receive, is her way of performing her alternative ideas of what beauty is (Tate, 2007). How the women I interviewed choose to understand beauty is also an articulation of how women choose to perform their ideas of beauty and/or Black beauty.

The analysis addressed the varying ways in which hair and hair representations for Black women in South Africa can be located in discussions of politics. It has furthermore addressed political and colonial structures still imminent in contemporary society, as well as in people's thoughts about representation. The participants stressed the importance of acknowledging politics through the lenses of colonialism and apartheid, which continue to impact on the performances of Black women's agency and representation. This analysis also brought to light how women depoliticise their representations and notions of beauty. They have simultaneously highlighted how politics plays a pertinent role in how Black women think about representation and how they behave and function in accordance with these perceptions. The participants have also shown the prevalence of depoliticising the discussion of Black women's hair and representations, in how they negotiate themselves in social spaces. In mediating themselves and negotiating their racial and gendered roles in society, they reveal their thoughts about representations in a growing social space. Furthermore, participants revealed the importance of taking control and assuming agency of Black women's representations. This allows them to divorce their hair choices from being assumed as politically driven. Finally, women's insight into the relationship between hair and politics

allows for a degree of agency and freedom to act and perceive representations differently, without stigma or shame.

2. Hair and Media

Introduction

Media was another common discursive theme presented in the interviews. Media is a popular medium through which beauty rhetoric in contemporary society is portrayed and a popular medium for delivering information, ideas and visual representations. Media was highlighted as playing an impactful role on Black women's perceptions as well as their personal representations and thoughts about beauty and hair. An interesting observation is how women talk about media and its impact on the Black female agent's representations. Another observation is how participants rarely elucidated on the discussion of "media" itself. More specifically, media was discussed as a loaded concept, in the sense that, the nature and functions of media are immediately understood and conceptualised when the word "media" is verbalised.

Media, or rather, "mediatization" as Hjarvard (2008) suggests is a double-sided process, where on the one hand media is seen as an independent institution to which other social institutions have to accommodate themselves to. On the other hand media becomes a part of and is integrated within other institutions such as politics, family, religion and work (Hjarvard, 2008). The logic and nature of media finds its strength in how it distributes symbolic and material resources and how it uses formal and informal rules (Hjarvard, 2008). "Meditization" as a term basically characterises the influence of media on various phenomena (Hjarvard, 2008).

This section of the analysis chapter explores how media is discussed as influencing the performative beauty representations of Black women. My participants address media's influences on perceptions and thoughts about beauty through the use of concepts such as "deceptions", "distortions" of beauty and racialised identities and hair practice for Black women in particular. Furthermore, media is discussed as being responsible for perpetuating colonial notions of beauty, with these images accepted and reinforced by Black agents. The

data has revealed that media is itself an influential agent, as are "Black women" in how they choose to enforce or challenge media's images of beauty.

The excerpt below – from an interview with one of my participants – speaks to how media racialises, distorts and deceives images of beauty.

Extract 1

> I would actually speak about the coloured community because I think hair is massive in our culture, just especially, [uhm] the other day I was sitting in SARS and there were like five or six hair ads in the span of half an hour and it all had the before the lady's hair was curly and the after the lady's hair was straight. So there is this big perception in our community where [uhm], straight is more acceptable I think than. I mean I don't believe that at all…
>
> I think it's informed a lot by apartheid and politically, because generally European people do have straighter hair normally and so they have aspired to that kind of notion of beauty, like the pencil test (Mona)

In Mona's statement above (extract 1), she reveals the prominence of a particular image/ style of hair that is perpetuated by a branch of media. Here one notices that reference is made to curly hair and straight hair. She also brings to light how this image of beauty is through media, informed by an entire community of people. Here one can pick up from her statement when referring to the object of hair as "massive in **our** culture". She makes a link with a particular racial group that is influenced by media, but also denotes the power of this media onto a group identity as a result of our political history. A number of participants alluded to the fact that the coloured identity and practices in South Africa, is a confused identity, where their past aesthetic performances of modelling Eurocentric notions of beauty are particularly noted. In Mona's statement a number of performances of media also become apparent. Media naturally influences, as it influences the viewer with its repetitive and consistent images; and more specifically the transition from somewhat questionable or unsatisfactory to ideal images. Media is redundant, as she relayed the space of time in which an image was

repeatedly presented. This process thus proves effective as an influential tool. Furthermore, media distorts beauty, as it only presents one image/ style as superlative, by presenting straight hair as an ideal and kinky hair as the unattractive image that needs to be (re) addressed.

Walsh and Gentile (2001) claim that an image that is constantly repeated and exposed to a public and absorbed by this public will eventually become familiar to them. Furthermore, this familiarity will shift to comfort and eventually preference of an image. Haugtvedt, Petty and Cacioppo (1992) agree with Walsh and Gentile's explanation, as they maintain that a "high frequency of exposure to advertisements" (p. 243) results in consumers not being motivated to actually think about the text which is being constantly presented to them; nevertheless still being influenced by the repetitive image. Finally, media racialises, because it uses Black women in these advertisements to present the idea that there is something aesthetically incorrect with them. In this sense it creates a negative picture of Black women's hair and presents a "straight hair" solution to address their hair "type" that was presented as an issue.

Media *distorts* and *deceives* – as media is relatable and redundant

In extract 1, Mona discusses a number of sub-themes. This section specifically addresses the manner in which Black women speak about how media distorts notions of beauty. It also brings to light how media deceives women; in the manner it presents beauty discourses. Furthermore, it explores the manner in which the participants perceive the images that media presents in public spaces. These images are somewhat a-skewed in emphasizing particular hairstyles as more favourable, while similarly limiting the space in which other hairstyles can function. Deception works hand in hand with distortion in how media creates certain favoured identities for Black women's beauty and in particular, their hair representations. Repetition of images and presenting images of good hair through media is also discussed as working with how media distorts the idea of good or ideal hair and deceives Black women in aspiring to perceived ideal images of hair over others.

Extract 2

But I mean the point of the matter is to still sell your product, to sell
this image of good hair and people are going to fall for it, because

84

they know the meaning behind having sleek good hair. So they are
going to go for it, even though half of them might even know that
that's not that girl's real hair they are still going to go for it because,
this might work (Lauren)

Above, Lauren speaks about selling an image of good hair in the same light as a tangible, marketable product. She makes specific reference to the more capitalist framework and perhaps foundation strategy of media and its strategies in society. Addressing Lauren's use of words "they know the meaning behind having sleek good hair" more closely, speaks to a perception previously highlighted in the analysis of Hair Politics. Here Black people rationalise changing their appearance to fit a more Eurocentric beauty aesthetic in order to better fit in with a white public. It is also rationalised because of how presenting more Eurocentric notions of beauty brought with it fortune in housing, employment and education. Therefore Lauren's rationalisation that we make our hair straight because we are aware of what the performance can result in brings together both analytical frameworks. It addresses how media perpetuates a false or rather biased idea of success, as well as the expectations within a political regime, where Eurocentric representation was perceived a requirement for Black people's success.

When Lauren highlights that people are "going to fall for it", she refers to an ideal image, which has been created by media. As observers, women thus fall victim to the repetition of such images. Her statement does express a lack of agency for women. More specifically, her words address how women's agency is actually driven by media, albeit indirectly. This idea of agency is thus not real, because perceptions about beauty and agency surrounding these beauty representations are actually manipulated by structures such as media. Stemming from Walsh and Gentile's (2001) earlier discussion, they further highlight that while consumers do not believe they are susceptible to media and advertising at all, they (Walsh & Gentile) maintain that advertising is constructed in such a way, so that the consumer or observer is indirectly affected by and influenced through media. This indirect suggestion of an idea or image through advertising media is discussed within the realm of hypnotism (Wesson, n.d.).

Lauren reveals that Black women are very aware of false claims made about appearance. In this sense, if women are aware of these false claims made about beauty and representation,

one can assume that they are able to justify their hair practices that are perceived as conforming to media driven standards. Similar to how women negotiate their agency in the analysis of hair and politics, women's awareness of the strength of media to manipulate as well as the strategies that media uses to sell products or an idea, allows Black women more agency in their (ultimately personal) choices to carry these images perpetuated by media. While Lauren highlights women's awareness of media and media's ability to influence, she differentiates between advertising as hypnotising, or brainwashing and media advertising actively engaged with by (Black) consumers.

Extract 3

> I've just seen many like hair ads on TV generally. I mean a lot of
> them… Exactly, the desired outcome is always the straight, glossy;
> you know that type of hair. And it's like ok? (Mona)

Speaking to the redundancy and idealism of media images as discussed in extracts 1 and 2, Mona's statement (in extract 3) relates to the discussions above that highlight how media's advertising is directed towards a single representational image of beauty and not a diverse plethora of images. She also highlights the redundancy of presenting a particular idea and/ or image across to a public, as she highlights how it is "always the straight and glossy" image. She makes specific reference to media through television, because of its influential power as a result of direct viewing of a perpetuated desired outcome of hair for Black women. It is a direct and personal strategy, and therefore particularly effective in delivering a message to a public. The single image, which Mona brings to light, again speaks to Walsh and Gentile's (2001) scholarship on repeated exposure to an image, resulting in familiarity with and eventually adoption of an image.

Stemming from the idea of presenting images as ideal and presenting these images in such a repetitive manner, reiterates the performance of creating distorted views and perceptions of beauty. Andy discusses one such idea of distortion below, as she addresses perceptions about femininity and how these perceptions stem from media's images and messages constantly brought into public view.

> [Uhm], what perceived my thinking that longer hair is feminine? [Uhm], cos now that I think about it, when I had longer hair sometimes I felt very unfeminine, because it was so *bos*. Anyway, uh, I guess when I make that comparison between short and long hair. I think some women who don't have an Afro, but have like very very short hair on their head, and maybe its not growing very well, so; to have a weave is to have hair, where maybe there is no hair. Even if there was hair, maybe it wasn't that much, maybe it wasn't that healthy or full whatever. So ja, so that's where that comes from. Coz Afros are great, like I'm, ja... and I've seen some women who have very short afros and look beautiful. So, yeah, perhaps, western media definitely. Like the fact that long hair is, is [uhm] a marker of healthiness, of, of I don't want to say bountiful, but like just there's a lot there (Andy)

In extract 4, Andy challenges the perception that long hair automatically indicates beauty and femininity, as she herself, felt unfeminine, while sporting long hair. As she pointed out, her hair was "bos". For Andy, "bos" depicts hair as out of control/ unruly and therefore unfeminine. In another breath she discusses Afros as being "beautiful" as well. Indicating that her views about hair that is not straight is a personal negative evaluation of herself and self-representations, and not necessarily a general negative perception of women without straight hair being an exemplar of unfeminine. Andy maintains that Black women, who choose to carry weaves, do so because of their natural hair being too short or unable to grow. Therefore wearing a weave allows Black women to own an identity, which they perceive to not be in their reach with their natural self-representations. Wearing a weave also allows a Black woman to own representations (wear hairstyles) that were previously out of reach. Andy creates a space of blame on media for her own distorted thoughts regarding hair and femininity with her words, "perhaps western media definitely".

This very brief acknowledgement of media again brings to the fore the ambiguous nature of "media" when discussed as rationalisation for performative representation. Media is seen as such a rudimentary yet simultaneously complex phenomenon, that the word itself

automatically speaks to its nature as well as allowing the space for assumptions and opinions to be informed from it.

Extract 5

> I would say their moms and also the [uhm], and also then the media. Those are the two. Like I would say, I would say like, their moms probably coz they've seen them doing X, Y and Z their whole lives in order to get their hair straight and it's a very, its you know its like, that's what a woman should do in order to maintain herself in order to, [uhm] look a certain way, like look presentable or present herself to the world. I think that does actually influence I mean. And then also like, TV you know [uhm], magazines…yeah and [uhm] then again hopefully men understand that every woman is beautiful, whether she's got curly hair, whether she's got you know dreads, you know and hopefully they see that. And perhaps they understand that all these women who look so different are beautiful, but they will only want a particular type of woman coz they're scared coz they don't know what it's like to be with a woman with dreads (Andy)

Addressing distorted images of representation from different genders, Andy discusses how media images and hairstyle practices employed by maternal role models impact on the perceptions created by males regarding notions of beauty. She combines forms of media and circumstantial influence from maternal family members as impacting on the different gendered perspectives. From this perspective she attempts to rationalise why men hold "distorted" perceptions of beauty towards women. In Andy's extract (5), distorted perceptions of beauty and distorted perceptions of ideal self-representations are created as a result of viewing perpetuated beauty performances by these women (males' mothers) to maintain long and straight hair. Andy is of the opinion that media images (more specifically from television and magazines) distort men's abilities to appreciate all discourses of beauty. While she primarily highlights family as being the larger influential factor in why men often own distorted perceptions of beauty, she quickly navigates her way to charging media as a second reasoning factor. By charging media and family as primary factors for why men hold certain

distorted views about women's beauty, she takes away men's agency to own perceptions and thoughts about representation that are not informed by external influential factors.

In extract 6 below, El brings to light the act of conditioning. Conditioning could be a plausible justification for why Black women continue a "culture of hair behaviour". This culture of hair behaviour refers to the benefits of adopting a Eurocentric image of beauty during a colonial period, while similar behaviour may not afford the same opportunities today.

Extract 6

> Maybe we are conditioned when we watch TV from like young like; that's what beauty is and we just. It's like you're trying to emulate what you see. So, I dunno. I think we still have a long way to go. For me like I said you'll have people that are like sure of themselves that will still have weaves, but people wont relate it that way, coz they perceive… But for me I've always been the type of person that… I don't care what people think. I'm not hurting anyone and if what I'm doing isn't endangering my health then like, I'm not bothered (El)

In extract 6 above, El emphasises how people are conditioned to believe and adhere to what media portrays. More specifically, she notes that this conditioning starts from a young age. According to Nair and Fine (2008 as cited in Wesson, n.d.), young individuals have not yet developed proper "defense mechanisms" (p. 8) in order to be alert to and defend themselves against subconscious suggestions that come from various forms of media. El does not place herself in that group of people who are conditioned, nor does she denote her choices in hairstyling as very much political either. She highlights the tendencies of women to "emulate" the visual hairstyle images most popularly presented on television, from a young age. El highlights this distortion as playing a role in women's evaluations of their own selves and acknowledges the fact that if a progressive change, regarding perceptions and representations about notions of beauty, is to happen, it will inevitably be a long process. She appears to understand the performances of women who defend their choices to wear a weave, while not feeling the need to associate that performance to feelings of inferiority either, which the literature review has highlighted, is a popular perception.

As El confronts other women's possible perceptions of her own representations, she continues to defend her choices and is protective of these hairstyle choices as being basic choices, which are not related to any political or media influenced idea of beauty. El divorces herself from the idea of her perceptions of beauty and her representations being controlled by media. She has greater agency in her performances, which may or may not be driven by factors such as media. El uses powerful words such as "don't care" and "not bothered" while still being able to identify herself in a space where weaves are commonly worn. However, she depoliticises her performances and furthermore portrays a strong will to challenge the perceptions of others upon women such as herself, who choose to wear weaves and extensions.

El (in extract 6) acknowledges young people as having grown up with media and are therefore conditioned to be influenced by media. Walsh and Gentile (2001) maintain that the minds of children are very impressionable, which speaks to why they are particularly susceptible to external influence such as media advertising.

Bernice discusses being privy to something else other than influence through media and that is information through media.

Extract 7

> But I also think that you know we're privy to much more information than we were [uhm] a couple of years ago. So now we've come to, we're less naïve. And we've come to realise that you know the Hollywood actresses and stars that we look up to don't … they have a lot of help and have a lot of work done, and it's just becoming more apparent that it's not what it seems. So it's not real hair and they can change it. Like particularly with people like Rihanna and what's the other lady's name? Beyonce, but then there's also Tyra Banks.
>
> So like I said I think we're just less naïve now because we have come across information, which we didn't have before. We realise

that people are not that perfect and actually everyone has
extensions and there's nothing to be ashamed of (Bernice)

Bernice brings to light how media as well as people's perceptions regarding media and representation has progressed over the years, as she mentions our information gain being different now than from "years ago". She also addresses how the idea of wearing hairstyles such as extensions and weaves has become synonymous with famous people, such as Rihanna and Tyra. By giving famous people such as the above mentioned, a platform to express their agency, these images become more desirable to a social public of lay Black women. With this, she reveals how people have shifted their perceptions towards such hairstyles from past to present society. Haugtvedt, Petty and Cacioppo (1992) indicate that the use of celebrities in advertising or product endorsing is advantageous for influencing a consumer. In addition, Walsh and Gentile (2001) highlight the advantage of using famous individuals when endorsing products. They further highlight a consumer's identification with a popular or famous agent in media, as increasing the likelihood of influence of the consumer. This is particularly relevant to youth as consumers, as they are prone to identification with various models, because of the developmental space they are in, which focuses on forming identities (Walsh & Gentile, 2001).

While speaking under the vein of modern media images and their distortions, Bernice highlights how our understanding of these images have become more progressive and open minded even though specific images have been overrepresented and perpetuated by agents of popular culture such as the Black women mentioned above. In Bernice's excerpt, agents such as Rihanna and Tyra drive media's images. From a paradox perspective, because these women are on a very public platform, their chosen ideas of representation may be individual and agentic for themselves, but are idealised by a larger lay body of Black women. This act takes away these Black women's agency to wear certain hairstyles, because it is inevitably controlled by the ideas of one or a few famous individuals, who are agents of media. Having said this, the choice to wear a certain hairstyle and do so with pride, is in itself agency of self-representations.

Bernice highlights that women are less naïve in contemporary society, when it comes to hair practices and hair representation. She reveals that the continued use of these hairstyles on a

daily basis through media and its agents has made seeing and wearing extensions and weaves commonplace.

While media – through constant repetition of an image – has to a degree taken away the shame of embracing hairstyles such as weaves, it simultaneously casts aside other types of hair representations, such as natural styles, including Afros and dreads. Black women's agency in wearing straight hairstyles becomes more difficult; because of images of straight and long hair more popularly represented by media, as appropriate and contemporary for Black women. Media's perpetuation of certain hairstyles does present the idea of manipulating Black people's insecurity about representation, which has manifested from years of oppression over a race. This manipulation enforces the ideal image of beauty in straight and/ or long hair. Wesson (n.d.) reveals that advertising's ability to take advantage of some individuals over others is based on their susceptibility to influence and suggestion, which is fore-grounded in political and ideological issues.

Extract 8

> I mean we see so many ethnic celebrities or celebs who you know their hair cannot possibly be that straight because it's not the hair type, but they have straight hair. They don't let their hair go natural. I mean I watched Tyra Banks once and she came out and said there's something I need to tell you all, I actually wear a weave… And she took it off and she showed herself for who she is, and I remember reading all the responses on the Internet and stuff. People were like outraged, some were saying like you know, how could she do that. "She looked terrible"…
>
> I felt so happy for her that she actually you know did it. Because young people who don't have the insight that we do, they are going to think that that is natural and for her to take that step goes beyond that and says "Hey, you know, this is actually who I am". But TV may dictate that I have to look a certain way and what I go for, but I think the young people of today are definitely massive now… with the rise of GHDs these days hey (Mona)

Mona brings to light one agent of media, Tyra Banks. She discusses how popular media images have become so commonplace in society, that deviation from this norm, especially from a popular agent who encourages these images, is seen as an outrage. Even though extensions are widely used in film and media, Mona refers specifically to ethnic celebrities. By making specific reference to Black celebrities, she creates a sense of applicability (relatedness) to Black women who observe these images. For these Black women, attaining the image is much more relatable because of the similar racial identity of the celebrity and the Black woman. This then also creates the perception that the ideal representation is more easily achievable.

Similar to the discussion of identification with famous agents, Walsh and Gentile (2001) discuss similarity with agents who are not famous, but share characteristics that lay persons can identify with. Racial identity is the characteristic factor in this regard. Both identification and similarity are influential over youth.

In the second paragraph of extract 8 Mona uses the word "insight". Here insight functions in the same breath as awareness, opportunities and exposure. She also equates lack of insight with age, in how she justifies young people's inability to appreciate cathartic behaviour such as that of Tyra. For Mona the lack of insight by certain youth allows media to adequately present and perpetuate images and distort their notions of beauty. With this perception, she maintains that age plays a role in developing and owning agency over one's representations. Therefore, if a woman is older and more secure about her own representations and hair performances, she will most likely be more open to the idea of embracing the cathartic behaviour of Tyra. Naine and Fine's scholarship (2008 as cited in Wesson, n.d.) is again reiterated, in how older people have a greater ability to challenge subconscious suggestions, than younger individuals because of the latter's incomplete formation of appropriate defence mechanisms.

Distortion through false images

> In the past [uhm], in campaigning, even in relaxer ads, they used to use white people. In a book by Susan Bordeaux, she actually mentions that like a picture of an ad, a relaxer add, with a white lady in it. This lady never used it, but just to get the whole idea that this is what your hair could look like if you used the relaxer, that type of thing. So [uhm], now we move to now and we see that you get ladies of colour modelling and you get more curvier women in magazines and stuff like that, but the only thing that remains constant is hair. You're always going to get the sleeker hair; you are always going to see... And even [uh], the things that are made available in order for you to attain sleek hair is on the increase (Lauren)

In Lauren's extract (9) above, she highlights the false images presented by hair advertisements. In particular, she reveals how white women were used in hair relaxer advertisements in the past. In Lauren's extract, a significant point of distortion in the past is the use of white women to portray an ideal hairstyle and hair type. Ultimately, media deceived a population of Black women in creating an idea of perfection through using chemicals. More specifically, they were deceived into believing that their hair could look like that of white women, because of white women's presence in advertisements specifically directed to Black women and Black hair. The advertisements itself provided a distorted view of what chemicals could do for Black women's hair.

Stepping away from past media practices perpetuating certain images, Lauren also highlights how society has become more open to difference in some media driven spaces, with regard to representation and beauty. She specifically notes how "magazines" have created a greater space for Black women and "more curvier" women in their pages. However, not such a large space is provided for hair images. Lauren claims that these hair practices and those represented in media's various spaces such as magazines "remain constant". Here Lauren

acknowledges how certain media spaces over others, are more open to embracing difference and presenting opportunities for agency of women's representations.

Lauren highlights that there has been a transition to using Black women to advertise relaxers and other chemicals. While these advertisements are more honest in its representation of subjects who can actually use or perceivably benefit from use of such products, it is not completely devoid of deceit. What can be gleaned from putting white women in advertisements directed towards Black women could be the opportunistic behaviour of media and product companies to exploit an idea that has been and continues to be a social issue for Black people.

In extract 10 below Wanda reveals how Black owned companies are also to blame for a degree of "distortion" perpetuated through ideal Black images and the exploitation of Black women towards perpetuating these particular images.

Extract 10

> That's why the media, look at the media. I mean have you seen even the black companies, the ads. Nobody has kinky hair. Everybody's hair is either pieces that they have in there to show this relaxer works. It's not even their own hair…
>
> They don't use their own. There was one product. I think it was *Motions*, was it Motions that they advertised or the organic or something; where the girl walks and the hair just… I mean seriously! You can actually see when she lifts it up there's a, there's some spot where she lifts her hair up, you could see the weave. And I thought to myself, why not just relax, yes; do advertise, but then use her own hair and show us what her own hair can look like, so people can be realistic about it. But having this full, full hair and you're walking with your hair shaking all over the place. Come on!
>
> (Wanda)

Wanda continues the focus on false representations, in how she addresses Black owned companies' roles and media's role in perpetuating and encouraging particular images

amongst a population of Black women. She brings to light the singular image which is encouraged by Black owned companies and media. In these advertisements, the idea of owning "kinky" hair is almost non-existent, as Wanda reveals how "nobody has kinky hair" on those advertisements. Rather Black women in these advertisements have straight hairstyles, as a result of hair straightened through the use of chemicals or wearing hair "pieces".

Wanda makes particular reference to Black owned companies as also choosing to portray false or biased images of beauty. She reveals her expectations of a Black owned hair care company to be more sensitive and sympathetic to the issue of Black women attaining "good hair". Furthermore, her expectation is that these companies should be more aware of and realistic about Black hair politics, as well as its social meaning and performance in contemporary society. The common strand she highlights is how all companies; Black owned companies included, use media to sell a product as effectively as possible. Stemming from Wanda's assertion that Black owned hair companies should be more aware of the *issue of hair* for Black women, Walsh and Gentile (2001) highlight that marketers and advertisers for companies and products play on the emotional factor of human beings, because it is emotion which foregrounds attitudes, perceptions and eventually behaviour. Black women who perceive straight hair to be most desirable will be emotionally impacted by certain advisements. This would thus impact on attitudes and behaviour surrounding hair performance.

Extract 11

> So so, it's like that kind of false advertising, I find it very disturbing,
> extremely. So that is why I think its kind of [uhm], challenging for
> one to wear your hair natural, because women and men and
> everybody even the kids will just look at you strangely and think
> "geez, is this woman real?" you know. Its 2011, they even tell me
> "nobody has to walk with hair like yours anymore (Wanda)

In extract 11, Wanda elucidates on her opinions in extract 10. She emphasises that "false advertising" is very disturbing, "extremely" even, which indicates her strong apprehension towards the practice of biased advertising. She is frustrated with how images that do not

mirror popular media or popular culture are not given enough recognition or praise in society.

The space provided to counteract these false or biased images presented through advertising is so minimal; that presenting any kind of image opposing the biased image is a challenge. She brings forth the struggle to personalise one's style in ways that are not in line with popular standards of beauty. Her statement brings to light how omnipresent these negatively biased images have become in society and across age groups, as she specifies the relation to and ownership of these distorted beliefs by men, women and "kids" (as in children).

Wanda quotes a popular reaction from people who have a particularly negative opinion of less conformist hairstyles. Her use of the word "walk" insinuates a public space or exposing the self. Furthermore, the allowance of this exposure, while not representing the self in a manner befitting popular media and its false/ biased advertising, is seen in a negative light. What can be gleaned from her excerpt (11), is a specific mention of time – "anymore", which insinuates that wearing natural hairstyles was an accepted practice years before. However, as society has changed and became exposed to more universal expectations of beauty, so too did performances of the self and particularly representational changes for the Black agent in society.

Media *racialising* through being relatable

Media *racialising* does not aim to insinuate that media is at all racist. Rather reference is made to how media uses the idea of race to sell various products and ideas. More specifically it explores how media is a medium for promoting race-classified products; how media communicates an idea to various races as targets of consumable products; and finally how races (in this case black and coloured racial identities), continue to follow media's images directed to them, as perceived to be best suited for them. This idea speaks to a much earlier extract (extract 2), which addresses selling an image of good hair. More specifically, it addresses selling an image of good hair through the relatable idea of race.

<u>Extract 12</u>

> I think western companies also they need to change the way they
> do their marketing. This is why *L'Oreal* has become so clever. They
> came up with a *Mazane* range. But even *Mazane* is so heavy. And it
> doesn't need to be!... And they (*her clients being women of colour*)
> believe that *Mazane,* "no it's made for blacks, it's a black face, so I
> need to". So I said no no no, believe me the other one that you think
> is not so good is actually much better for you because its actually of
> a much better, higher quality. And this is where the deceit comes in;
> how they deceive people, with how they market things (Wanda)

Wanda discusses how western marketing companies have become clever in their strategies of selling hair products to Black women. The way in which these companies advertise their products can be discussed within the realm of deception. This deception is noted in the poor quality of the products that are being sold to Black women. By addressing how Wanda discusses some of her clients' responses to hair products that reflect use of products by Black women in particular, together with how products are advertised, indicates that the marketing strategies of hair product companies, have and continue to successfully promote certain images. These media driven images continue to be in progressive effect. The idea of experiencing an image as applicable (relatable) to oneself and having commonalties with the image one observes is again reiterated.

<u>Extract 13</u>

> Well all women that I know wear their hair natural and whether its
> you know beautifully, like whatever.. I wont say beautifully straight,
> and then I have to catch myself again, coz I'm thinking the straight
> thing. So whether it's like that or whether it's like curly, all the
> women I know wear their hair natural and I'm lucky to have that,
> but still a lot of the other women that I know, who... its almost as if
> there's like, coloured women and like a very particular type of
> coloured women and then there's coloured woman or has her eyes
> open, almost. And who doesn't care about, you know, [uhm],
> straight hair and like, living a very particular (Andy)

In extract 13, Andy attempts to correct how she verbalises her perceptions of beauty, when she highlights having to "catch" herself after almost putting herself into a position of delineating notions of beauty. She highlights the almost instinctive act of women to assume what is most popularly presented to be beautiful; whether they believe it or not. Media's racialising becomes more apparent in how Andy further distinguishes coloured women within the broader coloured racial space. She differentiates between a "particular type" of coloured woman, and a coloured woman who has her "eyes open". The former delineation is almost "insinuating" a particular identity, a conformist even. Andy finds it challenging to label women like this. However it is deduced from the former description related to coloured women who choose to wear straight hairstyles and do everything in their power to maintain this performance. Paradoxically, the latter "type" of coloured woman is more receptive to different ideas regarding hair and self-representations. It is the former group of coloured women to whom media actually directs its strength, to those women who are less likely to explore discourses of beauty, which differ from popular media images.

Discourses of beauty are presented by Media and are negotiated in different ways, by different people. Andy specifically highlights how these negotiations differ in different coloured spaces and in relation to different coloured women. A coloured woman's agency could be present in both delineations made by Andy. However, the manner in which agency of beauty and representation is negotiated and rationalised within the aesthetic space is different. Where coloured women who are "conformist" hold a degree of agency in their performances of representation, there are simultaneously also coloured women who choose to purposefully challenge popular beauty rhetoric. The former group can be seen as "pleasantly ignorant" to other ideas of beauty, thus creating agency in their limited amount of knowledge on beauty. However, it is the latter group of women who are perceptive towards the discussion of Black beauty and representation and thus find agency in their performative representations because of their awareness of the complexity of Black beauty.

Conclusion

Media has been discussed as a particularly complex term to identify and discuss within contemporary society. More specifically, the nature of media came across as particularly difficult to explain, but easy to see in society.

Women use media to blame as well as justify notions of beauty and their perpetuations of beauty discourse. Furthermore, media dictates certain images and encourages repetition of exposure of such images; thus the basis of its power as well as its ability to influence. However media is also able to enlighten and inform viewers of information as well as images.

The analysis above explored how my participants view media as distorting ideas of beauty and deceiving Black women's perceptions about representation. It further explored how distortion and deception are formed and discussed through perceptions of femininity, redundancy of images and purposeful false or biased representations. The analysis also explored how distortions of beauty images are informed by relatedness to racial identities, targeted towards Black women in specific. As quoted from my participants, media is described as "massive" and "huge". These descriptions speak to the nature of media as being ominous and ambiguous and ultimately not well understood by a general public. Its impact is nevertheless understood. Media can be addressed as perpetuating the rooted desire of Black women, in particular, to fit in. In addition it is an intangible idea, a surprising phenomenon and a pathway for consumption and deliverance of information. However, one can completely juxtapose the argument thus far and go as far as to say that media as a structure is rather neutral and it is the ideas and images informed from media that creates women's perceptions about beauty and directs women's representations in ways that are similar or dissimilar; popular or not popular. Nevertheless, media has proven to be an influential factor in self-representation and beauty aesthetic for Black women.

3. Circumstantial Self-Representation

Introduction

The analysis has explored how politics and media impacts on Black hair and Black women's self representations in society. Since politics and media are rather broad subjects, the final discursive theme of analysis, discusses Black hair from a more personal perspective through the analytical framework of representation.

While drawing from the previous discursive themes highlighted in this chapter, I introduce the third and final theme, termed Circumstantial Self-Representation. This theme will address women's justifications for how they choose their hairstyles and why they choose to perpetuate or change these styles in various contexts. This theme is, as the previous one, divided into a number of sub-themes. The order of these sub-themes is strategically placed so that it can be viewed as an inside-out model.

This analysis will commence its discussion with a focus on sub-themes that are considered more personal to one's self-representations. These sub-themes include the development of Black women as individuals as well as within their larger family systems. This section is termed "coming of age". Various developmental stages, school going age and family have all been highlighted as playing a prominent role in moulding our self-perceptions and creating our beauty identities. The analysis will then branch out to address insight, awareness, opportunities and exposure as playing a pertinent role in widening or limiting Black women's agency in their representation and their perceptions about beauty within their living contexts. Professional contexts were highlighted by my participants as playing a prevalent role in why Black women adhere to pre-determined hairstyles. They argue this as a central reason for their inability to practice individuality with regard to representation. Finally, the discussion will broaden further to focus on how Black women charge the locations and cities in which they reside as influencing their self-representations.

"Coming of age"

The women in this study all addressed how their perceptions about beauty and self-representations in society were and to some extent continue to be driven by the perceptions and influence of family members and peers. It was, in various life stages that their awareness about the importance of hair became most apparent, with the period of school going age and adolescence expressed as the most influential stage of life. The participants reported that it is in this period of life that the strongest perceptions of beauty are built. Furthermore, it is here where people's standards of beauty are not only realised but also moulded. Therefore it is this stage of life that the foundation for perceptions of beauty and representation are laid.

What is interesting is how my participants are able to retrace their perceptions about representation at younger life stages. In doing this, they take a narrative approach of their own lives and past representations and how this has shaped their contemporary ways of thinking about representation.

One participant, Nancy, discusses how we progress through various life stages that mould the perceptions we have today. She maintains that there are three basic life stages we move through in relation to how we portray ourselves. She maintains that the first stage is the childhood stage, where our representations are largely driven by our parents and more specifically our mothers. Parents already own their own perceptions of beauty and will most likely portray their children in ways mirroring their own perpetuations and belief systems. She further maintains that at this point in our lives we are made aware of a plethora of styles, but are not yet able to make agentic choices. Nancy notes that the second stage will usually fall in line with high school going age, in which we begin to determine our own wants and needs about how to portray ourselves. It is useful to acknowledge the impact of contexts and peers on the teenage agent at this point. She highlights varsity as the third stage of aesthetic development, because of a greater degree of independence and agency present at this stage of life. She believes that it is at this stage that we should already be creating our own identities. She further asserts that while there is still a great deal of conforming, which may take place, our performances are inevitably drawn from previous life experiences.

> But I think it's also a certain age group. So during adolescence that's
>
> when I became aware of it... Those are the formative years. So they
>
> are forming all of those things (Mona)

Mona's excerpt above speaks to Nancy's earlier description of various life stages' impact on representations. She particularly highlights "a certain age group", where girls try to find an identity, while maintaining representations that are acceptable to peers. This brings to light the self-negotiation that takes place from an early age, in relation to representation within a public space. According to Mona, adolescence is where one becomes aware of *it*, being hair. For Mona, it was during her adolescence where she became aware of how influential hair is. Adolescence is a new stage of life, which introduces many physical and emotional changes. There are comparisons of the self, which are made in this life stage and school is one platform for these comparisons to be made. Buzwell and Rosenthal (1996 as cited in Stephens & Few, 2007) highlight messages of appropriate as well as yearned for physical imagery as determined through peer groups, family and other external and cultural factors

Because of perpetuated beauty stereotypes, straight long hair appears to remain most favourable in the school environment. Mona maintains that it is here where she became aware of how important hair is, as she often had to deal with remarks about the luscious texture of her hair and other girls, who have different hair textures, desiring hers.

Extract 2

> They would say, "you're so lucky, you don't have to go through
>
> that". But it was always said with a bitter undertone. Like I would
>
> always get that feeling, ok you know it's just hair (Mona)

Mona's realisation of her own hair only became apparent as a defining factor of the self at that stage of her life, where she was introduced to a peer environment. In her home environment, her hair was similar to that of her family's, therefore not making it a unique aspect of the self. School introduced her to a more culturally and physically diverse environment. Therefore, the public space of school was greater than introduction to an academic space for Mona. It was simultaneously the introduction of a social and interactive space. For Mona, school acted as a

defining space for her awareness of representations. It introduced her to different ideas about representation that she was not aware of. She expressed how other children used the word "lucky", to describe her ownership of straight hair. Furthermore the phrase "you don't have to go through that" indicates the perception from her peers that she had been exempted from a difficult life task, or had been exempt from the effort that other girls had to put into their hair representations. Her straight hair was indicative of perceived privilege. Mona's statement; "it's just hair", highlights that she was not on the same level of understanding as her peers regarding physicality's; as the degree of importance put on hair was different between herself and her school peers. This realisation only became apparent for her, because the idea of "privilege" needed to be highlighted in order for her to be aware of the difference between herself and other girls.

Extract 3

> With the younger groups of girls…that's not a topic of conversation
> in their peer, in their age groups (Bernice)

Bernice proceeds from the premise that while hair is a very important aspect to young girls, it is not a popular topic of conversation (i.e., ideas about beauty and hair being open to suggestion); at least not on an intellectual level. She claims that for them, ideal representation is conforming to a preconceived standard of beauty representation. For Bernice, young girls are not able to contextualise representations at that age and address the subject of hair within a bigger framework of thought. According to Stephen and Few (2007), women are socialised to believe in and perpetuate the idea that they are meant to maintain an attractive appeal in order to find partners and even peers or individuals you socialise with and find common ground with.

Bernice maintains that, that age of life (adolescent youth) naturally focuses on outer appearances. She notes how she felt physical representation could not be negated in social existence as an adolescent. Therefore even if there are personal desires of the self and opinions about self-representation, which are not in accordance with popular beauty standards, there is not a perceived wide social space, which allows for the freedom to express those individualities.

> But I think also the reason why it was so impactful for me was
> because, I was just at an impressionable age where people made a
> big fuss about it and I couldn't ignore it (Bernice)

Bernice claims that adolescence or young adulthood is an "impressionable" stage of life. Here she highlights her belief that adolescents are more easily influenced and in retrospect have a weaker ground on which to base beliefs and behaviours. This makes their decisions to conform and more easily adapt to various situations around them, that much easier. She recognises this stage of life for herself as "impactful", as she highlights how receptive she was to popular images and perceptions of beauty on a much more basic and superficial level. According to Stephen and Few (2007, p. 3), "self-esteem and body image are moulded by both internal and external sources of validation". Internal and external forms of validation are manifold, and include family, peer groups, partners and acquaintances. This justifies how opinions outside of ourselves can drive the very performances we choose to partake in. As a result of the very palpability of adolescence as a developmental stage, external validation plays a bigger role in self-definition and self-evaluation.

The desire to adapt to the beauty standard at that age is something Bernice felt she "couldn't ignore". This stems from her definition of Black girls in that particular "age group" as being more susceptible to external influences in determining and justifying behaviour with regard to self-representations. Both Bernice's extracts (3 and 4) explore her own personal narratives, revealing her perceptions about representation as a young girl. She acknowledges the lack of agency and lack of encouragement of agency afforded to young girls, including herself when she was a youth. This awareness has played a role in shaping how she thinks about beauty and representations today.

Gina not only acknowledges that school can play a large role in how we perceive ourselves within given spaces, but exemplifies this even further by making a comparison between various types of schools; more specifically, public and private schools.

So at school, what happened - I was at a government school in

junior school and I was at a private high school. So that was really

for me where I learnt [uhm], what societal standards (Gina)

In extract 5, Gina briefly highlights that she went to vastly different primary and secondary schools. However, one gets the sense that there was a profound difference between the two in matters outside of the rudimentary private/ public school debate. Her specific reference to the fact that she attended a government primary school and a private high school, already addresses that there were differences within those spaces that are exempt from the mere discussion of "basic education". It was also this academic environment that introduced her to a plethora of societal standards. Furthermore, this environment demanded 'new' representational expectations of her. The fact that these "societal standards" are brought to light within an academic environment does show how schools are in themselves social spaces as well as platforms for communication and interaction of self-representation among young girls. These societal standards are also indicative of "the outside" permeating academic walls. Here, the "outside" refers to constructions such as media, politics and personal contexts. It is structures like the above mentioned which my participants have highlighted as impacting on the perceptions about beauty for young female agents in school settings, as well as with their hair performances.

What was not highlighted in Gina's excerpt above is how she experienced similarities, comfort and sameness within a tertiary setting, with people outside of her earlier school environment. She was able to function in a junior school setting, where she felt little need to conform because of a solid home foundation. However, as in the earlier excerpts, she also highlighted high school as a space that brought with it new challenges and she found few girls she could relate to in that setting. The private high school she attended, as she pointed out was majorly made up of white girls, and all coloured/Black girls who were at her school had straight hair. With this she highlighted difficulty in relating to these coloured/Black girls on a basic racial level – skin colour – because of the difference between her and their hair representations. Furthermore, she highlighted that it was within a Black university setting where she was most comfortable because of the context and different spaces the university afforded her. More specifically, it is there where she could relate to more people on levels of physical

representation. The varsity environment invites a great deal of self-expression and individuality, because it is free from the more structured atmosphere of school environments.

For Gina, her representations were not as context driven as some of the other participants. Where other participants are able to own their sense of agency regarding representation today, as different from their younger representations, Gina articulates agency from a much younger age already. It is this agency, which allowed her to challenge expectations from pressured spaces, like school. It has also fore-grounded her continued perceptions about representations today.

What Gina's story brings to the fore is how the various stages, to which Nancy speaks at the onset of this sub-theme, occurred in her life and are very much apparent in everyday society. "Contexts" have mediated the participants' discussions thus far, in how they chose to represent themselves. It is this idea that finds continuity throughout the analysis. This idea however moulds itself to each sub-theme being discussed. Nevertheless, contextual obligations and expectation is revealed as playing a pertinent role in the representations of Black women and girls.

From our discussion and what will be discussed in more detail in the next sub-theme, Gina often spoke about how her home life set a very strong foundation for her self-representations, thus making all other external factors, even the very powerful one of school influence and peer pressure etc, ineffective in influencing her towards various stereotypes. Even though she does maintain that she was aware of the societal standards and the discomfort with feeling camaraderie amongst her peers, she never expressed any deep desire to actually conform to these given standards. A defining factor for Gina is her awareness of societal standards and expectations about representation; yet she chose to not accept or adopt such identities. She justified this through having a strong foundation at home. Gina showed awareness of the social expectation of school as well as varsity. However, she did not choose to conform to the popular image that was presented to her. The relationship between insight and performance is prevalent in this discursive theme of circumstantial self-representation. More specifically it brings to light Black women's awareness about their representations as young girls in relation to today. It further highlights the contrast in perceptions about representation within their different life spaces.

While Gina does not choose to perpetuate a "conformist" behaviour, Lauren submits to the pressure to conform. She makes the active choice to conform to society's standards, in her excerpt below.

Extract 6

> This is who I am and society just has to accept me the way I am, but
> there's always certain aspects of who you are that you're gonna try
> to maintain in order to meet society's expectations (Lauren)

Lauren is referring to herself and her hair in this extract (6) above. Throughout our discussion, she often spoke about degrees of forced and chosen conformity. For Lauren hair is not a choice, but rather a mandate. Furthermore, she emphasises that we have to conform to a Eurocentric ideal of straight hair in order to achieve success in society. However, she makes a clear distinction between which aspects of the self should be accepted by society and aspects, which should be more open to suggestion and change in order to "meet" society's expectations. *Preserve, uphold,* and *sustain* – a few words, which function similarly to Lauren's use of the word "maintain". This maintenance resonates with a picture of "order", to satisfy a particular mandate or set of rules. Lauren rationalises her willingness to conform to beauty rhetoric as being the result of society's immovable expectations. Instead of challenging these expectations, she conforms and in so doing, she denies herself agency.

Unlike Gina, who expresses a good home foundation as justification for moulding her current self-perceptions and perceptions about representation, Lauren divorces herself from assigning similarity with her family's representative identities. She highlights how she is in no way similar to her sister or mother, nor does she agree with her mother's points of view on hair. She revealed that her mother does not wear her hair straight, nor did she raise Lauren in that way. Lauren thus justifies her representational behaviour to be as a result of community and external pressure and expectation to fit in.

<u>Extract 7</u>

> My mother...hair was never an issue. They never discussed those
> things, they never discussed bad hair, they never discussed how
> you are supposed to look. So there was never that type of pressure.
> There was pressure from the outside I think she said from the
> community (Lauren)

Above, Lauren denotes her mother's chosen representational performances as a result of outside factors and never as a result of discussions in the personal home space. She expresses that for her mother, hair was never an "issue". Having labelled the discussion of hair as an issue, highlights that for Lauren and within her developmental space hair actually was and is an issue. Lauren brings to light her assumptions about what a home space was supposed to provide her with and what was never provided to her mother. This assumption is identifying the 'rights' and 'wrongs' of representation and making specifically clear, how women are "supposed" to look within society. For Lauren, a similarity in both her and her mother's developmental spaces was, peer pressure and community pressure. Both factors were considered as playing prominent roles in perceptions about beauty and identification through hair. Lauren discusses a *point of saturation*. Her mother achieved this *point of saturation* in her late 20s, which relates to using relaxers and desiring Eurocentric hair representations. This point of saturation is where her mother chose to divorce herself from straightening processes and decided to embrace her natural hair. A point of saturation, which Lauren argued, she would never want to achieve. Lauren acknowledges her mother's sense of agency from her twenties, but does not feel personally invested in achieving this agency away from Eurocentric ideas of beauty.

Active Family

I have chosen to include the sub-theme of family underneath the umbrella of circumstantial self-representation, because it speaks to women's justification for how and why they style their hair in certain ways. More specifically, it addresses women's justifications for representations as based on contextual circumstances such as the home setting. Where professions, schools and social life are to a degree chosen contexts, family is often not. This

indicates that family is a relatively strong influential factor on one's thoughts about self-representation.

All the women who participated in this study either briefly brought to light or spoke readily about how families and more importantly how mothers and senior women figures in the family play a huge role in how Black women perceive their own representations and perceive notions of beauty in general. They are able to personally relate to this point as they think about their own mothers and families' impact on their representations and hair.

Gina's home foundation was briefly highlighted earlier, as playing a large part in moulding how she perceived beauty and representations. Furthermore, she expresses how she chose to wear her natural hair and carry herself with agency in a public space, even though her choices were not always in accordance with perceived public conformity. Her home setting and mother's encouragement to represent herself in ways that were most comfortable for her, inevitably paved her future negotiations with hair representations.

In the broader discussion of family influences being either positive or negative, another discussion is presented. Firstly, women who rationalise their hairstyle performances as a result of imitating their mothers or growing up in particular environment that indirectly teaches them how to ideally represent themselves through modelling. Secondly, mothers who purposely impose their thoughts about beauty and representations onto their children. This is learning through imitation and observation, which is often also used as justification for why males succumb to and are arguably attracted to women with straight hair from their desired female suitors.

Nancy discusses having "control" of her agency about representation. She addresses the level of control that mothers or caregivers have with regard to the representation of young girls.

Extract 8

> When I was a kid, my mum would decide which hairstyles for
> example would suit me best and how to keep my hair neat and stuff
> like that (Nancy)

For Nancy, it is mothers and senior female figures in the family who not only control representation for young girls, but also inevitably influence them in directing their own perceptions about representation and beauty. Her words "my mum would decide", does take a large degree of individuality and agency away from the young Nancy, thus allowing her "mum" to make those important decisions for her. In essence agency over her representations was in her mother's control. It comes across as though the decisions were so important that it disallowed young girls to make such decisions on their own.

Extract 9

> So my mother never put pressure on me or things like that. So that's
> maybe why I don't understand it. And my mom, well my mom has
> straight hair, since my birth she's kept her hair short, but she also
> used to have like very long hair (Gina)

In extract 9, Gina addresses agency in an influential family environment. She brings to light the complexity of owning agency over one's representations in relation to how a mother can choose to enforce or withhold idealistic perspectives of beauty for her children. She centralises the idea of "pressure", as commonly functioning within the discursive space of family and the self in that space.

Gina does not relate to the appeal of straight hair, which many Black women hold in high regard. Nevertheless, she does emphasise that women's behaviour to conform to the appeal of straight hair can be justified as a result of "pressure" from the home. Gina's mother, who has straight hair, chose not to focus on the physical difference between herself and her daughter. This performance ensured that Gina appreciated her natural representations, which included her curly hair, before considering the impact of external perceptions about representation. Gina was never pressured to conform to any one particular image or identity. For her, agency was thus an important factor in her upbringing. Her perceptions about representation of herself as well as in general informed the perceptions she owns in her adulthood. This agency allowed her to create her own perceptions and not adopt others' imposed ideas/ perceptions on the matter.

To a large degree, Gina's excerpt explores the role of family as well as negotiating the self within the family in creating the foundation for one's self-identity and esteem. Gina's home and family encouraged individuality and agency from a young age. It is this finding which is not prevalent in the other participants' descriptions of family influence. Nevertheless, all participants acknowledge the role of mothers and home life as having impacted on their representations today.

Extract 10

> The foundation was set at my home already, so that was set there
>
> for me and if your family accepts you then who else do you need to
>
> (Gina)

Extract 10 discusses Gina's belief about how family and one's home setting shapes our perceptions of beauty and representation. She touches on women's self confidence and self esteem as similarly moulded by how they grew up in the household. According to Gina, if there is "acceptance" in the household, external factors and individuals outside of the home, such as peers should play little to no role in influencing the perceptions we have of ourselves. Her use of the word "need" does present the idea that one requires a sense of belonging in order to function optimally, which may ultimately be found in a familial space. She maintains that if this "grounded" space is satisfied, no other external spaces need to be further pleased.

Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz (2003) maintain that beauty is important for adolescent females and women, because through aspiring to achieve or maintain a perceived beauty ideal, they actually create and sustain a social status and self esteem for themselves.

In extract 11 below, Wanda highlights that a family's critique of one's self-representations can be so impactful that it can result in insecurity levels in the child. Mona (in extract 12) emphasizes this level of insecurity as creating a complex for young girls.

> And if your child comes in, then "oh my word, *wat mekeer hierdie*
> *kind se hare*?"[4]. We don't even know that that is wrong. That is
> creating a, an insecurity in that child (Wanda)

Wanda's statement above speaks to how parents may often feel the need to take ownership of their children's hair, indicating that children at a young age are partially moulded by their parents, and more so by their mothers, in relation to perceptions about beauty and representation. She exemplifies how Black women often use these derogatory phrases, such as *what is wrong with this child's hair?* (English translation) in public spaces.

This practice appears to perpetuate the idea that the hair a young girl does own is not necessarily good enough or satisfactory for a public space. These performances are negative, and are mostly directed to the psyche of young Black women. For Wanda, the constant opinions directed to young Black girls about their hair and how they should look, enforces the acceptance of these opinions. Furthermore, it creates a sense of insecurity in the young girls who do not meet or cannot meet popular perceptions of beauty. Their perceptions of beauty are therefore informed by their experiences as young girls. Here Wanda rationalises why Black women today have and practice certain beauty dialogues. She has different perceptions of beauty as an adult, in relation to her childhood self, but acknowledges the impact of childhood experience of Black women on their agency or lack thereof with regards to their hair and self representations. In Wanda's opinion, repetition of negative perceptions towards an object such as hair can have a negative impact on our future perceptions about the self, beauty, representations and identity.

---

[4] *What is wrong with this child's hair?*

I actually have a cousin; she's now 14years old and [uhm], when her hair started growing it was extremely curly. So they kept shaving her head. And then as she reached I think four, they couldn't keep shaving her head, so they grew her hair out and then they started straightening her hair at four years of age. And I remember telling them that they were gonna give her a complex about hair (Mona)

Similar to the psychological impact of others' opinions on one's representations, which Wanda explored in extract 11, Mona (in extract 12) addresses the constant "shaving" of her young cousin's head. This could be understood as the avoidance of the true self, or denial of real representations of the self by the family. What makes this performance particularly interesting is exploring it within Mona's Cape Malay/ Muslim family, in which all the family members have long and straight hair. She further highlights that they "couldn't" keep shaving her head anymore, which emphasizes two dialogues. Firstly, constantly shaving her hair was ceased due to the fact that it no longer made sense to labour themselves with this tedious task. Secondly, "hiding" her real hair was no longer an option; therefore, they chose to continue "hiding" her hair in a more socially acceptable manner. Mona's cousin's parents had control over their daughter's hair and in so doing, took her agency away.

In Mona's excerpt, the idea of not being good enough does become apparent. She highlights the "complex" that can develop from the behaviour of constantly fixing one's natural hair. This "complex" is similar to the "insecurity" which Wanda grapples with in her earlier excerpt. The psychological impact of perceptions of others about beauty and personal representation inhibits physical agency to counteract the popular image of beauty. This was also a discussion explored in both Wanda and Mona's excerpts above.

Extract 13

Just the hidden messages that parents send... that message was being sent because they kept changing her hair all the time to suit their notions of perfection (Mona)

In the above extract (13), Mona elaborates on the meaning behind her family's actions. Above she speaks about "hidden messages" sent by parents, to their children. These messages are often a result of the parental performances to continuously keep changing the hair of their daughter from what it naturally is. Mona suggests the idea of selfishness, as she discusses the performances to keep changing their daughter's hair as manifestations of their own ideas and perceptions about beauty and perfection. Mona's cousin's hair performances, while non-agentic, will inform her adult performances. While an assumption of agency can be gleaned in taking ownership of her hair straightening as an adult, her perceptions about beauty remain rooted in a space where she lacked control and agency of her self-representations.

Extract 14

> I think that influence is the older generations and I think those
> types of messages get carried over by people and filter ideas
> (Lauren)

Lauren also touches on the influence of family with regards to representation and perceptions of beauty. It is her opinion that influences are generational, and are more direct from mothers and elders in the family. That influence which she highlights refers to the ideas and behaviours relating to perceived notions of beauty. More specifically it refers to passing on of these ideas and perceptions about how females and women in the family are supposed to wear their hair and represent themselves. She highlights how the intentions of older women are met and continually carried out, as she reveals that "those types of messages" do filter through generations within the family.

Bernice introduces a middle ground, which allows for the agency of women's representations without too harshly challenging the perceptions and beliefs of family. She maintains that one's family can reach a point of acceptance if one shows persistence in wearing one's hair in a particular way. Bernice refers to how people, in this case family, will be accepting of one's chosen image as long this hair image does not represent them or will in any way indicate relation to themselves; i.e., is there a *fix* button?

> I do think it (*family*) still plays a role, but now I think you can try different things as long as you are not too eccentric... So, or you can't go too drastic so, yes ok grow out your hair or whatever, but can you still blow it out? ... Is there still a stage where you can reverse to possibly looking like you have normal hair? (Bernice)

In Bernice's excerpt, she reveals the idea of "false acceptance" of hairstyle choices, because these styles can be "readjusted" and corrected to behave accordingly if so desired. Bernice maintains that while women pronounce agency, family does play a role in representations of the self. She however stresses that this agency should not be exaggerated. She also brings to light the parameters of control still prevalent in the family structure with regard to hair and self-representations. These parameters remain in line with representations, which stem from politically motivated identities. The themes of circumstantial self-representation and hair politics can therefore not be completely separated. They interact with one another in Black women's dialogue on representation.

What is considered "normal hair" is relative. Relative to contexts people are in, relative to the way they were brought up and relative to perceptions about beauty and representations. However, in Bernice's excerpt, normal is considered straight hair, that can be "blown out" and made correct. Normal hair is considered a stark difference from any other kind of hairstyle that may challenge this normative morality of hair. This highlights the perceived need to negotiate one's autonomy in the family with regard to beauty and representations.

Hair Insight

This section takes a step further away from families' impact on representation. It discusses how the Black female agent moves beyond the family framework, to exposure and self-representations on a different level. There is focus on the continuous repositioning of one's roles within the personal self-context, allowing the agent to shift from that intimate world into a wider one. In this sub-theme, "insight" functions within the same space as terms such as *awareness, exposure, education* and *opportunities*. The agentic shifts from this point, allows one to explore how Black women continually reposition their roles in social spaces. It also

explores how their agency manifests in different contexts. More specifically "Hair insight" shifts the focus of representation from the Black woman's intimate world to the wider world. This "wider world" discusses contextual spaces such as professions as well as location.

Finally, this section introduces the discussion of a wider framework of representational agency for Black women. It moves away from family influence on representations as well as negotiating of the self within that familial space. It further discusses a space of greater independence; independence of one's mind as well as one's physical self.

Extract 16

> You wanna constantly have this idea that you need to conform to
> having straight hair. So now, because we recognise it intellectually
> and because we know what it's done, we just don't tolerate it so to
> speak (Bernice)

In extract 16, Bernice argues that her level of awareness and intellectuality on the subject of hair has allowed her to step away (psychologically and physically) from the perceived popular straight hair ideal. She uses "we" to define a certain group of women, who like herself recognise the discussion of hair for Black women, from an intellectual space. She claims that her ability to understand representations for Black women "intellectually" has allowed her to negotiate her way and her representations more comfortably in an aesthetic society. Bernice's statement speaks to the relationship between knowledge and power, in determining whether knowledge and education on a subject exposes us to various viewpoints and perspectives. Her use of the words "so now" and "don't tolerate" does highlight a shift in perceptions on the subject of Black hair and representations. This shift is a result of life experience, as she insinuates different dialogues she may have owned in her past. Her unwillingness to tolerate a sense of conformity is also indicative of growth and life experience. These life experiences shaped her perceptions as a child. In addition, understanding the intellectual realm of Black representations has shaped her current perceptions about Black representation and beauty, as well as shaping her agency in owning those perceptions.

> An open mind helps, maybe education, maybe experiences the
> world outside of things they know. So like [uhm], like if you like in
> that community and you stay in that community, that's how far
> your thinking will go. And if you open yourself up to other
> communities and other ideas and ways of thinking then hopefully
> you'll start to understand that there's more to the way in which you
> engage with the world than in that way (Andy)

In extract 17 Andy speaks to various types of exposure, including education and experiences. This exposure manifests from presence in different physical environments. However, this exposure also requires being open to the physical shift of one's hair representations, through a psychological mind shift. She specifically touches on one's immediate community and how it can stagnate one's performances and ideas about representation.

For Andy, a physical action can result in a mental change as well, however she maintains that one has to be open to the experience, with her words "you open yourself up". This process is one enforced by the personal agent and not by others. For Andy, willingness to be exposed to new contexts and frames of thought will hopefully encourage realisation of the diverse ways in which to engage with various representations. Furthermore, she sees "opportunities to study" as a way for Black women to shift or break away from their superficial surroundings, thus allowing the self to be exposed to new contexts, cultures and ways of thinking about representation.

Wanda spoke vividly about her experience of moving away from the *Cape Flats* and into a more "village-y" (her word) environment. This move exposed Wanda to new ways of thinking about representation and lifestyle. She revealed that she assumed typical personas and performances of the community, which included how coloured women represent themselves and their hair in those communities. With her relocation to Muizenberg, she highlighted being introduced to and being more open to new ways of life and thoughts about representation because of the new context she resided in. The contextual shift she made allowed her to readdress her previous surroundings from an outsider's perspective and a more "exposed" perspective.

Professional Hair

I introduce the section of professional hair to discuss how Black women in particular justify their representations and hair practices as based on their professional contexts. It explores Black women's choices about representation and carrying certain identities befitting such contexts. Stemming from the sub-theme of "Hair insight", this section also explores women's agency within the framework of women's beauty and representation. More specifically it discusses agency or inhibited agency in and as a result of professional contexts occupied. Discussing the professional contexts influencing and shaping representation, broadens the focus of representation of the self. This section addresses the Black agent's personal expansion and consciousness of this expansion in relation to self-representations.

Extract 18

> You try going into a corporate environment with an Afro and have
> people take you seriously (El)

Extract 19

> I can't have my hair the way I want it, its not going to help me, well
> in my profession at that, if you know what I mean. So, it's just
> conforming to sort of an unwritten standard (El)

In extract 18, El reveals the difficulty of representing the natural self in corporate environments. She insinuates that one sacrifices the option to wear one's hair natural, to rather conform to Eurocentric images of beauty in order to be "taken seriously" in corporate environments. This performance is specific to Black women whose natural hair is often perceived to not fit the criteria of what "acceptable hair" is in those professional spaces. Corporate contexts are considered very organised and adhere to mandates and structures. The Afro can be perceived as completely juxtaposing that structure. Due to South Africa's political history and the symbolism of hair attached to challenging colonial rule, an Afro symbolises too much freedom and is the epitome of unstructured. According to El, owning an Afro therefore does not comply with or compliment the picturesque idea of corporate identities.

In extract 19, El reveals that she "can't" carry her hair the way she truly wants to because she is forced to fall in line and follow professional policy. Her reluctance to even attempt to challenge such a professional policy is due to the fact that she feels it will be of no "help" to her in that professional space; thus confirming the idea that representing herself with straight hair is beneficial. By taking away her agency in owning that hairstyle, she is able to better engage with that professional space. El highlights the behaviour to which women are forced to succumb in professional contexts as based on an "unwritten standard". This perceived standard is powerful in its strength to manipulate the mindsets and perceptions about representation of and for Black women.

The manner, in which El justifies carrying her hair, is similar to how she negotiates her justification for wearing a straight wig in the hair politics discussion. El shows agency in wearing her hair in a straight hairstyle, because the professional contexts she is in has predetermined ideas and expectations of representation. By mentioning this, she steps away from the possibility of representing herself in the way she wants to and therefore divorces herself from the possibility of agency at all. However, expressing her underlying interest in wearing natural hairstyles, while being forced to conform because of her professional context, gives her more assertive agency in the image she does carry on a daily basis.

Extract 20

> I do believe that the Afro, the dread or whatever is very much
> context related (Lauren)

In extract 20, Lauren discusses how various hairstyles are context related. She maintains that there are particular hairstyles and hair practices, which best "fit" particular contexts. I bring to light two particular words from the first extract – "always" and "adapt". For Lauren, when it comes to representation of the self in various contexts, there is little to no room allowed for individuality, and her use of the word "always" does indicate that there are certain contexts that do not encourage individuality or agency over representation. Similar to a perception explored in the analysis of hair politics, Lauren presents the idea of being "shackled". This "shackling" refers to women's inability to subjectively interpret and engage with their professional contexts. It takes away a woman's agency in professional contexts, as she

maintains that there is "nothing we can do about it". She appears to limit the possibility and probability of agency for Black women's representation.

In extract 21 below, professional contexts are further classified into two groups, the *creatives* and the *corporates.*

Extract 21

> The creatives like, you can spot them, they're the ones who are doing the drastic things to their hair while at the same time pulling it off. You'll find that they also use hair as a medium to like express themselves. Corporates tend to have very like, you know their hair is always done in "this" way (*she gesticulates*) and that's it (Gina)

In Gina's description of the two professional contexts, she discusses how it is in the creative context, where women wear more drastic or outrageous hairstyles that can make a woman stand out and immediately creates an identity for herself. According to her differentiation of contexts, one's vocational positions can be assumed from the representations of women in that context. The way in which Gina describes corporate hair as "this way and that's it", allows one to assume a juxtaposing ideal for the creatives. Having said this, the assumption is that creatives perpetuate bigger, and louder hairstyles, such as Afro's and dreads, which one can notice more easily. The corporate identity demands and receives very straight/ Eurocentric images from its occupants. These styles are perceived to be more "business" related.

Readdressing Gina's differentiation of expectations in corporate and creative contexts, she reveals that there is a greater sense of individuality and agency allowed in the creative context, as well as greater agency and individuality of representation and hairstyles by Black women who occupy these contexts. She further highlights that their hairstyles are much more "drastic", which highlights how the context encourages agency and experimentation.

Gina denotes corporate identity to be a very structured way of living without room left to own a unique representational identity that challenges the expectations of a corporate context. It appears that corporates are in a way shackled by their representations in that professional space. Gina asserts that in the corporate professional context, there is very little autonomy

and agency over one's representations and in one's hair practices than in the creative context. The corporate context thus controls the Black female agent and her representations.

The idea of agency within any context is again grappled with as Gina reveals how creatives use their hair as a "medium" of self-expression. She notes that corporates are not afforded the same luxury. These performances resonate with the expectations of the context a woman may find herself in and how she chooses to understand, define or even challenge those expectations. However, given the very extreme paradox of the two contexts, choices about representation and willingness to challenge the aesthetic demands of professional contexts is more likely within the creative context than the corporate, as the former context encourages agency more than the latter.

Big City

This section broadens the discussion even further, by focussing on representations based on Black women's contexts. By addressing location of Black women as impacting on their representational performances, there is further exploration of Black women's personal expansion for them in wider social spaces. It explores how my participants negotiate identity and self-representation differently within two different cities in South Africa, namely Cape Town and Johannesburg.

Extract 22

> What I've noticed from Joburg people, is that they've moved away so much from thinking that what white people represent as the standard of beauty, they've actually shifted around and now people are so proud to be black and they moved to whatever is black as the standard of beauty, instead of you know us still trying to move away from whatever is white is the standard of beauty (Bernice)

In South Africa, black Africans make up the largest racial population. 79.5% of South Africans are from the black demographic and 9% are from the coloured demographic (Statistics South Africa, 2011). According to Provide Project's earlier statistic records from 2009, of the 79.42% of black individuals who reside in South Africa, 28.72% of them live in the Western Cape; and

of the 8.85% of coloured individuals who reside in South Africa, 51.18% of them live in the Western Cape alone (Provide Project, 2009).

In Bernice's excerpt she differentiates between black and coloured women's perceptions of beauty. Bernice insinuates that coloured women still seek to portray 'white', while black women, particularly in Johannesburg, have created their own perceptions of beauty. In so doing she reveals that black women assume greater agency over their representations than coloured women. More specifically, black women in Johannesburg are less controlled by external perceptions of beauty than coloured women, allowing them greater agency in the way they carry themselves and their hair.

Extract 23

> Everyone in Joburg... the weaves are very popular in Joburg. Here in Cape Town I've seen lots of people with like their natural hair, which is a stark contrast for me. None of my friends have their hair out in Joburg. Everyone, it's weaves... That's it. Whereas in Cape Town, it looks like everybody's sporting dreads, white, coloured (El)

El (in extract 23) presents a somewhat contrasting argument to Bernice's extract (22). El makes a comparison between how black women most popularly wear their hair in Johannesburg and Cape Town. She recently moved to Cape Town, from Johannesburg, where she grew up and thus has an understanding of representation about performances of black women in Johannesburg. She highlights that weaves are commonly observed in Johannesburg. This gives a foundation to her wearing her straight wig and furthermore her acceptance of wearing weaves as a black woman. She adapted to the popular beauty identities in the social space of Johannesburg because of her contextual placement.

She reveals how women in Cape Town are a lot more diverse in their representations because she says "everybody's sporting dreads". For El, there is more control over beauty rhetoric in Johannesburg than in Cape Town. This finding highlights that while agency is deemed apparent amongst black women sporting their weaves, Johannesburg as a location has actually manipulated people's mindsets about beauty and agency. This encourages the

discussion into black and coloured women's perceptions as different because of their locations; i.e., coloured women in Cape Town and Johannesburg have different perceptions of beauty and similarly for black women.

For Bernice and El the context that encompasses their childhood experiences have shaped the way they think about representations. Both ladies assume agency in their representational performances, and agree that location of the Black agent impacts on representations.

Conclusion

The analysis has focussed on agency over self-representations in various contexts. It has also addressed women's willingness to challenge contextual expectations of beauty. The participants have highlighted how contexts impact on thoughts about representation as well as the performances informed through these perceptions. The natural development of the female self and introduction to the new contexts, such as school were highlighted as prevalent in the discussion of moulding perceptions of beauty. Family and the role of mothers in particular was another prominent context presented in how participants justify their perceptions of beauty in how this context shaped their thoughts about representation and hair performances. Hair insight, professional contexts and location of Black female agents were also discussed as playing a role in shaping thoughts and practices surrounding representation.

From this section of analysis' point of departure, being "coming of age" to location (termed "Big city") of the Black agent, there appears to be a continual personal expansion or expansion of the consciousness from a private space to a more public space. There is a continual shift from the private space, which explores Microsystems, such as family and personal development to more public spaces, such as professional contexts and location.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

This study has illustrated that hair is a monumental subject in society. More specifically, it has highlighted the degree of importance hair holds within social, political, personal and professional society. By focussing on the social interactions between Black women and their hair, it has highlighted how hair functions within the physical and verbal dialogues of women, particularly Black women.

The literature review focussed on scholarship pertaining to the social and political dynamics of hair. Furthermore, various scholars have elucidated on the fact that hair does not only hold a degree of physical authority in society, but also a symbolic power; both of which mediate and instruct Black women's performances in society. Discussions about the physical and symbolic dialogues of hair are imminent throughout discourses in history surrounding representations for Black people.

The analytic text in this study revealed how hair is negotiated, manipulated, performed and challenged in the day-to-day lives of Black women. Each of the three discursive themes grappled with in this study hold strength in its own right. Each had different focal points and discussed aspects of the Black self as unique to such a theme, but also complementary to the other themes. However, the general focus of the analysis illuminated Black women's dialogue about representation from a macro-systemic to a micro-systemic viewpoint. In other words, the study commenced its exploration of analysis from a wider frame of evaluation, being politics and its relationship to representation and hair, having impacted on many cultures of Black people throughout history. It then navigated its discussion to media – a deeply complex phenomenon, while still focussed on Black women and identities through beauty representation. The third segment of analysis – circumstantial self-representation – was purposefully discussed last as it presented an exploration of the personal Black self and the negotiations that take place in that private space. It also addressed the factors immediately surrounding the Black agent within the discussion of beauty and representations.

The study explored alternative representations for Black women and more specifically how Black women grapple with these representations differently. It has also highlighted how Black women discuss hair discourses, by justifying its practices as a result of various contexts, circumstances and influential institutions and individuals. Alternative understandings and ways of representing the self were drawn from the wider realm of perceptions about representation and beauty as a whole. Challenging of popular perceptions and images of beauty was also revealed in the interviews. Here representations of the self were discussed as images driven by choice, and not images directly as a result of circumstances and/or politics.

The study revealed how women understand and discuss Black women's awareness of politics – more specifically through the lenses of colonialism and apartheid – in relation to their perceptions of beauty and ultimately their representational performances. It revealed Black women's awareness of hair politics, but also highlighted their ability to depoliticise situations and make agentic choices about representation, which they articulated as devoid of political and colonial impositions and manipulations. Furthermore, women's hair talk within the realm of politics emphasised how Black women encouraged the acknowledgement of colonialism and apartheid as politically driving the way they think about representation and beauty and ultimately performance of hair representations in society. However, while this acknowledgment was encouraged, it was not allowed the space to completely overpower their thoughts and practices surrounding notions of beauty and hair representations. The study further revealed how Black women explored hair as a performance of statements, beliefs and historical influences, and more specifically how these performances describe the agency of Black women through whichever way they choose to analyse representations in wider spaces as well as their personal spaces.

Media was highlighted as playing a prominent role in perceptions about beauty and representation. Stemming from its ambiguous nature, the ability to challenge popular beauty rhetoric presented by media was also highlighted. Interview discussions revealed media's ability to impact on the personal self and self-evaluations while simultaneously remaining an external and neutral structure. Black women's agency with regard to beauty and hairstyling thus presented with certain inquiry. The study participants argued that performances, which

stem from media's images, are false (or biased) images, creating the possibility of false (or biased) agency of Black women's representations.

The sections of hair politics and hair and media analysis differed in how my participants justified its functioning within society and its impact on the mindsets of Black women surrounding beauty and representation. For hair and politics, my participants maintained that political institutions like colonialism and especially apartheid in South Africa were relatively forceful, resulting in the awareness of the need to "change" the self in order to better succeed in most avenues. Their assertion was that media is purposeful, by being redundant. However, it also maintains a spatial disconnection from its consumers, because of its nature as being omnipresent and without deliberate forcefulness of owning specific titles and/or identities. They argued that the regimes of historical – political mandates, psychologically impacted on representation in the past. The perceptions drawn from such a psychological impact have continued to filter through generations of colour in South Africa. Furthermore, they argued that there was a great deal of force and physical coercion during political eras such as apartheid and colonialism. In addition, media is less deliberate in its expectations of imposed regimes and rather creates a platform of identity through suggestion. Both have proved to psychologically impact on Black women's perceptions, however, each delivers these expectations differently. In addition, agency was revealed as imminent in all the discursive themes, but is performed differently.

The study also presented how my participants discussed contexts and personal relationships as impacting on ultimate representations of the self. This more personal level of analysis (CSR) made specific reference to the importance of awareness, exposure and insight about the impact of contexts on personal evaluations of the physical self. Having said this, the participants brought to light how awareness, exposure and insight also speak to the impact of historical politics and media on such personal evaluations. The sections of hair insight specifically shifted the focus to Black women's representations from an intimate world to a wider world. CSR in particular emphasised insight at various stages of life and addressed how women would narrate their own performances of representation as children, as having moulded their current perceptions about beauty and representations today. The prominent role and assertion of agency for Black women were argued as greatly influenced by contexts

and family. Therefore, agency was again highlighted as functioning within the realms of private and public spaces.

The discursive themes of media and circumstantial self-representation addressed the difference in gendered perspectives regarding representation and especially hair representation for contemporary Black women. What became starkly apparent was how each of the themes discussed in the study fed into each other and explored notions of beauty in different ways, from the perspectives of Black women who are active agents in society. My participants explored how public spaces of representation are influenced by private spaces such as the family and peer groups. Therefore, perceptions of beauty and ultimately one's self-representations are drawn from the influences of one's private circles in order to present the self in public spaces.

A difference between the parameters of control in the themes of hair politics and CSR was also illuminated in this study. Exploring the manner in which Black women are willing to challenge the perceptions of beauty as drawn from circumstances and family as well as politics highlighted this difference. It became clear that Black women are more willing to challenge images of beauty as relegated from historical (political) mandates than from the influences of more intimate spaces such as the family and peer groups.

A central idea filtering through each of the three analysis sections is the idea of agency. Furthermore, challenging perceived ideas of beauty or negating its impact on the personal self has also been deliberated on. The study has highlighted how Black women are constantly presented with images, ideas and belief systems regarding expectations of their beauty and representations in particular. However, the manner in which women discussed these expectations and ultimately drew performances from, describe conformist as well as challenging or rather "unorthodox" behaviour. Both types of behaviour claim agency by its Black female performers.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study was the age range of interviewees who participated in the research. While it focuses on the perceptions and insights of women in the early adulthood and adulthood stages (mid 20s – 40), it negates adolescent frameworks of thought, even though participants themselves say much about this period of development. While the participants were able to recollect their own thoughts as adolescents as well as their opinions of representation at that time, society and culture is continually shifting. Inevitably, perceptions about beauty and representations are different for adolescents. Therefore, expectations and opinions of self-representation are continually changing and being influenced. Hence, on the other side, there is also an older generation of Black women who were not included in this study. Similar to the previous rationalisation, older women hold different views on representation, which are and were also moulded by circumstantial spaces and mindsets at earlier periods of life. What would be most prominent in this differentiation are the political manifestations, which would have greater impact on perceptions about Black women's beauty and representations. In retrospect, the age range of participants in this study may have been too wide. A study with women closer in age range may have provided different data. It will also be interesting to address how mindsets are more or less open to challenging representation and notions of beauty, within the various age ranges, including adolescent, early adulthood, adulthood and late adulthood, in order to identify the prominence of various factors as impacting on self perceptions and representations.

The second limitation of this study pertains to geography. All the participants in this study grew up in and currently reside in an urban environment. Having said this, participants from rural environments, or at least broader environmental groups, may provide data that could highlight different perspectives on such a topic. It would therefore be useful to explore the perceptions of beauty and representations of Black women from rural environments.

A third and final limitation is education. All the participants in this study are considered educated women, as they all completed primary, secondary and tertiary education. The perspectives and opinions, which have come from them, could thus be assumed learned and educated perspectives. It would be interesting to explore perspectives from less educated

Black women. This final point also ties in with exploring this topic with Black women in rural environments.

Recommendations

Acknowledging the conclusion and limitations of the study above, recommendations for this study include experimenting with other data collection methods, such as focus groups, in order to gain rich data in an exploratory space of women. It is in these spaces where women's opinions may be challenged and extensively explored within the interactive space that focus groups provide. Furthermore, the characteristics of participants in future studies could be readdressed, including ages, levels of education and geography of participants. A final recommendation is conducting studies focussing on black and coloured women separately, to explore perceptions regarding representations and identity from specific racial identities.

I believe this study has fore-grounded further exploration of many similar avenues of discussion, including contextualising hair and understanding representations between women of all age groups.

I advocate this type of research in the future and believe it has the ability to continue exploring identity and representations for Black women in a contemporary and an inevitably changing future society.

REFERENCES

Afroze, R. (2010). *A comparative discussion of thematic and discourse analysis and their underlying perspective, goals and applications in qualitative research.* Retrieved 25, October 2012, from http://www.bdeduarticle.com/research/40-uncatagorized/154-a-comparative-discussion-of-thematic-and-discourse-analysis-and-their-underlying-perspective-goals-and-application-in-qualitative-research

Anfara, V. A., Brown, K. M., & Mangione, T. L. (2002). Qualitative analysis on stage: Making research process more public. *Educational Researcher, 31*, 28-38.

Arie, I. (2005). *I am not my hair.* USA: Motown

Baderoon, G. (2011). "This is our speech": Voice, body and poetic form in recent South African writing. *Social Dynamics, 37*(2), 213-227.

Baker- Sperry, L., & Grauerholz, L. (2003). The pervasiveness and persistence of the feminine beauty ideal in children's fairytales. *Gender and Society, 17*(5), 711- 726.

Banks, I. (2000). *Hair matters: Beauty, power and black women's consciousness*. New York and London: New York University Press.

Bellinger, W. (2007). Why African women try to obtain 'good hair'. *Sociological Viewpoints, 23,* 63-72.

Berry, E. R. (2008). The zombie commodity: Hair and the politics of globalization. *Postcolonial studies, 11*(1), 63-84.

Boucher, G (2006). The politics of performativity: A critique of Judith Butler. *Parrhesia: a journal of critical philosophy,* (1) 112-141.

Brickell, C. (2005). Masculinities, performativity and subversion. *Men and Masculinities, 8*, 24-43.

Brubaker, R., & Cooper, F (2000). Beyond identity. *Theory and Society, 29*, 1-47.

Butler, J. (1988). Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay on phenomenology and feminist theory. *Theatre Journal, 40*(4), 519-531.

Butler, J. (2009). Performativity, precarity and sexual politics. *Politics*, *4*(3), 1-12.

Byrd, A. D., & Tharps, L. L. (2001). *Hair story: Untangling the roots of black hair in America.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Cheek, J. (2004). At the margins? Discourse analysis and qualitative research. *Qualitative health research*, *14*(8), 1140-50. doi: 10.1177/1049732304266820.

Dash, P. (2006). Black hair culture, politics and change. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 10*(1), 27-37. doi: 10.1080/1363110500173183

Erasmus, Z. (1997). 'Oe! my hare gaan huistoe': Hair-styling as black cultural practice. *Agenda, 32,* 11-16.

Fanon, F. (1952). *Black skins white masks.* United Kingdom: Pluto Press.

Fields Grenee, H. (2011). *What spending a half trillion dollars on hair care and weaves says about us.* Retrieved April 13, 2012, from http://madamenoire.com/57134/what-spending-a-half-a-trillion-dollars-on-hair-care-and-weaves-says-about-us/

Gelo, O., Braakman, D., & Benetka, G. (2008). Quantitative and qualitative research: Beyond the debate*. Integrative Psychological and Behavioural Science*, *42*, 266-290. doi: 10. 1007/s12124-008-9078-3.

Gqola, P. D. (2010). *What is slavery to me?: Postcolonial/ slave memory in post apartheid South Africa.* South Africa: Wits University Press

Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (ed.). *Identity.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. pp 222-237.

Haugtvedt, C. P., Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1992). Need for cognition and advertising: Understand the role of personality variables in consumer behaviour. *Consumer Psychology, 1*(3), 239-260.

Hjarvard, S. (2008). The mediatization of society. A theory of the media as agents of social and cultural change. *Nordicom Review, 29*(2), 105-134.

Huddy, L. (2001). From social to political identity: A critical examination of social identity theory. *Political Psychology*, *22*(1), 127-156. doi: 10.1111/0162-895X.00230.

Jere-Malada, R. (2008). Women's politically correct hair. *New African Women*, *1,* 14-18.

Johnson, J. L., & Repta, R (2012). Sex and gender: Beyond the binaries. In J. L. Oliffe & L. Greaves (Eds.), *Designing and conducting gender, sex and health research.* California: SAGE Publications.

Johnston, L. G., & Sabin, K. (2010). Sampling hard-to-reach populations with respondent driven sampling. *World Health, 5*, 38-48. doi: 10.4256/mio.2010.0017.

Jones, R. (2012). *Discourse analysis: A resource book for students.* London: Routledge

Joyner, M (1988). Hair care in the black patient. *Journal of Paediatric Health Care*, *2,* 281-287.

Kynoch, G. (2005). Crime, conflict and politics in transition-era South Africa. *African Affairs, 104*(416), 493-514.

Lester, N. A. (1999). Roots that go beyond big hair and a bad hair day: Nappy hair pieces. *Children's Literature in Education, 30*(3), 171-183.

Lewendal, G., & Levendal, G. (2004). Holding my breath: Feeling my way through 'Black' and 'women'. *Agenda, 59,* 138-150.

Lloyd, M. (1999). Perfomativity, parody and politics. *Theory, Culture and Society*. *16*(2), 195-213.

Mercer, K. (1987). Black hair/style politics. *New Formations, 3,* 33-54.

Merriam-Webster.com. (n.d.). *Shackle*. Retrieved 5 November, 2012, from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/shackle

Mitchell (2011). *Stop apologizing for being Black: Natural hair in the workplace.* Message posted to: http://ourlegaci.com/2011/09/stop-apologizing-for-being-black-natural-hair-in-the-workplace/#.UHfbSKlMKCQ

Morrison, A. M. (2010). Straightening up: Black women law professors, interracial relationships, and academic fit(ting) in. *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender, 33,* 85-98.

Murray, J. (2012). Pain is beauty: The politics of appearance in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut*. *English in Africa, 1,* 91-107.

National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979). *The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research*. Washington DC.

NaturallyCurly.com (n.d.) *Resilience*. Retrieved 3 September, 2012, from http://www.naturallycurly.com/curltalk/4a/74238-natural-hair-poetry.html

Olasode, O. A. (2009). Chemical hair relaxation and adverse outcomes among negroid women in South West Nigeria. *Journal of Pakistan Association of Dermatologists, 19,* 203-207.

Patton, T. O. (2006). Hey girl, am I more than my hair?: African American women and their struggles with beauty, body image and hair. *Review Literature and Arts of the Americas, 2*.

Parker, I. (1999). Tracing therapeutic discourse in material culture. *British Journal of Medical Psychology, 72*, 577-587.

Parker, I. (2005). *Qualitative Psychology: Introducing Radical Research*. New York: Open University Press.

Provide Project. (2009). A profile of the Western Cape Province: Demographics, poverty, income, inequality and unemployment from 2000-2007. *Provide Project Background Paper, 1*(1).

Qekema, N. (2010). *The June 16 uprising unshackled: A Black perspective.* Retrieved 15 June, 2012, from http://www.azapo.org.za/index.php?subaction=showfull&id=1277813459&archive=&start_from=&ucat=2&

Ribane, N. (2006). *Beauty: A black perspective*. Kwazulu-Natal: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press.

Rooks, N. M. (1996). *Hair raising: Beauty, culture and African American women.* New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Rosenborough, I. E., & McMichael, A. J. (2009). *Hair care practices in African-American patients*, *28*, 103-108.

Rosette, A. S., & Dumas, T. L. (2007). The hair dilemma: Conform to mainstream expectations or emphasise racial identity. *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy*, *14*(407), 407-421.

Salih, S. (2002). On Judith Butler and Performativity. *Sexualities and Communication,* Retrieved May 2, 2011, from http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/theory/Salih-Butler-Performativity-Chapter_3.pdf

Seekings, J. (2003). Centre for social science research: Social stratification and inequality in South Africa at the end of apartheid. *Social Science, 31,* 1-55.

Singh, D., & Singh, D. (2011). Shape and significance of feminine beauty: An evolutionary perspective. *Sex Roles, 64,* 723-731.

Statistics South Africa. (2011). *Annual report 2010/11.* Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.

Tate, S. (2007). Black beauty: Shade, hair and anti-racist aesthetics. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 30*(2), 300-319.

Terre Blanche, M., Durrheim, K., & Painter, D. (2006). *Research in Practice.* Rondebosch: University of Cape Town Press.

Thompson, C. (2009). Black women, beauty and hair as a matter of being. *Women Studies*, *38*, 831-856.

Thomas-Williams, C. O. (2008). Judith Butler: Philosophical encounters of the third kind. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 10*(2), 251-256.

Tongco, D. C. (2007). Purposive sampling as a tool for informant selection. *Methods, 158*, 147-158.

Vilakazi, P. (2012). You're a coconut. *KasiTimes*. Retrieved 19 July, 2012, from www.kasitimes.co.za/opinions/youre-a-coconut/

Walsh, D. W., & Gentile, D. A. (2001). Slipping under the Radar: Advertising and the mind. In L. Riley & I Obot (Eds.), *Drinking it in: alcohol marketing and young people.* Geneva Switzerland: World Health Organisation. pp. 1-19

Wesson, D. (n.d.). *Suggestibility as an operant factor in advertising effects, cognitive defences and the issue of consumer sovereignty*. University of Northumbria: Newcastle Business School
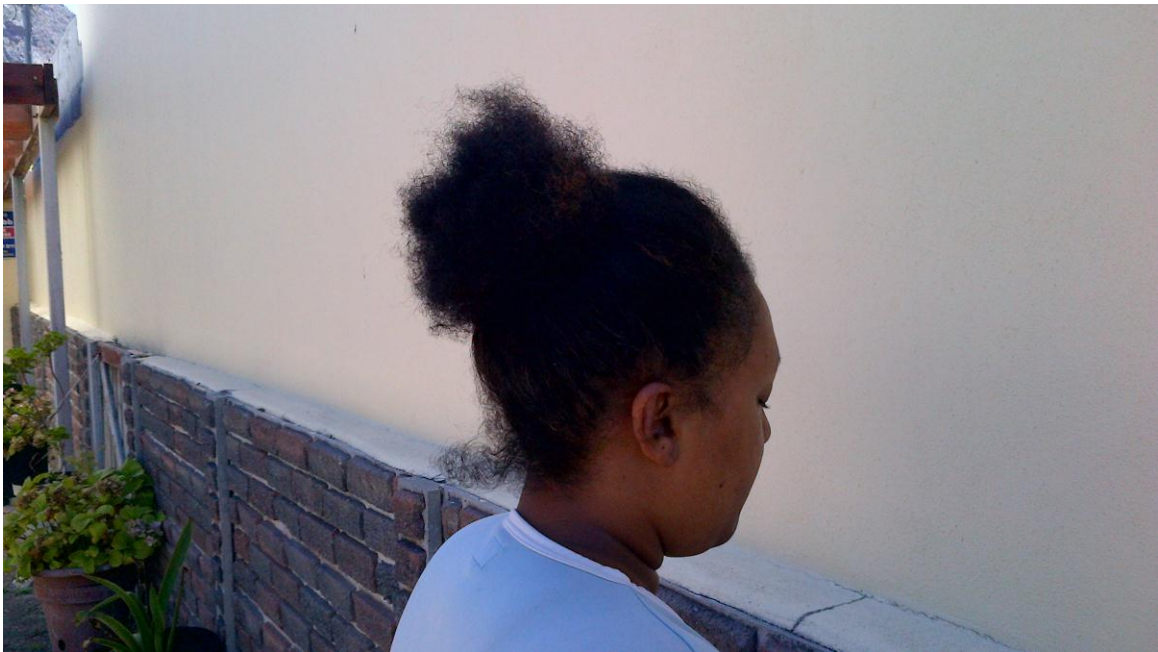
Wicomb, Z. (1998). Shame and identity: The case of the coloured in South Africa. In D. Attridge & R. Jolly (Eds.), *Writing South Africa: Literature, apartheid and democracy 1970-1995,* (pp. 91-107). Cambridge: University Press.

Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (1994). *Mass Media Research: an introduction* (4th ed.). California: International Thomas Publishing.

PARTICIPANTS' HAIRSTYLES
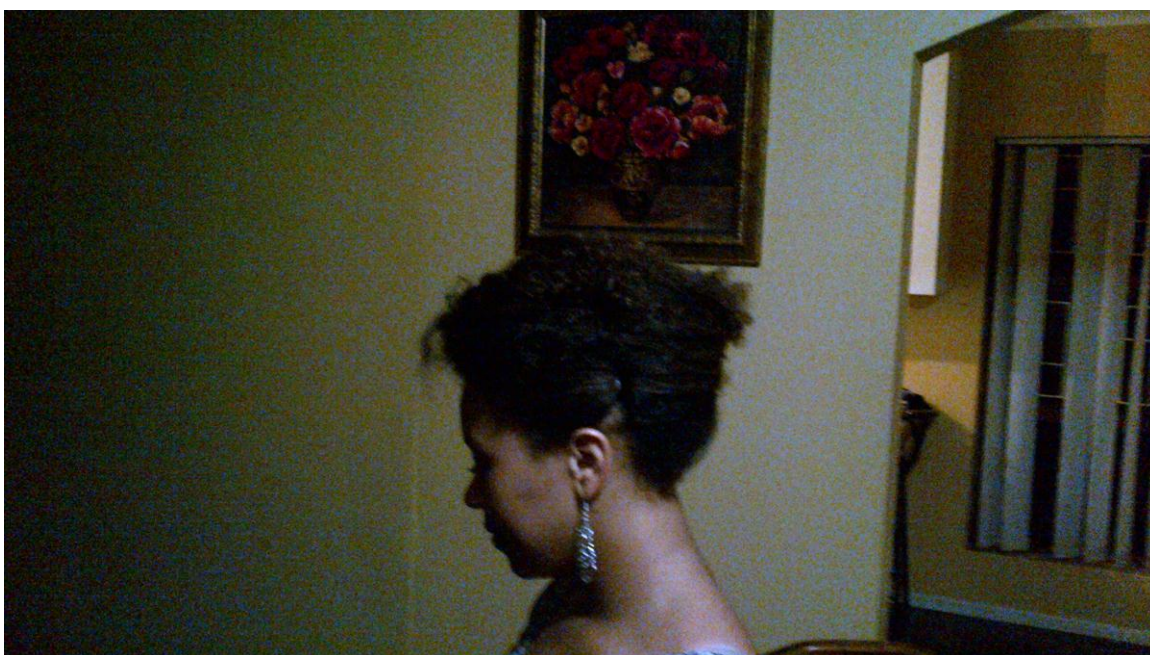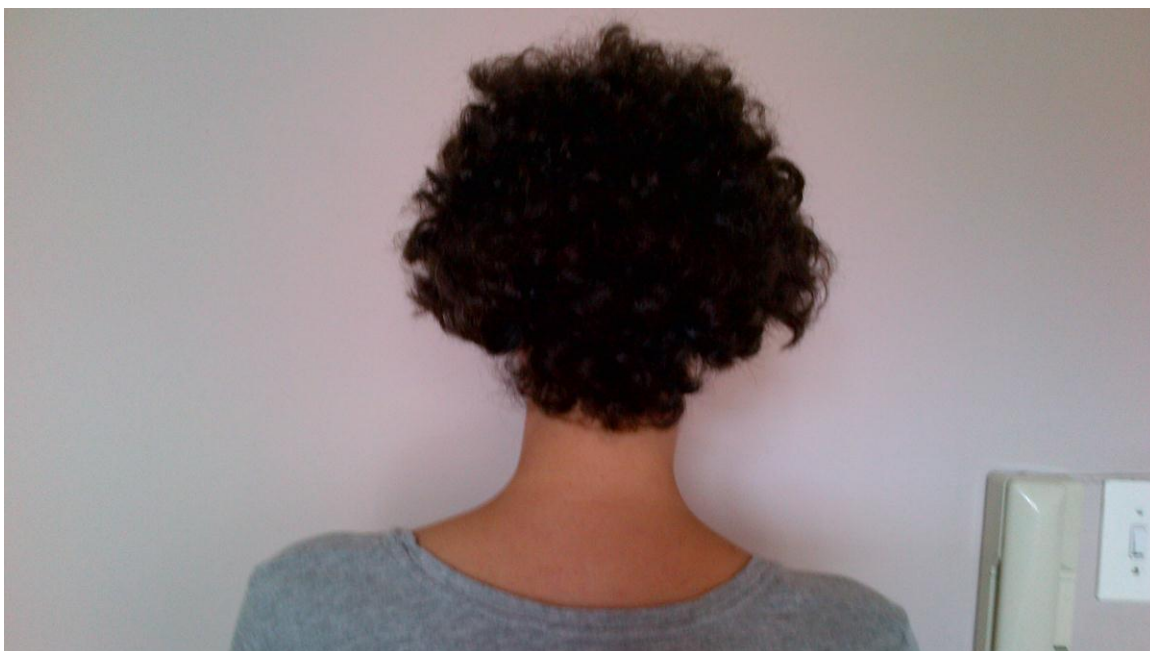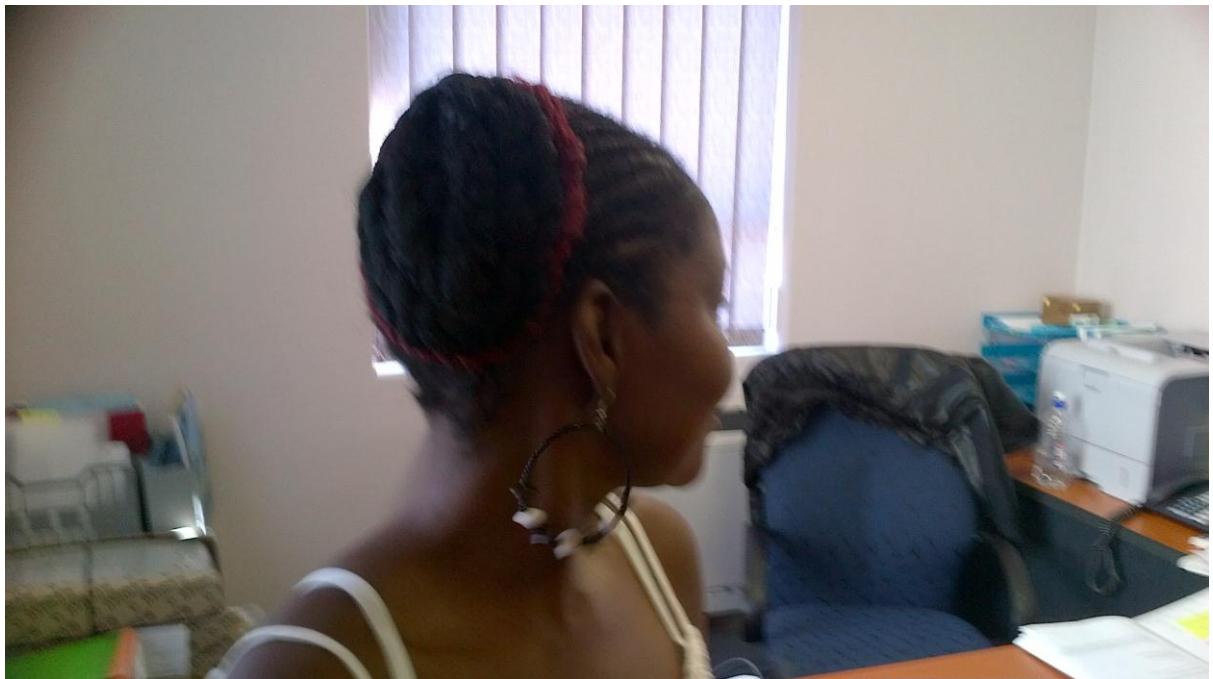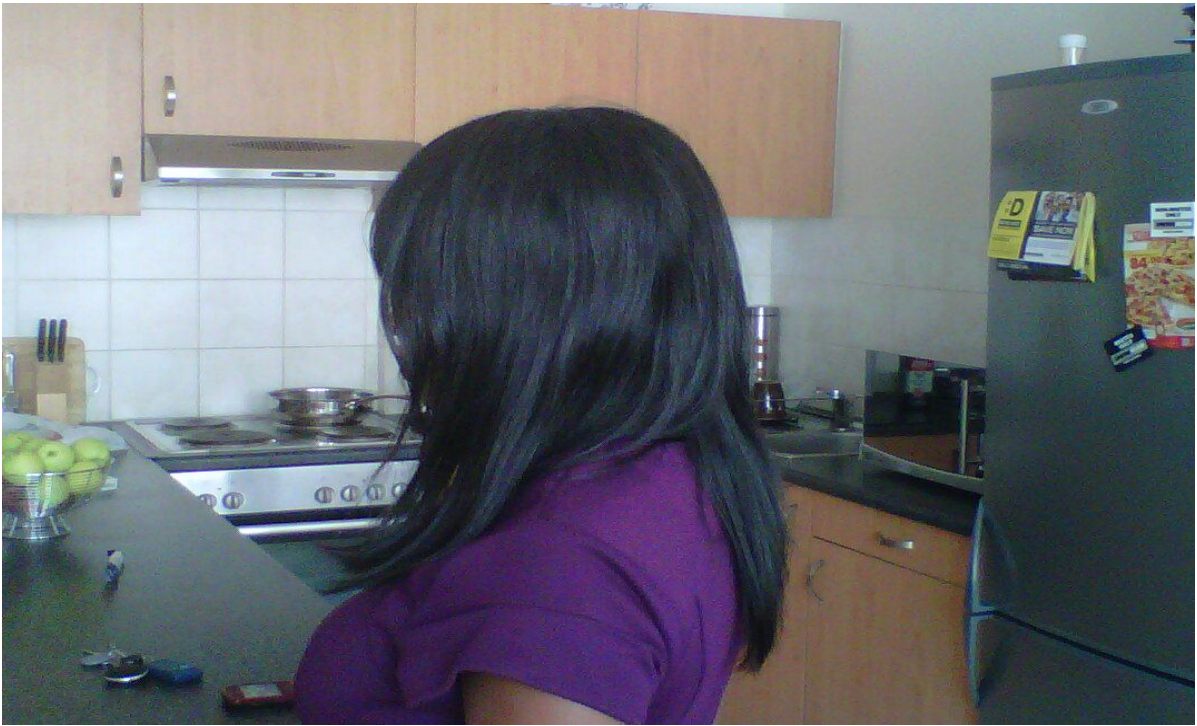
Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant

You have been approached to participate in this study interview on hair representations among Black South African women, conducted by Jenna-Lee Marco.

This study forms part of the fulfilment of a Master of Arts in Psychology degree. Your participation in this study will make a valuable contribution to understanding how hair plays a role in the lives of Black women in South Africa.

Should you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an unstructured interview with the head researcher, Jenna-Lee Marco.

Signature: ……………………………………………..

Date: ……………………………………………

Interview consent form

I, …………………………………………… consent to being interviewed by Jenna-Lee Marco for her study on how hair is represented among Black South African women.

I understand that:

- Participation in this interview is voluntary.
- I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to.
- I may withdraw from this study at any time.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.
- Direct quotes may be used from the final report, but my identity will not be revealed.
- There are no risks or benefits to me if I participate in this study.

Signed: ……………………………………………

Date: ……………………………………………

Consent Form

(Digital /Voice Recorder)

I …………………………………………… consent to my interview with Jenna-Lee Marco for her study on how hair is represented among Black South African women.

I understand that:

- The digital recordings and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person at any time, and will only be processed by the researcher and transcribers.
- The digital recordings will be safely stored on the researcher's password protected personal computer for the duration of the research.
- All digital recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.
- Direct quotes from the interview may be used in the final report, but my identity will not be revealed.
- There are no risks or benefits to me if I participate in this study.

Signed: ………………………………………………

Date: ………………………………………………

Consent form

(Photographs)

I …………………..……………………..… acknowledge all relevant information pertaining to this research study and my involvement therein, and will allow photographs to be taken of my hairstyle(s). I will also allow these photographs to be used by Jenna-Lee Marco for research purposes.

Sign: …………………………………………………

Date: ………………………………………..……………