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like...espec...okay...**as a Coloured woman or just as a Coloured girl growing up I think we were always thought that anything African was baaaad (^) and inferior and not worthy and so (5.0)...it was almost like being called an African or being called black was bad it was like you were second rate or you a second class citizen you a second class human being uhm and again...anything white was [raises hand above head] that was the standard that was what you were stri striving towards so ugh gosh!**", "And I've learned that Africa is so rich and uh Ellen Johnson- cerleaf said ***"Africa is very rich, we've just been poorly managed"***.....And also

as a Coloured woman cause I'm a Coloured and I've got black blood in me as a Coloured woman also too...ugh...we've been colonised our minds have been colonised so much as a Coloured woman having growing up on the Cape Flats being raised by a single parent that I don't have to stick into that box...I don't (^).....". HP 3 addresses that as a result of colonialization Coloured women have been taught to see themselves in particularly skewed notions where striving towards 'whiteness' seemed an innate response. However, several means of decolonising the mind continually become made known and those who choose mental liberation begin to see themselves 'outside of the box' they were put in as they come to terms with and take control of their decolonization.

2. What role has society played in the historical and present conceptualization of hair as an identity marker?

Historically, society played an extensive role in classing and classifying people according to physical traits and this did not exclude hair. The infamous pencil-test was historically used to class people into various race groups and particular stereotypical labels were placed on these racial groups. Western Culture has long been treated as the 'right' way and everything that differed was deemed as 'left'. Thus communities in society attempted to conform to their standards to be able to fit into society and hair became a marker of identity. The participants recall moments where society played a role in the conceptualization of hair as an identity marker in the past and present. In the past the participants recall school rules that governed the 'whiteness' of their hair, family members entrenching 'corrective' hair practices and the lack of representation in the media among many other instances. As hair was further etched in as marker of identity by the 'pencil-test', even though it played a deranged role in apartheid, it does support the claim that identity does lie within hair among other things. However, for

Coloured women, it is the present that allows them to re-conceptualize hair as a marker of identity as it is far more than a divisive label but holds within its roots the essence of who they strive to be as they re-create their identity. We now have the ability to re-write the norms or what is seen as acceptable in society and broaden it to be more inclusive than the narrowed vision of Western Eurocentric culture.

3. To what degree does the transition process allow Cape Coloured women to re-fashion, establish and negotiate their identities in a post-apartheid South Africa?

The transition back to natural hair has had various impacts on the participants yet each mentioned that they have achieved mental liberation of sorts as they now are allowed to re-fashion their identity in a post-apartheid world. Identities are fluid and ever-changing and as such it allows individuals the opportunity to negotiate their identities and perform acts that help establish their desired identity. It is however an ongoing process as society has to unlearn the confines of the past and be taught the inclusive visions of the future. We have to transition, just as their hair has gone through different processes to reach the stage they are at now, so we will have to change our ways of thinking and lean into the diversity we have been blessed with. This transition process has allowed all the participants to grow in confidence as the world allowed them to take up space figuratively and literally when it comes to natural hair. HP 2 describes how she was known as the shy girl who kept her hair and head down to being identified as the girl with the big hair who holds friendly conversation, “I remember that day I walked out of church and I looked up [lifts head with finger] and I walk down the street and I look up because I decided that I’m going to look at you so that when you look at me and you want to smile at me because you appreciate my crown [shows space around hair] and I will smile back at you and it made people in the road walk into church no one would talk to me right because I always

look like this [looks down] but I came back and walk with my head up high and I looked at people... **that made me realise you know what my crown being up there means that my head also has to be up there [lifts head high again]...**” Her big hair allowed her room to grow into her big personality as she embraced her natural hair and self. HP 4 reflects, “...throughout this journey I think this journey has taught me that uhm my aim should should not have been trying to fit in uhm it should not have been trying to look like the next person it should be try and be identified as who I am, trying to look like me, trying to look like me **uhm and now surprisingly my family tell me no that afro is you, it is what we identify you with uhm that is just who you are...**”. Through this reflection it is evident that re-fashioning ones identity lies in fully embracing who you are but it also relies on the societal view of what is ‘accepted’. Thus the transition seems to be taking place not just within those who undergo the process but also within those within their community which allows this re-fashioning and negotiating of identities to take place.

4. What constitutes hairstyle as performance and defining quality of Cape Coloured women’s identities?

Hair is a means of performing identity acts in an attempt to converge to the desired group. Hair is a complex concept when it comes to women and their identity, particularly Coloured women. When the pencil-test defined Coloured individuals according to their hair type, it became a marker of identity. Thus hairstyle not just a hairstyle, it has a meaning in society and means various things for those who dawn their diverse styles. It is a performance of identity as it is not something that haphazardly happens but it is a choice that is consciously made and performed. From the choice of straightening hair to wearing your hair natural, they all have different impacts on the identity. It is therefore not just Hair. HP 1 embodies this as she recalls how hairstyle is a performance and defining quality in Coloured women’s identities, “...I have a picture!...this beautiful dress uh African style



heart, boob-tube what what what! A gold uhm choker vibe **annnd even though my mini afro was still out I looked like a flippen Queeeeeeeeen! (^) That moment!, that was the moment where I was just like, it was probably my wedding more than it was the girls' [smiles] cause I was just liiike [flips 'hair'] you know...**". She displays this moment through showing how her hair made her feel that day and performs her identity as she relives that moment. Hair is an embodiment of who we are and hope to be seen as.

5. To what extent does media representation play a role in upholding dominant ideologies

Representation matters and the incorrect representation of minority groups have a direct impact on society. Media plays a vital role in the way a society upholds dominant ideologies and misrepresentations have consequences especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where media is no longer a one-sided affair. People now have the ability to challenge media outputs through citizen journalism as misrepresentations are no longer acceptable in the age of technology. Media maintains negative narratives and stereotypes in the way they create and produce content on their platforms from extremely narrowed perspectives. HP 4 elaborates this, "...so in that moment it was to me like that's just it's this view [hands show narrow view] that people have you know, they people prefer to look like horses like this, they only see this type of view and if you don't has a person as an individual broaden your view, then that's all you're gonna see...". HP 3 recalls working in media and suggests that the media have no excuse to be producing and distributing inaccurate under-represented narrow-minded information, "how in the name of history how in the name of data that we have available with ALL (^) of this information...history...you are supposed to know the continent you supposed to know the country the background all levels so you supposed to do a whole pestle analysis..." Media plays a vital role in how society interprets the world around them. It has the power to influence

millions at a time and the responsibility that goes along with possessing this kind of influence is not taken seriously enough.

#### **8.4 Recommendations**

The data present is unfortunately insufficient to make bigger generalisations although it does provide evidence for the problem addressed. I however believe that further research should be done regarding hair and Coloured women as the data available is far too little for such a large part of our population. Further inquiry on narratives of Coloured women would allow an extensive exploration of their stories and generational practices passed down through the years. This would allow for years of missing data on this population to start to take further shape. I also suggest that the Coloured identity post-apartheid should be investigated as a whole and that this identity is to be seen and investigated as fluid and ever-changing in a post-apartheid world.

It is further recommended that interviews be done face-to-face after covid-19 or in the place of stringent protocols as the online meetings were met with connection, sound and various other technological problems that have impacted my data as some interviews could not be used as they were not of good quality due to connections etc.

#### **8.5 Conclusion**

This chapter presented conclusions to the objectives and research questions situated within the study. It also provided an overview of the study and recommendations for a future route for the social semiotics of hair as well as the Cape Coloured community.



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## 10 Appendix- Ethics Documentation



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