Not my hair! Perceptions of Young black women on policing of their hair at Model C schools

By

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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained within is my own original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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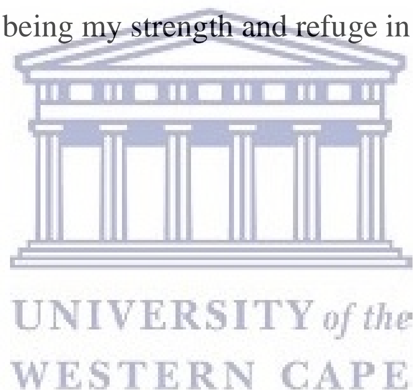
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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the experiences of young Black women educated in former all-white schools, better known as Model C schools, and their stories around the policing of their hair. This phenomenon is particularly prominent in interracial spaces where whiteness is normalised and people of colour are ostensibly the minority, such as at Historically White Model C Schools. This qualitative study seeks to understand these experiences and their linkages to historical events, utilising Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the concept of Politicisation as theoretical frameworks for analysis.

Ten black women were interviewed to share their counter-narratives of hair policing. These interviews were subjected to discourse analysis. The findings revealed how Black women have come to understand their experiences of hair policing as a form of institutional racism. The study further revealed in the last half of the analysis, how black women came to understand and interpreted their hair policing experiences as political - more specifically through the lenses of colonialism and apartheid. This interpretation draws connections between their personal encounters and notable incidents such as the Pretoria High School for Girls (PHSG) and Clicks/TRESemmé advert controversies.

By highlighting the experiences of hair policing, this study underscores the significant impact of such incidents on the academic and social development of Black women, emphasizing the political nature of black hair. The research underscores that hair policing experiences are deeply rooted in historical and social contexts. The findings also expose the insidious presence of institutional racism within educational institutions, particularly in formerly all-white schools that have transformed into multi-racial environments. By using black hair as a medium to examine institutional racism and cultural dynamics, this study contributes to a broader understanding of the complexities surrounding race, identity, and education in multi-racial schools. It aims to raise awareness about the subtle forms of racism that infiltrate institutions and to foster a more inclusive and equitable educational environment for all students.

Keywords: Black women, hair policing; Historically White Insinuations; Model C; Critical Race Theory; Politicisation

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND RATIONAL

After the dismantling of apartheid, the South African government implemented various formal policies to authorise racial integration in high schools. While the demographics of many high schools in South Africa have changed, there have been many obstacles to meaningful racial integration in schools (Chrisite & McKinney, 2017). Thus, a discrepancy between formal and substantive change exists. Integration has been mostly a formal process implemented through policies and laws however substantive integration is a process which manifests itself in the daily, lived experiences of pupils in these high schools. To date, this has not lived up to expectations (Chrisite & McKinney, 2017). A notable example of this discrepancy is the cross-country protest by black female pupils against school policies banning Afro and natural black hair. In August 2016, black students at Pretoria High School for Girls, a former all-white school, took to march against a school policy that banned afro hair. Students accounted that this protest streamed from years of enduring racism at the hands of school administration (Makanda, 2016).

Similar incidents have occurred and most recently an advertisement by TRESemmé associated with the store chain Clicks, depicted African hair as "dry and damaged", "frizzy and dull" while Eurocentric hair was seen as "normal" and "fine and flat" (Bhengu, 2020). This depiction of Africans as being "less than" undermined sparked outrage nationwide, showcasing that despite 25-plus years of democracy and integration, African features such as afro-textured hair are still seen as abnormal and unsightly for social settings. Despite formal integration policies, substantive processes in most former all-white schools hold Black students back, and in this case, Black females still report racism at the hands of school officials as regards their hair.

This research aims to explore the experiences of young Black women educated in former all-white schools, better known as Model C schools and their stories around the policing of their hair. In particular, inspired by the recent Pretoria High School for Girls (PHSG) protest and the Clicks TRESemmé advert debacle, the study will focus on whether and how these young women define and explain their personal experiences as forms of politics. This study also aims to showcase the racialised cultures and systems that endure in historically white institutions (HWIs) and manifest in racialised norms around Afro-textured hair in particular.

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Even though the cases of Zulaikha Patel and others reflect deeply ingrained anxieties about the need to control Blackness, research on racism in schools suggests that such cases are only the tip of the iceberg (Alexander, Weeks-Bernard, & Arday, 2015). Most examples of racially discriminatory school uniform policies do not garner the attention that Zulaikha's case did, and instead, the repression of Black hair is normalised within a post-apartheid, post-racial society that constructs school policy as racially-neutral and/or 'colour-blind' (Gillborn, 2008; Joseph-Salisbury, 2018). In this regard, this study will use her case and those of the participants to shed light on how former all-white high schools police Black hair. Hence, this study argument is part of a larger racist system that uses institutional racism to maintain white supremacy over Black bodies. The tensions surrounding the attempts by schools to police the hair of Black students should not be understood in isolation, but rather, as an extension of the embedded racism in institutions that function to systematically subjugate Black people. In this sense, schooling is but one site of many within a broader apparatus of racial discrimination that has historical antecedents in the trans-Atlantic trafficking, enslavement and colonisation of African peoples.

There is a wealth of literature on colonialism and other kinds of institutionalized racism's role in the racialization and gendering of the body (hooks, 1988; Grayson, 1995; Erasmus, 2000). Although certain post-colonial works such as (Thompson, 2009; hooks, 1988) specifically examine the racialized and gendered notion of hair texture, relatively little of it concentrates on this process in the South African context. I only came across a few studies on black hair specifically as it pertains to discrimination. The paucity of research on this vital subject also demonstrates its applicability. On a global scale, colonization had a significant impact on the ideas of race, gender, class, and physical attractiveness. Zimitri Erasmus, a South African sociologist (2000, p. 381)informs us,

> *"Western racisms in their various mutations make claims about the body: about beauty and ugliness, and about sexuality. The politics and violence of this racism operate in and through the body. This legacy has meant that, in general, white bodies have graced with beauty while black bodies have been relegated to ugliness".*

That is, human bodies have been separated, and classified as races and genders, based on physical similarities and differences in a hierarchical manner. The way racial categorizations have traditionally been conceived is strongly related to, some of the ideas about human types that emerged from the European Enlightenment (Steyn, 2001; Kitch, 2009). European explorers told stories about their encounters with people from all over the 'new' world in the

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1400s (Steyn, 2001, p. 8) However, it was not until the 1700s that racial categories became popular as a way of dividing and segregating people in ways that suited colonial purposes, such as justifying land theft and the subjugation of 'black' people (Steyn, 2001, p. 13-14). During the colonial period and beyond, racial distinctions were regarded as descriptive rather than normative. As a result, people living in areas of interest to colonizers, such as Africa, Asia, and the Americas, were stereotyped as racially inferior to Europeans. The human body and its physical differences have been and continue to be used to define what society should value and strive for (Steyn, 2001; Kitch, 2009). This image was created from the perspective of 'white' Europeans and justified based on European Enlightenment values' precision and rational superiority.

According to South African sociologist Deborah Posel (2001a; 2001b), South Africa faced years of segregation and racial practices favouring whites before the National Party came into power in 1948. However, race ideas were fluid and determined locally usually determined by body features and lifestyle differences. Because of this ambiguity, apartheid was a practical way to maintain and protect white supremacy against the perceived black threat, thus the Population Registration Act was passed. It served as a centralized, ridged and articulate form of racial classification (Posel, 2001a). Race was used to maintain social and moral order through discipline, regulation, and surveillance. The Apartheid regime provided 'whites' with access to the country's wealth and resources by allocating them to those classified as 'white' (Posel, 2001a, p. 66). The Population Registration Act did not simply divide people into groups; it did so in a hierarchical order, "[...] which ranked whiteness at its apex" (Posel, 2001a, p. 57) and "[...] 'native' was the default classification" (Posel, 2001b, p. 105). To be classified as 'native' meant to be at the bottom of the racial hierarchy; being classified as 'native' meant harsher treatment in all aspects of life. For example, 'natives' were denied equal participation in and access to societal resources such as education, work, property ownership, marriage, and the freedom to live and travel freely (Posel, 2001a).

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The basis of determining race was skin colour, those who were racially ambiguous and who neither looked white nor black were classified as coloured. This lead to many 'Coloured' people being reclassified as 'white' or 'native', and many 'native' people being able to be reclassified as 'Coloured', and in a few cases 'white' people being reclassified as 'Coloured'. Because of this loophole, the regime imposed additional tests and amendments to prove one's racial belonging (Posel, 2001a). One of these tests was the infamous 'Pencil Test' which was used to determine racial differences between 'white' and 'non-white' people. Classifiers would place a pencil in an individual's hair, if it did not pass through the hair, the person would

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automatically be considered 'non-white' and other 'tests' and lifestyle criteria were used to distinguish between 'native' and 'Coloured'. Furthermore, classifiers would consult with barbers and other 'experts' to determine whether a person's hair was of an acceptable texture for a 'white' (Posel, 2001b). Consequently, in many communities of colour, an association with whiteness and distance from Africanness was embedded. Since little could be done to change your skin colour hair could be the deciding factor in one's life chances (Adhikari, 2005). In many cases, the colour of one's skin and the texture of one's hair were the cause of broken homes and denial of social and economic access. What should be clear from this discussion is that being labelled as a "non-white" person was both socially and economically disadvantageous. This helps to explain why people classified as one of two types of "non-white" people engaged in practices to appear more "white," such as hair straightening.

Hair remains a visual articulator of this value ranking system in many societies in the new millennium. The conventional wisdom about what constitutes beautiful hair maintains that straight, sleek, long hair is attractive and desirable and that it is associated with 'white' Europeans, particularly women. Coarse textured hair, on the other hand, is considered unattractive and associated with being 'black' (Grayson, 1995). The body is not only racialised but also gendered, according to postcolonial and feminist literature (Kitch, 2009). This is true for both hair and any other physical feature. Women with coarse hair are more likely to face stigma and discrimination (Thompson, 2009). Hair, for example, is important to a woman's social position because it is both public and personal, according to Rose Weitz (2001). In this way, it is visible and attached to the body, exposing it to cultural and social norms.

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Furthermore, Erasmus (2000, p. 13) argues that "Hairstyling and texturizing were (and still are) key beautification practices in the making of womanhood among young Coloured women". It is important to note that, following 1994, South African society witnessed racially conscious movements that encouraged and promoted a framework of 'Africanization,' which embraces an 'authentic' African aesthetic, such as coarse hair styles and textures. As a result, they complicate and frequently compete with the dominant 'white' aesthetic. Hair texture and styling are still used as visual markers of race in 21st-century South African society, often in binary oppositions such as coarse versus straight hair. Straight hair is associated with being white, while coarse textured hair is associated with being black. Individuals who identify as 'Coloured' and Black may become entangled in social expectations based on hair texture because hair texture varies greatly within this group from coarse to curly, wavy, and straight.

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As such with the increase of racial diversity in South African high schools, particularly at historically white schools such as Boland Girls High School, (BGHS pseudonym used for local high school) and Pretoria High School for Girls (PHSG), so too could the incidences of racism increase in spaces that were previously white only. These forms of racism have been manifesting in acts of hair policing across society, particularly in key social institutions such as the schooling system, and are underpinned by an enduring colonial desire to control 'unruly' Black bodies (Yancy, 2017). Given that both policing and education serve to maintain and perpetuate white supremacy (Long, 2016; Long, 2018; Vitale, 2017; Gillborn, 2005). In essence, observing the primary responsibility for black body policing shifting from one institution to another: black bodies become entangled in a web of whiteness.

The fact that Black students are more likely to be excluded from school should not be interpreted as indicating a greater proclivity for breaking school rules. As Graham (2016) argues, 'historically and persistently, Black pupils' behaviour in classrooms is more likely to be heavily scrutinized and incur a reprimand compared with the same behaviour by their White peers'. As a result, Black exclusion rates are indicative of pervasive ideologies that impose deviant stereotypes on Black bodies (Joseph-Salisbury, 2018). However, policing of Black students' manifests not only in high rates of exclusion, but also in curriculum, pedagogy, and other school policies that appear neutral but are underpinned by white supremacy (Gillborn 2006). Furthermore, David Gillborn's (Gillborn, 2006, p. 89). Research has demonstrated how education policy has "failed to address race inequality" and has instead served to perpetuate it. He argues that the changes that have occurred are racist in their outcome insofar as black students have been markedly disadvantaged, citing how changes in assessment coincided with a radical decrease in the attainment of Black students at the start of school. These changes appear to be the result of the normal workings of the education system—a system that places race equality on the periphery of debate and takes no action when black students are judged to be failing (Gillborn, 2006).

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The concept of hair politicisation and discrimination will be introduced in this study to convey acts in which racism or racial bias may be concealed from the participants, and some White people may not actively seek to be racially biased towards girls of colour. Rather, white people have historically been socialized to perceive themselves as superior while placing people of colour on the periphery of superiority. These beliefs are so deeply ingrained that White people are frequently unaware that they are being racially prejudiced. As a result, the concept of hair policing is preferred to reflect the unintentionality of the behaviours. This definition does not imply that the act does not exist at all; rather, it implies that it exists in

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disguised or subtle forms within society. It describes a powerful vivid experience that sometimes seems unknown to the victim and perpetrator, but even though it is hidden it creates a tumorous internal attack within the victim that they are unable to explain. Thus, this study is interested in gaining a deeper understanding of those experiences of hair policing black girls experienced or those ‘stop-and-think-about-it’ incidents at their Model C schools.

Why hair? By incorporating black hair as a lens through which to understand institutional racism and cultural biases, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on racial dynamics within educational institutions. It seeks to uncover the unnoticed forms of racism that persist within these institutions and their impact on marginalized communities. By focusing on black hair, the research endeavours to shed light on broader issues related to institutional racism at former all-white schools now multi-racial schools, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and unbiased educational environment for all students.

1.2 Rational of the Study

The topic of hair policing has received a lot of attention in the news and academia, but most of these insightful research projects have been developed from a predominately US framework. As a result of their minority status within a dominant White American society, what is known about hair policing is the experiences of African Americans and other minority groups. This is not the case in South Africa, where Black people are the majority and yet are still expected to conform to White minority standards. When young students of colour enter academic spaces such as high school, they are also influenced to assimilate to Whiteness. According to Badat (2010, p. 144), before 1994, these historically white schools were characterized by a dominant White academic and administrative staff, a lack of cultural and racial diversity, and "racist and sexist" behaviour. Students of colour are more likely to encounter daily subtle discrimination on their 'otherness' as a result of historically white schools’ still maintaining a Eurocentric institutional ethos (Badat, 2011). As a result, it would be fascinating to document the experiences of black women with their hair as a result of being in historically white schools. There is limited research in South Africa that has been developed to explore the kind of discrimination black students encounter and essentially hair being used as a way to enforce the status quo at Model C schools. This study hopes to address these gaps and initiate dialogue about the experiences of hair policing on black women.

This research focuses on South Africa women. Having said that, one cannot ignore South Africa's rich historical discourses. Furthermore, South Africa's "non-white" (Black) citizens

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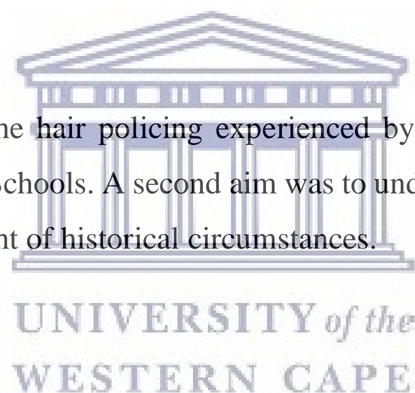
have faced their fair share of mockery, ostracism, and classification. As a result, this text cannot deny the significance of terminology when dealing with race and identity for South African Black women. Gqola (2010), in her exploration of postcolonial and slave memory in post-apartheid South Africa, uses terms in contemporary texts that have different meanings concerning the past. Through this, she extends the importance of terminology within the rubric of racial studies, in contemporary South Africa. I will use the "Black" to refer to women of colour under the Population Registration Act of 1950 during the National Party's Apartheid rule. The 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 on afro-textured hair.

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 word "Black" will also refer to the ancestors and descendants of the transatlantic slave trade within context.

1.3 Aims of Study

This study aimed to explore the hair policing experienced by Black women at historically White schools, Model C High Schools. A second aim was to understand the way black women saw their hair as political in light of historical circumstances.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1.4 Objective of Study

The primary aim of the study was attempted through the following objectives:

- To gain insight into the hair policing experiences Black girls faced at their Model C schools
- The identity impact of hair policing on Black girls
- To identify the various forms of exclusion that Black girls faced
- To gain their insight into how their viewpoint on their hair changed and interpret the PGHS and Clicks/TRESEmmé advert
- To identify if black women can link their hair policing experiences to historical circumstances that aided in politicising the black body

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1.5 Research questions

Two primary questions directed the focus of this study:

- What are the experiences of hair policing for Black girls who attended Model C schools tell us about Institutional Racism?
- In light of the PGHS and Clicks/TRESEmmé, advert and personal experiences are the policing of black hair associated with any historical events?

1.5 Overview of the chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter gives readers a brief introduction to the study by specifying the context of the study, the relevant objectives and the research questions that informed these objectives.

Chapter 2: Literature Review. This chapter presents the literature review of this thesis, which mainly focuses on a discussion of African hair, its significance, the effects of dehumanization, and a brief discussion on institutional racism. This is followed by a description of Model C school system. This chapter ends with a summary of all the points discussed in each section.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework. This chapter presents the theoretical framework. The framework centres around the concept of Politicisation, how private issues become public and political. Additionally, Critical Race Theory's six tenens are described which highlight the marginalised groups' voices.

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Chapter 4: Methodology. This chapter presents the research methodology pertinent to this current research project. Here, a discussion about the research design of discourse analysis is described. Readers will also find information about the different types of sampling techniques that were employed, the data collection and analytical procedures as well as an ethical and reflexivity component.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion. This chapter presents the data findings and analytical discussion of the data drawing in the supporting literature from chapter 3. These findings reflect the perspectives of the participants and quotes are provided as evidence from the interview transcriptions.

Chapter 6: Conclusion. This chapter draws the study to a conclusion with a discussion of the implications and recommendations of this study and an engagement with the limitations of the study will also be presented.

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CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a synthesis of literature regarding the phenomenon of African hair policing and its ties to institutional racism. First, I gave the significance of African hair that ranges from pre-colonialism to modernity. This comprises the spiritual importance of hair to Africans, the effects of enslavement and South Africa's racialized system surrounding hair and the dehumanisation of the black body will be provided. A brief section on the definition and effects of institutional racism on students of colour follows this. Finally, a discussion around the Model C school system and the continued discrimination faced by black students at these schools highlights debates around the policing of African hair at such institutions and the importance of continued research on this topic.

2.2 Historical Significance of Black Hair

The story of Black people's hair begins where life was created — in Africa. Like its people, who have adapted perfectly to different climates and environments, the thick curls of African hair show an evolutionary genius. Like a natural air conditioner, the tangled curls of Afro-hair isolate the head from the sun's intense rays. Byrd and Tharp (2014) explore the deep-seated history of hair discrimination and prejudices in American history showcasing how 15th-century Western African societies, wore hairstyles to communicate messages and a means to interact with society.

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The one constant many African societies shared with hair is the social and cultural significance intrinsic to each beautiful strand (hooks, 2015; Byrd & Tharps, 2014). Even then, hair symbolised identity with different hairstyles indicating marriage, engagements, age, wealth and rank in society (Sieber & Herreman, 2000; Lawal, 2008). Hair provides a sense of belonging and identity in African culture. In the Senegalese Wolof culture, young women who were not of marriageable age partially shaved their heads to emphasize their unavailability for courting (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). Likewise, a recently widowed woman stopped attending to her hair for a specified mourning period because she was not meant to look beautiful to other men, and an unkempt coiffure in almost every West African culture was anathema to the opposite sex (Byrd & Tharps, 2014; Patton T. , 2006). In South Africa, married Zulu women

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from Transkei wore towering, coiffure made by applying red clay and fat on the hair, then shaving the forehead.

While the social significance of hair is important for Africans, the aesthetic aspects are just as vital. "West African communities admire a fine head of long, thick hair on a woman. A woman with long, thick hair demonstrates the life force, the multiplying power of profusion, prosperity, a 'green thumb' for raising bountiful farms and many healthy children," wrote Sylvia Ardyn Boone (1986 cited Byrd & Tharps, 2014, p. 21), an anthropologist who specializes in Sierra Leone's Mende culture. To the Mende, a woman with unkempt, "messy" or "neglected" hair has loose morals or is insane (Boone, 1986). Professor Mohamed Mbodj goes on to explain that the value of hair is heightened by its spiritual properties. "The hair is the most elevated point of your body, which means it is the closest to the divine" (Byrd & Tharps, 2014, p. 21). Similarly, French explorer Jean Barbor wrote, "The Senegal blacks [have] their hair either curled or long and lank and piled up on their head in the shape of a pointed hat," (Byrd & Tharps, 2014, p. 26). Additionally, the history of adding hair extensions to African hair can be traced back to ancient Egypt and Nubian civilisations. Ancient Egyptians wore their hair in a natural style however, wigs made from human hair, wool, palm-leaf fibres or cotton were introduced around 3000BC. In light of the above, the recent wig and human hair trend of today is not new to Africans after all, Haas (2008, p. 562) observed that Egyptian art "is the richest source of wigs in history". However, the shift in how Africans and Europeans saw African hair changed once the Transatlantic Slave Trade and colonialism came to fruition.

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2.3 The Politics and Dehumanisation of Black Hair

The significance and importance of African hair took a drastic turn with the introduction of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Thompson (2009), adds to other scholars and specifically Byrd & Tharp's (2014) argument that the legacy of slavery in America has generationally affected how African American women perceive beauty and their own identity. Where men and women, in particular, used to meticulously craft elaborate hairstyles in Africa, once in the "New World" they took to wearing headscarves or handkerchiefs on their heads, to shield them from the sun but also to hide their unsightly, unkempt hair (Thompson, 2009). As part of the dehumanisation of the slaves, slave traders shaved the heads of their captives stripping them of their identity. African hair became seen as unattractive, woolly, not real, and a confirmation of African inferiority (Thompson, 2009; Ellis-Hervey, Doss, Davis, Nicks, & Araiza, 2016). Children of African slaves and white masters, with lighter skin and straighter hair, were treated better by

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being allowed to work and sometimes live within the master's homes, although they were still slaves (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). Morrow quoted in Banks (2000) argued that "(hair) is the basic, natural symbol of the things people want to be... And its social-cultural significate should not be underestimated" (Banks, 2000, p. 7). Lighter skin and straighter hair meant more opportunities for a better way of living, thus the phenomenon of lighter skin and "good hair" versus the dark skin and "bad hair" division was born (Byrd & Tharps, 2014).

For many enslaved people in the New World, their hair became a means of survival. Having "good hair" meant that your hair was kind of good enough to allow you to be seen as human instead of animalistic. So if you could make your hair look less African and make it look more European then you might not have your child ripped out of your arms, and you may not be beaten as badly. These physical differences among African slaves created a social hierarchy based on skin colour and hair texture (Lara, 2010). Slaves with features closer to the European norm (lighter skin and straighter hair) also became more valuable in monetary terms. This suggests the internalisation of white racist norms by black people: "Black beauty was juxtaposed with white beauty; a socially stratified hierarchy began to take shape" (Thompson, 2009, p. 834). Some slaves internalised the idea that their body was inferior compared to white people.

The black body become a politically charged subject and it was fashioned and constructed as an object of desire and political embodiment of the "other". Images of black women in media ranged from untamed, wild and primitive, to exotic and beautiful, targeted at white audiences. The image black women represented was contradictory, for example, on the one hand, black women represented ugly untamed, wild and primitive, yet contrary, they were portrayed as exotic, desirable and beautiful. The contradictions surrounding the black body indicate that the black body is, in fact, a social, cultural and political construction, as a result, the gendered, class and racial representation of the black female body serves a specific ideological purpose. Black female bodies have been imbued with "unsettling sexualised meaning" (Baderoon, 2011, p. 214). Features such as big buttocks, big lips, and kinky hair were meant to represent barbarity, being uncultured, and served as a symbol of exotic sexuality. Despite the animalistic representation of the black female body, during colonial and apartheid times, the fact that black bodies were so contrary to white females made them sexually desirable because of that difference.

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Furthermore, black women were described as revolting and ugly but several white settlers had sexual relations with them. For instance, in his memoir, Afrikaner journalist and author Rian Malan (1990, p. 60) acknowledge having a sexual encounter with a black domestic

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worker. Describing the experience, he says, "I recoiled at the thought of French-kissing her, but I did it anyway because I was a social democrat ... I came out of that room laughing nonchalantly, but at heart, I was stricken with guilt. In my fevered racist imaginings, I was quite sure she had given me the pox ...". If the black female body was so considered diseased and dangerous why did some white men risk being infected by getting having interactions with these women? The above quote shows that for some white men being intimate with black women was a sign of liberation and cultural diversity. However, juxtaposed, it points towards the eroticisation and commodification of the black female body. White men can gain access and exploit black females for their pleasure. Mirroring this, bell hooks further argues that "from the standpoint of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy the hope is that desire for the 'primitive' or fantasies about the Other can be continually exploited, and that such exploitation will occur in a manner that reinscribes and maintains the status quo" (hooks, 2015, p. 22).

In addition to hyper sexualisation, black women are characterised by animalisation and exoticisation. Animalisation serves to create a racial hierarchy with white people at the top and bestialise non-white humans at the bottom (Magee, 2012). The animals such as baboons, monkeys and pigs serve as placeholders for blackness and this figurative animalisation transforms the radicalised other as prey that could be ridiculed, exploited and tortured. During these eras, the pervasive connection between blackness and animals manifests in the representation of black models wearing animal prints, photographed with animal-themes props or real animals. In the 1920s, African-American dancer Josephine Baker was well-known for the banana costume that she wore in the Folies Bergère and a cheetah with which she performed in her shows appealed to French audiences and reviewers described them in animalistic terms (Magee, 2012, p. 44). These perceptions of the black body contributed to segregate policies in apartheid. The black body has been categorised and fragmented, and hair that was once regarded as a symbol of black beauty in historical African communities turned into a tool for dehumanising black people during apartheid.

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2.4 Black Hair in South Africa from the Colonial to Democratic era

Colonialism and slavery had a profound impact on Black American women's perception of beauty and hair, much of which echoes in the South African context. From Jan van Riebeek and the Dutch Calvinist settlers in 1657 to 1910 Union of South Africa laws were introduced that controlled the flow of Black people (Doxey, 1961). Soon after, the National Party (NP) laws led to the impoverishment of Black people, including the Native Urban Areas Act passed

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by Jan Smuts` government in 1923, which called for the establishment of locations for black people at the periphery of cities. The system legitimised the dehumanisation of black people as the "Other", Black people were perceived as infantile, stupid and were exploited both psychologically and physically. All resources were controlled by the white minority, stemming from industry to education whites were given priority in all things, and whiteness symbolised superiority. Drawing on Yancy (2008), the term "whiteness" is used to refer to a "symbolic structure around which values and meanings are organised" and it is a concept that is "learned ... and lived on the inside as well as attributed to one's external appearance". On the other hand, in his essay "*The fact of blackness*", which was written at the height of the oppression of black people by their colonial masters in the 1950s, Frantz Fanon (2008) notes that blackness is not an identity that is created by black people themselves but is a label that is thrust upon them by external forces. Yancy (2008, p. 20) reasons that during this time, in the European imagination Blacks were further viewed as a different species.

In colonial times and now, whiteness is identified by the "other," that is blackness. Although Fanon documented the experiences of colonial subjects, the black body was still dehumanised, as evidenced by how Zulaikha Patel, the Pretoria high schooler was ridiculed for her hair texture and nonconformity leading to her and fellow peers protesting restrictive white hegemonic beauty standards at their former-all white school (Makanda, 2016). This shows that the image of black beauty is often portrayed as the antithesis of white beauty, white hair and white norms. Through the policies of apartheid, black beauty and hair became a means to 'otherness' and classify the 'other', hair became distinctively became political (Erasmus, 2000; Posel, 2001a; Adhikari, 2005). During Apartheid, hair became a base for determining race along with skin colour and phenotypical features. The 1950 Population Registration Act divided South Africans into four racial groups (Whites, Asians/Indians, Coloureds and 'natives' or Blacks) based on physical characteristics that determined where one was born, lived, went to school, worked, died and was buried (Erasmus, 2000; Oyedemi, 2016). Using the Pencil Test policy, those who failed the test were sentenced to a lower social status with fewer rights than Whites, but being Coloured had more rights than being classified as "native" or Black (Powe, 2009; Oyedemi, 2016; Posel, 2001a). Furthermore, scholar Tonks Oyedemi writes, that the path to beauty for non-white South African women, to obtaining 'beautiful' hair, is filled with all forms of violence; physical, structural direct, cultural, and symbolic. Black women's attainment of 'beautiful' hair is essentially a fabrication of structural violence. The social structure of class, gender, hierarchy, and race work collectively with violence to birth a legacy of cultural, symbolic and psychological violence (Oyedemi, 2016). The culture of passing as

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White or Coloured involved, amongst many acts, mechanically and chemically straightening one's hair to erase one's natural identity, and the apartheid regime tore families apart according to racial categorizations based on hair texture irrespective of genetic certainties of biological family connections to a race (Stone, 2007). Mohamed Adhikari (2005, p. 11) adds, because of the circumstances of racial hierarchy, Coloured identity favoured an association with "whiteness" and distaste toward "Africanness". Being non-white was socioeconomically disadvantageous (Adhikari, 2005). This explains why women engaged in practices that make them appear whiter, such as hair straightening. The status quo on what beautiful and desirable hair looks like is straight, sleek, long hair which is associated with Europeans. Conversely, coarse-textured hair is regarded as ugly, and less desirable and is attributed to black women (Grayson, 1995, p. 14-15). Afro-textured hair is viewed in a negative light because of its past legacies. Women with coarse hair are likely to suffer discrimination and stigmatisation from their community and wider society because their hair does not conform to what is viewed as socioeconomically beneficial. Thus, a person's existence and economic survival were linked to the racial structure, determined by the colour of one's skin and hair texture. Yet, Blackness is not only defined and perceived in terms of white racism, slavery, and colonial history but it is also rooted in the unique experiences of black people themselves.

Third-wave black feminists in the West and Africa, such as Shirley Ann Tate (2009), bell hooks (1989), and Zimitri Erasmus (1997), have added voices to the debate. By writing about their bodies, these black women explore the intersection of class, politics, and a person's personal preferences and how these shape a person's identity and perception of their own body introduces another aspect. Drawing on Edward Said (1978) these black feminists see beauty as a classed and raced site of “Othering” but differ in terms of their ideals of hairstyling practices. One group of third-wave feminists believes that beauty is a “primary source of [black] women’s oppression” (Tate, 2009, p. 11).

The other camp is opposed to the popular images that are often circulated about black women, suggesting that the woman’s body is presented as a source of power, and the beauty practices they engage in empower them. Erasmus in her notable works asserts that racist notions of beauty shaped and still shape South African black women’s perceptions of what constitutes good hair. However, she observes that although media images promote the straight hair ideal, more and more black African women have come to accept that hair texture alone cannot be used to determine good from bad hair (Erasmus, 1997, p. 14). This shows that the white ideal is not the only standard of beauty that is used as a yardstick; there are other sources such as cultural and social mores and values, and the prevailing political climate. However, she

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further acknowledges that “racial hierarchies and values of colonial racism have left a deep mark on our concepts of beauty” (Erasmus, 1997, p. 12). It is these colonial inheritances that impact how Black women see their hair and how Black communities internalised this legacy by using hair to further racialized themselves, to determine acceptance or rejection (Thompson, 2009; Erasmus, 2000; Erasmus, 1999). Aside from the obvious difference in skin colour, hair has always been one of the most prominent points of comparison.

Historically, negative connotations were attached to Black hair, which shaped perceptions of "good" and "bad" hair in African-Black communities (Mercer, 1987, p. 36; Thompson, 2009, p. 834). Dialogues about "bad" hair, on the other hand, usually refer to kinky or "woolly" hair (Mercer, 1987, p. 35). The recognition that hair can be racialized is critical in initiating discussions about the meanings of "good" and "bad" hair among Black people. In light of this, everyday hair discourses by Black women can only be understood when contextualized historically and racially (White, 2010, p. 19; White & White, 1995). The concept that hair discourses are linked to skin colour politics dates back to slavery when lighter-skinned Black women with straight hair were valued more financially (Russell-Cole, Wilson, & Hall, 1992; Hooks, 2001; White, 2010). The legacy of slavery and colonialism is therefore not only restricted to oppression and exploitation in a political and economic sense it also leads to beauty standards that reject and exclude distinguishing features of Black women (Robinson, 2011, p. 358). As Oyedemi (2016) argues, the result of a history of structural violence through hair creates physical and cultural violence by erasing natural hair. However, the changing political landscape and globalization, have added to changing opinions on afro hair and hairstyles, but the underlying problem of colonial inheritances and ideologies of Black hair in South African society is still there.

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The process of shaking off over 300 years of colonial subjugation and apartheid has led to the renaissance of Blackness. Since South Africa had been exposed to oppressive Western-centric customs and laws, when democracy ushered in 1994, black people regained their dignity and were free to assert themselves. Being African was celebrated with a revival in African culture, tradition, identity and political discourses. Despite the new democracy, the dismantling of political racism is easier than the dismantling of norms, values and cultures that have been conceived, birthed and permeated spaces such as schools for decades under racialized governance. African textured hair and styles continue to symbolise 'otherness' because it does not ascribe to dominant white culture.

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2.4 Institutional Racism

The sociological concepts of institutional racism also referred to as systemic or structural racism, are relevant topics in post-apartheid South Africa, especially in terms of education – in schools and tertiary institutions. Whether it be a school, university, a company or a church, all institutions have their own unique institutional culture, which includes; norms, values, traditions and policies, administration and operations of an institution (Sehoole, 2005, p. 107) While each institution has its own unique culture, true substantive equality cannot be achieved without problematizing the norms and values of some institutions which are inherently racist and which marginalise certain groups, while catering for a dominant group, institutional racism ties in here. Knowles and Prewitt discuss institutional racism which is subtle and difficult to attribute to one person as it is embedded in the practices and culture of an institution (Knowles & Prewitt, 1969, p. 1). Racism has become deeply embedded in the culture of society, particularly in the practices of its institutions which trickle down to affect equality on an individual level.

Institutional racism is a relevant topic in post-apartheid South Africa. Although formal equality has been implemented thanks to a robust constitution that upholds equality for all regardless of race, gender, religion or other factors, aiming to institutionalize notions of equality and combat discrimination. Substantive equality is found lacking because in educational intuitions as demographics changed positions of influence in schools were still overwhelmingly white (Fredman, 2016). The power and privileges associated with "whiteness" and the disadvantages associated with "colour" continue to endure and adapt over time. Although racism is incongruent with democratic ideals, both are pillars of South African society and culture (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010). Blacks, Coloureds and other people of colour have received inferior treatment across a range of South African societal institutions, including education, largely because these institutions are not immune to deeply rooted societal inequalities (Fredman, 2016). In this way, formally white institutions do not change regardless of integration because the leadership does not change to give previously marginalised groups a voice.

The apartheid government socialised and encultured South Africans into racialized groups, leading the minority White group to have preconceived notions that they were superior to people of colour, resulting in overt and covert subjection of racial groups. Not surprisingly, most scholars contend that, although some White people might be explicitly pro-equality, some still foster implicit negative prejudices towards black people or ethnic groups (Murphy, Richeson, Shelton, Same, & Bergsieker, 2013; Sue, et al., 2007; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, &

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Torino, 2009; Wong, Derthick, David, Saw, & Okazaki, 2014). Sue et al (2009) argue that because of their hegemonic and privileged status, whites may unwittingly internalize and support racist views that may lead to discrimination and invalidation against people of colour. It can be argued that white supremacy is a learned reaction from years of indoctrination. These learned reactions could be overt derogatory, hostile or negative racial slurs and/or unconscious everyday verbal, and behavioural actions targeted at black people. The concept of covert racism is similar to what educators and sociologists call covert curricula, a conscious effort on the part of the apartheid government to subtly teach students racialized ideas. These discriminations feed into institutions because of their subtlety people of colour felt as if they are not welcomed through verbal and nonverbal cues directed by white people unconsciously. As with the effects of covert racism, little attention is often paid to the negative effects of covert curricula. This is because a covert curriculum leads students to think in ways that define or reflect the general socio-political ethos of the institution or the attitudes of wider society. Leask (2009) and Killick (2016), argue that the hidden curriculum is influenced by the social, cultural and economic ideologies of the groups that make up the majority of the cultural capital at schools.

With little research conducted on former all-white high schools in South Africa, this section of the literature derives mostly from research done at Historically White Universities (HWU) in South Africa, which can be extrapolated for High School narratives since there is an insufficient amount of academic research on institutional racism and cultures in South African high schools. The South African Government's Education White Paper 3 (Department of Education, 1997) and its regular instrument, the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education, emphasise the need for institutions to change their institutional cultures (Asmal, 2001). Because the apartheid regime used education to advocate white privilege, education today should reflect what is written in the Bill of Rights, aiming towards non-discrimination and cultural inclusivity. This, however, is not reflected in predominantly historically white schools, which have retained the White English/Afrikaans cultural norms and values that have permeated schools for decades.

While the demographics of students and some senior management may have changed, the academic staff at the core of the academic enterprise has hardly changed. Maart reminds us that "Whilst one can legislate for and against almost anything and everything, one cannot legislate attitude!" (Maart, 2014, p. 57). Furthermore, Niemann (2010) maintains that a strong institutional culture requires purposeful and patient development by management. However, Van Wyk (2009) points to the insidious and endemic subculture cultivated by some departments within the broader university, based on the suppression and subversion of

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transformative discourse in South Africa's post-1994 era. For this reason, Saleem Badat argues that if schools, through their internal thinking, structures, cultures, and practices, continue to be powerful mechanisms of social exclusion and injustice, education will fail to realize its potential to serve society. Justice and its external conditioning by the wider society (Badat, 2010). Institutional culture is the collective influence of school values, attitudes, styles of interaction, and collective memories that those who work and study in the school environment know through real-world experience (Steyn, "The Diversity Imperative: Excellence, Institutional Culture, and Limiting Assumptions at Some Historically White Universities.", 2007). So, simply put, overtime institutional culture becomes the default way of doing things. Thus race as a social marker becomes a means for perpetuating injustice, reproduced and normalised in the process of education.

A concept that may add further conceptual clarity to institutional culture is that of whiteness. Institutional racism has been argued to be embedded in the whiteness of historically white universities/schools (Van der Merwe & Van Reenen, 2016). Delgado, Stefancic and Harris (2012) suggest that white hegemony has evolved to the degree that it allows many forms of racism to go unacknowledged, unconscious in the minds of white people and largely invisible. Whiteness, therefore, operates to position white people as automatically deserving of material benefits (Van der Westhuisen, 2018). Thus whiteness essentially defines the institutional culture of former white schools in South Africa (Steyn, 2007). Racism inherited from apartheid policies and beliefs permeates this white-dominated institutional culture, with the assumption that white dominance equates to excellence and merit and that blacks are associated with mediocrity or failure (Robus & Macleod, 2006). This conveys a message to black staff members that they are not good enough and students are expected to fail (Moraka, 2014; Njovane, 2015). Consequently, black students are socialized to believe that their survival depends on the extent to which they aspire and enact whiteness. This is nothing more than a rehashing of colonialism and apartheid, which only creates new, subtler but unjust forms of colonialism and stratification.

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Having gone to Boland Girls High School, a former-all-white school that stood on the principle of non-racialism, this can be a misguided attempt at equality without addressing the cultural assumptions that permeate the institutions. Seekings argue that whiteness is the norm in these institutions, meaning that any behaviour which deviates from that becomes associated with the "other" and is marginalised in a white-dominated environment (Seekings, 2007). Additionally, Fataar (2007) debates how traditionally all-white schools favour activities such as rugby, ballet and Shakespearean plays while excluding soccer, which is enjoyed by many

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students of other races. The Western-orientated cultural scene excludes popular youth art forms such as kwaito, modern dance or hip-hop (Fataar, 2007, p. 11). Non-racialisation can be seen to link with assimilation, as the "other" is expected to assimilate into the dominant culture (Fataar, 2007). While attempts at racelessness by schools with the best intentions, the concept nevertheless does not negate the fact that many such schools are inherently founded on a racialized system.

2.5 Model C System in South Africa

The term Model C schools were historically white state-aided schools. Although the term Model C is no longer in official use, it continues to be used by the public to refer to all historically white state schools (Battersby, 2004). In their article *Decoloniality and "Model C" schools,* Christie & McKinney (2017) shows how historical inequalities persist far beyond the end of colonialism. Model C schools were established towards the end of apartheid to protect white schools from the end of racially based privilege. The education system in new Democratic South Africa had to grapple with two impulses: One, the new government's commitment to addressing racial discrimination as the most visible form of educational inequality, which led to an understanding of justice and reparation captured in a policy of affirmative action (Badat & Sayed, 2014). Two, this strategy had to be achieved in such a way that the educational system and social order were preserved; that is, the change should not break radically dominant educational norms, policies and structures and practices (Badat & Sayed, 2014).

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As part of this transition, then Education Minister Peter Clase allowed white parents to vote to maintain the status quo or to close schools according to one of four options: Models A, B, C or D. The difference between the models was based on the desegregation scale a school could allow (up to 50%) and the amount of money a school could raise to collect fees (Hunter, 2015). The move towards decentralisation while radical in enabling desegregation was consistent with schools' longstanding authority over admissions. However, across the board, school after school voted for desegregation, mainly the Model B option, which allowed significant government funding to be maintained in 1992 the government converted these to Model C schools that relied more on fees – thus "Model C school" stuck, it continues to be used by the public to refer to all formerly-white school (Hunter, 2015). Under this system schools were to remain (50% +1) white majority, continue to uphold principles of Christian National Education, instruction in English and Afrikaans and maintain their "traditional values

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and ethos". The South African Schools Act SASA (and the South African constitution more broadly) incorporated an overarching principle of non-racialisation in admissions policy - although the decisions on who made decisive action on who was allowed access to these schools were left ambiguous, leaving a higher demand than available spaces at such schools (Crouch & Hoadley, 2018). Schools would "render services" to students of other race groups provided that the schools remain fundamentally unchanged (Chrisite & McKinney, 2017). Rendering service to the other races shows how the Model C system "othered" people of colour. This notion further informs white supremacy, officials would seem benevolent, allowing students of colour access to better education while these students are expected to be grateful and submissive. Despite the decades after independence and integration, Model C schools are often institutionally racist, and sometimes even overtly racist. Beyond this, white parents, at these historically all-white schools, were well-positioned by the SGBs with authority to ensure that the schools would remain well managed and 'cultured'. Furthermore, as previously noted, the autonomy provided by the SASA included the right to top up public funds with financing by the parent body-ensuring that these elite schools would not lack resources resulting in their well-performing in exams and high demand for access.

Today in public discourse the term Model C defines former all-white schools and not the state-aided "public schools" we have now (Chrisite & McKinney, 2017). However, those former Model Cs maintain the best resources and the best test results in the country. Even the term Model C signifies a historical link to white privilege and supremacy (Chrisite & McKinney, 2017). Key managerial, financial, language policy, fees and school policies discussions lie with the predominantly white majority governing body. Despite the change in demographics, being recognised as the best performer encourages these schools to preserve their white-dominated culture. The histories of these institutions persistent racist and sexist behaviour, privileges associated with social class, English as the language of medium, the overwhelming dominance of white students and administrators, the associated underrepresentation of black students and role models as well as limited respect for diversity - combine to create institutional cultures that black students experience as discomforting, exclusive, alienating, and disempowering (Badat & Sayed, 2014). The policy on appearance and guidelines on hair at these schools are significant aspects of their established culture.

In recent years, a wave of incidences at former Model C schools about hair politics and debates around racism have merged. In 2016, *The Guardian* reported that students were demonstrating against a school policy that banned afro hair at the Pretoria High School for Girls, a former all-white school. According to students, their protest stemmed from many years

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of enduring racism at the hands of school officials. One girl said that she was given Vaseline by a school official to flatten her hair after having been removed from class (The Guardian, 2016; Vilakazi, 2016). That these instances of racism have occurred at schools is all the more significant as, in the words of (Makanda, 2016) a school is an ideological state apparatus that is at the centre of where systems of ideas and relations of power are reinforced and reaffirmed. Schools are spaces of indoctrination, where difference is produced, and children grapple with their identity, sense of being, race and whose lives matter. In schools, the codes of conduct teach learners what acceptable behaviour, rights, and responsibilities are and how to conduct oneself. The codes will prescribe how the uniform is worn, and hair is kept "neat". However, schools' codes of conduct can also be fraught and politically charged. This is seen in language policies where African languages are discouraged based on promoting competence in English and Afrikaans (Makanda, 2016). These schools are English medium, but it seems only to encourage the hegemony of one particular racial group – white people. Intentionally or not, schools remain the sight where white supremacy is reproduced.

Schools' regulations around hair are increasingly perceived as a direct attack on Black people. The framework in which codes and regulations are designed mirrors white supremacy and draws from pre-democratic standards of beauty and acceptability in South Africa's history. Since Blacks' natural hair, the Afro is commonly considered symbolic of resisting white supremacy, it was declared "unacceptable" and "not neat" in the school environment (Vilakazi, 2016). As noted above, hair presentation has always been a site of constant battle and continues to be today. When Black students are treated discriminatorily because of their hair it brings up the ugly history of the pencil test. The incident of the TRESEmmé advert product featured at Clicks showed pictures of African hair labelled "frizzy and dull", and "dry and damaged". While white hair was labelled "normal" and "fine and flat" (Bhengu, 2020). This recent incident indicates how Black hair is seen by white institutional cultures. This attack on hair is an attack on Black heritage, culture, pride, identity and position in society (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). It could be said that Black students' 'unruly' hair denies them access to better socioeconomic activities such as education, in a way similar to the Pencil Test of apartheid.

In her article *Why our hair matters*, Makanda (2016) argues that Blacks are not asking for an exemption from hair regulations, but rather the recognition of identity. Part of this is the acknowledgement that natural Black hair textures are healthiest when worn in styles which do not require daily manipulation or harsh chemicals. After 26 years of democracy then, Blacks are still deemed inferior based on hair texture in culturally white spaces. Eurocentric hair still symbolises worth, esteem, health, wealth, beauty and prestige, whereas Blacks' hair is seen as

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uncontrollable and untidy. Blacks are still being discriminated against because of their hair, which affects their identity and the way they view the world. Black hair is part of the black experience. Women with coarse hair can express themselves through their hairstyles; however, because Black hair has been shaped in the colonial racial lens, no matter how black or coloured women style their hair, it remains engulfed in its politicisation. The politics of African hair evolved from interrogating this obsession with straight hair (Thompson, 2009, p. 837). These arguments range from self-hatred and self-love to the freedom to express personal preference (Thompson, 2009, p. 837-838). Hair politics in the African community typically revolves around debates over natural versus fake/manipulated hair (Nyamnjoh & Fuh, 2014, p. 57). As a result, the concept of "good" versus "bad" hair emerges. And, in keeping with old stereotypes, "bad" hair is associated with natural and unprocessed hair, while "good" hair is associated with chemically straightened hair.

2.6 Conclusion

A more recent established and growing body of literature examines the symbolic and historical importance of African hair, including the process of dehumanization black communities faced. another established and growing body of scholarship has shown how, in our contemporary epoch, racism has taken on increasingly subtle and subterranean forms permeating institutional cultures and places of education.

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This chapter has drawn these bodies of scholarship together in conversation, to highlight some of the ways racialised institutional culture has embedded itself in schools creating a culture of Eurocentric beauty standards while negating and marginalizing students of colour who have afro-textured hair. This hair policing and discrimination faced by students of colour at the hands of white educators and peers leans towards subvert racism. In so doing, this chapter urges scholars not to neglect the minutiae that is hair but instead, recognize how the policing of black girls' hair operates at the quotidian site of school.

Whilst this work has used this chapter to shine a light on the particular experience of Zulaikha Patel and the TRESemmé advert. These cases offer a useful lens through which one might consider how Black hair becomes a key site for racism in a 'post-racial' white supremacist South Africa. This study has shown that hair discrimination has deep-roots in enslavement and colonialism and that notions of Black hair as messy and antithetical to school discipline and success are naturalized and widespread. Race-neutral school policies and practices that are applied to all students, hide the fact that 'a racial order is in place that benefits

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a racial group' (Chrisite & McKinney, 2017). This white supremacist racial order holds in place systems which maintain white dominance and Black subordination, systems crafted over decades to uphold the status quo.

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CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This research project seeks to explore the hair-policing experiences young black women have faced in former all-white schools and their explanations of these experiences. This will be interpreted through two theoretical frameworks, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the concept of politicisation. The CRT tradition strives to reveal how racism operates in both seen and unseen ways (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). While emphasizing the importance and legitimacy of the experiences of people of colour (Hylton, 2012). Adding to that, politicisation points out how the mundane, daily personal expression such as hair can become a public issue that is politicised interlined with racism which becomes a normalised and ingrained feature of the social order, appearing mostly in covert and mundane ways.

3.2 Critical Race Theory

The theoretical underpinning of this research is Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT emerged in the mid-1970s with the early work of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman, both of whom were concerned over the low pace of racial reform in the United States. It was designed to uncover how race and racism operated in the law and society and takes the position that racism is a normal occurrence and attempts to make plain the racial context between public and private spheres in society (Abrams & Moio, 2009, p. 250). It comprises the intersection between race and racism and the dominant ideology – such as white supremacy (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). CRT operates on the premise that race and racism are an everyday occurrence in the lives of non-whites and is a social construction (Ortiz & Jani, 2010). This study will be based on a CRT tradition that endeavours to reveal how racism operates in unconscious and conscious ways both explicit and implicit. With this in mind, this work hones in on the specific example of young Black women who went to former Model C high schools, to recognize the legitimacy of their experience, by understanding six tenets of Critical Race Theory.

3.2.1 Tenets of critical race theory

The permanence of racism. CRT challenges the belief that racism disappeared with apartheid law. It posits the ubiquitous and incurable nature of racism in society, especially in higher education. Delgado, Stefancic, and Harris (2012) find that it is incredibly difficult for

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whites to see the immortality of Racism because it is deeply anchored in their mental and social structures. Race and racism must come to the forefront for significant change to take place within institutions. This approach applies to this research study as it is well known that South African society is deeply marked by a racist past, and this is particularly true in former all-white high schools, moniker Model C exemplified in this study through Boland Girls High School (BGHS). More specifically, focusing on race is essential within an institution that previously used racial classification and language preference to discriminate against students of colour. That is, before 1991, minority students who were not white were by law forbidden to attend Boland Girls High School (BGHS). Despite some relevant transformative changes post-1991, the experience I had with my hair in high school has shown that black students still feel marginalized at school due to the favouring of white culture. Likewise, CRT recognizes the intersectionality of race /racism with other identities (Solórzano D. G., 1998; Yosso, 2005). This assumption seeks to explain how race and racism are used as tools to subordinate other marginalized people, such as gender, class, accent, and sexuality. The idea of intersectionality is also applicable as it focuses on how black people's multiple identities, such as black and male or black and having a specific accent, may be reasons for experiencing subtle oppression and ultimately alienation from the school experience.

Counter-storytelling. Stories told from a white perspective often deny or hide the existence of racism because in the white narrative racism died when the white minority agreed to end black people's oppression by illegalizing apartheid and approving of a black President elected in 1994; Racism died when democratic South Africa adopted a "rainbow nation" approach. However, both Sleeter (2016) and Malagón and co-authors (2009) argue that we cannot understand racism by listening to the stories of perpetrators or those in power, as these narratives are constantly being skewed for the benefit of the social and economic elite. Instead, CRT theorists claim that one needs to recognize and legitimize the everyday experiences of victims of racism to understand and transform racial inequalities. Through methods such as counter-storytelling, which legitimize the people of colour's voices by making their accounts of racial subordination valid because they are victimized by it (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Counter-stories allow people of colour to reinterpret and redefine the oppressors' archives and at the same time call into question the transparency of the dominant groups towards racism.

Critique of Liberalism: The challenge to the dominant ideology. CRT seeks to challenge claims of neutrality, meritocracy, and colour-blindness in higher education (Möschel, 2014). The idea of neutrality tends to suggest that all students, regardless of their racial identity, are treated equally in schools. Meritocracy believes that students could achieve

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their academic goals if they only applied themselves regardless of their social circumstances (Sleeter, 2016). The "rainbow nation" ideology that South Africa feeds its people is a fine example of colour-blindness. Colour-blindness seeks to emphasize a commonality between people: Race does not exist because we are all human. Colour blindness is harmful to people of colour. Colour blindness avoids, neglects, and denies enduring and current racial atrocities committed by white towards people of colour (Edwards, 2017; Howard-Hamiltion, 2003). CRT seeks racial transformation by examining how the construction of race and other racial ideologies such as colour blindness affects and further marginalizes the lives of people of colour in society (Abrams & Moio, 2009, p. 250; Ortiz & Jani, 2010, p. 176). Colour blindness is a microaggression that people of colour experience daily, as it denies the subtle forms of racism people of colour encounter in many situations (Edwards, 2017; Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015). The Rainbow Nation dream advocates that South Africans embrace each other as being physically different because being physically different is aesthetic and a strong quality of the nation.

A consequence of this ideology is blindness to acknowledge the fact that people of colour are victims of everyday racism and that there are social, educational, and economic differences between different racial groups. This focus on the community of humanity is an endeavour of many Model C schools to promote a multicultural space so that racism and all other forms of subordination can be eliminated. At BGHS and similar Model Cs, colour blindness can be seen in school policies that perpetuate racial inequalities, as most of these policies are skewed in favour of preserving the white culture while promoting diversity. This strategy can backfire because favouring one culture over another can create the traditional perception among white students that they are racially and culturally superior. According to Yosso (2005) and similar views as Hiraldo (2010) and Sleeter (2016), CRT is designed to challenge these myths because they camouflage white privileges and collude in the submission of students of colour.

Whiteness as property is the fourth tenet of CRT. Whiteness is considered a property interest due to the embedded racism in South African society (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). This concept thus works on different levels. These include the right of possession, the use and enjoyment rights, disposition rights and exclusion rights (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Historically, the notion of whiteness as property was maintained as an asset that only whites could own (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). During slavery, African men, women and children were denied ownership (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This historic ownership system and its ramifications further strengthen and perpetuate white supremacy system, because only white individuals benefit from it. Particularly in higher education, the

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division between students and academic staff perpetuates the idea of race as property rights. This is evident in minority students of colour and majority white academic staff. Particularly at Model C schools, black people do not become part of the driving force: faculty. Teachers, academic staff and board members are seen as owners of the curriculum. Therefore, they have the power to design school policies according to their knowledge, values, and norms, which can work against students of colour (Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). This institutional power further reinforces the notion that being White is more valuable and important than being a person of colour (Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). This systemic reality works against building a diverse and inclusive higher education environment because it supports the existing hierarchical racist paradigm in our society. Although diversity is more visible in students, the power of schools is centralized in academic staff and people of colour are less represented.

Interest Convergence. Is the fifth tenet of CRT, which derived from Bell Hook's theory of *interest convergence.* The principle is that whites are the main beneficiaries of civil rights law (Ladson-Billings, 1998; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Additionally, the notion that white individuals will allow and support racial justice and progress to the extent that there is something positive to them, or the "convergence" between white and non-white interests (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). CRT focuses on notifying the public how certain stories act and serve to silence and misrepresent people of colour., while simultaneously building up and legitimizing whites, typically the majority –status quo, which retain or gain more power through these transactions.

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Intersectionality, the final tenet of CRT for this study, argues for theorists to draw on different disciplines or frameworks, such as feminism, history, psychology or liberalism, to inform their understanding and analysis of racial inequality inside society (Möschel, 2014). This thesis is interdisciplinary because it positions the experiences of Blackness and hidden racism within a historical context. Pérez Huber and Solórzano (2015) suggest that CRT does this by examining how dominant ideologies, race, and racism have historically been maintained in society, including the education sector, and how these forces continue to infiltrate and infuse contemporary experiences of people of colour. This focus on historical contextualization is important to this thesis because it questions the notion of a rainbow nation or a non-racist society, as persistent evidence, as shown in the literature review, highlights that the effects of apartheid social and Education policies still exist. They persist in the student of colour's current experiences of racism in both open and covert forms.

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3.3 The Concept of Politicisation

The concept of "politicisation" has various meanings. One meaning or use refers to activities or beliefs which are thrust into the sphere of politics, yet not previously in politics (Samuels, 1980; Zürn, 2019; Schmitt, 2007). The second meaning refers to activities or beliefs which recognise an original and continuing political element previously ignored and now surfaced (Samuels, 1980). In this study, politicisation is defined as moving something into the realm of public debate, thus assuming the possibility to make collectively binding decisions on that issue (Zürn, 2019). This research aims to use politicisation to see if the respondents see hair as a political issue rather than just a personal issue. Subsidiary themes attached to the meaning of the concept of politicisation are "public" and "private" (Samuels, 1980), the non-political is private and the political is public–this research looks at how hair which is a non-political private matter becomes political - making previously unpolitical matters political. Politicisation, therefore, refers to the social tendency for abstract concepts such as hair to go from being seen as objective and outside of politics to being a part of cultural hot-topic debates and becoming topics for subjective discussion. The recent discussions in the media have frequently pointed to a "politicisation" of institutions, groups, and issues, such as the former all-white schools, the young and the Black, and the perception of Afro-textured hair. In both meanings, there is a position to call into question traditional arrangements or institutions, whether private or public.

This project will use the concept of politicisation to explore the politics of hair in former all-white schools. The issue is over the status quo and the terms of this debate revolve around articulation and selection of values connected to hair, explicit or implicit, and competition for power to change or defend the status quo (Samuels, 1980). In this study, the key point of institutional racism is that the norms of former Model C schools have white roots and characteristics which are implicitly rather than explicitly racist. The status quo is upheld in the sense that a teacher tells a Black student to make their hair neat. On the surface, this may appear as the teacher trying to "uphold school neatness and appearance" while, below the surface, the student experiences this as a microaggression and the rejection of their natural hair for more Eurocentric notions of beauty and neatness. The teacher may even be unaware of this bias. In this way then, the status quo is connected to institutional racism through implicit and hidden racialised cultures that elevate white standards of appearance over others. This concept of politicisation is necessary, allowing us to focus on the ways personal experiences – such as appearances, and one's hair – can be understood as being collectively and systemically produced even when not overtly stated. Thus politicisation required not just identifying a

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personal experience as a collective one, but making public the private, and in this case often implicit and hidden racist assumptions in everyday governance in a historically white school.

Politicisation, therefore, is rupturing the state of the situation by demonstrating the axiomatic principle of equality through a single event or mobilisation (Swyngedouw, 2020, p. 3; Schmitt, 2007). First, politicisation occurs primordially when objects of disciplinary action (in this case, the policing of African hair) turn into subjects, by recognising their oppressed state. Second, this process of subjectivation is marked by people (black students) dis-identifying with the order of the day with the implicit cultural norms around them and by transgressing regulated prescriptions and practices (Swyngedouw, 2020). Third, this process of subjectivation to politicise a matter unfolds through the transition of new and egalitarian ways of being in the world which subsequently reveals the unequal configuration of the existing state (Swyngedouw, 2020), exposed the underlying culture still enthralled in institutions. Politicisation occurs through a process of subjectivation when the oppressed individual recognises their state and starts to carve out new norms and ways of being highlighting the signifier of their oppression in a new and positive light in turn slowly transforms the institutional order.

To understand the politicisation of Black women's hair by institutions and society, one must consider how ideologies are formed – in particular the ideology of white supremacy. An ideology is a system of moral and social ideas perpetuated by a group of people to promote unitary thinking and to define what is accepted and what is rejected (Geertz, 1973). Ideologies are reproduced through actions, language, values, beliefs, and everyday behaviour when interacting with society. For white supremacy to succeed, the Black body must be devalued, thus Black expression through hair has been subject to white social control through formal and informal instruments. Whether it is slave masters shaving enslaved people's hair, or the humiliation of the apartheid Pencil Test (Tate, 2009), white social control of the Black body and subsequently Black hair has been part of white supremacy to uphold a white-dominant social order. For this reason, white supremacy depends on the subordination of Blackness and Black pride in hairstyles, beauty and aesthetics runs counter-intuitive to white supremacy. The ideological nature of South African education was historically formed on notions of racial superiority and discrimination against Blacks (Davis, 2018). This can be interpreted in terms of the existing structure of power – within white hegemonic cultural norms and power. This is how through ideologies Black hair becomes politicised and made public because Black pride in hair would pose a threat to white supremacy.

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3.4 Appropriate lens for this study.

CRT provides a framework for identifying and understanding interactions between Black women and structural and institutional white cultures. By bringing the CRT framework to the foreground, this thesis recognizes that students of colour are a marginalized community and are often targets of hidden racism. In context of the research, institutional racism may not be recognised as being the motive behind the policing of Afro hair and not viewed as being racially unfair by educational institutions, as it is embedded in law and complemented by racial ideologies. CRT framework is central to the current study as it centralizes and validates SOC's hidden racism counter-stories as attempts to understand how race and racism continue to dictate the educational and social culture of BGHS. This framework can help expose racism at Model C schools like BGHS and it is hoped that through academic engagement, people plagued by racial prejudice will recognize their prejudices and hopefully develop empathy for the voices of their victims. Storytelling is a fundamental tool of CRT as it exposes superficial transformative and *colour-blind* agendas, revealing the truth that racism continues to be a problem in our society, especially in higher education (Mhlauli, Salani, & Mokotedi, 2015). For this study is key to have a strong understanding of race and hair from an institutional standpoint, which is why CRT was the chosen prevalent framework. The six tenets of CRT will be used in the analysis section, where applicable.

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3.5 Conclusion

The theoretical framework, Critical Race Theory and the concept of Politicisation, outlined in this chapter are important in giving students of colour a platform to unearth and purge these discriminatory encounters at Model C schools. Through CRT's counter-narrative technique, one can determine the types of hidden racism black students face daily. The literature examined in chapter two presents history, colonialism, political and racial systems as influencing ideas about Black women's hair representation, as well as their performances in the past and present. These ideas are also prevalent within the Politicisation and CRT framework. Helping to understand how a personal issue such as hair can be politicized through racial policies and dehumanization as the 'other' group, in such a way it leaves an impression in the school system.

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CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the methodological approach that has guided this research. A qualitative approach was deemed more appropriate to meet the objectives of the study, because of its ability to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences of hair policing. A more extensive exploration of these methodologies will be addressed in this chapter. In-depth semi-structured interviews were employed as data collection method. A detailed description of the data collection method as well as the recruitment process and details of the participants is outlined. Discourse analysis was the analytical approach used to analyse the data findings. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion about reflectivity and the ethical considerations of the research process.

4.2. Qualitative Research Design

Creswell (2012), Domegan and Fleming (2007) affirm that when researchers are interested in understanding human process and how we make sense of these processes, qualitative research is the preferred approach. A qualitative methodology was chosen for this study because its primary goal is to comprehend human behaviour by investigating underlying issues that arise in specific social contexts and discovering the meanings and explanations that individuals have for what is going on around them (Neuman, 2014). This aspect of qualitative methodology was important for the current study because the experience of hair politicisation can be better understood within the social context of Model-C school institutions, which has been identified as a predominantly White middle-class academic environment. As a result, the social-historical context influences how women of colour interpret their racialized experiences and respond to given challenges. A qualitative design is also the best approach to take because it allows for multiple, subjective perspectives on the phenomenon at hand.

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4.3. Method of Data Collection

Given that the study aimed to explore the first-person experiences of hair policing, primary data extracted from in-depth interviews were judged to be the most suitable data collection method. Gill and co-authors (2008) propose that individual interviews were suitable when the researcher wants to expand knowledge on an otherwise uncommon topic or social

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phenomenon - subjective, comprehensive responses are necessary and when the nature of the topic under study proves to be too sensitive for focus group discussions.

A semi-structured interview schedule (*Appendix A*) was used as the research instrument. Semi-structured interviews are effective because they allow for a rapport to emerge between the interviewer and interviewee, allowing the interviewer to respond to the interviewee in a sensitive manner, as well as offer probes to help cover the desired topics and elicit complete, and specific responses from the interviewee (Edwards & Holland, 2013). This interview method was appropriate for this study because it encouraged participants to describe their experiences with hair policing as thoroughly as possible, elicit their opinions, and give them an expert role in their understanding of the world. The interview schedule helped to capture participants' experiences of hair policing and how it is linked to racialised historical events. This way it gave the participants space to be more organic as possible while they recounted their stories, but also allowed for the researcher to obtain information from the interview that was relevant to the study objectives.

Due to the CORONA19 virus outbreak and the subsequent lockdown that followed, the initial face-to-face interviews were scraped for Zoom rooms. This made it easier to schedule interviews with participants who were currently out of town. In qualitative analysis, interviews allow the researcher to get to know participants better, building up rapport between the two (Lune & Berg, 2017). This rapport came quickly as the researcher knew and had interacted with each participant before the study. Rapport allowed for the participants and researcher to cultivate a level of comfort in the Zoom room, which lead to meaningful conversations, that utters to the participants that the researcher was interested in what was being said. In turn, this rapport minimised the potential anxious feelings that could have been raised when total strangers are required to bare their souls to one another.

Interviews were used so all participants had their experiences voiced and heard rather than in a focus group setting where some voices could be lost. This method was chosen because of the sensitive content that was asked surrounding the discrimination experienced by Black women. During the interviews, the recording function on Zoom was used to get direct information with little struggle to write participants' stories verbatim. Transcription of all recordings were done within three days of the interviews. One aim of this project is to share the experiences of Black women with afro-textured hair.

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4.4 Procedure

This study relies on qualitative research methodology which examines a specific phenomenon from the participants' perspectives. Thus, purposive sampling was used to define the inclusion criteria for interested participants. Purposive sampling is defined as the deliberate effort to select individuals or groups of people who reflect the characteristics relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Lune & Berg, 2017). The purposeful sampling helped identify participants and gained a greater understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon from the participants'' perspectives on Black hair and how it was policed and their understanding of that after high school. The purposive criteria for this study were twofold: (1) identify as a woman of colour, and (2) be willing to discuss their own experiences of hair policing at historically white institutions.

This criteria method helped set apart Black women who experienced hair policing in high school from those who did not. The participants' specifications were women between the ages of 19-30 years of age, who are coloured or black (in this study both classified as Black) who attended a former Model-C school. Participants who met the study's objectives were contacted via Instagram, email or WhatsApp message and invited to participate. Black women were chosen because of my personal experience and wanting to know if other women of colour experience hair policing at their former schools and the importance placed on their hair that juxtaposes the Eurocentric notions of beauty. Once participants were chosen a small preliminary study was conducted to test the efficiency of the interview schedule. A pilot interview is useful was useful because it helped determine which elements in the methodology section was necessary, it ensured the validity of the research questions and it helped test the level of feasibility of the study (Thabane, et al., 2010). I invited a friend, hereafter called Jameela who matched the inclusion criteria to partake in the pilot interview. Once the interview was completed which was recorded with the recording app on my cellphone and lasted from 1 hour, I probed Jameela about her impression of the process such as her attitude towards the questions asked and where I could improve. Jameela's only feedback was for me to allow some seconds between some questions for participants to collect themselves as some questions evocated strong emotions and she asked for time to collect herself again. This just speaks to the hurtful experiences hair policing has had on young black women, who are still emotional after years. However, while transcribing this pilot interview, it became apparent that I had certain interview flaws that could be prevented such as waiting for the participant to finish her notes before interjecting or asking for elaboration. Jameela's interview was included in the final sample as it provided descriptive and rich data. It would be a great disservice to Jameela

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to not include her account as she was strikingly candid throughout her interview by sharing extremely personal reflections.

4.4.1 Description of participants

Ten participants out of the sampling group volunteered to share their experiences. The ages of the women ranged from 21 to 27 years old with the average age being 25 years old at the time of the study. Most participants are from middle-class to high-income social-economic backgrounds. All participants self-identified as women of colour but also retained their racial preferences as Black or Coloured.

Out of the 10 participants, 3 of them lived in hostel and the rest were day students. Notably, at least 3 of the participants were not South African citizens. All ten interviews were conducted on Zoom as the data collection was conducted during the lockdown period in South Africa. The participants were tasked with creating a pseudonym, or one was created for them to protect their identities. As an ice-breaker before pertinent questions, participants were asked biographic questions about their family backgrounds and current situations. The following is a description of the biographic characteristics of each participant with pseudonyms used to protect their identities:

Amandla. Amandla is a 24-year-old Black adoptee who by her own account is moving towards a Pan-African identity. Her first experience with Boland was the principal asking her, *… "wouldn't you want to have nice blonde hair like your mom?"*

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Bulelani. Bulelani is a 21-year-old Xhosa woman. Her family moved from Port Beaufort to East London so she and her sibling could attend a better school. She attended Beacon Hurst High School which was a former Model C school that now has around 70% SOC.

Chandler. Chandler is a 24-year-old Coloured woman studying for her bachelor's at the University of the Western Cape. When she first came to Boland, Chandler reviled that Boland was a very different environment from what she was used to *"…It was a very new environment to me. But yeah, I think what that did for me, it did a lot".*

Jameela. Jameela is a 26-year-old who is completing her postgraduate degree. She identifies as being Black. Her mother tongue is French, but she speaks English to her family and friends. When asked about why she came to Boland Girls High School she responded by saying *"…it was the only English-speaking high school in Stellenbosch, everything else was Afrikaans".*

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Joie. Joie is a 25-year-old Black woman from Johannesburg who has originally been living in Cape Town for 15 years. Having come from a strong Afrikaans-dominated primary school where she was one of a handful of SOC. She was happy and excited to come to Boland where it was English and there were a few more Students of colour.

Mandela. Mandela is a 26-year-old Black woman, who speaks Xhosa, Tswana and English. She is a *book influencer* on Instagram with a following of 12,6 thousand. She also attended Boland and later Pretoria Girls High School. She recounts a fellow pupil at PGHS who asked her if she was Coloured because her hair was long so she assumed Mandela couldn't be Black.

Monica. Monica is a 26-year-old woman currently doing her Masters. She identifies as a Black woman from West Africa who moved to South Africa at a young age. Her home language is English. When asked if she found her high school to be inclusive, she acknowledged the great facilities and teaching skills of the faculty, *"... I don't think they made a special aid like a special intention to include black learners, but I don't feel like they excluded them."* When asked about her high school Monica talked about how she didn't feel any form of overt racism, "…But there was no special effort to make me feel comfortable. It was more just like I just had to slot in with everyone else."

Phoebe. Phoebe is a 25-year-old Black woman of Nigerian and Samoan ancestry, her family moved to South Africa in her 9th year of High school from the Middle East. When asked about her experience of moving to South Africa, she commented on what a shock it was for her to come from a place where diversity was not an exception *"…and to suddenly be put in a space where even though it's post '94… apartheid doesn't exist anymore…There was diversity, but a lack of integration at an institutional and also a social level."*

Rachael. Rachael is a 25-year-old who identifies as a Black Xhosa cisgender woman. She is finished with her studies and is working as a success advisor. When asked why she went to Boland she was very vocal in saying that because of its heritage as a predominately white-only school, the education would be better. "…*And it's a white Model C school."*

Rolene. Rolene is a 25-year-old Coloured woman. When asked about her experience in high school she mentioned that when she dyed a strip of her fringe blond as many of her other classmates were doing and it was not an issue for them. But for her, she felt that her dying a small streak of her fringe blond was so highlighted to the point that she felt humiliated. *"…And like I covered that part of my head afterwards…"*

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4.5. Data Analysis

The interview transcriptions were subjected to discourse analysis and was used as a method of data analysis. Parker (2005) claims that discourse analysis is the study of language, it is one way to look at language that focuses on the social construction and apprehensions of meanings created through this discourse (Lune & Berg, 2017). Discourse analysis differs from other thematic analyses as it is interested in the talk and text that naturally occurs in social spaces. Parker posits that discourse analysis encourages the exploration of different language uses in society and that it enables people to reconsider power relations through different language use. What makes discourse analysis crucial to this study is that it also looks at terms and relations on the surface level but also at the latent assumptions of these terms and assumptions which can provide richer meanings (Parker, 2005). Given the nature of this study, a degree of focus is on the political and historical acknowledgement of race and discrimination faced by certain races, this perspective is suitable for use in data analysis.

The goal of this research is to find out whether these women can make links between their personal experience of hair policing and the national cases that have emerged recently and if these women can make correlations toward racialised historical events. During the data collection and analysis process, this researcher looked at the specific language, words and phrases used by participants when talking about hair and how each discursive theme was used to explain their experiences. This method of analysis was used on the secondary data source, which was the Boland Girls High School code of conduct where participants themselves were tasked to analyse the language, words and meaning behind the school's hair policy. This method of analysis was suitable for this study because it allowed for the extraction of data from both primary and secondary sources. The start of the analysis process was relatively easy because the research questions and the literature review directed most of the types of themes that I discovered or focus on. For example, knowing what micro/macro aggressions consist of helped in finding examples of such events in the transcribed data. However, despite the pre-existing themes, an open attitude was warranted to allow categories to emerge organically. Jameela's interview was used as a template to identify the main emerging themes because it was stimulating and detailed. I sat with Jameela's recorded interview for about eight days to become familiar with her depictions.

Transcribed interviews were uploaded, to *Otter.ai*, a computer-based software that "supports the researcher during the data analysis process, in which texts are analysed and interpreted using coding and annotating activities" (Smit, 2002, p. 65). This software aided in the management and organization of the transcribed data, making it easier to identify common

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or divergent themes across all ten interviews. Memos were created as needed to record the meaning of a specific code or to record personal thoughts and ideas. After this was completed and a thorough understanding of Jameela's interview experience was obtained, the second part of the analysis was to group similar codes or ideas into themes and sub-themes. After the themes from the template text had been identified, the other transcripts were thoroughly analysed by assigning them to pre-existing themes or developing new codes.

On completion of the analysis, examples from the written texts that give life to the themes were extracted and are available to read in chapter 5. This analytical tool applied to the study, because it allowed for the detailed examination of hair policing encounters by students of colour, how they make sense of this phenomenon and the links they make to other events.

4.6. Reflexivity

The importance of reflexivity in research, particularly qualitative research, cannot be overstated. Its role necessitates acknowledging the researcher's contribution to meaning construction throughout the research process (Parker, 2005) goes on to argue that reflexivity is more than just a subjective framework assumed by the researcher (in qualitative research). Even before the interviews, I, the researcher, was personally connected to this study and the context of this study because of my personal experience with the topic and themes raised in the literature. As a result, I needed to keep track of myself as well as my goals for this study throughout the discussion. This was done to avoid any bias from my side, as well as the imposition of personal ideas onto my participants.

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As a result, every effort was made to ensure objectivity. As a 26-year-old Black female student from Somerset West, I brought particular biases to the current research study. First and foremost, before beginning this research project, I was convinced that women of colour, are victims of racial politicisation and that these experiences are exacerbated in predominantly White spaces such as Boland Girls High, a former all-White school. This was due to incidents during my Boland years that affected my perception of my hair and my ability to interact in White spaces. Because I could personally relate to the context of this study, I had to remind myself of the importance of speaking to the study's questions and purpose rather than my inquiries and expectations. However, given the qualitative and subjective nature of this study, the researcher could not be expected to maintain complete objectivity and lack of bias throughout the study.

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Having said that, the researcher admits that her initial interest in studying Black hair and its performances in society stemmed from her relationship with her Black hair and its representations in society. Furthermore, her knowledge and experience with Black hair, as well as her strong assertions about Black hair practice, ensured the researcher's steadfast role in this study and provides a degree of subjectivity in this study.

4.7. Ethical considerations

As a researcher, one of the most important aspects of collecting data is ensuring the privacy and safety of participants. Each participant was briefed on the aims and rationale of the study, they will be made aware of their autonomy and ability to leave the study if discomfort arises during the process (Lune & Berg, 2017). They were required to give formal informed consent before participating in the study. The anonymity of participants and the confidentiality of the data were maintained. As the subject of this discussion will be hair and discrimination, the researcher is aware of the possible impact that such a topic could have on personal evaluations of the participant's self and experiences, and how the stories and opinions of participants would be represented within the research, participants were offered referral to counselling if they needed it. The pandemic has forced interviews online, thus other ethical considerations have to be made. The first thing to remember is the health of all participants. I asked participants to engage in this study during the pandemic will put them under additional unnecessary stress (Greeff, 2020). Second, special preventative measures were made when using an online platform and data so that information was not lacking or hacked. Extra care was taken to choosing an online platform to collect data, and data was sorted as soon as possible to separate data storage sites and deleted from online platforms to prevent hacking (Greeff, 2020).

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4.8. Conclusion

This section went over the research procedures and ethical protocols that were used for this study. This is especially important for research on hair politicisation experiences because it frequently deals with "myths" that dominate debates on the subject and are used to deny and negate what is real for women of colour. To provide a counter-narrative to these myths, a study of the politicisation of African hair in high school must examine participants' actual experiences. Furthermore, the complex dynamics of these experiences frequently reflect a convergence of the post-apartheid South African social and political context, as well as the

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historical context of apartheid itself. The chapter described the semi-structured interview framework and provided a summary of how the data were captured, stored, and analysed in the section on data collection. The ethical considerations used in this study were discussed to demonstrate the protocols used to ensure the participants' safety, confidentiality, and anonymity. The reflexivity component described my involvement in the study, such as how participants solidified my own Black identity and how they allowed me to reflect on my own experiences at my former Model-C school. The findings and discussions of this study are presented in Chapter 5.

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CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The main objective of this study was to explore and understand the lived experiences of students of colour with encountering and engaging with hair policing at former all-white high schools (Model C schools). The secondary objective was to understand whether students of colour could link their experiences of hair policing and historical institutional racial structures. The finding presented in this thesis highlights powerful racialised narratives of students who experienced hair policing due to their non-conforming hair at a traditionally White high school. This study will explore five emergent themes in the upcoming chapter. The theme titled 'Confrontations *about hair at school*" is the first thematic segment of the analysis of this study. "*Participants' response to hair policing*" will inform the second thematic segment of this chapter and third, what I have termed "*Interpreting the school rules and the experience as racist*" informs the third thematic segment of the analysis chapter. 'How *perceptions of hair changed after high school'* is the fourth thematic segment of this study, and finally *'Personal narrative around hair politicisation'* informs the fifth and last topical analysis.

Each of the themes are unique but also feeds into each other as it highlights how contemporary black and coloured (Black) women have understood their hair policing experiences at school and the politics of hair in today's context too. It also addresses how Black women have come to understand the policing of black hair on a national historically contextualised level.

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The order in which the themes are mentioned is in such a way that the reader experiences the cycle of hair discrimination. You first encounter discrimination and/or hair policing at your former white high school. The experiences leave you feeling a certain way that you might change to be received better. Through one's school code of conduct (COC), you are confronted by your 'otherness' regarding your hair. After high school, you are no longer bound to a COC, so your viewpoint on your hair changes, influenced by various factors. Lastly, national events, such as the protest at Pretoria High School for Girls (PHSG) and the Clicks/TRESemmé advertisement, make you confront your past hair policing experience, and you in turn analyse why you went through what you did and why black hair is so politically fraught.

Overall, participants reflected on hair policing encounters by referring to events occurring within their high school and other events occurring nationwide. The interpretations of the key themes will be done by analysing them with Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the

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concept of Politicisation. The five tenants of CRT will be consulted and, where necessary, used to make sense of the participants' experiences.

As the starting theme of hair salon *confrontations about hair at school* was pivotal. This refers to the experiences of each participant and it also uses CRT's notion of counternarrative to provide students of colour with a voice to tell their stories about hair policing and discrimination at their Model C schools. The second thematic segment, *participants' response to hair policing*, is a theme that was gleaned from the interview discussions. In this theme, the women's responses to their experiences were mentioned, including their emotions and their physiological wellness in light of their experiences. Links are drawn to previous studies on the subsequent effect of racism coined 'racial battle fatigue'.

The interrelation of school rules and the experiences as racist reinforces the wider literature on how school policies and norms created a culture of invisibility and alienation of black students. It is under this theme that this study identified a new finding around the intersectionality of swimming and race. The fourth theme, *how perceptions on hair changed after high school*, is vital in understanding how participants responded to the Pretoria High School for Girls case and the Clicks/TRESEmmé ad while discussing factors that motivated them to shift their viewpoint on their hair. The final theme *personal narrative around hair politicisation* provides a picture of how participants view black hair discrimination concerning the political influences of the past. In this sense, it becomes clear that participants acknowledge politics viewed through the lenses of postcolonial, apartheid, and racism as impacting contemporary thoughts about hair for black women.

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The analysis chapters are thematically arranged and explored in the form of a reverse funnel discussion. This means that the analysis purposely addresses the personal experiences first, at the intimate level, drawing on the schools' exclusionary practices. Finally, it explores the politicisation of black hair, which is a broader phenomenon, addressing the links the participants make towards their experiences and the broader historical context of colonialism and apartheid. In unison, the themes touch on how black participants experienced hair policing at their Model C school then and how they look back on it. They acknowledge the past circumstances of apartheid and colonialism, as well as institutional structures and personal context that have impacted how Black hair is politicized today.

Table 1 offers a summary of the major themes and subthemes. These themes are further discussed in subsequent sections, along with extracts from the interviews to exemplify them.

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5.2 Table of Themes

Table 1

Summary of themes and subthemes

THEMES	SUBTHEMES
1. Confrontations about hair at school	a) Overt and covert Hair confrontations b) The objectification and exoticisation of black hairstyles c) The Negative Perception of Black Hair: A Message to African Women
2. Participants' response to hair policing	
3. Racist School Rules	a) Code of Conduct b) Neatness as a baseline c) Alimentation from opportunities d) Assimilation and Double standards
4. How Perceptions of hair changed after High School	a) Factors that changed participants' views on their hair b) Personal experiences and public controversies
5. Personal narrative around hair politicisation	a) The politicisation of black hair b) Hair, racism and Colonialism in South Africa.

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5.3 CONFRONTATIONS ABOUT HAIR AT SCHOOL

5.3.1 Introduction

This section explores the hair confrontations that participants identified as offensive. These include remarks made by white educators and students alike, which often my respondents questioning the meaning behind what had occurred and spoken or the non-verbal behaviour of a white person that makes them feel a sense of worthlessness. These narrations are categorised into three subthemes, first, overt and covert forms of hair discrimination, secondly the objectification and exoticisation of black hairstyles by white individuals. and third, the negative perception of black hair society imparts to black girls. This leads to subliminal messaging that students of colour's hair do not fit society and the 'normal' way that hair should be. These subthemes will draw on certain tenants of critical race theory (CRT) to strengthen the argument.

5.3.2 Overt and Covert Hair Confrontations

This subtheme describes the everyday actions, verbal intonation or behavioural slights experienced by the participants or through their interactions with White people. When discussing an incident in which she interpreted her friend's covert non-verbal actions to reveal the assumption of her hair, Amandla stated that:

> *I'll never forget this one girl a Meisieskool girl, by the way, Black as well, she was at my house and she says to me, "Amandla, you are just so organic I just love it."*
> *"Organic! What do you mean?"*
> *"What like, I just I don't know", she was like, "Ya, your dreadlocks and um, you never wear makeup, blah, blah, blah." I mean, like, I didn't even know it wasn't a thing. I just had dreadlocks…*

For Amandla, her shared experience was coming across another black adoptee who went to an independent white Afrikaans school, which shaped the way that individual saw other Black people not realising that her comments also indirectly reflected on her internalised racial biases. She (Amandla's friend) did not understand her racialisation process, through her families, communities and the commentary on African hair she internalised this racial hierarchy, saying that Eurocentric hair is better than afro hair. This internalised racism not only

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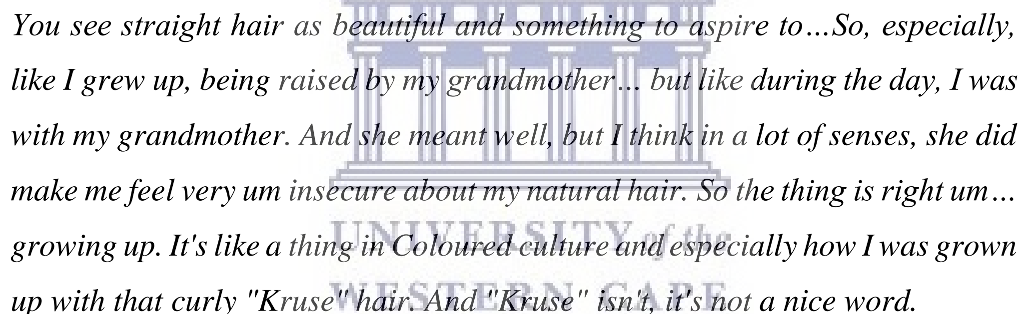
creates rifts between Black and White women but also pits women of colour (i.e. black, coloured, Indian and Asian) against one another, grading them on their hair texture and proximity to straightness alighting with whiteness (Patton T. , 2006).

The word 'organic' which can be seen as a derivative of 'natural' can be used as an extension of CRT's permeance of racism as the concept describes the ordinary or default way of viewing the world without explicit reflection. According to Weiss (2016), the term 'natural' does not imply that these ways of thinking or ideologies are born to us. Rather, Weiss drawing on Husserl's work, explains that our natural attitudes are primarily shaped by the dominant socio-cultural practises of the time we exist, such as our ideas about race. So, when the Black Afrikaans transracial adoptee from Amandla's narrative said that she was so 'organic', referring to her dreadlocks and lack of makeup, she enforced hidden racial insults because of the deep-seated pervasive cultural stereotype of Black women who wear dreadlocks as being more 'earthy' and 'unsophisticated'. Unfortunately, these pervasive images of women of colour have become normalised or 'naturalised'.

In the extract below, Chandler experienced a similar incident where a member of her race spoke out against her hair:



> *You see straight hair as beautiful and something to aspire to…So, especially, like I grew up, being raised by my grandmother… but like during the day, I was with my grandmother. And she meant well, but I think in a lot of senses, she did make me feel very um insecure about my natural hair. So the thing is right um… growing up. It's like a thing in Coloured culture and especially how I was grown up with that curly "Kruse" hair. And "Kruse" isn't, it's not a nice word.*

In Chandler's experiences, she mentions how her race, Coloured people, or Coloured culture, internalizes and regurgitates the hair standards of White people. Here one's culture uses reinforces terms such as "Kruse" meaning frizzy hair but in an offensive mode of reference to tightly curled African hair that many Coloured and Black women have.

Chandler also speaks on how Coloured/Black people's thoughts about hair are informed by political structures of the past. She discussed how her upbringing informs the ways black people think about hair. She also notes how elders meant well, but their colonial inheritances from past experiences have an impact on young Black people's mindset and how young Black children they care for see their hair (Thompson, 2009; Erasmus, 2000; Erasmus, 1999). These ideas on hair justify the older generations' partiality towards a more European standard of beauty, which is in line with Erasmus and Thompson's argument that blacks used past legacies associated with hair to further racialize themselves in their communities because that was

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ingrained in them from infancy, and they pass on these inferiorities of afro-hair onto their descendants (Thompson, 2009; Erasmus, 2000). Chandler exemplifies some of the perceptions surrounding hair for Black people when she refers to *"straight hair as being beautiful and something to aspire to".* She makes her argument personal as she speaks about how she and other peers during her childhood were informed about hair in that way. Therefore, it appears more vulnerable because of her upbringing and being informed that her *Kruse hare'* was unacceptable. Her vulnerability is highlighted again, with words such as *"insecure"* and *"Kruse hare".* These racial experiences contributed to Chandler's feelings of inferiority, otherness, and worthlessness.

Both Amandla and Chandler had experiences where their first introduction to hair policing was not directly by White individuals but by their communities and relatives. This shows how powerful racialised structures are when even black people start to internalise and link 'good hair' to the white standard and 'bad hair' or '*Kruse hare'* to people of colour. This highlights the complicity of relatives in maintaining racist norms of beauty and attractiveness, but it also indicates the broader social presence of those norms. I argue here that the complicity is complicated because, as Chandler points out, her grandmother 'meant well'. For them, societal upward mobility was tied to having straight Eurocentric hair. Erasmus (2000, p. 381) notes that 'These racial hierarchies and values of colonial racism have left a deep mark on our conceptions of beauty defining beauty against blackness'. Hair lessons are learned early in life, and families are one of the first agents of socialisation (Norwood, 2018). This speaks to how upbringing is impacting perceptions of hair as well as enforcing the skewed perceptions of whiteness as being the ideal of hair aesthetics.

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Amandla remembers an encounter she and her mother had with the White principal of her school when they were interviewing for a possible high school:

> *And so at one point during this meeting, she showed me my mom… my mom's Caucasian, she has short kind of you know, the senior White woman hair, kind of where they crop it all off look. And at one point during that, she said to me, the principal, "wouldn't you want to have nice blonde hair like your mom?".*

In her statement, Amandla indicates that while explicit racism is believed to no longer exist, there remain manifestations of it in society and one such manifestation is the subjection of black hair to Eurocentric hair standards. This argument indicates that while the principal's statement may not have seemed racist to him, in fact just the mention of her suggesting that Amandla, a black adoptee would want her hair to be like her mother's is normal, as many girl

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children grow up imitating their mothers' style of wear and hair. But the fact that Amandla is black indicated that she was already at a disadvantage with parents who did not understand her hair and her maybe having feelings towards her natural hair not being like her mother's. The principal unconsciously affirmed that her hair is different and that to fit in and be more accepted or welcomed in this school she should strive to obtain hair that imitates her mother's Eurocentric style and texture. This shows that deliberate racial classification and segregation are no longer practised; however, manifestations which arose from racial segregation remain imminent in covert forms of speaking that tell young black girls that their hair is somehow less than and they should strive to mirror Eurocentric standards to present themselves in predominately white spaces.

Monica had an experience with a teacher at her school:

> *I once had a teacher pull me over and say that my hair was inappropriate. But that was the one time I wasn't wearing... like towards the end of high school I stopped wearing my hair in braids. I just had like normal styles with my hair, like I would braid my hair into little plaits, stuff like that. So I was wearing one of those. And the teacher said that my hair was inappropriate, but she didn't really elaborate and just left.*

The pervasive assumption here is that Black girls' hair is perceived as inferior by white peers and educators alike. This notion is associated with CRT's whiteness as property due to South Africa's colonial past whiteness was seen as an asset that only white people could possess, this historic system of ownership and its reverberations further reinforce and perpetuate the system of white supremacy because only white individuals could benefit from it (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, 2012). Particularly in education, the division between students and academic staff perpetuates the idea of race as property rights (Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). This is evident in minority student of colour and majority white academic staff. Particularly at Model C schools, few black people are part of the faculty. Teachers, academic staff and board members are seen as owners of the curriculum. Therefore, they have the power to design school policies according to their knowledge, values and norms, which can work against students of colour in Monica's case, the white teacher had all the right (property) to denote Monica's hair because it did not come under her knowledge of what is proper hair for school (Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). This institutional power further reinforces the notion that being white is more valuable than being a person of colour by the verbal and non-verbal cause black students receive for their hair. This

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systemic reality works against building a diverse and inclusive educational environment because it supports the embedded hierarchical racist paradigms that are embedded in society that Eurocentric hair is superior to afro-textured hair. In general, the comments demonstrated that teachers perceived natural hair as nonstandard, not beautiful, and not well maintained. Therefore, afro hair must be somehow 'fixed' in white eyes, this pits black against white with whiteness on top because it is the 'standard'.

Joie mentioned in Hostel when she would get out of the shower that her fellow white boarders would comment on her hair:

> *And I think you know, the commenting, 'Why is it so short?" Like, especially when you have washed it like I said it shrinks and so whenever people washed my hair and I would come to me like "oh your hair was so long last week what did you do to it?' or someone would be like "I don't like this", you know. And it is like it is not your hair anymore, they can freely make comments on it, that really kind of added a lot to how I felt about my hair and how it looked.*

Rachael explained her experiences of hair discrimination that were very in-your-face and overtly racist:

> *... So being told "oh you need to wash your hair like it is dirty" like actually, it is not dirty...So like just small remarks over time and the subtle, "What is it? Can I touch it? What does it look like that? What's going on today? When you bring braids in", and then obviously you know how sometimes braids can slip out? And like it doesn't even have to be my braid and it was like 'you're discussing there is someone's braid on the floor', it's like to black girls 'it's just a braid', nothing is disgusting, it's an extension that just like white women's clip-ins and when it falls out you're not going to be crying, it's disgusting.*

From Rachael's narrative, black hair was perceived through a lens of defilement. Specifically, Black hair was perceived to be generally physically dirty or debased. The perception that black hair is dirty and defiled is an echo of the mistreatment received by black people during the era of slavery. The literature suggests that during slavery, Black hair was often unable to be maintained due to the harsh conditions. The lack of care for their general well-being certainly meant that their hair could not be adequately maintained; this resulted in hair damage and scalp conditions (Byrd & Tharps, 2014; Thompson, 2009).

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This de-based view on afro-textured hair was reinforced in Amandla, Monic, Joie, and Rachael's stories, that white people think they have a right to ask questions about others' hair without stopping to think that their questions, looks, and quibbles are hurtful and their comments could negatively affect students of colour. This theme primarily encompasses the notion that black students' hair is an oddity and that curiosity bypasses black students' bodily rights (Erasmus, 2000). This relates to the CRT notion of whiteness as property, in that endures a systemic hierarchy that gives white individuals the luxury of not reflecting on their actions or words or bypassing others' bodily rights to appease their curiosity because they sit at the top and can subjugate those below. While there were certainly cases where students were teased, as in the narratives, in most cases, second-class hair was communicated verbally in a matter-of-fact manner. This message was discussed as a point of view, sometimes without an expressed intent to put down the receiver, but through an unconscious action. In agreement with Sue et al's (2009) argument that due to whites' hegemonic and privileged status, they may unwittingly internalize and support the racist views that lead to students of colour being discriminated against. This notion is aligned with previous experiences of participants who experienced unconscious racism by white individuals.

5.3.3 Objectification and Exoticisation of Black Hairstyles

This subtheme was illuminated in interviews with some Black female participants and indicates actions that left participants feeling objectified and exotified by racial insults directed at their hairstyles. This was something they frequently encountered at their Model C High Schools. In their work, Johnston and Nadal (2010) explain the exoticisation and objectification of multiracial bodies, which resonates with the experiences encountered by the female participants of this study. The authors conceptualise this theme as occurring when a multiracial person is "dehumanized or treated like an object" (Johnston & Nadal, 2010, p. 135). Although Johnston and Nadal's research is based on multiracial people, the women in this research also reported being put on display or feeling like they were an object to others due to white individuals who probed them with questions. In most cases, White people remain oddly curious about Black hairstyles often showing insensitivity which makes the recipient mostly uncomfortable with such questions as it is intrusive of their personal space. In most of these narratives, the hidden message communicated to the female participants is that Black women are public objects of fascination because their hair deviates from the Western norm. However, within this general message, other hidden messages were also generated, such that mainly black

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hair is still peculiar to the White norm (Hall & Fields, 2015; Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, & Brownes Huntt, 2016; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Thompson, 2009).

For example, Mandela's experience conveyed the message that because of her hair, she cannot be black:

> *I remember once this one girl who was racist. We figured out later that she was like, "Are you sure you are black?" I'm like, "Excuse me, what does it even mean?" And she's like, your hair is not like the other girls. It's like, moving and, I'm like, "I'm black, thank you very much".*

This also communicates that she is not the norm of their expectations of blackness and thus an oddity and her physical appearance does not match their idea of blackness, and thus made into an ideal of exotification. For Amandla, it is the verification that her hair is her hair:

> *Its constant comments of "Is this your real hair? Oh, wow! It's the constant expectancy of I guess a wave, braids so there's a constant shock that this is my real hair. But then that's as far as it would go. So I wonder what the subtext was and why are people so surprised that I am walking with my natural hair and then this is why people now, with this growing out of my head, and also saying constantly, "Oh, it's so long!" So that's, that's the kind of comments I got and I'm not sure if it was just disdain, but it was racially, you know, like dog-whistling, pointing out.*

In most cases, these narratives show how easily some white individuals can reduce black people to a single or monolithic category ignoring their appearances and that blackness comes in all shades and varieties.

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Again Amandla encountered a few white pupils who invaded her space by touching her hair without permission communicating the hidden message that the Black female body is not self-owned and thus can be played with at any point in time (Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, & Brownes Huntt, 2016; Thompson, 2009):

> *...With white students, I think it was stereotypical the hand and in the hair, the holding of one braid, just you know, the inspection, the looking, the assessment, but I guess it said 1000 words without really having to say much, it never really went past that.*

Similarly, Phoebe expressed her exasperation with white individuals who exotify afro-textured hair:

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...if I got cornrows...people will kind of make comments saying, "Oh, you look like Snoop Dogg" or be more peers, not necessarily staff members, or teachers be like, "Oh, you look like Snoop Dogg". Or you look like referencing some sort of black celebrity who maybe had that hairstyle...

When students of colour are in white-dominated spaces being Black and existing in those spaces means that people of colour's unique identity down to their hair is essentialised with tokenization.

...So, you know, I look nothing like Snoop Dogg, you know, but because I have a hairstyle that reminds you of him, you know, you're going to use that reference, or it's going to be brought up.

From a CRT perspective, intrusive comments about Afrocentric hair are a direct cause of their historical and social positioning as "unattractive," racialized others versus Eurocentric beauty standards. Existing literature on the subject shows that whites for centuries have clung to the dominant narrative, propagating that African hair is inferior to white hair and denigrating it as dirty, unprofessional, and synonymous with the texture of "wool" (Byrd & Tharps, 2014; Caldwell, 1991). Alubafi et al (2018) note that during colonization, derogatory Afrikaans terms such as 'kaffir hare' (African hair) or "boesmanskop" (Bushmen or indigenous hair) and demeaning apartheid techniques such as the pencil test proliferated to reinforce their deviation from the superior white race to emphasise the inferiority of African beauty.

The pencil test, according to Powe (2009) consisted of inserting a pencil into the hair of a racially ambiguous person, to pass the test, the pencil should fall out of the person's hair, who would then be declared white and have access to the privileges that come with being white. However, if the pencil remained in the hair, the person was considered Black or Native. In this way, the apartheid government was able to ensure the dehumanisation of African hair to maintain white social and cultural sovereignty. Twenty-four years later, black beauty is still being monitored and seen in strict hair policies at schools like Pretoria High School for Girls, which tell impressionable young black women to tame their natural afros to succumb to Eurocentrism.

Another significant aspect of Amandla's story, we can argue that narratives of white people touching African hair highlight the continued colonisation of black bodies specifically the black female by white people. Placing this argument in a historical context, as suggested by CRT, it is not unreasonable, historically the black female body has always been a place of entertainment for the white world (White & White, 1995; Byrd & Tharps, 2014). The history of this violation of the black body dates back to the case of Sara Baatman, who was sold into

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slavery and exhibited in London similar to an animal to be dissected by white bodies and criticised for seemingly unnatural physical characteristics, such as her big African buttocks (Romero Ruiz, 2017). The act of touching African hair unsolicited by white people suggests the relation to this inherent belief by white people that they have property rights over the black body, and this can sometimes lead to black women feeling that they are there to perform for whites' gratification. This was evident in the storeys of Mandela, Amandla, and Phoebe, who felt irritated and uncomfortable when white women propped them about their hair.

These ignorant hidden and insensitive insults directed at black women because of their hair reveal an ignorance that Eurocentric beauty trends are the norm and that African beauty is atypical or quirky even at a time when it is possible to educate oneself about other expressions of beauty with the rise of social media platforms like Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram.

5.3.4 The Negative Perception of Black Hair: A Message to African Women

In this third subtheme, participants described hair discrimination experiences that made them realise that the standard of hair was not theirs. Students of colour through these experiences felt as if they had to conform to the 'standard' of hair/style. For instance, Phoebe felt she had to alter her natural hair when she moved to her new high school:

> *I remember the first time I ever relaxed my hair was actually…And I was in grade nine. So it's the first year that we moved here. And I remember very well that, first of all, I didn't know the procedure. So not aware that you're not supposed to wash your hair before you relax it so. So the physical pain of it, I still have like burn marks, or like my scalp hasn't fully recovered, basically, from those first relaxer burn marks.*

Chandler mentions how society expects women of colour to adhere to certain aesthetics to get ahead.

> *But I think we do just because there is such an expectation of society of institutions of how women of colour's hair is supposed to look to fit into that box of neatness and professionalism. And just to be able to make our hair like that and keep it like that. I think we do; we do feel even if it's subconsciously that we need to put more effort into making that happen.*

Joie reiterates Chandler's comments on hair standards:

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…the western idea of what beauty is that long straight hair. Because I mean, that's how you get that long, straight hair is by relaxing or putting straightener or putting heat to it, you know what I mean. So I think that is the image that a lot of us have, there are still some people who still see that as the standard of what beauty is. We still using, you know, that Western idea of beauty that's the image they are still trying to conform to. I don't think that all those people have accepted that beauty has very different many different faces... When you look at TV ads, it is still the same stereotypical relaxed hair, straight hair…

As noted earlier, while the negative perception of black hair was endemic to the black girl experience, this was reinforced when the hair was worn in a natural style (e.g., afro, ponytails, braids). This experience aligns directly with the messages conveyed to black women during the days of apartheid who had to undergo the pencil test and similar, black women relaxed and 'tamed' their hair to fit in or gain social benefits, rather than wearing them naturally (Powe, 2009; Oyedemi, 2016; Posel, 2001a). Messages about black hair were also reinforced as black girls' hair became more closely aligned with European standards exemplified when Phoebe relaxed her hair. This practice of glorifying certain types of black hair while vilifying other types of black hair is similar Apartheid system's practice of classifying people of colour by attributes such as hair whether it is thick hair, coarse or fine hair.

While negative messages about Black hair were enforced by what was said to Black students by educators and other pupils, these messages were further reinforced by a lack of response to hidden insults. Specifically, no participants mentioned educators' responses to insults and microaggressions from other students about hair. When Black students were discriminated against for their hair, participants did not mention the teacher's response indicating that they did not intervene. Indeed, in a few experiences, it was the educators who discriminated against Black students for their hair. Therefore, inaction was a further mechanism for the pervasive ways in which societal standards about black hair were communicated to Black girls.

From the above narratives, one can gauge the importance of CRT counter-storytelling. Counter-storytelling helps in understanding the experiences of students of colour while legitimising their everyday experiences (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Counter-storytelling aids in analysing the culture of a school and provides opportunities for further research for inclusivity at schools and not just superficial diversity. As much as schools can increase the number of students of colour if the schools do not make the necessary changes to the school

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culture to be more inclusive, the school will have a difficult time maintaining diversity. In many cases, counter-storytelling is made necessary by the permanence of racism.

5.3.5 Conclusion

Overall, the study participants experienced hair policing and discrimination at a time in their Mode C high school by white educators and students, suggesting that their hair was less preferential. Surprisingly, the data also showed that for some women of colour, their introduction to hair discrimination starts in their communities from internalised racism inherited from past traumas. the permeance of racism and whiteness as property, CRT shows how white individuals can become oblivious to the impact of their actions and words on students of colour, allowing students of colour to experience hair discrimination within the three subthemes.

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5.4 PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSE TO HAIR POLICING

5.4.1 Introduction

This second theme addresses the way participants responded to their hair policing experience. The participants' experiences had a profound effect on shaping them and shifting how they viewed themselves and their hair. An interesting observation is that the literature and data revealed that students of colour develop racial trauma because of multiple encounters of racialised interactions contributing to a range of physiological, academic, and social sufferings (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Hardy, 2013; Lebron, et al., 2015). This shows that continuous racism affects people of colour's minds and their bodies.

This section of the analysis chapter presents the findings of how participants felt in the moments of hair policing experiences and the results of these racial acts. Most participants recognized that a lot of the results of their hair policing experiences were unconscious but could acknowledge in retrospect that they performed certain actions to negate the racial harm that happened to them. In this theme, most of the participants were open about the troubles they have encountered and witnessed because of being subject to hair policing. The overwhelming sentiment in the narrative was one of harm, all participants saw their experience at the time as personal harm and not a collective experience.

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Rolene:

"…but I remember having a streak of blonde in my fringe, and it was so highlighted to the point I felt humiliated."

Again Rolene commented:

"…I speak for myself, you're constantly on high alert around your appearance. And so that is why their conversation around relaxing and constantly doing that so that it can be within a certain archetype of 'neat'. Yeah."

Monica:

I just felt really scared especially when she dragged me I was like, "Joh!" It was so shocking. And also what she said was hurtful. It was hurtful, it hurt my feelings.

Similarly, Jameela added her emotional take on her experience;

But as a kid, it's quite traumatizing."

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This shows that experiences around hair policing leave a lasting effect on black girl students long after they matriculate and enter society.

Each of the above participants expressed how they saw their experiences as personal harm and were visibly emotional during the interviews. Chandler even broke down in tears as she narrated her experiences at hostel and school. The participants' over-run emotions show that despite the years these racist experiences still have a hold on them. Other participants like Chandler responded by conforming. She showed how she changed her hair style and texture as a result of hair policing, whether it was an intentional act or an unconscious act of conformity to survive.

Chandler:

> *"…that feeling of like you are not enough to be there, that you don't fit in with the typical Boland Girls and I think that's also a big part of the reason why I always straighten my hair. I mean I didn't always straighten it but very rarely would I have my curly hair out because that never fit, that wasn't the mould that I had to fit into. So it's just I think I love Boland as a school but I was also very aware that the school wasn't made for people like me."*

In contrast to the feelings of hurt and conforming to get along, other participants flipped and fought back in their way. Amandla through her narrative indicated that she chose to question and reflect internally on what was being said to her:

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Amandla:

> *"But I think it had a profound effect on who I was. And as I said, it was the slow racial awakening to claim my blackness. I think, in some ways, I've always tried to, you know, be divorced from it...my blackness was always the punch of the joke. You know how when someone comes and does a blackccent (black accent) to you, it's like, what is funny? The blackness is funny. Somehow my black existence is what's funny here. Meanwhile, it's a random joke where like literally studying for something and somehow the blackness is the punchline."*

Some may say it was "just a joke" but why are jokes always at the expense of black women? Moreover, 'the joke' only works because it assumes that there is something 'wrong' about deviating from the white norm. It seems like white supremacy's favourite public sport is berating black women; it has become social currency. There is a long history of black women

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being dishonoured, disrespected, denigrated, and degraded, especially within colonial society (Mothoagae, 2016). White people might therefore believe that they laugh with a racial stereotype joke solely because of its humorous qualities yet their laughter might be motivated, at least in part and unbeknownst to them, by an unknown enjoyment of the stereotype that forms the joke's content and in a way gratifying for them and proving their thoughts on women of colour's blackness. One could argue that whites are not laughing at the racial stereotype but only at its clever comical rendering, which can function as an elaborate strategy to dissimulate their racial prejudice, therefore forming a sophisticated excuse for enjoying one's racial unconscious under the guise of post-apartheid colour-blindness.

These findings resonate with the point in the literature that black women's pain, trauma, and anger are never taken seriously (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Hardy, 2013; Lebron, et al., 2015). This compares well with Oyedemi (2016) who argues that black women experience all forms of violence; physical, structural direct, cultural, and symbolic to attain acceptable beauty. It is conceivable that all these jokes at the expense of black women are a form of violence against them. If anything, this incident should ask us to ponder why it is so easy to disregard and discard black women, especially those on the margins who do not fit the model of what white people think black womanhood is. To negate those racial stereotypes, black women often feel like they have to adhere to societal standards of beauty, which means hair that more closely mimics white standards of beauty. Black women have gone to great lengths to contort their hair in ways that society sees as socially acceptable, even if it impacts their health and safety this is pressure from society, race, and discrimination work collectively to birth a legacy of psychological and cultural violence.

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Furthermore, the findings reinforce the claim of critical race theory that racism is permanent. In this case, the racism inherited from apartheid policies and beliefs instils this white-dominant institutional culture with assumptions that whiteness equates with deservingness and excellence, whereas blackness is unconsciously or consciously associated with mediocrity or failure (Hiraldo, 2010; Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, 2012). The message that this conveys to those not ascribed to whiteness is clear if you are a black student, you are not expected to succeed.

Bulelani fought back by overcompensating and doing her best to achieve academic excellence. Her fighting back against her school's discriminatory practices shows Bulelani's step towards politicisation:

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"Yeah, I guess I was, I was very angry because I didn't understand how the way that my hair looks would affect my academics. I think overall just the hair aspect for me, kind of cemented what I thought that the school viewed us as, so for example, I found myself kind of overcompensating. As much as I was angry I also kind of wanted to prove a point, right. So I would overcompensate with debating and public speaking, I was in the BLC (Beacon Hurst Leadership Council), I was a prefect, I was public speaking so I wanted to show them that hey, like I'm not this… my hair doesn't make this uncivilized person or whatever. I found that I wanted to prove myself, but my academics or my culture or whatever should have spoken enough of me as a student that I shouldn't have needed to do more if I don't want. I felt very limited in what I could do. And then that also affected kind of how it made me feel at school. Like how confident you know, like, as a girl, I want to do this hairstyle or that hairstyle, I couldn't do that besides outside of school. They would say, "Oh, you can do it outside of school", but I'm mostly at school."

All participants showed how influenced they were by their hair policing experiences, indicating that hair discrimination is not a small issue but one that expands permeates and shifts the way students of colour view themselves and interact with the white-dominated structures that they inhabit. Six students lamented how the cumulative effects of racial hair policing impacted their emotions and academic performance. For instance, Jameela termed her experience as traumatizing and Bulelani described her overcompensation for her academics and cultural activities at school to overset her white teachers' view of her, essentially enacting her agency over herself. These students heightened emotions and activity could be due to stimulated cognitive energies that were used to make sense of the multiple racist suffering the students went through and as a result, this affects their well-being (Smith, 2004; Sue, 2004). Amandla and Bulelani mirror Chandler's views about questioning their sense of belonging in such a culturally white space. All felt that they faced the dilemma of either embracing their true self or denying themselves to embody a white-dictated form of hair to make white individuals feel more comfortable with them.

In their narratives, the participants showed heightened emotions and their frustration with white educators and students over their hair indicating indications of being tired in their tone and voices from the need to explain their hair constantly to others. For Smith (2004). Bulelani

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and others might be suffering from racial battle fatigue. Racial battle fatigue suggests that black people develop racial trauma as a result of multiple incidents of racialised interactions contributing to a range of psychological, economic, social, and physiological suffering (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Hardy, 2013; Lebron, et al., 2015). This is conceptualized as "the physiological and psychological strain exacted on racially marginalized groups" due to daily exposure to hidden racism (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007, p. 555). This conceptual framework suggests that due to having to navigate and exist in historically white institutions that favour whiteness, students of colour often find themselves having to re-centre their academic energies to deal with negative impacts caused by the collective build-up of racism such as hair policing thus this can impair thinking abilities needed to concentrate on pertinent responsibilities.

Hylton (2005) further mirrors Smith, that racial trauma is birthed when people of colour are unable to resolve the blatant or hidden racialised encounter. Some of the negative effects of racial trauma include the inability to concentrate, sleep deprivation, ruminating over prior events, anger, anxiety and depression (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Bryant-Davis, 2007; Carter, 2007; Reynolds, Sneva, & Beehler, 2010). Emotionally, some participants reported grappling with issues of assimilation, hyperawareness, suffering from humiliation, worthlessness and overcompensation all causing trauma. These emotional or physiological injuries are consistent with existing research on the mental consequences of extended exposure to racism (Reynolds, Sneva, & Beehler, 2010; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Broman, Mavaddat, & Hsu, 2000). The assimilation issue Chandler experienced on feeling the need to constantly straighten her afro-textured hair is a normative consequence of being in an environment that requires one to assimilate to feel a sense of belonging, which she very much lacked.

Ample literature postulates that minority students who attend former white institutions often face an "internal conflict' as Amandla lamented because they are placed in a difficult situation whereby they have to either try to maintain their ethnic connections or assimilate to the majoritarian norm which she had been doing usually but in doing so, as she stated divorcing herself from her internal needs and forgetting who she truly was (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Glenn & Johnston, 2012). In both cases, the participants still feel a sense of alienation and of never quite fitting into the hegemonic white culture as evident in the current study's sample.

Consequently, students of colour who grapple with identity dissonance do not necessarily think that they will become physically white, in the case of Amandla she knows she is black but being raised by white parents and family, she disconnected herself from her black skin and identity until she was confronted with it at school, where educators and peers only saw her

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blackness. In this sense, the CRT's concept of whiteness as property comes into play. This notion operates on the level that whiteness confers the rights to possessions, to use and enjoyment, to disposition and the right to exclusion (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998). This is an asset only white people can enjoy, thus whiteness can be described as an ongoing history, which orientates non-white bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up' space, and what they 'can do'. So whiteness functions as a habit, bad or good, which becomes a background to social action. Thus, for black students to exist in a certain space or 'take up space', they crave proximity to whiteness, because only then will they feel a sense of 'humanness' and thus access to privileges such as the ability to have their existence accepted without facing contempt. Like Chandler stated "*that's also a big part of the reason why I always strengthen my hair"* so that her existence can be acknowledged so much so that white people forget that she is a perpetual outsider and for a while can regain some 'humanness'.

Importantly, these racist effects of hair policing occur in an institutional context of Model C school 'colour-blindness'. This is a perfect illustration of Sue et al.'s (2009) claim that colour-blindness can facilitate racism because it gives white people the power to dismiss any conversation that exposes the permanence of white hegemony and thus perpetual racism (Gallagher, 2003; Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). As stated in chapter 2, South Africa's post-racial 'rainbow nation' rhetoric created the illusion that democracy eliminated inequalities and discrimination simultaneously. The 'rainbow nation' was an idealization and not reality. It allowed white people to dismiss their racial insults and unconscious aggression toward black people as them being overly sensitive and delusional about their own experiences and thoughts with the slogan 'racism is over'.

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When Model C schools shun students of colour's reactions to racial hair policing in the language of non-racialization that arguably endorse the belief that being evasive to colour can heal the wounds inflicted by racial acts. White people and instructions have held onto this non-racialization notion and 'rainbow nation' ideology because it serves a purpose to them, it allows people to ignore racist policies that persist in society. Thus, this notion of colour-blindness works against dismantling social racial inequalities such as hair policing and consequently makes anyone who challenges this dominant narrative inaccurate or overreacting. However, this evasiveness to racism and race ultimately invalidates and trivialises real encounters and feelings of marginalisation witnessed by black students (Harwood, Choi, Orozco Villicaña, Browne, & Mendenhall, 2015; Nadal, Pituc, Johnston, & Esparrago, 2010). Furthermore, it divulges the ignorance of how easily white people transfer societal problems as black people's

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baggage as though they are not liable for the racial enslavement of people of colour. Instead, when white people ignore the existence of systematic racism this works to propel and reinforce institutional and cultural racism insuring the permanence of racism (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

5.4.2 Conclusion

In a utopian world, high school should be a time of excitement where students can expand their knowledge and understanding of the world coupled with managing their changing bodies. However, for some students of colour attending a historically white high school like Boland, high school was an additional tutelage in racism through hair policing. There were two responses. Everyone felt some form of pain, but participants chose to deal with this pain in different ways. Some chose to conform, some fought back by doing internal reflection and questioning and others overcompensated in terms of academic performance. The follow-up effect of this was an emotional overflow, emotions ranged from alertness, and humiliation to feelings of worthlessness. These effects culminated in racial trauma as a result of their multiple racialised interactions contributing to the range of physiological, academic and social sufferings listed before.

CRT's tenants of the permanence of racism, critique of liberalism and whiteness as property highlighted that South Africa's 'rainbow nation' rhetoric, non-racialisation and colour-blindness do not work. Instead, these initiatives have worked to reinforce and promote institutional racism and white dominant culture in our schools. Those former white schools have thrived on the initiative of colour-blindness and 'rainbow nation' rhetoric to keep their status quo. Through this white supremacy culture, white students are subliminally taught that 'racism is over' and their whiteness insures their 'humanness' while black students are felt to be the outsiders who need to change to be recognized, and this leads to trauma and emotional wounds for them.

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5.5 RACIST SCHOOL RULES

5.5.1 Introduction

This theme emerged from participants' interpretation of the formal school rules today, but also from reflection on the informal practices of enforcing these rules. Boland Girls High School (BGHS) in this study was used as a 'standard' for participants, as more than half of the participants attended this school. BGHS is a boarding school for girls in Stellenbosch in the province of the Western Cape in South Africa. It was founded in 1860 making it the oldest girls' school in South Africa. The school was founded by a German mission on 1 May 1860 for the education of the daughters of the missionaries. The school grew rapidly, as girls from the wider Stellenbosch community joined the missionaries' daughters. In 1991, the school became one of the first government schools open to all races (Rhenish Girls High School, 2022). Boland, like similar former white schools of its kind, prides itself on Eurocentric cultural values and norms, which are deeply linked to colonialism. With the influx of diverse students after the end of apartheid, little change was made to truly incorporate other cultures into the school. Students of colour were supposed to just slot in and be grateful to be allowed in an institution which was denied to them for so long. This attitude is probably typical of the white institutional culture at most Model C schools. This is the underlying factor causing students of colour to experience hair discrimination and policing in historically white institutions due to the privileging of white aesthetics and cultural interests.

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This section addresses how the 'standard' Model C school rules were interpreted as racist by participants, resulting in exclusion. The participants addressed the issue of exclusion using concepts such as *Code of Conduct (COC),* and *neatness* a word that was thrown around a lot at their high school. Furthermore, participants discussed feeling *alienation* from opportunities, and having to choose *assimilation* but being confronted with a *double standard*.

5.5.2 Code of Conduct (COC)

This subtheme explores how the participants interpreted the BGHS code of conduct (COC) and whether they found the COC inclusive or not. this study, Boland's COC was used as a standard for other Model C schools' ethos, see *Appendix B*.

From the beginning of inclusion, the COC at Boland has not changed much as black students have benefited from transformative policies such as being accepted to a former white-

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only school but only on the condition that the white intuitional culture remains intact (Chrisite & McKinney, 2017). Out of the 10 participants, six flat-out denied Boland's COC as being inclusive:

> Bulelani: *Absolutely not.*
>
> Jameela: *I feel like the Code of Conduct is not extensive enough. It only literally deals with white hair and there's like a small abbreviation for like the styles that a black girl could wear.*
>
> Joie: *Definitely not. I feel like, when I read that, I was like, okay, this sounds like it applies to white kids only because everything is like long hair. So, what happens when a black child has 4C hair how does it works with short hair like, when you have an afro…or if you have braids or like do braid fall under long hair. So, it's a bit vague in a sense, like, who are we talking to? You know, to me, it sounds like I feel like talking to white kids. They're not accommodating at all in there. You know, so what happens if my natural black hair touches my ears? what do I do with it, then? what do you want me to do with it? You know, do we braid it? Or do you want us to cut it? I don't understand. Yeah, so that's how I feel about that.*

When looking through the code of conduct Monica felt like changes should have been made years ago to update the school norms on hair when students of colour was integrated into the student body:

> *So it makes me feel that they excluding it they are deliberately excluding it. How many years has Boland been, open and has had people of colour, like since 1995? Right? I mean, that's 25 years. And it's the same school rule from 25 years ago, the same hair rules and all that nonsense. So I feel like they should have updated it by now already or at least included a section for specifically addressing girls with Afro kinky textured hair, with curly hair and all the different styles that are appropriate for school. They could have had a section with cornrows. They could have had a station for box braids, they could have a section with weaves. Like they could have just done anything like that, throughout the years that they've had black girls in that school, but none of that has been addressed in the school rules.*

The findings of this theme mainly highlight experiences with the underlying message to exclude and negate. Specifically, participants reported reading hidden racial invalidation that nullified black students with afro-textured hair from the COC. When reading the COC many

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participants felt that the section dealing with hair was aimed solely at students who did not have afro-textured hair. The section that should have dealt with afro-textured hair was just one sentence that did not encompass enough of the styles and braids that would be acceptable for a school child.

Utilizing CRT's interest convergence, indicated that white individuals were the main beneficiaries of civil rights in America (Hiraldo, 2010). DeCuir and Dixson argued, "early civil rights legislation provided only basic rights to African Americans, rights that had been enjoyed by white individuals for centuries. These civil rights gains were in effect superficial 'opportunities' because they were basic tenets of U.S. democracy" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 28) This can be applied to the South African context when former all-white schools integrated, the interest and values of white norms were preserved and have lasted (Hiraldo, 2010). Thus white students have benefited from a structure that was initially implemented to offer equal opportunities to people of colour. Applied to understanding the dismissal of black girls' hair, most schools like Boland pride themselves on their Old-European missionary history which is deeply rooted in colonialist religious reforms. The post-apartheid era has seen the influx of students of colour into this once white-only utopia, because of the desegregation policies of democratic South Africa. Mode C schools like Boland has even gone further to accommodate different races by establishing Xhosa as a secondary language (student have the option of choosing Afrikaans or IsiXhosa as a second language) which requires the homeroom class to be split when those subject hours come up further marginalizing and excluding those students who chose isiXhosa as an additional language from the majority white students in a class who take Afrikaans.

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However, it can be debated that these superficial changes have only been developed to create a sanctuary for whiteness in the name of diversity so that white people can retain their power (Hiraldo, 2010; Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, 2012), this is the major premise of interest convergence. According to Delgado and authors (2012), white people "will [only] tolerate or encourage racial advances for blacks only when they also promote white interests" (2012, p. 391). This interest is seen in the dominant institutional culture at most Model C schools. That is, the underlying factor causing black students to experience devaluation in many of these Model C schools is largely due to the privileging of white cultural interests over other identities. This is supported by Read and co-authors (2003) who argue that despite the integration of historically white institutions (HWI), the normalisation of whiteness remains the key point reflected in the dominant images of students as being white and middle-class, Bourke's (2010) research corresponds with Read et al.'s (2003) by commenting that the traditions "celebrated

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[at HWIs] are those based in Whiteness" (2003, p. 128). Similarly, a student in Hotchkins and Dancy's (2017) study lamented that "I don't see an appreciation for difference, only White culture" (2017, p. 45). Therefore, when the participants like Bulelani, Jameela and Monica adamantly lament that they do not find the COC inclusive links to the fact that intrinsically it is not, it is based on white Eurocentric beauty aesthetics and is uphold Eurocentric standards while excluding students of colour who do not conform to these Eurocentric hair ideals.

5.5.3 Neatness as a Baseline

This subtheme, emerged when participants discussed the BGHS code of conduct (COC), analysing their feeling toward the word 'neat'. For all the participants' depictions of 'neat', the one notion that comes to mind is colour blindness. The schools' attempt at non-racialisation in the COC's hair policy, fails to take into consideration the persistence of racism and the construction of black people's hair. In her account Bulelani noticed how the staff did not understand black hair and brushed her concerns side, indicating their lack of understanding:

> *Because I remember there were a few of us who had natural hair. And then as the years progressed in high school, everyone kind of chose to relax, because it was easier to maintain them, and they wouldn't get into trouble. A lot of us who had natural will get called to the side and they would say, "We're not saying it's wrong for you to have this but we're just saying you must make it neater". And I'm like, I don't know how much neater I can make it because this is, you know, the style of my hair. Or they would say, oh, what isn't maybe you can stick it back, like Chloe or something where, you know, Chloe is mixed, and her hair type is maybe not the same as mine and mine has kinkier hair. And so it would seem less put together.*
>
> Phoebe*: ...hair can represent and mean a lot of different things. That you will even sort of that idea of neatness and tidiness...But I think the main thing that I see, you know, is this idea that having an Afro is unkempt. And then it's better to have the lace front wig laid down.*

This word 'neatness' holds a notion of whiteness and a lack of understanding of how Afro-textured hair forms and can be styled, Monica links those thoughts in her narration:

I think that word can be very triggering. Because, like I'm a black woman who has Afro-textured hair with African culture, I will choose to wear my hair out naturally. It doesn't always appear 'neat'. You know, like your typical, it's not slicked back, it's not whatever, but it is off

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my face. Because my hair will not go down like the curls just go up. So like this word 'Neat' can be very triggering. Because even though my hair is clean, and like you know, gathered it does not necessarily it would not necessarily appear neat.

The culture of the school afterwards, made me reflect on how just the fact that they're not deliberately excluding people does not mean that they are, celebrating us or making a specific effort to welcome us into the school. I mean, as black women, black girls into the school, like the school never really made an effort to do that. Or even, address different types of hair in their school rules, which I also saw was negligent on their part.

Again, like Joie participants narrated how this word evoked negative emotions:

So, to be honest, I think it makes me feel away. Like I don't know how to describe it. Like, it makes me very uncomfortable. But what does neat me is it's got a hint of discrimination in a sense. So, it's like, what does it mean?

Other students resonated with Monica's narrative. In the below extract, Jameela notes that the specific word 'neat' is limiting to girls with afro-textured hair and when the school does not explain itself, it is the students who have to interpret what hairstyles are suitable for school and hope it is in line with school codes:

I feel that like sometimes that this word can be used to discriminate against black women because our hair doesn't always like appear tamed when it's in its natural state so it will look unneat or uncoiffed and that can have people discriminated against and so then you won't be applying to the rules. Unless your hair is braided down. Then it appears extremely neat and in a pattern. But if you didn't have time that weekend or, you are in between styles, then your hair won't comply with the school rules. Schools don't know how time-consuming having one's hair done is. So as a student, you don't always have enough time to do a specific hairstyle or even money to get it done. And hairstyles depending on the style are also damaging to our hair and sometimes you need to let your hair breathe a bit so when it's out of braids or something it may look unrefined to some people. Schools just don't understand the intricacies of African hair.

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The extract from the COC calls from the problematisation of the words such as "neat", "conservative" and "presentable", which were through around in the participants' narrations since these terms are subjective. Furthermore, it begs the question: who defines what is neat, conservative and presentable? From interpretation, the school determines what constitutes ideal and acceptable hair and hairstyles. Ratele and Laubscher (2010) suggest that whiteness is

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associated with power and privilege and whoever holds this power is who decides. Furthermore, Fredman (2016), asserts that because the deep-seated structure of racialized South African educational system has not changed fundamentally, the decision-making in former white schools is still directed by white people. Therefore, it follows that although hair is personal it is also governed, among other things by societal norms (be it at school or certain spaces) and attitudes, and cultural and political dynamics which are still seated in heavily white norms and standards.

Given what participants have said, the race-neutral hair policy may have been too moderate to radically change the lives of black girls, who continue to be disproportionately policed. Milazzo (2015) maintains that banning racial categories has institutionalised colour-blindness in South Africa leading to the "demonization of race-based affirmative action policies" (2015, p. 11) . This is seen in school hair policies that exclude black girls based on the notion of non-racial categorization, leading to the over-policing of their hair because space was not given to them in the COC where their hairstyles could be negotiated, instead vague sentences that allude only to white students and students with non-afro textured hair. This ignorance and overlooking of racial categories and the rejection of race-based policies is what leads to "an invisibility that pretends there is no racial difference" (Davids & Waghid, 2015, p. 164).

Relating this discussion to CRT, the critique of liberalism stems from the ideas of colour-blindness, equal opportunity for all and the neutrality of the law (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, 2012; Hiraldo, 2010). If used incorrectly, colour-blindness can be used to allow people to ignore racist policies (such as hair policies) that perpetuate social inequality (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). That racism is subtle and normalised, a policy that does not use nor encourage the critical use of racial categories denies that racism exists. Essentially, colour blindness risks denying the existence of subtle racism (Conradie, 2016; Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, 2012). Through this denial, the COC misses an opportunity to empower educators and hold them accountable for improving the hair policy for black girls, which itself would be a significant step towards tackling race inequality and racism. School administrators not changing the hair policies to be specific for black students or rewriting certain words argues that while non-racialism claims moral superiority, not implementing racial categories is self-contradictory and fosters denial of racial oppression and allows it to continue. If there were hair policies written explicitly for afro-texture hair this would make black students feel more accepted and acknowledged because their school is making an effort to understand their hair. This ignorance by Model C school policies fosters racial inequality, as students with afro-textured hair are more policed because

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their hair does not fit the policies laid out, hence racism is persisting. Milner (2017, p. 294) argued that issues of race and racism are "ingrained and deeply embedded in the policies, practices, procedures, and institutionalized systems of education". In this analysis, the code of conduct may be effective in outlining the rules of the school, but it is ineffective in addressing black hair. The avoidance of race-conscious language in the COC makes it colour-blind, which makes it a tool for perpetuating the strategies developed by the apartheid government to establish and maintain white supremacy in the education system.

In all the participants' stories, the one notion that comes to mind is that the majority of white people do not understand black hair and the non-racialised, colourblind COC is the only effect in alienating students of colour. The idea that black hair should be altered to be 'acceptable' is ignorance masquerading as "neatness". In the same breath, neatness does not belong to only one culture. Neatness should not and does not mean that hair that curls, hair that grows up, and hair that cannot be brushed into submission are untidy. Neatness does not mean that black girls should have to suffer through expensive treatments and procedures to meet an acceptable "white" standard of conformity and respectability. When Model C schools adopt a non-racial approach, they ignore that racial inequality exists and thereby foster a colour-blind approach to education which is detrimental because it fails to meet the needs of black students by insisting on colour-blindness.

5.5.4 Alienation from Opportunities

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This subtheme describes racial experiences that were engineered consciously or unconsciously to exclude participants from school experiences. In terms of activities context, swimming being an uncomfortable situation for many black girls is perhaps one of the biggest driving forces to exclusion as it takes away from students' overall enthusiasm for the school experience. This theme was incredibly profound because it manifested as frequent feelings or experiences of invisibility and marginalization around swimming for participants. The experience of alienation and invisibility consisted of black girls' physical appearance being mocked and wanting to not partake because of humiliation and frustration from a lack of understanding from white peers and educators. This theme reflects the treatment of the student of colour as a second-class citizen or the message that "whites are inherently more valuable than minorities" (Lilienfeld, 2017, p. 147). Nadal and colleagues (2010) found that feelings of invisibility contributed to Filipino graduate students' sense of devaluation and detachment from historically white institutions. The same sentiments are evident in the narratives of the

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current participants. This feeling of alienation seen in these themes is commonly found in other research studies at historically white institutions when students of colour are ignored or overlooked (Nadal, Pituc, Johnston, & Esparrago, 2010; Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010; Vang & Dickmeyer, 2015). Afro hair takes a while to dry and once wet it shrinks exponentially and becomes matted unless treated immediately. For those who choose to style their hair in braids, the braids take even longer to dry and the swimming caps are never large enough to cover the dense amount of braids, leaving black girls feeling flustered and flustered. Below Rolene recalls events where she felt excluded during a swimming session:

> *I think I remember very clearly my…being in the eighth grade was like swimming trials or something. So it's like your hair went from this (indicating her hair is in an Afro) to that (showing how her Afro shrank exponentially when in contact with water) and how does this happen? And it's like, I've just been in the pool. That's what happened. And that coming from, that coming from a teacher, not a student. I think, granted, the teacher was probably quite young although I don't excuse that behaviour. She's still a teacher and should have known better. Yeah, that one experience really, it stays it's it leaves a lasting impression, right?*

Again, Joie narrates a similar experience she had when swimming:

> *Oh my gosh, I hated swimming because of that. I hated I would always have an excuse to not swim because firstly, I hated wearing a cap. And so I was like how come all the other kids never wear caps? You know, I know it was a requirement for you, you get those teachers that were, like lenient and stuff and didn't care about stuff like that was just in the code of conduct or whatever. You know, when you swimming you must wear a cap blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. But I hated swimming, I would avoid it at all cost, whether it was social swimming, PE or any form, I'll always have an excuse as to why I didn't want to swim. Because you know our hair would change and people would start laughing or asking questions that you didn't want to answer or that I dint even know how to answer.*

Jameela in agreement with Rolene and Joie's experiences talks about her having negative feelings towards the whole swimming experience in High school:

> *I always wore braids in high school, so when it came to swimming it was not fun. Because my braids were too big to get into one swimming cap so I had to use two and it was this whole song and dance in the bathroom of me struggling*

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to get these two caps over my braids and my white classmates in between helping me, laughing and pointing. By the time I get to the pool, I have this lopsided swimming cap on at the top of my head and another at the bottom but there are gaps in the middle so it just looks ridiculous and the braids were bulky looking in those silicone plastic caps, so people were laughing and being like one out of two black girls in my class no one understood, so I just preferred not swimming and chose to sit out even if I lost a mark or two for PE.

Granted wearing swimming caps was a way to protect your hair from chlorine and keep the pool clean, but the fact that the process of swimming isolated girls of colour so much because they knew the caps were not big enough to hold their hair and they would eventually face uncomfortable questions, and they chose to sit out because accommodation for them was not made.

The most prevalent racialized experience of exclusion was the experience participants encountered from swimming as a direct result of the cultural domination of Eurocentric hair. For example, when Rolene, Joie and Jameela complained about swimming offered at Boland Girls High School (BGHS) in comparison to white students, this was an unfair treatment of students of colour made to feel less and humiliated not just by students but by a teacher who should have known better. On the other hand, it can also infer the white students' and teachers' actions in supporting racial inequalities, but they are not aware that these actions endorse their denial of racism. Thus, as a result of this, classifying this theme independently was necessary. However, the common message illuminated in this theme is one of exclusion. That is, white students and educators have a biased preference for not understanding black girls' struggle with swimming even within multiracial spaces like classrooms, it is not a lack of skill but a challenge to how to keep their hair contained and dry.

There have been other studies of exclusion due to racial microaggressions (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2009). However, the unconscious bias of swimming as a tool to instigate and preserve feelings of exclusion and segregation is unique to this study as the above-mentioned studies have not reported this finding as an aspect of hair policing. In this study, swimming contributed to the participants' racialised realities. CRT's intersectionality theory is applicable in comprehending the student's hidden racial experiences. That is, the current participants' narratives are unique, because of the intersectionality of race and sport occurring when students of colour, specifically black-identifying students, are subjugated or 'othered' because of their perceived non-membership to 'the swimming club' and the culture of its participants.

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Nonetheless, this finding is perhaps unsurprising when considering the South African context, because of the historic oppression of access to recreational swimming areas for people of colour, whites are privileged over other bodies. Pre-1994 most public swimming areas and beaches were predominantly 'white only' and the government and schools put effort into swimming as a sport, thus the activity become ingrained in white society (Politics in South African aquatic sports, 2022). This investment in white swimming was successful with a string of Olympic swimmers and about 2000km of stunning coastline. As a result, swimming has been synonymous with whiteness. Yes, there is that stereotype that blacks cannot swim but that comes from the historical context that they were denied access. On the other hand, Afro-textured hair shrinks and becomes matted quickly once in contact with water unless treated properly (i.e. drying, combing out the tangles and putting product in to protect it) this all is time-consuming and at school, during gym time there is not enough time for black students to treat their hair or even if they have braids on, depending on length and thickness of the braids take a while to dry and you will have to hold a towel in on your head for a few hours so water is not dripping on the floor.

For most of the participants, the swimming classes symbolize resistance to inclusion that was fought for, by marginalised communities, pre-1994. Thus, the unwavering adaptation of swimming for girls with afro-textured hair alludes to students of colour that white individuals will not relinquish their power to acknowledge or make girls of colour comfortable, who are mostly black. In addition, this strong attachment to not changing or adopting methods that would allow black students to participate in the activity without mockery or alienation reveals the hidden message that Model C schools are not a home for people of colour. This intersectionality of swimming, race and culture makes these hidden racial experiences uniquely South African.

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In similar instances, black hostel girls who lived on campus, those participants who wore their natural hair textured hair out, shared experiences where they felt like white individuals ridiculed their hair. Chandler expressed how emotionally isolated she felt with comments from white roommates and pupils in hostel:

> *...one day Sammie was playing with my hair, my hair was curly at the time, and I didn't straighten it. and Flynn was like, "why are you playing with her hair?" And then like, say I would play with Flynn's hair she's like, "oh you like playing with my hair because it's white hair?"*

The normalisation of black alienation pre-1994 made it possible for whites to relegate black people to the margins. The indoctrination of the innate inferiority of blacks rendered their

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lived realities insignificant to whites and the effects of such teachings are still evident in the post-1994 landscape. Thus, when some white students disregard a physical black body, they do so because of being socialised to alienate students of colour or only give attention to those they perceive to form part of their white circle. This is demonstrated in Chandler's narrative when she was made to feel alienated by her white roommate.

As Chandler was narrating her experience in this one incident tears were streaming down her face and the pain and feelings of loss and inability to stand up for herself on that day were still clearly visible five-plus years after the incident.

> *This should be like a place of safety. A place where I should be able to feel like I can be myself. And I think when... in a lot of senses, I guess before I got there I viewed Boland like that place where I could be myself, that I would have wanted to be able to be myself over there ... instances like those made me feel like you know I'm not safe here and I'm not accepted here and the school isn't for me it's for white girls, it's for the girls with the straight hair and even the white girls with curly that's more for them than it is for me and then like this I guess I just never felt like that feeling never went the way.*

These experiences left participants feeling perplexed and embarrassed, because of the subtle non-verbal dehumanization they received. The similarity of these experiences infers that white people in Model C schools have been programmed to not see the pain and understand the reason behind the mockery they cause to black students which are experienced by participants as incredibly alienating. This theme was perhaps the most potent due to it endorsing feelings of non-belonging or worthlessness for participants.

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CRT's interest convergence and Higham's nativism are used to examine the phenomenon of alienation which mirrors Franklin's (1999) idea of invisibility syndrome because of the internalised interpretation that one's presence or abilities are devalued because of being part of a racial minority. Franklin notes that invisibility does not equate to the notion that the white person cannot perceive an entire physical being in their vicinity. Rather, it denotes experiences that make a black person feel disrespected or not acknowledged due to their race. In essence, there is a detail of nativism inside Model C schools that leads black girls to be alienated which Higham describes as an "intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign connection" (1995, p. 4 as cited in Lippard, 2011). Higham similarly postulates that nativism is extraordinarily divisive as it "constantly divided insiders, who belonged to the nation, from outsiders, who were in it but not of it'' (Lippard, 2011, p. 593). This concept talks about the discrimination faced by foreigners in a highly nationalist nation. This concept can be used

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within the Model C school context due to the extreme 'otherness' that black students experience. That is, black students are alienated because they are not deemed as natives of their respective Model C schools because of their lack of physical membership which makes them outsiders and thus unimportant. More importantly, the white facilitators choose not to change the rules for them because their interests do not converge, that is, there are no perceived advantages or benefits in making swimming more accessible to black students for them.

5.5.5 Assimilation and Double Standards

This theme deals with the issue of assimilating black girls to enjoy their high school experience. In the same breath, they realised that there was a double standard between them and white pupils. Mandela talks about this need to conform:

> *…So understand why there was that need to like, keep up pretences or have wigs to have you assimilate and have one less thing to worry about because at the end of the day, you're black and there are still struggles.*

Other participants shared similar sentiments to Mandela but also added that even when conforming to white hair standards, they were not treated the same as their white counterparts:

> Bulelani*: Absolutely. So for example, as I said, there were times when we weren't allowed to dye our hair right. So we would see with maybe some of our white classmates they would naturally have brunette hair, and then they would die at like very platinum blonde or blonde, which is very far from their natural hair colour. But it would then be allowed because it looks more natural, where it fits in more with their skin tone than with us. No one would be allowed to dye their hair blonde because maybe you know the contrast and skin tone would be… you know would make it very kind of evidential something that's what they would say at least is that 'we can tell this isn't your natural hair colour.'*

> Rachael*: And then being told that you can't colour your hair, you can't have red braids, but like someone else has red hair that they've dyed, it's not their natural hair colour. So they're like the standard on that.*

> Rachael*: And the one teacher was like, "oh your braids are very long". I don't understand what do you mean they are very long. It's tied up as it's supposed to be that chick has hair up to her back (bum), why is it a case that my braids are*

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long and then putting it in a bum and like, "oh, you're distracting other students, you know, specifier people can see or like, it's so distracting, can you bring it down", whereas the other white girls could wear their hair in a big bun. And if they don't have thick hair no one made an emphasis them wearing their hair in a bun or their hair being long.

To the participants who shared their experiences of double standards, to that effect, if a black girl dyed her hair blond, that perhaps gets read in a very particular way – different than a white woman who is a brunette wanting to be blond. Because it's not the norm or standard according to European understanding that black people's hair can be anything else but black and dark brown. It's easier for the Eurocentric view to understand white women changing their hair from brown to blond because it still correlates to their skin colour and what they believe to be natural, while for blacks it's not. The message interpreted by the participants' stories is that of exclusion, the school will not go the extra mile to accommodate students with different hair types that are not Eurocentric in nature, nor do they think it's necessary.

At Model C schools, the unchanging hegemonic white curriculum the schools which give European/white South African heritage royal status in academic and social spaces instigates a sense of non-belonging for the students of colour. This is seen in Bulelani and Rachael's experiences when they were berated for wanting to follow the white students by dyeing their hair colour because 'everyone was doing it'. Teachers told them that it does not look natural on them, the subtext being as a black student any other colour besides black hair is unacceptable and you are rebuked for it, unlike white students dyeing their hair blond, black, brown, or red looks 'natural' thus is acceptable and encouraged. From CRT's interest convergence lens, black students have benefited proportionally from transformative policies such as being allowed access to Model C schools, but this was perhaps only possible so long as the white institutional culture remained intact.

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Thus, since Afrocentric hair and different colour style do not support the interests of white students and the broader white society, they will likely be dismissed or not even put to mind. This gives white people the power to nullify 'othered' hair colour and style because they do not adhere to the status quo. Therefore, when black people change their hair colour to a colour that is deemed 'white hair only' the image is confronting and antagonistic to what white hegemonic norms know of their image of blackness and what they see does not match their image of blackness so it like an assault to their sense. So, when a white individual says "it's

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not natural", she does not understand the impetus that it (the hair colour) does not mirror white schools' idea of a Model C student.

From a CRT perspective, this idealization of former white schools as being superior can be traced back to historical events of colonialism and apartheid's racial classification system. During apartheid, education played a major role in creating social inequalities and poverty in black communities. The Bantu education subjugated black people to support the apartheid ideology. This was seen in the financing of schools, white schools were much more well-off economically in comparison to the impoverished dismal Bantu schools (Chrisite & McKinney, 2017). Formerly white-only schools normally charge high school fees that white parents can afford to pay but most poor parents cannot (Ndimande, 2006). In addition, they can organize massive fund-raising drives, where wealthy parents donate funds and other school materials, such as computers, printers, and laboratory resources—including sufficient money to allow a school to hire additional teachers to cover areas not adequately covered by the full-time teaching staff. Hence resources in these schools are abundant in comparison to township schools that charge low fees, and most of their students qualify for free tuition (Ndimande, 2006). After 1994, repeal of all forms of discriminatory education was put in place but as people of colour integrated they wanted their children to go to former white schools because they were still the best-funded and resourced schools and people of colour wanted to give their children the best and former white schools were the best and are still today (Ndimande, 2016). Thus, former all-white schools have always been rendered as the elite standard as it embodies social, cultural and economic capital.

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5.5.6 Conclusion

The findings indicate that students of colour encounter four forms of exclusion within Model C schools, mainly exclusion in the code of conduct, and the subjective word of neatness. These lean into the analysis that schools' notion of colour-blindness does not help students of colour but in effect excludes them by not mentioning specifics when dealing with hair in the COCs and policies. Thirdly, black students experience the white school space to be alienating because their racial stories are often silenced by white bodies. In this regard, one unanticipated finding was that swimming was a key point of alienation for many students of colour. Lastly, when black students try to conform and assimilate, they are confronted with the double standards that invalidate their efforts of assimilation at school.

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5.6 HOW PERCEPTIONS OF HAIR CHANGED AFTER SCHOOL

5.6.1 Introduction

The fourth theme delves into the follow-up to the participants leaving school and how their views on their hair may have changed. Furthermore, participants reflect on their thoughts regarding the controversies around Pretoria High School for Girls (PHSG) case and the TRESemmé-Clicks advert, identifying the similarities and differences between their experiences and these cases, in an attempt to pinpoint when participants came to see black hair/personal experiences as a public issue.

5.6.2 Factors that changed participants' view on their hair positively

Unlearning the ideas and thoughts that participants unconsciously learned at their former all-white school meant they needed to go through a process of re-socialization. This re-socialization refers to the process of discarding former behaviour patterns and accepting new ones as part of a transition in one's life. Such re-socialization takes place mostly when a social role is radically changed (Bell, 2013). It involves the abandonment of one way of life for another which is not only different from the former but incompatible with it (Bell, 2013). This re-socialization is facilitated through three processes, the first process was through a change in environment, specifically the transition from high school to university:

Rachael**:**

> *"I think when I came to varsity, I became more of a critical thinker...So, it was very much like it was definitely through learning, reading, understanding. Yeah, like the story of Sari Batman, like, the real story of her has completely changed my life, and allows me to understand how a black woman moves and how the world interacts with black women we're hyper-sexualized. I mean, it's crazy..." it was a case of media and doing readings, learning, and personal experience, like the trifecta that we put together earlier on. That made me aware of how political hair is and how that plays out outside of me sitting at home just plaiting my hair."*

Phoebe:

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"And I think, additionally to that was having the chance to also get away from Stellenbosch and going to study at UCT for some time, and being sort of in a different environment also helped reaffirm what that journey that I was going through in terms of self-acceptance..."

Joie:

"I obviously, I started I had a very clear I had a better relationship with my hair by the time I reached UWC"

From the above, it is easy to infer that perceptions and sentiments about hair transcend age and seem not to change with 'calendar maturity.' A change in environments often follows the unlearning of certain ideas such as hair and what is 'good' hair.

When it comes to ideas about black hair, Rachael, Phoebe and Joie made it clear that leaving high school to other places with almost completely different conditions changed how they viewed their hair. A change of environment reinforces their beliefs that their hair serves to dignify them. Furthermore, Phoebe claims radical self-acceptance is one factor for this. She posited:

"And I think, additionally to that was having the chance to also get away from Stellenbosch and going to study at UCT for some time and being sort of in a different environment also helped reaffirm what that journey that I was going through in terms of self-acceptance, and, you know, saying you know I am beautiful it's not that I'm ugly or you know, you don't have to be the token sort of black girl in the space and things like that."

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She identified *"affirmation from the media trials, and role models as well"* to be some important factors that diffused her new environment of its corrosive impacts. And that instead of new environments being the medium for change in perception, they simply provided a mirror-like platform where she politicized the sort of what she went through, a form of re-establishment of her sort of self-acceptance. The change in environment gave the participants access to broaden their knowledge with critical thinking. This helped them to decipher and analyse their racialized hair experiences for what it was and react to them.

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The second process that aided in re-socialization is family, parental upbringing and friends, which empowers not just radical self-acceptance but also self-expression. Monica relates her background this way:

"And that's for me because I was raised by a dad who was and people who are around politics and they would always be like 'speak your mind' and then I also have a mom who was just like keep your head down and keep quiet. So, like it was like both people like I was empowered to speak."

Joie:

"we also progressed but I would contribute a lot to my friends. I would say, you know, when you see someone with a hairstyle that you like, being like, oh, how do you do that? Or how do you make your hair look like that…So it was my friends. Definitely."

In this process with the encouragement of friends and family, participants were able to embrace their natural hair and style wholeheartedly. For Monica, her family encouraged her to speak her mind and not be silenced. Other participants explained how friends would educate each other on hair and explain different styles.

The third process of re-socialisation was media and the emergence of the #NaturlaHairMovement that emerged in the early 2010s on social media and YouTube. Black women of a variety of afro-textured hair share tips and tricks on taking care of their hair and learning to embrace and love their hair. Participants noted that media influenced them to rethink and look at themselves as beautiful and boost their self-esteem. This culminated in the participants further engaging in research on the topics of black hair and its discourse, allowing themselves for the first time to study and understand the composition of afro hair.

Joie:

And I'll also say YouTube a lot. So it's a bit of a friend and also me doing a bit of my personal work as I started, you know, doing more research on black it wasn't a lot of research but just to get a better understanding of how much more our diverse black hair is."

Monica:

"So I just started watching more videos finding out why my hair is the texture it is learning to understand, like, the more you learn, the more you understand, the more you appreciate how beautiful your hair is and how unique it is. And that just like made me enjoy the whole natural journey."

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Another respondent gave a hint of what further emboldens radical self-expressions asides from parental support. Not all African women seemed to have grown from families where parents trained girls to speak out and stand up for themselves. However, all of them tend to enjoy some sort of freedom provided by a change of environment after leaving school. Bulelani explains that the perception formed about hair while in high school never changes, but the mode of expression is more elaborate with the more freedom of expression one now has outside high school environments. According to her, high schools, especially Model C ones, tend to be overly restrictive. Getting out there is akin to bursting everything caged for years out there.

> *"Sure even now. I think like, I never… because I never did like a lot of different hairstyles in school. I did when I got out of school. Like, I just didn't know what to do with my hair, I don't know if that makes sense. Yeah. Because you're told this is what you're supposed to do this is how it's supposed to look. And then you have the freedom outside of school and now like, I'm not, I don't know, like, you would think that you would like, be like, Yeah, and you would like to explore and do all these types of things."*

Monica, Phoebe and Bulelani recount that there existed a form of religious indoctrination of how bad black hair was and how to make it better. To them, the idea that you carry something terrible on your head is not as painful as your expected silence, even sometimes the need to verbally consent to instructions about your hair. That self-degrading restriction was said to be buried in high school environments, though the indoctrination seemed to continue long into the future for some of the girls despite the freedom new environments provided after school. Bulelani confessed this:

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> *"But now I'm at a thing of like now what and I don't know what to do with it. So, I still, find that I still stick to the same things. And I don't know if that's maybe, because then I've been like indoctrinated with that, that's what I'm comfortable with, that sort of was like I don't know anything else for me. And I don't know what to do with it, like what to do with my hair. So, these are my thoughts."*

Many others like Monica, never allowed that indoctrination to transcend the school environments. Monica recounted an experience when her teacher told her that her hair was inappropriate. She simply reassured herself that she would be an adult soon. She narrated how she vehemently rejected the belief that she was not as pretty because her hair was unacceptable. She took as a blatant lie the information in the white male-dominated media, and Eurocentric media, which was suggestive of the idea that as an African woman if she needed to navigate

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her way in those worlds she needed to learn how to take care of her hair, and how to love her hair in the way it was. For Monica and others like her, they ceased thinking they were less because their hair grew in a certain way. For these, a change of environment does not mean a change of perception but freedom to express their perceptions.

Phoebe discussed in earlier narrations the harsh chemicals found in common hair relaxers and recounted the burning pain that left her with scars on her scalp. She, along with Rachael and Mandela, also experienced hair loss and discolouration as side effects of the relaxer – similar to the women in Christ Rock's documentary Good Hair (2009). The pressure to conform to Western society's standards of beauty has proven to be harsher than the chemical burns, as black women endure the pain and health risks associated with hair augmentation as a necessary sacrifice consciously or subconsciously to attain a physical appearance that is deemed more acceptable and 'normal' to society (Barnett, 2016; Bellinger, 2007; Ellis-Hervey, Doss, Davis, Nicks, & Araiza, 2016; Johnson & Bankhead, 2013; Johnson, Godsil, MacFarlane, Tropp, & Goff, 2017). Given the enduring history of oppression that black women have faced and continue to endure, concerns about the 'acceptability' of their natural hair and Afrocentric hairstyles are legitimate as black women and girls' hair continues to be discriminated against in South Africa, as evident in the participants' narrative and the events surrounding PHSG and TRESEmmé/ Clicks advert and the response to those dealings.

Participants cited the health of their hair, being true to themselves, resisting Eurocentric standards of beauty, and shifting personal ideologies, as some of the ways participants changed their view on their hair after high school. While the intersecting layers of oppression that black women faced with their hair have shaped their reasons for changing views on their hair, the degree of importance of each decision differs from participant to participant. Employing a CRT lens is critical in understanding that each participant's experiences in life are different and are processed differently, so while factors are common each person's motive behind them is unique.

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Deciding to embrace one's natural hair for any reason is arguably an act of resistance against the Eurocentric preference for straighter, smoother hair that has impacted the psychological and economic prosperity of black women for centuries. For the women who participated in this study, unlearning defamatory ideas about their hair embodies a rejection of colonial, anti-blackness ideologies that are present within black communities, the public, and mass media who encouraged them in some way to assimilate to a status quo. While none of the women embraced their hair to make a political statement, all of them understand that black hair

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remains politicized so sporting a natural afro-texture or Afrocentric hairstyle is, in itself, a form of activism.

While the personal accounts of students in the PHSG and the TRESEmmé/ Clicks advert have shocked many, they have also been dismissed as highly exaggerated. The critique of some is that parents and students alike knew the code of conduct and rules of the school before they signed up, thus you have no right to complain now when you knew what you were signing up for. And if you did not want to follow the school rules on hair go to another school where that is allowed (Gon, 2016). In these reactions, the moral integrity of SOC and people of colour were questioned, the irony is not lost here.

At former all-white schools and institutions, black women and girls are (often unconsciously) taught to aspire to whiteness and white femininity is upheld as the beacon of success. Aspiring to white femininity means changing your accent, your dress, your hair, your body and even the way you think. This education is imparted to impressionable adolescents in high school, you do not realise you are being socialized to think in a certain way, and you cannot fight back because your white teachers have too much power over you. So, you sit and listen to the insults to your intelligence, your background, your race and culture and religion, and you begin to believe them. You begin to assimilate into white culture. But it is never enough. You will always be a few steps behind because you are not white.

The counter-narratives of black students demanding the opportunity to speak, to be heard and to act indicate that the black youth of South Africa are increasingly distrustful of the 'rainbow nation' doctrine (Hlophe, 2015). The incident at PHSG is not isolated. The frustration and helplessness that these students feel are not limited to this school. The attitude of South African schools, former Model-C schools, and indeed the South African education system as a whole, is racist and steeped in colonialism and imperialism. The constant policing of the clothing, hair, bodies, and behaviour of women of colour takes its toll on the psyche of young girls, who must begin to unlearn and re-socialize themselves from white supremacist indoctrination and that occurs through the three aforementioned processes.

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5.6.3 Personal Experiences and Public Controversies

In recent years, notably in late 2016 and 2020, tensions erupted country-wide as calls to end hair racism and policing emerged steaming from the protest at Pretoria High School for Girls and a controversial TRESemmé-Clicks advert. At Pretoria Girls High, a Christian

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conservative apartheid-era school, black girl learners have made the country aware of the excessive hair policing and discrimination they have faced (Mahr, 2016). Staff members told black girls to "fix" their hair, and some were told to relax their hair while others were reminded about the school rule limiting cornrows, braids and dreadlocks to a centimetre or less in diameter (Mahr, 2016). Propelled by the long-simmering beliefs that such criticism was discriminatory and overly policed, a group of current black students staged a silent protest about the high school's rule on hair, taking place at their annual fair, which the school uses to raise money (Mahr, 2016). What followed is what the uproar is all about the school called in the police, and that included guns and a K9 unit.

Following that night, the #StopRacismAtPretoriaGirlsHigh hashtag had been trending with images of the protest flooding social media, and other reports on hair crackdown at other former-all-white schools surfaced (Mahr, 2016). Guns, dogs and a visible police presence – all for girls marching in silence to protest unfair and untenable school rules – indicate the seriousness of the racial undertone in schools. Similarly, in an online advert for TRESemmé products featured by pharmacy chain Clicks, pictures of African hair were labelled "frizzy and dull", "dry and damaged", while the hair of white women was labelled "NORMAL HAIR, FINE and FLAT". That following Monday, many Clicks stores were forced to close due to a protest led by the opposition party Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), who called the hair advert "racist" and "dehumanizing" (Ngema, 2020). The backlash to this incident was that TRESemmé products were removed from leading stores nationwide and several Clicks employees were suspended (McSweeney, 2020). Outrage over these two incidents shows that a broader debate has gained traction in South Africa in recent years. In short, despite 25-odd years of democracy, there is still an underlying racial cultural undertone to institutions in South Africa. This cultural undertone is white cultural dominance which takes the form of unconscious social norms that are projected onto young black girls and black people, this decolonization is what advocates speak towards, the deconstructing of white supremacist culture.

Seven of the ten respondents reported they had similar experiences while three others thought had to speak out for themselves but not in the manner the students reported. Their comments are presented in this section. Rolene gave the detailed narration below:

> *"It (the controversies) was an Ah-Ha moment in terms of like, these things are coming up, and these things are happening. And I like to think of us not being that old. But if I think about Zulaikha, and like, the kind of black empowerment, strong women, you know, black is beautiful, type of aspect she has grown up in*

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and can access from people on her phone…I think people are like, I've been socialized. With comments and ideas around natural hair, they could say whatever they wanted and would be no overt repercussions for it. And to see a corporate like TRESemmé put that advertisement out is just an example of that. I mean, it's hard to believe that the marketing team wouldn't have thought that through, likely the marketing team was all white. And so, you think about all of that…"

"But it did make me think about like, it's so nice that young black girls now can see things that are acceptable and not acceptable when it comes to being black and hair and being in a predominantly white school, and what they should tolerate and what they shouldn't...Whereas now to bring it (hair discrimination) to the teacher and they don't see anything wrong, there's other steps that you can take. I can go on Twitter and I'm going to tweet about it, back them it wasn't a thing because who's going to... we all have a similar idea of hair and being black and being in a school, it's quiet... Yeah. Every time I think about it, I'm like, that's wild."

Chandler gave her version of a similar experience:

"Obviously, like, to be honest, I don't remember all of the comments, but I do remember the way they made me feel, that conversation was really difficult to see. But at the same time, I was so happy because I felt like progress or something good will come from this. And that perhaps institutions would make an effort to quell negative views and stereotypes about black hair. But now, I'm not even sure how much has changed.

But I think a lot of girls of colour at Boland were made to be the butt of a lot of jokes, especially when it comes to our hair. Which was very infuriating. Because once again, makes you feel less than others. It makes you feel like you don't belong. Like, the school does not accept you even though it says it does, it comes a lot of the time from learners that's just how it felt."

Joie also concurred to having had almost the same experience as others when she recounted:

"And it made me very upset because of my experience as well. In terms for me, it was already a process to kind of fall in love with my hair and my texture and so just to see it happening to someone else that was kind of awoke

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somebody inside of me that I would say was anger, but it wasn't a pleasant feeling."

"I think part of me was kind of ignorant to that act until someone else that I know pointed it out...I start asking myself okay, why would this person find it racist then you start reading everyone's opinions about how you know beauty is kind of seen in the world and you're like this is very racist."

For Amandla, it was an epistle! Explaining how with her transracial adoption she had to learn to embrace her blackness and recognise the racism she had experienced for what it was. She detailed it as presented below:

"So, I related to what happened because it made me realize that whole 'little blonde wig like your mom', comment just wasn't it. It made me see that for what it was. And the way I responded to it... And for me, I guess that was me, slowly waking up to the fact that I was black, and slowly waking up to dismantling my little white girl performance, my white girl wanting. And so that's how I responded to it and so for instance, at the time my brother was married to a Xhosa woman, and it brought us a lot closer to speak about these issues. So that was the one hair incident."

"And in some ways that relate to how I think I've dealt with comments about my hair and about my blackness, not being able to speak up about it, feeling uncomfortable, but also not just having the words not realizing. And I think it's because I wasn't raised black, I wasn't raised with the idea that racism is going to come even though my dad kind of taught me all black history, told me all about his time as he was fighting against Apartheid how he had to go into exile, how he was in the prisons, and all of that. And in some ways, I almost didn't know that was something I have to stand up and protect myself until the Pretoria Girls High School moment. And then that memory of the whole blond hair wig thing suddenly came running back to me."

Bulelani seems to have had a slightly different experience in her school back then, as she joined a group that decisively fought for what they believed was fundamentally their rights. She related it this as given below:

"I don't know if in us in East London not a lot of people are like willing to protest the same way. So, I kind of like felt relieved. You're like, okay, I'm not crazy like there is something wrong with the way that they say our hair is

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supposed to be, you know what I mean? It's a confirmation, like, we're not crazy like there is something fundamentally wrong here. So, I kind of felt relieved when the Pretoria girls with Zulaikha Patel…But yeah, I think with me, I felt like okay, like it was just confirmation that I'm not crazy. Like there is something wrong with this. And because it spread so much and it was like an international thing and then I was okay, so it was just confirmation that okay, like there is something wrong with this."

"Honestly, I was kind of surprised because when it happened, group of people who understand us, but then it got so much attention, that like, I was like, I didn't expect… I expected it to trickle down because I expected that, you know, the principles would have to be like, "Oh, we're going to sort it out". And then kind of sort it out privately that always happened. Yeah. So, I was really surprised. Like, it became this movement, and then more people started talking about it. And then the international community. Like, I was pretty surprised because I thought that it would be something that's gone within a week."

In the case of the Pretoria High school for Girls, we are reminded that just because an institution of learning has a transformation policy or a rhetoric of non-racialisation that does not equate to the academic staff in particular as being committed to the implementation of the same non-racialisation and non-discrimination process. In the case of the PHSG and Zulaikha Patel, the petite 13-year-old with the afro who has become a poster child for the protest, it was mostly the educators who enforced the hair policies on girls of colour and noting that while the demographic profiles of students and some teachers have changed at PHSG and other Model C schools of its kind since 1994, the profile of the academic staff who are at the core of the academic enterprise has hardly changed.

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In the case of the TRESEmmé/Clicks advert, institutional culture is mostly manifested at the level of the senior staff and management team who signed off on the campaign. It is also at this level that has been successful in appropriating the language of change without actually changing (Hiraldo, 2010; Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, 2012). Maart reminds us that: 'Whilst one can legislate for and against almost anything and everything, one cannot legislate attitude!' (Maart, 2014, p. 57). And it is this attitude that permeates institutions, this attitude of whiteness as right and dominant. Who is to judge what is whiteness? This is what leads to wards unconscious bias, one would assume whiteness has a universal standard but it does not and

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each individual is measuring whiteness in their understanding, using their imagination, norms and value to fulfil this image of the 'right white'.

As Bulelani mentioned when the PHSG event happened she thought it would be swept under the rug by white administrators as things like this are always; "*Oh, we're going to sort it out". And then kind of sort it out privately that always happened.* This notion of silencing black voices ties in with CRT's whiteness as property, whereby they have the right to exclude if necessary (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). White property is legitimised when students are rewarded for conformity to white norms, such as speech patterns, behaviours and dress, in this case, hair. It does not help that the nation's most affluent schools are located in predominantly white communities, where children enjoy privileges such as better teachers, libraries, smaller classes and pipelines to university opportunities. White people can also be confident that their identities carry more prestige and are not as extremely scrutinised for their hair as their Eurocentric hair is the 'norm' schools want others to aspire to. The right to exclude is exemplified in Bulenai's narration above, white schools often side-lined, shut down or 'sort it out privately' to students of colour who had voiced their opinions about certain discriminatory rules.

Phoebe, Joie, Chandler and Mandela reported being oblivious to the kind of direct physical demonstrations as given above. It was not really that they did not have more stringent conditions to protest but that it did not cross their minds at the time. Their comments are presented below. Mandela narrated:

> *"So yeah, quite. Honestly, I don't know. I don't know if it's me thing, or it's a life thing. But my initial reaction to Pretoria Girls High when they had the protests on the outside, I went because I mean, it was just literally across the road. So, I and my friends went to like support because as much as I was oblivious to it, I am aware that some of my classmates did experience a tougher kind of like hair policing, from teachers and stuff like that. But also, like you so busy with Matric and it's like "Oh, I can't believe that teacher did that!" And you move on. Because you just think it's teachers being mean."*
>
> *"Like, I was just really like, okay, that hair, I'll get there if it's that deep, but right now I'm like trying to avoid men, get to school, easily and safely. So that's, I think I feel like the older I'm getting, the more I'm like, I'd take less things to heart, however, I'm aware of the implications of these kind of policing and what it may mean to other people. And if ever I need to explain that to someone, I will already know it, but I won't do it for fun like I won't enter a room like "Let*

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me explain hair to you!" It needs to get to that point. So, I think it's just age, I don't know what it is, but I'm just like, I can't be freaking out about everything otherwise I'm not going to make it. So yeah. That's a weird thing."

Phoebe recounts the difference in her experience when she reported:

> *"And I remember sort of feeling indifferent towards it, just simply because the world that we live, not to make a whole big thing of it, but because the world we live in is so reactionary to things that happen, you know, we're cancelling Clicks. Now no one must shop at Clicks, because they use this advert. When we know, that's not the case, Clicks is one of only two major pharmaceutical companies in South Africa. And this happened, you know, nearly two years ago. And our minds are like fishes to like whatever news is happening. This person said the N-word, this person wore box braids this person..."*
>
> *"And I think even though I might not necessarily relate in a literal sense, you know, I've never experienced sort of hair protests at my time during school, but more the overall culture and policing of black woman's appearances is something I can identify with this idea that you know because there's a uniform, you have to remain neat and tidy. But there will almost be double standards."*

Mandela and Phoebe's accounts mirror the reaction of some commentaries on the two cases, which asked why hair was being made into such a big deal. In the same breath, people argued online that it was not the schools' fault entirely for the Code of Conduct. Because by law all policies drafted by School Governing Bodies (SGBs) have to be sent to the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) for confirmation. The Code of PHSG and many Model C schools of its like comply with the laws (Gon, 2016). At the time of the incident, three out of nine parents on Pretoria's SGB were black. The three learner representatives were black: The Head Girl and two Heads of the Residences. What happened at the SGB meetings when these issues were raised? What did they say or do when these issues were first raised or at all (Gon, 2016).

These questions were frequently asked by commentators and also by the participants. In the same breath, one is reminded of the enduring nature of institutional racism and culture because a strong institutional culture has been purposefully and patiently cultivated over the decades by white supremacist culture (Niemann, 2010; Hiraldo, 2010). Despite democracy and a change in colour for individuals on the SGB, the presence of an insidious and endemic sub-culture that some Model C schools have nurtured over the years from colonialism to apartheid

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and present created a sub-culture predicated on suppression and subversion of the transformation policies in the post-1994 era (Van Wyk, 2009). The commentators seem to forget that the white patriarchal structure of South African institutions creates an oppressive system even when it is being led by black people.

This notion lies in CRT's whiteness as property and colour-blindness, whereby the institutional power reinforces the notion that being white is more valuable than being a person of colour while white people and schools could use colour-blindness as a mechanism to ignore racist policies that perpetuate discrimination against black girls (Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This is replicated in the school code of conduct, where the hair maintenance section reads as normal and unassuming but in action, it stems from the control and subjugation of the black body that women of colour have had to endure when cases such as the PHSG and TRESEmmé/Clicks advert take place there is a violent call for change for those who understand and are affected by it and on the other side calls of exaggeration and over reactionary to matters as trivial as hair. But those complaints do not understand the complex structures and cultures that have been placed upon black bodies to conform to white society to just be, they are not looking at the complex history of South Africa and its dehumanisation of the black body and thus Afrocentric hair and when those incidents occurred, some people of colour's reactions were violent because it stems from frustration and lack of transformation in institutions, as 25 years past democracy and people of colour still have to justify why name calling Afrocentric hair and excessive hair policing is racist. thus education continues to be a powerful mechanism of social exclusion and injustice, through their internal thinking, cultures, structures and practices and their external conditioning by the broader society (Badat, 2010).

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Chandler, her reaction was unpleasant. She complained,

"When I saw that whole thing, I mean, I never expected that reaction, but I was so angry and so infuriated. But also, I know that when one is angry a lot of the time it's because you're hurt or because you're sad to see something like that."

Steyn (2007) in his analysis of historically white universes, writes that institutional cultures are the sum-total effects of the values, styles of interaction, attitudes and collective memories of a university, this research can extract the university for former all-white schools and institutions, known by those who study and work in these environments through their lived experiences (Steyn, 2007). Simply put over time institutional culture becomes the default way of doing things. It 'not only seeks conformity but also often acts to screen out and marginalize dissident voices as a dominant sub-culture, asserting its values and mindset as an informal

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institutional code of conduct, thereby consolidating institutional hegemony…' (HETW, 2016, p. 16).

Embedded in the above, is how patterns and practices of exclusion and inclusion informed by social markers such as hair, race and gender, are reproduced, normalised and perpetuate injustices in the process. A concept that can add clarity to institutional racist cultures in CRT's notion of whiteness. It has been argued that everyday racism in the intuitional cultures of historically white schools is embedded in whiteness (Van der Merwe & Van Reenen, 2016; Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, 2012). White hegemony has evolved to the degree that it allows many forms of racism to go unconscious, unacknowledged in the minds of white people and largely invisible (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, 2012). Whiteness, therefore, operates to position white individuals as automatically deserving of whatever material benefits may be on offer being that access to prime education without any contingencies (Van der Westhuisen, 2018). It is for this reason that in the cases of PHSG and TRESemmé. Clicks advert the reaction of people of colour has been so loud and enraged, to make the invisible dominant, inherited institutional culture visible, which was shaped around and arose out of whiteness to benefit those that function within it and exclude those outside of its parameters.

Whiteness essentially defines institutional racist culture across historically white education institutions in South Africa. It does so by defining how different forms of multiculturalism can be identified in terms of their relation to the power of white privilege (Steyn, 2007). Racism inherited from apartheid policies and dogmas instils this white-dominant institutional culture with assumptions that white dominance equates with deservingness and excellence, whereas blackness is unconsciously or consciously associated with failure or mediocrity (Robus & Macleod, 2006). The message that it conveys to people of colour is clear. If you are black, you are not good enough or expected to succeed and you should be grateful that you are accommodated in a place where you have no right to be in the first place (Moraka, 2014; Njovane, 2015, p. 121). Students of colour are socialized to believe their existence depends on the extent to which they enact and aspire to whiteness through assimilation. This is nothing more than 'reheated colonialism and apartheid', which serves to create subtler, but no less unequal, forms of white supremacy and colonialism (Ratele K. , 2018).

5.6.4 Conclusion

Overall, this chapter examines the process of the participants changing from a negative perception of their hair to a positive perception. The findings of the chapter showed outcomes

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that the experience of hair policing at school was harmful and racist and all the participants had recovered to love their hair through three factors: finding public affirmation of black hair at university, from family and friends and through social media. Additionally, participants explained their thoughts on the Pretoria High School for Girls and TRESemmé-Clicks advert pinpointing when the participants began to see their experience as not just a personal but public issue. This was done by drawing on the two tenets of CRT, whiteness as property and the critique of liberalism centring on colour-blindness, the participants highlighted how affirming the PHSG events were to them by reassuring them that their experiences and emotions were not exaggerated.

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5.7 PERSONAL NARRATIVES AROUND HAIR POLITICISATION

5.7.1 Introduction

One of the main objectives of the study was to see if the participants could connect historical and institutional concepts such as colonialism, apartheid and institutional racism, and their hair policing experiences at their Model C high school. Drawing on the findings of the previous section after participants came to love their hair through certain processes, this chapter looks to explore how the respondents see hair policing and their personal experiences became a public issue of racism. This is the essence of politicisation: coming to see a personal issue as a shared public problem.

5.7.2 The Politicisation of Black Hair

It is obvious from my respondents' comments that almost all of them linked their hair experience to some sort of political element. So, it was important to investigate the connections between hair and politics, especially as experienced in South Africa. And this took the central stage in the conversations about hair. Many of the respondents were largely emotional about the topic, some taking it even personally. For example, when asked if hair matter was either personal or political, Chandler bluntly reacted with an affirmation:

> *"100% political. I'd say that just because of how intrinsic it is, in institutions, how much it's spoken about in media like there is a lot of emphasis and importance on it. And the fact that your hair, the way it's styled, the type of texture of your hair, you can be discriminated against based on just something as... just based on that basically and I don't agree with it."*

Monica shares identical sentiments when she reacted:

> *"Hair is political! Definitely political! I've always seen it as a race issue. I mean, you can't escape that as a black woman. Like your kind of just born knowing that your hair is not as pretty as other girls' hair."*

Bulelani marked where the difference was about hair personal or political. For her, it is a racial matter, which touches on other aspects, including particularly personal and political realities. She put it thus:

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"I think it is like we can't take away from the fact that it is a race issue. And not just like, there's a certain number of experiences that you go through, like, because not everyone's going to have the mentality that I have, like, a lot of people have been oppressed. And I mean, so have I, but there's a certain amount of education that I had about my hair and freedom that I had, that other people didn't, because they changed certain narratives, or they've been told certain things, and they're not able to unlearn those things."

"I think I only started embracing my natural hair when it became this movement. So, even I feel like when I have my natural hair out, I have there's a certain pressure to have a certain level of wokeness. Does that make sense? Yeah, like it's like because I have my natural hair out then I'm supposed to be this like, you know, Pan Africanist and viva, you know what I mean? And sometimes it's just because I like the way it looks now. Or I try to have it out, but I feel like it is because of that whole political stance. Now it's like trickled into our kind of beauty. And then there's a certain level of blackness that maybe I have that people think that I'm blacker maybe if I have an afro then when I have my weave, even like for some reason that I appreciate my hair, it's not because I'm insecure about my hair. If I choose to have a weave, and it's a protective style, that's how I look at it like I have braids, my hair is braided underneath I have a weave because I like the way it looks now. Not because I hate my hair any less or I feel any less black or I want to feel any less..."

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"Where and also, I will think like as a black woman for me, like my hair is not just my hair. You know what I mean? Like it's how I express myself and stuff like that. But then also I realized that like, but why is that because for white people their hair is just their hair and for Indian people, their hair is just their hair. Is it that like they've taken that from us so much that like we are taking it back? We've kind of made it this like this bigger phenomenon like more than it's supposed to be, like, more than is just hair, and you can make it up. And, yeah, it's just so many factors to look at. But I think that's one of the reasons is like pressure around us to fit into certain spaces, even within our communities."

Bulelani's knowledge about the impact of politics on black hair allows her to remove herself from the idea of having an oppressed or colonised mind. Therefore, this allows her more freedom in her agency about her hair to educate and unlearn the discriminatory, racist notions of black hair that were taught to her either via implicit and subtle societal narratives,

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communities, or racialized institutions. This, consequently, gives her access to agency and freedom in wearing whatever hairstyle she chooses not to make a statement of *"wokeness"* by wearing her hair in an Afro or oppression by wearing a wig or weave. Her unlearning of colonial narratives has allowed her to explore all aspects of hairstyles despite the connotations society attached to them for black women. She highlights people's assumptions about conformity when seeing a black woman with a weave. She brings to light the difficulty of wearing weaves as a protective style because of this perception, making black women's decision to wear their hair a constant battle because you do not know what message people will construe from their personal choice of hairstyle. Two extremes become apparent here, black women who are in a constant struggle with white society in wearing their natural hair and black women who are in constant struggle with 'woke' black communities who are judgmental about black women who choose to wear straight hairstyles, such as the weave.

Bulelani questions herself on why hair for black people is not just hair. Why do white people and Asian races naturally have straight hair, and also does hair seem to be not as important for these races, in comparison to black people? Her question appears to allow her to depoliticise her hair in choosing to wear weaves or braids as a protective style and not because she hates her natural hair. She postulates that black hair has become a "*bigger phenomenon*" but in her words, one can extrapolate that she understands that there are factors that have pushed black hair to be more political than it ought to be and one of her reasons stems from pressure black women feel to assimilate to certain spaces and those spaces being 'white' spaces. This need to fit in comes from the fact that straight hair is still considered beautiful and natural afro hair is still not as idealised. She acknowledges that this perception is held by black communities as well, indicating that these perceptions are prominent within the community and social spaces.

In more specific terms, she described hair and politics thus:

> *"As a political issue when I was in high school and around the whole, like, when those protests and everything happened. I realized that everyone wants an afro because everyone's all like, Pan-Africanist. And I'm very black. And also, when you would speak to, especially males, and I don't know, like black men, even with my peers that were like black guys, and they would say, I would have my afro out all the time. And they were like, 'Bulelani appreciates her blackness', even with the older generation, you know, you're more I don't know, like, she's woke, or she loves her natural beauty. She loves her natural beauty. And she is not trying to be white, which you would hear a lot. Because maybe if I decide to have a weave,*

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I gathered that there was a very much like, it started being a political thing when I was in high school, okay, I'm more black. Like, if you hear a lot of people who are in politics, and then all of a sudden, when they start to speak, they put on this kind of black accent, because they feel like it's more relatable, you know, things like that, where you're just like, this is not your accent, that's not how you speak. As we know I went to school with you, I know how you sound. Yeah, so things like that. So, it was the same thing with my hair then and it was like, I people are thinking I am more black, or I appreciate my blackness more because I have an Afro than when I have weaves or things on like that."

Bulelani further narrates how black hair became so performative because of the politics surrounding black hair in recent events. "*I realized everyone wants an afro because everyone's all like, Pan Africanist. And I'm very black."* In her extract, Bulelani makes references to how she felt that amongst her peers and other black people since the times of the above-mentioned events, black hair has become a performance and wearing an afro symbolised your *"woke*" and being *"more black"*. In this act of recognising the politics of black hair and linking afros to militant and the black consciousness movement, black people box each other in these categories.

The fact that she felt boxed-in, or pigeonholed, by the politics of black hair, indicates that her choices of hairstyle will be scrutinised by others in her community, limiting her choices of hairstyle or highlighting her inability to use her hair as self-expression. She is conscious of the pressure of feeling boxed-in, in so far as she correlates the pressure with her conforming to a particular image of blackness. Boxed-in is a loaded term. One definition of boxed-in is to surround (someone or something) and make movement difficult (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary). I extrapolated this word boxed-in from Bulelani's words and feelings to demonstrate how she is prevented from being free or expressing her hair. The reference to boxed-in even refers to the difficulty of performing certain looks in various situations. For Bulelani the boxed-in also refers to how she and her peers now have to wear afros or their hair as naturally as possible to belong to the 'black tribe' or be welcomed into this ideal of Pan-Africanist and in essence "boxes" the self to make the black hair and body more politically charged because now with the hair and *blackccent,* you become a true black and *"it's more relatable"* now you can fight for the black cause. While some of her peers were capable of maintaining this belief system and remaining in the boxed-in system, some women like Bulelani cannot. For Bulelani her hair was an expression of herself, fun and changeable as she saw fit but not a factor that judged her on a 'blackness scale'.

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Bulelani explains that for others to see you as a black woman who loves and embraces her hair, you need to conform to this one image of black femininity with an afro. This is because of the politicisation of black hair by white colonialist/ apartheid governments that informed black women of their hair's worthlessness and afro hair turned into a symbol of radicalism and nonconformity. However, parallel to that today, black media is telling black women to embrace the radicalisation of natural hair and if you do not love your whole blackness then you are not being Afrocentric or Pan-Africanist. Her questioning as to why black women should conform to wearing our afros out as a sign of being Afrocentric, again speaks to a community and ultimately a race that has been subjugated to and subjects themselves to a realm of conflict and dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction relates to hair, ways of being a black woman and thinking about black beauty.

Gleamed from the participants' narratives, they see their personal experience as forming part of a wider social phenomenon of the politicisation of black hair, which stems from racist institutional culture. This happens through the process of politicisation, where there is a power struggle between groups in this case white and non-whites, through the act of processes such as segregation, Apartheid and the dehumanisation of the black body during those times, the entire black body was seen as vile and in constant comparison to Eurocentric body and features (Schmitt, 2007). Despite democracy, the culture of white supremacy and anti-blackness has fermented into institutions creating institutions that's morals, norms, and culture is fundamentally racist has allowed for the transferal of anti-blackness from skin colour to features of the black body (Ellis-Hervey, Doss, Davis, Nicks, & Araiza, 2016; Thompson, 2009). In doing so the racial undertones are not so obvious but are subtle and covert in its dealings.

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This process of politicisation of the black body that started years ago under racist governance is still present, it is due to these factors and first-hand experiences that participants have come to understand that their experiences of hair policing are personal but also very much a public political issue because of the racial element behind the antagonistic actions. For too many black women, hair is intrinsic to their blackness. It is, however, the perverse construction of black identity in hair textures, that remains a marked feature created by anti-blackness. As evidenced by black girls and women bearing the psychological burden attached to policing for wearing dreadlocks, braids, and other Afrocentric hairstyles and their natural hair, the extensive policing of black hair is an expression of systemic and institutional racism. This expression creates normal and abnormal hair standards. Additionally, widespread policing of black hair

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ensures that black hair falls in the latter, revealing malicious forces of anti-blackness. This anti-blackness forms part of a wider social problem.

5.7.3 Hair, Racism and Colonialism in South Africa

With the history of South Africa, the shy away from the possibility of the hair challenges stemming from racism would amount to deliberately taking life away from the discourse. It is a fact that for the most part, the social issues in schools were a product of Apartheid segregation. However, it is important to isolate the actual elements of racism and colonialism specifically linked to black hair. This section discusses racism, colonialism and hair. Beyond Apartheid motivated racial issues, Respondents Rachael, Mandela, Monica and Bulelani believe that hair issues go beyond experiences just in South Africa. Their comments suggest that in all places where there is significant contact between both blacks and whites, the matter of hair often pops up. And that the first platform that provided contact between these races was colonialism. Therefore, historically issues of hair and racial identities began with colonialism. Study the respondents' comments below. Rachael**:**

> *"Colonialization, you know, Jan van Riebeeck, coming on a ship, Apartheid and being enslaved. We're pushing, I think there's a mentality shift on despite, like, you know, the Black Panthers and understanding what it means to be strong and black and the importance of it. We're in a space now where we fundamentally understand what it means to be black. We're at a stage where maybe our parents studied, but not a lot of them had the opportunity to study so didn't have access to literature or reading or being able to investigate. But looking back at the Sari Batman story and unpacking it and realizing that was hyper-sexualisation, like super racist and she was violated. Understanding how trends on that have filtered through to being on what we experienced today. What it means to be black, how it needs to be black. There's a shift in mindset, mainly for black women. And as Zozi said, "taking up space", we're less likely to care if we are labelled the angry black women, or like, are you just causing problems? Or you're like, no, you talk too much or too loud. We don't care about that. Because we know that there are grounds for me to feel the way that I feel. I do have grounds to be able to tell you, I don't like what you said, I can take it further than what you're saying. That doesn't have to have high school the like, where I'm working now. I have, I wear wigs now. And then one day it just took*

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my wig off, because I'm growing my natural hair out. Like no blows (blow out) just the wash and conditioner and then go. So, I like to sometimes get in protective hairstyles, but I came and my hair was short. And she's like, "Oh, you can't Zozi". I said, "What" because now I am an intern and I'm hoping to be permanently hired. So that stuff still does filter through even in our adult lives. Because now I'm like that is racist because what do you mean I look like Zozi? My hair is short like Miss South Africa, she's black, and I don't look like Zozi. Let's be honest. Like if we're thinking about it I don't. Whether it's like my white colleague came in with blond hair no one is telling her she looks like Britney Spears, so like till this day they are macroaggressions racist undertones to black woman's hair...."

In her statement, Rachael highlights how colonialism and apartheid happened and, in this sense, they are gone, but the remnants of those practices remain within social spaces. These remnants refer to memories of apartheid, which speaks to her statement above. These remnants have impacted on and are still impacting black women and how they are perceived and how black women have inherited those legacies of hyper sexualisation of their bodies and they are rediscovering their identity and "taking up space" as she said. In this sense, Rachael talks about how a colleague linked her to Zozibini Tunzi former Miss South African 2018 and Miss Universe 2019 because she was sporting short hair which is Zozi's iconic look. Her choice of words insinuates that apartheid or colonial mindset for white people has not changed and it impacts black women, "*So that stuff still does filter through even in our adult lives".*

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This colonial mindset or memory exists for black and whites and it "resists erasure" (Gqola, 2010, p. 8). More specifically, Gqola (2010) discussed how memory wavers between the past and present, stressing the importance of memory and history. In Rachael's statement, *"I'm working now. I have, I wear wigs now",* this paradox brings to light the differences in thoughts and behaviours, which manifests from knowledge and insights surrounding the issue of black hair, from her narrative Rachael knows and understand her hair when she talks about taking a breath and wearing a protective styling but one has to ask her wearing a wig at her workplace is that an act of convenience or the socialisation that black girls and women have endured that still inherently imply that Afrocentric hairstyles are not 'professional' enough and not welcomed in the working space. In former white institutions and working spaces, black women's (black and coloured women's) professional gear still appears to continue to represent white/Eurocentric ideals of beauty.

Another participant Mandela had the following to say:

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"I didn't think that's a coincidence. It's just that I think before it was way easier to ignore black students and black people because we weren't in that position to fight for ourselves, or we're just a bit shy, you know, especially, I think that us and older generations, when it comes to standing up to authority, it does take a bit longer, I mean, yes there were activists."

"So, I just think things are moving way quicker than what they were before also they are definitely way more black students and children in these spaces and therefore it comes to a reckoning because I mean if there were three black students and they had this problem it would be way more difficult to I think to fight it then if basically half a school now is black you know you. there's just courage and strength in numbers so I think it's that, it's information that we're getting way quicker than before and there's just more people of colour in these spaces with an understanding of what's going on and then the ability to stand up for themselves I would like to say they are very capable."

Monica:

"Because of the historic aspect of it, because of like, the fact that the texture of your hair could decide what kind of school you go to, and what kind of opportunities you have later in life, whether or not you become a doctor, whether or not you could have access to a proper hospital, and all that. Like, that's, like, messed us up as a society. I think hair for black women is definitely more than just hair for white women, for white women, it is just hair. Like you can straighten it and whatever, but for black women, because it's the way that the Apartheid government used to categorize people into race, then hair is not just hair, hair is political, hair is everything. Like hair is power hair is beauty. So like, if you have straight hair, then you are considered more beautiful than the girl with curly hair, or with kinky hair, or with afro hair, and it's all just like this, you know, like hierarchies and, like, it's not just that as well as it's why I'm saying it's political. because, historically, people were discriminated against because of the way, the texture of their hair. And you were put into a group like a category because of your hair. And you were treated a certain way because of your skin colour or your hair. So we can't just blissfully ignore that history and just be like, 'Why are you so upset hair is just hair', it's not just hair. Okay, it's so much deeper, and it can be so hurtful. When people dismiss your concerns because it doesn't apply to

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them, you know? And that's like, really, really hurtful but also like, like, in I know, in certain, like jobs and like, people you are required to have a certain hairstyle or like some hairstyles, just less professional than others or all that nonsense. So hair is never just hair."

Mirroring Rachael's narrative Monica also highlights colonialism and apartheid while discussing the presence and impact of apartheid on black women and communities. She also highlights how hair has become a symbol of economic upward mobilisation because it was informed by political structures such as apartheid. Scholarship suggests black women's perceptions around hair are due to regimes like apartheid enforcing years of oppression, slavery and subjugation. As Monica highlights above "*straight hair, then you are considered more beautiful"* and thus more acceptable in society and she explained that the politics of oppressive regimes have "categorised" us up to believe that there is only one way in which to correctly portray beauty side-lining Afrocentric beauty and hair for the more popularly presented Eurocentric hair. She acknowledges that because of this politicisation of hair, hair is no longer just hair to black people it is intermingled with themes of oppression and categorisation and when society and mainstream media deny the importance of black hair it is "hurtful".

Monica further speaks that black people's hair was politicized because of the process of colonialism and apartheid where people of colour were classified and for those ambiguous people hair became a marker of race and thus you were categorised under a certain race because of your hair texture. Hair was so important because the more Afrocentric it was, you would be categorised as black and thus live a life of subjugation, less opportunity for economic success and societal mobility was limited and if you have straighter tending on the Eurocentric side you could be classified as Coloured or Indian, allowing you more mobility and access to social resources and economic mobility (Erasmus, 2000; Oyedemi, 2016). Thus societal categorization was informed by hair which led to a denial of political structures in the past. She specifically discussed how the *"apartheid government used to categorize people into race than hair is not just hair, hair is political, hair is everything"* informs how black women think about hair. She reiterates Rachael's statement above as she notes apartheid and its impact on black people's and white people's mindsets, in justifying black people's partiality to hair and white people's "*'Why are you so upset hair is just hair"* because they do not understand the historical engines that were implemented to make black hair so politically charged that it became a symbol of upward momentum and subjugation depending on your texture. White people have the luxury of saying hair is just hair because they are in the dominant position, of representing the standard and the norm of hair, they have never been in a position to see hair as social capital.

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This argument indicated that while deliberate racist classification and racial segregation are no longer practised, manifestations which arose from the initial racial segregation remain inherent. Monica argues that hair is not just hair for black people because it is fraught with historical influences that influence how white people and former white institutions react to black hair today.

Bulelani, similar to Monica, represents an informed knowledge of the subject of "hair, racism and colonialism". She further explains her frustration with the politicisation of black hair because of the emphasis on it:

> *"But then it's also that it's something special about our hair, because of the history behind the people who have the hair, maybe it's that. And that history, and with that, the racism so obviously, it every part of us that it's not that, like, they didn't choose, like, "ah black people have this nice part. So, we're not going to make that part of the negative". Do you know what I mean? It's every part of us, what it for us to redress and like talk about that racism, maybe it needs to be every part of us. But then at the same time, I'm like, no other group of people have to talk about their hair this match. It's just, it's, I'm like can both, you know, I'm like, we don't, you know, other has to talk about their hair as much like, it's only us. And it's tiring, because at some point, because at some point, it's like, just let me do what I want with my hair. Whether I relax it, I put this and that, like, just leave me alone."*

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Bulelani argues that every aspect of the black body was dehumanised and thus made political through the engines of colonialism and apartheid. All the women's narration of their hair experiences all centre around this notion that past political structures have impacted how black women see their hair and how it is held in society today. The participants' insight into the discussion of political hair allowed them to identify with various black hair practices. Political systems such as apartheid and its antecedents such as oppression and racial classification can be equated with struggle and resistance. The colonial and apartheid inheritances that some participants alluded to can also be equated with the damaging reality that Bulelani and her peers faced, being boxed-in and conformed to one look of being black and wearing your afro-textured hair, points towards another form of oppression.

Black hair has become politicized over the years, and it is linked to this process of colonialism Apartheid, and segregation, where the black body was deemed inferior over the

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years' blatant racism has been illegalised but now we are seeing hair racism taking up the place. Through the process of politicisation whereby the marginalised group was victimized, dehumanised, demoralised and targeted so that the dominant white group could rise to power and create systems of governance that enforced and ensure their continuation to power and the breaking down of the marginalised group (Ratele & Laubscher, 2010). Furthermore, Sue et al (2009) add that the ideologies of racism and superiority did not face away with the dawn of democracy, the culture behind these intrinsic differences that white supremacists embedded in society still lingers, and it comes out in things like hair discrimination at Model C schools because discriminate by physical skin colour is illegal now, nonetheless, certain aspects of the black body has become more policed and notable because it is in such contrast to the white majority in specifics space such as Model C schools where students of colour are still in the minority. With being less than 50% and that includes people of colour that are Asian, Indian, Coloured, Cape-Malay and African and in that minority very few of these students of colour have afro-textured hair that just looks so much more different from other hair textured such as Eurocentric hair and Asian hair that naturally grow downwards and tends to be straighter (Chrisite & McKinney, 2017). The African hair that stands out and stands against gravity defines the norm which is the white institutional cultural norm of that school that is so set against afro hair and does not understand it therefore it is marginalised, politicized, and discriminated against.

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Participants initially thought that their experiences of hair policing by white educators and students was solely personal experience. But through re-socialisation in tertiary education and with the help of family and friends and social media they realised that their personal experiences are not isolated experience but collective experience and phenomenon that has been occurring throughout the years. This belief was just intensified with the Pretoria High School for Girls and TRESemmé-Clicks advert incidents because it resonated with the participants that their experiences were not only personal but a collective experience. Because of that collective experience and widespread media and understanding of institutions that still have these old cultural white dominant norms that feed into institutional racism, black hair in these institutions has become politicised and still very much politicized although in a covert way.

So today the participants see their experiences as a public show of racism and not just a personal problem. They see it as part of a wider problem which is institutional racism where there are still implicit norms on how hair should be and if anything deviates from that standard,

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that white standard then stands out. So there is a white supremacist culture because the right way of being is the white way of being. And that is an inheritance from colonialism through to Apartheid that did not disappear with the start of democracy in South Africa. So participants see racism as a public issue which is what this study means by politicisation, so the process of something that is very much a personal issue such as hair because of the process of politicisation for people of colour in South Africa and by extent the colonized world.

It is conceivable that black hair is politicized through institutional racism but it is also a problem of power. This is exemplified when white supremacists used the features of the black body to dehumanise people of African descent through the rise of colonialism and the introduction of racism (Robinson, 2011; Oyedemi, 2016). This all stems from colonialism and apartheid systems of governance that specifically targeted and lawfully implemented legal racism. Consequently, the participants through their narration become politicized some at school and others later down their journey to adulthood. They acknowledge that hair is not a personal problem but also a public issue and part of the public domain and discussion.

5.7.4 Conclusion

This theme highlighted that all participants understood that their experience of hair policing was not merely a personal experience but a public politicized issue. Through the subthemes, it is understood why hair become political through the process of politicisation of black hair that emerged with the rise of colonialism through to apartheid. With the collapse of these government systems, the underlying racial foundations of former all-white schools did not change but gave birth to a culture of institutional racism.

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CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

6.1 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 educational, personal, social, and political society. By focussing on the educational/political interactions between Black women and their hair, it has highlighted how hair functions within the physical and verbal dialogue of educational institutions, particularly Black women's hair.

The literature review focussed on scholarship pertaining to the social and political dynamics of hair, and black hair in particular. Furthermore, various scholars have elucidated 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 Black people.

Using mostly Critical Race Theory, the analysis of this study revealed how hair is negotiated, manipulated, and politicized in the day-to-day lives of Black women at Model C schools. Each of the five discursive themes grappled with in this study had strength in its own right. Each had different focal points and discussed aspects of the Black hair experiences as unique to each theme, but also complementary to the other themes. However, the general analysis illustrated Black women's experiences of hair policing at former all-white high schools from a micro-systemic viewpoint. In other words, the study commenced its exploration of analysis from a smaller frame of evaluation, being confrontations about hair at school. The second segment of the analysis – participants' response to hair policing – focused on what changed after the discriminatory act. It then navigated its discussion to the code of conduct – how it reads and interprets as racist from a people of colour's standpoint. Additionally, the discussion led to how these women changed their view on hair after school and making links to Pretoria High School for Girls and the Clicks/TRESemmé advert cases. The fifth segment of analysis – personal narratives around hair politicisation – was purposely discussed last as it presented an exploration of the experiences and factors that make black hair political.

The study explored in the first half of the analysis that institutional racism exists, the provided evidence it is not always a deliberate conscious policy but more of a 'world' of racist values that are projected onto the black body and subsequently the black afro-textured hair. In this study, it is evident through confrontations about hair at school whereby black girl students are greeted with micro and macro aggressions directed at their hair through explicit and implicit

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comments, actions and unconscious behaviours by white educators and peers alike. Where they explicitly or implicitly express to black girls that their hair is offensively different and juxtaposition to the standard white hegemonic hair beauty commonplace at Model C schools. This leaves black girls with psychological and physical pressures to change or defend their hair against what was discriminated against. Through school code of conduct and hair policies, further strengthens and perpetuate the white supremacist norms of beauty that underline former all-white schools, unconsciously telling black girls through the subtext that their hair has to be managed and fixed to resemble and imitate Eurocentric hair that is much more in line with the school's unconscious image of what a Model C students' hair should look like. This subtle learning of black girls that their hair should fit a certain image and to white students and educators teach that it is acceptable to 'other' black girls hair and enforce harmful stereotypes instead of reprimanding them.

As a consequence, institutional racism is not confined to formal rules of exclusion that affirm blacks cannot access Model C schools. It also occurs through racialised rules that are shaped by a racialised language, or meanings attached to those rules. White people are not necessarily racist, sometimes they are consciously racist but sometimes they perpetuate harmful stereotypes around afro-textured hair that the perpetrator may not even be aware is racist. Through this assumption that white people do not understand the extent of racism in their unconscious minds, thinking that whiteness is normal and if you are not white you are lesser than others, there is that racial supremacy hierarchy in their heads that is unconscious through years of learning and socialization. Thus these unconscious racist though come out in macro/micro-aggressions around the way black girls' hair is presented in school or their objectification and curiosity about black hair. As a result, white students and educators are perpetuating the cycle of white institutional culture, beauty and exclusion in these schools.

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The study further revealed in the last half of the analysis, how women understand and interpreted their hair policing experiences and the nationwide cases – more specifically through the lenses of colonialism and apartheid – in relation to their understanding of hair politics. It revealed Black women's awareness of hair politicisation and the politics surrounding black hair, but also highlighted their ability to depoliticise situations and make agentic choices about how they will perceive their hair, which they articulated as devoid of political and colonial impositions and manipulations. Furthermore, women's hair talks within the realm of politics emphasised how Black women encouraged the acknowledgement of colonialism and apartheid as politically driving how former all-white Model C schools and similar institutions saw and categorised black hair as 'other' and in need of conformity to white supremacist culture

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standards of beauty. However, while this acknowledgement was encouraged, it was not allowed the space to completely overpower their thoughts and practices surrounding notions of black hair and their choice of hairstyle and wear.

The sections on how perceptions of hair changed after school and hair politicisation analysis. For hair and politics, the 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 to better succeed in most societal avenues. They argued that the regimes of historical–political mandates, systematic dehumanisation of black bodies and the affirmation and glorification of Eurocentric hair beauty standards at the expense of afro-textured hair, psychologically impacted black hair and in turn because of the state interference in race and subsequently black hair, it became politically charged 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.

To summarize, this study brings attention to the connection between institutional racism and subtle racism within educational institutions, particularly in schools that have undergone demographic changes. By using black hair as a lens, the research reveals how certain policies, practices, and attitudes perpetuate subtle racism. The study aims to raise awareness of often unnoticed forms of racism within institutions and their impact on marginalized communities.

By focusing on the specific example of black hair, this research sheds light on broader issues related to institutional racism and cultural dynamics in multi-racial schools. The intention is to foster a more inclusive and equitable educational environment for all students, where deeply ingrained racial biases are acknowledged and addressed. Through this exploration, the study contributes to ongoing efforts to eliminate subtle forms of racism and create a more just society.

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6.2 Limitations

The first limitation of this study was the age range of interviewees who participated in the research. It focuses on the perceptions and insights of women in early adulthood (the early 20s to mid-20s), who went to high school between 2010 and 2018. it negates an older era which was closer to the end and establishment of the new South Africa. Hence, on the other side, there is also an older generation of Black women who were not included in this study. Like the previous rationalisation, older women hold views on hair policing, which are and were also

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moulded by experiences and different eras at earlier periods of South Africa's democracy. What would be most prominent is the differentiation are the political manifestations, which would have a greater impact on policing of black girls' hair.

The second limitation of this study was the COVID-19 pandemic, the study had to shift the in-person interviews to Zoom rooms. With the anxiety and stress of the pandemic and lockdown, participants may have been more prone to emotions and more vulnerable, because the experiences were so cathartic one could pour out your grievances without restraint.

Another criticism of this study is the choice to conduct individual interviews instead of focus groups. The initial rationale was that the former means of data collection would allow individual lived stories to flow smoothly without them being restrained or dominated by others. However, I noticed that some participants could have benefited greatly from an interactive focus group discussion because they repeatedly sought validation or support for their experiences from me or they would refer to another participant in their narrative. This is largely because black hair historically is such a social event and whether you go to a salon or have someone do your hair at home, the maintenance and experience of black hair is individualistic but also a communal activity. For example, Jameela, Monica, Rachael and Chandler's narrations could have been enriched and explored more as they attended BGHS in the same year. However, the separate interviews should not be overlooked as they ultimately provided participants with a free space to be as unapologetically themselves. They were also valuable because they offered participants undivided attention which could have been compromised in a focus group.

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The fourth and final limitation is education. All participants in the study were considered educated women, all of whom had completed primary, secondary and tertiary education. The views and opinions that have emerged from the participants, can therefore be assumed from the perspective of education women. It is interesting to explore the perspectives of black women who are not educated. This last point is also linked to the study of this topic with black women in rural environments.

Regardless of these limitations, this research increases and provides new knowledge, especially the intersectionality of race and swimming, to the existing literature on racial hair policing encountered by students of colour at historically white high schools. This information is particularly credible within South Africa due to the lack of local studies that examine the cumulative impact of hair policing and discrimination on women of colour. Secondly, by using CRT's counter-narratives, this study was able to showcase participants' first-hand encounters with continued marginalisation at Model C high schools which is often dismissed by White

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people as evident in some of the narratives. These narratives give voice to students of colour and thus challenge the hegemonic assumption of a post-racial educational system. More importantly, this research is arguably appropriate in the aftermath of the transformation debate at historically white high schools and other historically white institutions. It also shows the degree of transformation after apartheid and the restructuring of the education system which call for a more inclusive and diverse learning environment. The implications for transformation offered below can help inform envisioned social and cultural renovation plans that centre on eradicating the sense of loneliness and alienation encountered by many students of colour.

6.3 Recommendation

Recognizing the conclusions and limitations of the previous study, the study recommended experiments using other methods of data collection such as focus groups to obtain rich data in women's research areas. In these spaces, women's views can be challenged and explored in the interactive spaces provided by focus groups. Furthermore, future study characteristics may be addressed, including age, level of education and geography. Given the limitations of this study, it is recommended that future studies use a larger sample size to determine the experiences of women of colour attending historically white high schools from all over the country. This can be done through focus groups which will allow participants to share and debate relevant ideas and allow researchers to analyse both verbal and non-verbal responses.

While there is a large body of literature devoted to whiteness, it would still be interesting to audit White students and educators' perceptions about girls of colour and school diversity at Model Cs. A focus group discussion, with both girls of colour and White students and educators, could prove valuable in understanding the racial and social dynamics between these two groups at Model Cs. This can perhaps help White individuals to become more cognizant about the racial realities of girls of colour.

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The final recommendation is to conduct a study focusing separately on Black and Coloured women to explore the difference in hair policing of a particular racial identity. I believe that this study is based on further exploration of many similar discussions, including contextualising hair and the understanding of hair policing and discrimination between women of all ages.

I am a supporter of such research in the future and believe that this research can continue to study the policing of black women's hair and bodies in modern society which is inevitably

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changing. These recommendations might provide richer data about the overall campus experience for girls of colour and allow more generalizable findings.

6.4 Implication for Transformation

It is indisputable that Model C High Schools need to be transformed as evidenced by the hair policing tales shared by the participants in this study. Critical Race Theory's main premise, as stated in prior chapters, is committed to eradicating a toxically racial space which continues to marginalise people of colour. As such, the following implications for practice support CRT's principle of social justice, because they address ways to eradicate inequalities within Model Cs so that students of colour can finally feel liberated from racial discrimination:

- Schools should look into employing more teachers of colour and recruiting more students of colour. Harper (2013), who uses various works to support his argument, posits that having Black academics at historically white institutions is beneficial as they can help foster a sense of belonging for students of colour; they can validate their racialised experiences and act as role models for those students who aspire to pursue an academic career. Having Black professors and managerial staff will ultimately offer them the opportunity to influence curriculum development thus mending the one-sided, White dominant, academic interest. In doing so, Coursework material may change to reflect a more African worldview and thus allow students of colour to see themselves represented.
- If Model Cs wants to attract more minority students and educators, it should also think about creating suitable support structures and locations where minority bodies can express their racialized feelings without fear of being policed.
- Model Cs should consider deconstructing Eurocentric standards of hair in their code of conduct and policies that are interpreted by students of colour as racist and discriminatory.
- Educators should attend cultural/racial competency workshops on a continuum to become more aware of their prejudices and gain a better understanding of their students. Vandeyar and Swart (2016), make a compelling case for a "pedagogy of compassion" in decolonizing apartheid teaching practices. This emphasizes White teachers thoroughly examining themselves, including their beliefs about race, culture, inequalities, and gender, before they can understand their multi-ethnic students. Only through self-reflection and acceptance of biases will educators be truly transformed,

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making them better equipped to address racial issues on and off campus. This transformative pedagogy should be recommended to educators and taught in classrooms.

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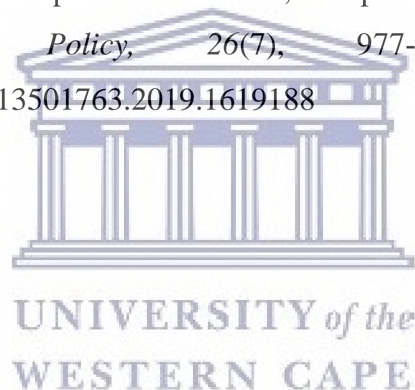
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APPENDIX A: Structured Interview

Section 1: Introduction Biographic questionnaire

Selected Pseudonym of the participant: ____

Sex: ___________

Self-designated racial background (if applicable): _______________

Self-designated Cultural background (if applicable): __________________________________

Age: __________________________

Year of study: ____

Main Language: ____

I will now switch on the digital recording device.

[TURN ON DIGITAL RECORDER]

Firstly, for the sake of the recorded interview, please could say your pseudonym and say which race group you identify with (if at all).

1. Questions about Boland and their Model C school, why did you choose your high school? What attracted you or your parents to this school? What years did you attend?
2. What was the experience like of you studying at a historically White-English high school? Tell me about your experiences from your 1st year to the last. (Education, environment, town, other students of colour)
3. What did you think of your hair in high school?
4. Knowing hair discrimination for what it implies, do you think you have experienced hair discrimination at BGHS?
   i) think of some of the perceptions people held of you and your hair or that exist about your racial group's hair. How did others (staff or students) express their stereotypical beliefs about you and your hair?
   ii) What emotional state after that experience?
   iii) How did you make sense of these experiences?
5. How did that experience and what was said to you affect how you viewed your hair?
6. Did these experiences affect the way you viewed BGHS? (academically, socially or emotionally)
7. Recently nationwide protests have erupted at Pretoria High School for Girls and TRESemmé-Clicks advert, claiming hair discrimination and racism. Did these events remind you of your school experiences?
   i) If so, how were they similar or different to your experience?

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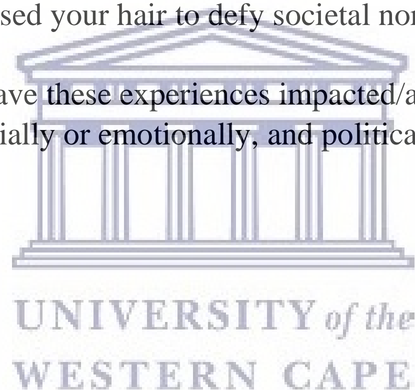
ii) How would you describe what is occurring nationwide at historically all-white institutions?

8. (Read from the BGHS code of conduct on hair) *Appendix B*
   How does the school's code of conduct in writing relate to your feelings and personal experience on hair? Did you feel that your style on that occasion was in line with the school's conduct?
   i) A specific word 'neat' is used in the writing of the conduct of hair. What do you interpret about this word in terms of hair?
9. The global hair care industry is valued at R1,1 trillion and South Africa's black hair care industry is valued at R9,7 billion. Black consumers spend up to 6 times more than their white counterparts on hair. Why do you think hair is so valuable to people of colour? (socially, economically, academically, politically, personally)
10. From your experience of high school, university, media and recent events is Afro-hair a personal or political issue?
    i) why?
    ii) When did you realise that opinion? (media, study, people)
11. A few years out of high school/ university. What is society's ideal of 'good hair' and 'bad hair'?
12. What is it about your experiences that made you more politically aware of afro-textured hair?
    i) Have you ever used your hair to defy societal norms and intact your political autonomy?
13. In what ways, if any, have these experiences impacted/affected your life such as in terms of academics, socially or emotionally, and politically?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APPENDIX B: Boland Girls High School Code of Conduct

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Learners are expected to be neat and tidy at all times.

Hair: Hair is to be kept off the face; long hair touching shoulders must be tied up and back neatly with plain navy-blue, white, black or brown hair accessories. Fringes must be cut off above the eyebrows. Head- and Alice-bands must be plain navy-blue, white (not cream), black or brown and may not be excessively thick, or pulled down onto the forehead. No lacy headbands. Bows and flowers (real or artificial) are not allowed to be worn as accessories. Hair may not be dyed an unnatural colour. Thin braids and moderate extensions are permissible, but only in the girl's natural hair colour.

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APPENDIX C: Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: 'Hair is Political!': Black Girls' Experiences of Hair Policing at Historically White Model C High Schools

Researcher: Chayana Amina Hamidou

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in a Masters research project. The following information sheet will provide you with all the relevant details of the study. This is to ensure that you have all the information before you choose whether to participate or not. You are encouraged to ask any questions that you might have about the study or your participation therein.

Purpose of the research:

The purpose of this study is to contribute to knowledge on the management of Black hair, Afro-textured hair, at previously white High Schools and understand how Black girls are treated through their hair. In addition, I am especially interested in knowing how you felt about these rules at a personal and collective level.

This study will focus on the accounts of Black women who went to historically white or 'model C' institutions and experienced hair policing at their High Schools and how these women in hindsight view their experience in response to recent public controversies around black hair.

What you will be asked to do in the research:

You will be asked to participate in an interview that will take approximately an hour to an hour and a half. The questions will be about the policing of Black female students' hair at former all-white high schools.

Anonymity:

All participants' names will be anonymous. However, for the purpose of this study, names of past affiliations with High schools would like to be mentioned as this will add more depth and validity to the study and data. However, if you choose to stay anonymous in all aspects, your anonymity will be protected by all means at my disposal.

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Risks and Discomfort:

There is a small chance that some discomfort will arise as a result of your participation in this research. However, if you feel any discomfort you may decide not to answer the question or to withdraw from the interview without any consequences. I will also offer to refer you to professional counselling services that will help you. In addition, we will either do the focus group and interviews over Zoom, or in person, then we will respect the protocols for conducting research under COVID-19 conditions, including at all times wearing masks, maintaining a minimum 2m distance, not touching when greeting, and washing hands immediately before and after the interviews.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in the research is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to continue participating will not influence your relationship or the nature of your relationship with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Informed Consent

Your informed consent is needed before I proceed with the interview process. I have thus included a consent form for you to fill in should you wish to participate in this research. Participants are restricted from disclosing their identity or the information shared by any other participants in the interview session.

Anonymity and confidentiality

A pseudonym will be used to assure your anonymity is maintained. Confidentiality will be provided to protect the information given by respondents from causing them any harm.

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Audio recording and notes

The interview will be recorded for accurate data-capturing purposes and for use within the research project itself. However, if you choose not to be recorded, I will only make notes of your answers during the interview. All records of the interview will be safely kept with only the researcher and supervisor having access to them. The records will be destroyed after five years.

Questions about the research

If you have any questions about the research in general or your role in the study please feel free to contact the researcher, tel: 072 434 0229 or 3560408@myuwc.ac.za or my supervisor Prof Laurence Piper at lpiper@uwc.ac.za, o UWC Political Studies Department, Tel: 021 959 3228.

If you have any questions about this ethics process or your rights as a participant in the study, you may contact the Ethics Social Science Committee at UWC: *Research Development, Tel: 021 959 4111, email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za*

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I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Chayana Amina Hamidou in Political Studies at the University of the Western Cape.

This study has been described to me in a language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered.

I understand that my identity will not be disclosed unless otherwise requested and that I may withdraw my consent at any time by advising the student researcher.

I... (full name of participant) hereby
confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participate in the interview for this research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I consent/do not consent to this interview being audio recorded (Please circle your preference)

………………………….. ………………………….

Signature of Participant Date

Thank you for considering participating in this research.

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