

DETANGLING THE STRANDS OF IDENTITY:
EXPLORING HAIR POLITICS AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE
UNITED STATES

by

Philana A. Jeremiah

Copyright © Philana A. Jeremiah 2024

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

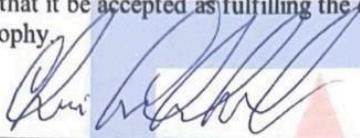
In the Graduate College


THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA


2024

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Philana A. Jeremiah, titled *Detangling the Strands of Identity: Exploring Hair Politics Among African American Women in The United States* and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

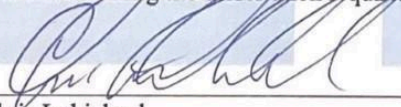

 _____ Date: April 9, 2024
 Chris Lukinbeal

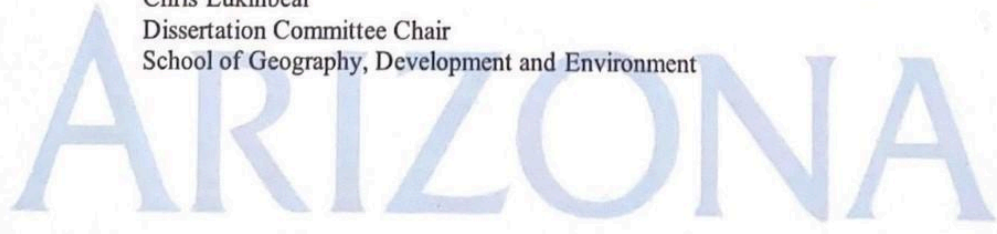

 _____ Date: 9 April '24
 Stefano Bloch


 _____ Date: 10 April '24
 Jerome Dotson

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.


 _____ Date: April 9, 2024 [®]
 Chris Lukinbeal
 Dissertation Committee Chair
 School of Geography, Development and Environment



Acknowledgements

Thank my mother Dr. Denise N.A. Bacchus, who has assisted and supported me since she knew of my existence. She tirelessly supported me since the NICU. Whom I watched write her dissertation day in and day out who did not stop despite my distractions. Who encouraged my love of travel since before I could walk and encouraged my love of learning.

Thank you to my little brother, Hasan N.A. Garrett for showing me tough love and reminding me that I can accomplish my goals. Thank you for being my informal student I can teach everything I know and excel.

Thank you to my praying West Indian grandmothers Elouise P. Bacchus and Lillian A. Jeremiah who always have encouraging words for me in my times of need. Both women were courageous enough to leave their respective home countries (Guyana and Jamaica) to immigrate to the US. My grandmother was my first nurse who ensured I was going to eat quality food from their backyard gardens. Thank you to my great-grandmother, Gertrude M. Gibson, who only obtained a 3rd-grade education, and I inherited my love of baking which kept me sane during graduate school. Thank you to my grandfather, Sheik Bacchus who supported my travel goals and reminded me not to take foolishness from anyone. Thank you to X. Bacchus, who answers my facetimes no matter the time change to debrief about my day or concepts I am stuck on. Thank you for being a consistent presence in my life.

To my uncle, S.L.A.B.- thank you for telling me it was okay to move from home for school and reminding me that I should shine my light and not let anyone dim it. I am sad that you are not here to physically see me cross the stage, but I know you are present in the spirit.

Thank you to my friends, that I have made along the way from undergrad Olajumoke Harrison, Jada Moodie, and Shannon Parrott, to graduate school Dr. Elisa Sperandio, Pademendra Shrestha, Kira D. Harris, Georgia Weiss-Elliott who have allowed me to lean on them and during this time. Thank you to my online communities formal and informal Jelah and the girls, and the various groups for providing me with support and an outlet to talk about a variety of my interests. Thank you to the administrative staff of SDGE especially Liz Cordova and Marissa Diaz.

Thank you, the faculty members at Georgia Southern University who fostered my ideas and allowed their office hours to be places where I could foster lasting relationships. Thank you to Dr. Ashley Coles (SGDE alumna) and Dr. Caren Town who both graciously wrote letters of recommendations for graduate school.

Thank you, to the faculty members at the University of Arizona whom I took classes with: Dr. Sapana Doshi, Dr. Orhon Myadar, Dr. J.P. Jones, Dr. Jeffery Banister, Dr. Jennifer Mason.

Thank you, Dr. Stephanie J. Buchler, for sharing your wisdom and knowledge during my master's program and in the initial stages of my PhD program. Thank you for editing my work and sharing all the resources that came across your desk that related to my research goals.

Thank you, to GIST Department and Dr. Gary Christopherson, who I was graciously able to be his teaching assistant for several courses over the years. Thank you, for advising me on GIS topics and other avenues of how to succeed in academia. Thank you, for attending my dissertation defense it was one of the highlights of that day. Thank you for sharing your lived experience with my topic afterwards. Thank you for sharing a classroom with me for hours and letting me learn how to navigate a large classroom. Thank you, to my students as well for sharing their ideas and reminding me what it was like to be in a GIS lab for multiple hours a week trying to learn how use ESRI software and learning how to make maps..

Thank you to Dr. Katherine McKittrick and the other scholars in the AAG Black geographies specialty group for creating a place in geography to highlight Black experiences across the diaspora. Thank you to Dr. Camilla A. Hawthorne who, paved the way for me to study Black hair politics in the United States, for presenting during the 2021 the Jan Monk Distinguished Lecture and participating in the graduate student hosted lunch and acknowledging me in your 2023 publication.

To my committee members, Dr. Chris Lukinbeal, Dr. Stefano Bloch, and Dr. Jerome K Dotson, thank you for joining me along this academic journey. Thank you for being open to my ideas and allowing me to reframe my interest to create a place for hair geographies. As a committee, you all supported me and carefully provided a curated expertise to my work.

Thank you, to all the individuals who crossed my path from undergrad to graduate school that might not have been mentioned by name.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We respectfully acknowledge the University of Arizona is on the land and territories of Indigenous peoples. Today, Arizona is home to 22 federally recognized tribes, with Tucson being home to the O'odham and the Yaqui. Committed to diversity and inclusion, the University strives to build sustainable relationships with sovereign Native Nations and Indigenous communities through education offerings, partnerships, and community service.

Dedication

To the 8-year-old me, who has accomplished more than you could have imagined.

This work is dedicated to the little Black girls with crooked parts, mismatched ribbons, colorful barrettes, and bubbles. Your hair is your crown and wear it with pride.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| List of Figures | 11 |
| List of Abbreviations | 12 |
| Abstract | 13 |
| Introduction | 14 |
| Overview of the Dissertation | 15 |
| Chapter 1 | 22 |
| Part I: The Lacuna of African American Women's Natural Hair in Human Geography | 22 |
| Introduction | 22 |
| Identifying the Research Gap | 22 |
| Literature Review | 23 |
| Theoretical Foundation | 27 |
| The Intersectionality of Hair | 29 |
| Then Global Dimensions of Natural Hair | 31 |
| Addressing Global Beauty Standards | 33 |
| Addressing the Gap for Studies on Natural Black Hair | 33 |
| Conceptual Models for Placing Studies on Natural African Hair | 35 |
| Conceptual Models | 35 |
| Cultural Geography | 35 |
| Black Geographies | 37 |
| Interconnectedness and Synergy | 40 |
| Humanness | 40 |
| Subhuman Treatment of African American Women | 41 |
| Spatial Development | 43 |
| Urban Planning | 44 |
| Natural Hair Care and Entrepreneurship | 45 |
| Hair Salons and Beauty Supply Stores | 46 |
| Knowledge Production | 47 |
| Black Feminist Geography | 48 |
| Distinguishing Black Geographies and Black Feminist Geography | 50 |
| Intersectionality in Black Geographies | 52 |
| A Conceptual Model: For Natural African Hair | 53 |
| Reclaiming Space and Place | 56 |
| Chapter 2 | 57 |
| Geography and Respectability Politics: A Historical Analysis of the Evolution of Natural African Hair Politics in the United States | 57 |
| Background Context | 58 |
| The Evolution of Natural African Hair Textures | 58 |
| Defining Respectability Politics | 59 |
| A Place for African American Bodies | 60 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Private Place | 60 |
| Public Image | 62 |
| Place | 63 |
| Concept Model of Respectability Politics | 65 |
| Historic Analysis Respectability Politics: A Reaction | 67 |
| Post-Emancipation Era | 67 |
| Pressure to Conform | 68 |
| Influence of Madam C.J. Walker | 69 |
| The Great Migration (1916-1970s) | 70 |
| Placemaking During the Great Migration | 71 |
| Urbanization of African American Women | 71 |
| Diversification of Hair Care Products | 72 |
| Freedom to Experiment and Innovate | 72 |
| Passing | 73 |
| Cultural Expression and the Harlem Renaissance | 74 |
| Cultural Renaissance | 75 |
| Shifts in Political Engagement and Civil Rights Activism | 76 |
| Impact of the Great Migration | 76 |
| The Civil Rights Era (mid-1950s- late 1960s) | 78 |
| Natural African Hair and the Civil Rights Movement | 79 |
| Alignment with Respectability Norms | 81 |
| Rejection of Respectability Politics | 81 |
| Conceptual Model of Respectability Politics Revisited | 82 |
| Chapter 3 | 86 |
| Respectability Politics: A Rejection of Eurocentric Beauty Standards and A Reclaiming of Natural African Hair | 86 |
| Respectability Politics A Rejection | 88 |
| The Black Power Movement (1960s -1970s) | 88 |
| Female Leaders in the Black Power Movement | 90 |
| Post-Civil Rights Era and Respectability Politics | 91 |
| Respectability Politics: A Reclaiming | 92 |
| The Modern Natural Hair Movement | 92 |
| Natural Hair Journey | 93 |
| Adherence to Respectability Politics | 94 |
| Intersectionality | 95 |
| Race | 96 |
| Gender | 96 |
| Class | 97 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Economic, Social, and Political Impact | 97 |
| Economic | 97 |
| Social Impact | 99 |
| Expanding Group Pride | 100 |
| Work-Related | 101 |
| Demographic Changes | 101 |
| Political Impact | 102 |
| Chapter 4 | 106 |
| Claiming Place: A Netnography for Placemaking on YouTube for Natural African Hair | 106 |
| Geographic Theory | 107 |
| Space and Place on Land | 107 |
| Space and Place Online | 108 |
| Literature Review | 108 |
| African American Women Online | 109 |
| Netnography | 111 |
| Pink's Contribution | 112 |
| Dodd's Contribution | 113 |
| Dittmer and Dodd's Contribution | 114 |
| Ethical Considerations | 115 |
| Research Question | 116 |
| Placemaking | 116 |
| Sense of Place | 117 |
| Methods | 117 |
| Sample | 117 |
| Data Collection | 118 |
| Data Analysis | 118 |
| Data Reporting | 118 |
| Validity | 119 |
| Discussion | 120 |
| Online Placemaking | 120 |
| Use of Netnography | 121 |
| Invoking Emotions in Digital Spaces | 122 |
| African American Women Emotional Engagement | 124 |
| Media Convergence | 125 |
| Chapter 5 | 128 |
| Case Study: When Natural African Hair Trends: African American Female Content Creators on YouTube | 128 |
| Sample | 129 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Methods | 130 |
| Results | 131 |
| Motivation | 132 |
| Why YouTube? | 132 |
| Jasmine Turner - "Curls Empowered" | 134 |
| Kiara Johnson - "EcoChic Mane" | 135 |
| Morgan Bailey - "Bailey's Business Beats" | 135 |
| Simone Richards - "The Hairitage Hub" | 137 |
| Destiny Washington - "Mindful Manes" | 137 |
| Summary | 139 |
| Common Themes | 140 |
| Natural Hair Journey | 140 |
| Compliments on Hair Growth and Beauty | 141 |
| Expressions of Gratitude and Inspiration | 142 |
| Shared Experiences and Emotional Connections | 143 |
| Acknowledgment of Impact on Personal Choices | 145 |
| Requests for Advice and Product Information | 146 |
| Expressions of Admiration and Enthusiasm | 147 |
| Discussion | 148 |
| Netnography | 148 |
| Placemaking | 149 |
| African American Women Content Creators | 150 |
| Media Convergence | 151 |
| Conclusion | 156 |
| Synthesis of Insights | 156 |
| Geography Research | 157 |
| Exploring Intersectionality | 157 |
| Global Perspectives | 159 |
| Impact of Digital Platforms | 160 |
| Spatial Practices and Physical Places | 162 |
| Policy and Legal Frameworks | 164 |
| Geography Education | 166 |
| APPENDICES: | 170 |
| APPENDIX A - | 170 |
| APPENDIX B - | 171 |
| References | 172 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Chapter 1 | |
| Figure 1: Conceptual Model Cultural Geography | 37 |
| Figure 2: Conceptual Model Black Geographies | 39 |
| Figure 3: Conceptual Model: Black Feminist Geography and Natural African Hair | 50 |
| Figure 4: Locating a Place for Hair Geography | 54 |
| Chapter 2 | |
| Figure 5: Respectability Politics Concept Model | 66 |
| Chapter 3 | |
| Figure 6: EBONY December 1962 Cover | 99 |

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|------------------|---|
| NHM | Natural Hair Movement |
| HBCU | Historically Black College and Universities |
| NHJ | Natural Hair Journey |
| CROWN Act | Create Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act |
| BPM | Black Power Movement |
| BPP | Black Panther Party |
| TAMS | Text Analysis Markup System |
| BC | Big Chop |

Abstract

This dissertation explores the dynamic relationship between natural African hair and identity through physical and digital spaces African American women have created. Through a journey spanning the historical roots of hair texture transformation due to coerced liaisons during slavery to the present-day digital placemaking on platforms like YouTube, this work illuminates the complex dynamics of race, gender, beauty standards, and societal expectations as they intersect with women's natural African hair. Chapter 1 establishes a foundational understanding of natural African hair within geographical research, using a postcolonial lens to address a scholarly gap. This gap emphasizes the significance of natural African hair among African American as a crucial aspect of African American culture and identity, proposing the development of an area of geographic inquiry situating natural African hair within the larger discussions of identity, intersectionality, and place. This opening chapter seeks to position natural African hair within academic discourse, advocating for its recognition as both a women's issue and a pivotal element of African American identity. Chapter 2 delves into the historical evolution of women's natural African hair, tracing its trajectory through the lens of respectability politics through the Black Power Movement. It highlights how these movements have shaped the perception and representation of women's natural African hair, transitioning from a symbol of resistance to an emblem of cultural pride and identity. This historical analysis underscores the role of cultural geography and Black feminist geography in exploring the empirical place of women's natural African hair in the United States. Chapters 4 and 5 shift the focus to the digital realm, employing netnography to examine how African American women use YouTube as a place for cultural expression, community building, and resistance against mainstream beauty ideals. These chapters reveal how content creators challenge societal norms, promote self-acceptance, and educate on natural hair care. The exploration of digital placemaking highlights the importance of online communities in empowering individuals, shaping identity, and influencing broader beauty discourse and industry practices. The resurgence of the Natural Hair Movement (NHM), propelled by digital platforms and culminating in the enactment of the CROWN Act of 2022 or Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act, represents a watershed moment in the struggle against hair discrimination. This legislation legally affirms the right to wear natural and protective hairstyles, marking a significant legislative victory in the journey of natural African hair from defiance to cultural celebration. This dissertation maps the complex relationship between African American women and their natural hair and highlights the transformative power of placemaking in affirming identity, fostering community, and challenging societal norms. The exploration of hair politics among African American women, as explored through geographical, historical, and digital lenses, opens avenues for future studies. Recommendations for further research include examining the global implications of natural African hair discourse, the evolving role of digital platforms in shaping cultural practices, and the impact of policies on the distribution of natural hair care resources. This work stands as a testament to the resilience, creativity, and agency of African American women in navigating the strands of their identity through the politics of hair.

Introduction

The nexus of race, gender, and social class forms a complex framework through which African American women's experiences with their natural hair are understood and interpreted. These dimensions are not isolated; they interact within a historical and cultural milieu consistently influencing African American women's perceptions of beauty, identity, and self-expression. The historical context of natural African hair, marred by the legacies of slavery, colonialism, and racial segregation, has perpetuated stereotypes and biases that marginalize natural hair textures and styles. These legacies underscore the critical need for geographic discourse to acknowledge and deeply respect the cultural, historical, and personal significance of natural African hair within the broader tapestry of African American women's identities. Incorporating women's natural African hair into geographic research offers a relevant lens through which to examine the spatial dimensions of identity and culture. It compels one to consider how African American women navigate spaces—both physical, such as salons and community centers, and digital, like social media and online forums—serving as arenas for contestation, negotiation, and celebration of natural African hair. These spaces become sites of placemaking where African American women can challenge prevailing beauty norms, share knowledge and experiences, and foster communities of support and solidarity.

The interdisciplinary nature of hair studies, involving anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and biology, highlights the complexity of the subject matter. Yet, geography's focus on space, place, and scale provides a unique framework for exploring how hair is entwined with issues of identity, body politics, and spatial justice. Geographers can contribute to understanding how the politics of hair influence African American women's mobility, access to resources, and social interactions within various spaces. They can examine how these spaces are imbued with

cultural meanings and how they facilitate the formation of identity and community among African American women. Moreover, engaging with natural African hair within geography prompts the discussion about inclusivity and the appreciation of diverse beauty standards. It challenges the discipline to consider how spatial dynamics shape and are shaped by cultural practices and societal norms related to hair. Geographers can illuminate how space and place contribute to the construction and negotiation of identity by moving empirically toward understanding the stereotypes and biases against natural African hair. This focus not only enriches the geographic discourse, it honors and reflects the rich heritage and lived experiences of African American women, promoting a deeper appreciation for the diversity of beauty standards.

Therefore, this dissertation examines the placemaking practices of African American women concerning their natural hair. Employing a postcolonial framework, this dissertation delves into the intricate narratives surrounding natural African hair, aiming to fill existing gaps in academic research. This approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the historical, cultural, and social influences shaping perceptions and experiences of natural African hair. It scrutinizes the impact of European beauty standards, introduced during and after the colonial period, on present-day treatment and perception of women's natural African hair. Moreover, it explores how natural African hair has evolved into a potent symbol of identity, resistance, and empowerment among African Americans.

Overview of the Dissertation

This chapter proposes an innovative approach to filling a lacuna in geographical research on natural African hair in the United States. It discusses how natural African hair is deeply entangled with issues of race, gender, beauty norms, self-expression, and societal expectations.

These factors significantly shape the experiences of African American women with their hair, underscoring the critical intersections of race, gender, and social class in their lives. The primary aim of this chapter is to identify a space within the field of geography for the study of African American women's hair and hair in general, asserting its importance and relevance. To achieve this, the chapter discusses the work of geographers who conduct research around culture, identity, hair and gender. It then introduces three conceptual models designed from existing geography literature and a final conceptual model that provides the necessary historical context and theoretical foundation for establishing an area of geographic inquiry centered on hair for both men and women. Ultimately, this chapter endeavors to secure a rightful place for natural African hair within academic discourse. It aims to recognize and emphasize its significance as an issue of concern for women and as an essential aspect of African American cultural identity in the United States. Through this effort, the chapter advocates for the broader academic recognition of natural African hair, arguing for its inclusion in the scholarly canons and acknowledging its value in understanding the complexities of identity and culture.

Chapter two explores the historical development of respectability politics and its influence on the perceptions and treatment of natural African hair textures among African American women in the United States. It traces back to the 1800s, highlighting how the sexual exploitation of enslaved African women significantly contributed to the variety of hair textures seen among African American women today. This historical context is crucial for understanding the complexities of identity, heritage, and the politics of appearance African American women navigate. This chapter uses post-colonial theory and cultural geography as a lens to analyze these dynamics, integrating Black feminist geography to further examine how race, gender, and space intersect within the narrative of natural African hair. This interdisciplinary approach illuminates

the experiences of African American women across different geographic settings, showing how these experiences influence cultural practices and the formation of identity, particularly about natural African hair. This chapter seeks to examine how identity, class, and resilience are entangled in the lived experiences of African American women via their natural hair, by placing the narrative of natural African hair within the contexts of post-colonial, cultural, and Black feminist geographical frameworks. This comprehensive perspective seeks to acknowledge the complexity and diversity of African American women's hair, underscoring its significance in broader discussions of cultural identity and resistance.

Chapter three delves into the evolution of respectability politics and its impact on natural African hair from the transformative 1960s, through the resurgence of the NHM in the early 21st century, to the historic passing of the Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act (CROWN) Act of 2022 (Watson Coleman, 2022). It traces the journey of African American hair as a site of political resistance and cultural pride during the Civil Rights Movement which became central to debates on professional acceptability and identity. The NHM re-emerging strongly in the 2000s, played a crucial role in redefining beauty standards, emphasizing self-acceptance, and challenging the deep-seated biases against natural hair textures and styles. This movement paved the way for a larger societal acknowledgment of the racial discrimination embedded in traditional views on professionalism and aesthetics, leading to legislative action. The chapter highlights the CROWN Act of 2022 (Watson Coleman, 2022) as a legislative response to decades of discrimination, legally affirming the right to wear natural and protective hairstyles in workplaces and educational institutions. This chapter illustrates a significant shift in the discourse on racial equality, respectability politics, and the acceptance of African American

cultural identity, marking a milestone in the journey toward embracing diversity and combating racial discrimination.

Chapter four explores the background of the innovative application of netnography to study the cultural and social dimensions of women's natural African hair and provides an analysis of online communities and digital discourse. Netnography, as an online ethnographic method, enables the examination of conversations, interactions, content and meaning creation related to natural hair. This research approach provides unique insights into the evolving perceptions, practices, and shared experiences of individuals engaging with natural African hair culture across various social media platforms and forums. This chapter seeks to uncover how digital communities serve as sites of empowerment, education, and resistance against mainstream beauty standards by analyzing the rich, user-generated content. It also seeks to highlight how these online spaces facilitate the dissemination of knowledge about hair care, styling, and the significance of hair in expressing identity and cultural heritage.

Furthermore, this chapter discusses the challenges and ethical considerations of conducting netnography in sensitive and personal subjects, such as hair politics. Through this netnography lens, the chapter contributes to the understanding of the complex interplay between technology, culture, and identity, emphasizing the role of digital communities in shaping and reflecting the contemporary discourse on women's natural African hair. Specifically, this study looked at how online spaces serve as active sites for placemaking, where African American women craft and navigate their identities.

Chapter five presents a case study on the pivotal role of YouTube in creating a dynamic space for African American women to explore, celebrate, and disseminate knowledge about natural African hair. It examines how African American women leveraged YouTube as a

platform to counter mainstream beauty narratives, foster a sense of community, and provide education on the care, styling, and cultural significance of women's natural African hair. Through an analysis of popular YouTube channels and content creators dedicated to natural African hair, the chapter illustrates the transformative impact of these digital spaces in empowering African American women to embrace their natural hair textures and challenge societal norms. It examines the content strategies employed by these influencers, including tutorials, product reviews, and personal hair journeys, which have contributed to the visibility and acceptance of natural African hair and spurs conversations about identity, race, and beauty standards. Additionally, this chapter explores the socio-cultural implications of these YouTube communities, highlighting how they have become instrumental in shaping perceptions of natural African hair and influencing hair care industry trends. This case study underscores the platform's significance in advancing the NHM and creating an inclusive space for dialogue and empowerment.

The dissertation concludes with a discussion of implications for future studies and geography education. It will serve as the culmination of this exploration of the cultural, social, and political significance of women's natural African hair within the United States, viewed through a postcolonial lens. This chapter synthesizes the insights gained from examining the placemaking practices surrounding natural African hair on land and online, delving into how these practices reflect narratives of identity, resistance, and empowerment among African diaspora women. This concluding chapter will highlight the role of Natural Hair Movements as powerful expressions of cultural and political resistance, showcasing how these movements challenge existing beauty norms and contribute to a reimagined sense of community and belonging. Furthermore, I will conclude by briefly reiterating the significance of women's

natural African hair as a symbol of empowerment and a site for asserting cultural and historical identity. This discussion will also reflect on the implications of this study for future scholarship, emphasizing the need for continued exploration into the intersectionality of race, gender, and identity within the realm of cultural geography and beyond. Expect to find a comprehensive analysis of the contributions this research makes to the academic discourse on natural African hair, proposing new directions for scholarly inquiry that prioritize the voices and experiences of African diaspora women. This chapter aims to affirm a critical dimension of African American women's experience, advocating for greater recognition and appreciation of its role in shaping American cultural landscapes by situating natural African hair firmly within the canons of academia. Through this dissertation, I hope to inspire further academic engagement with the complex interplay of history, culture, and politics embodied by natural African hair.

Lastly, this dissertation sets the stage for the exploration of natural African hair within the United States through a postcolonial lens. Defining natural African hair as more than just a physical attribute, but as a significant cultural and political symbol, this work seeks to bridge scholarly gaps and offer new insights into the complex dynamics of identity, resistance, and empowerment. Through examining historical influences, societal perceptions, and the transformative powers of Natural Hair Movements, this dissertation underscores the importance of natural African hair as a site of cultural and political placemaking. As it explores the narratives shaping the experiences of African diaspora women, this dissertation aims to enrich the academic discourse on natural African hair and celebrate its role in challenging prevailing beauty standards and advocating for racial and cultural recognition. It is through this scholarly journey I contribute to a deeper understanding and appreciation of natural African hair, affirming

its place within the tapestry of American cultural identity and history and finding its place in geographic literature.

Chapter 1

Part I: The Lacuna of African American Women's Natural Hair in Human Geography

Introduction

Natural African hair, or natural hair, is defined as the hair naturally growing from the scalps of individuals of African descent, not altered by chemical straighteners, texturizers, or perms, that can return to its unaltered state after washing. It is characterized by a diverse coil pattern, ranging from tight coils to loose curls, resulting in a variety of textures (Dash, 2006; Gill, 2010; McAndrew, 2010). Despite its appearance of density and volume, natural African hair is more delicate than it appears (Daniels et al., 2023; Tanus et al., 2015; Versey, 2014). The points of bending and coiling are particularly susceptible to breakage, necessitating specific and gentle care (Cloete et al., 2019; Dawson & Murina, 2021). Its low porosity affects the way the hair interacts with moisture and hair care products (Davis-Sivasothy, 2011). The care, styling, and presentation of natural hair transcend personal grooming, linking to broader cultural expressions of identity and social status (Byrd & Tharps, 2014; Greer, 2019; Hobson, 2018). This dynamic offers opportunities for scientific studies to understand natural African hair as an integral aspect of the cultural identity and expression of those with natural African hair, transcending the realm of hair itself.

Identifying the Research Gap

One of the most significant gaps in existing geographical scholarship is the lack of research focusing on the cultural and spatial dynamics of natural African hair within the United States. While some geographers have explored the intersections of race, identity, and cultural expression in various contexts, there remains an absence of studies specifically addressing how natural African hair is navigated and experienced by African American women in the United

States. This omission is notable given the rich theoretical potential for this type of research, which has the potential to contribute to clarity and understanding of post-colonial identity, resistance, and belonging in a country marked by its colonial legacy and ongoing racial disparities.

The inherently geographical experiences of African American women with natural hair encapsulate complex interactions between personal identity, cultural heritage, and societal norms. These experiences are shaped by and manifest within specific places, whether in the workplace, educational institutions, public spaces, or through media representations. Yet, the geographical dimensions of these experiences—how they are influenced by, contribute to, and reflect the racialized landscapes of the United States—have been largely overlooked. This gap undermines a comprehensive understanding of the spatial aspects of racial and cultural identity formation and limits the potential for geographical scholarship to engage with and inform debates about race, embodiment, and space in the post-colonial context of the United States.

Addressing this gap requires a deliberate shift towards investigating the geographies of natural African hair, examining how African American women's experiences of their hair are spatially constituted, negotiated, and resisted. Such research would fill a critical void in the literature and provide valuable insights into how spaces in the United States continue to be racialized, gendered, and contested. A geographical analysis of natural African hair uncovers the complex layers of meaning these practices carry for African American women and the implications for understanding space, identity, and resistance in a post-colonial society.

Literature Review

The intersection of identity, culture, and physical appearance has garnered increasing attention across various academic disciplines, yet the geographical implications of these aspects

remain underexplored. Specifically, the lived experiences of African American women concerning their natural African hair—a subject rich with cultural, social, and political significance—have seldom been the focus within the field of geography. This omission highlights a critical gap in the literature, where the spatial dynamics of racial and gender identity, as expressed through hair, have not been adequately addressed. Despite the richness of this area for exploration, only a few geographers have ventured into this terrain. Holton's innovative exploration of hair in geography, Hawthorne's analysis of race, gender, and identity within the Afro-Italian community, and Faria's critical examination of beauty labor in nationalism and global trade are just a few of the scholars.

Holton (2020) introduces hair as a lens to understand bodily and spatial relationships, revealing how hair practices shape identities and social relations. His work underscores the importance of considering hair within geographic research to deepen the understanding of the body's relationship with space, identity, and society. This approach opens up new avenues for exploring the complex interplay between bodily practices and spatial experiences, inviting further scholarly engagement with the multifaceted roles of hair in geographical discourses. In his article, "On the geographies of hair: Exploring the entangled margins of the bordered body," he addresses a significant gap in geography studies on the role of hair in shaping and representing bodily borders (Holton, 2020).

Holton's work documents that there is insufficient attention given to the role of hair in shaping and representing the body's borders within the geographies of the body. Holton advances this discussion by examining hair as a new geographical prism, focusing on its significance in extending and re-imagining the frontiers of the body as bordered, marginal spaces. This approach is innovative in its focus on hair, a subject not traditionally examined in depth within the field of

human geography, especially in how hair's presence or absence on the body can produce powerful and emotive understandings of bodily practices and social relations.

Hawthorne's research explores the intersections between race, gender, entrepreneurship, and identity within the Afro-Italian community, with a particular emphasis on the cultural and political significance of natural African hair (Frisina & Hawthorne, 2018; Hawthorne, 2021). Hawthorne's work looks at the dynamics of Afro-Italian women's lives, their challenges, and the strategies they use in asserting their identities, given the systemic inequalities and Eurocentric beauty standards. Her scholarship collectively underscores the importance of natural African hair in her discourse on race and identity, revealing how aesthetic choices around natural African hair are powerful expressions of resistance and self-affirmation. Her research also addresses the geographic dimensions of Black lives, drawing on McKittrick's argument that while Black lives are inherently geographic (McKittrick, 2011), they often contend with discourses that erase their spatial identities (Hawthorne, 2019; Hawthorne & Heitz, 2018). Hawthorne's research calls for a global approach to Black geographies. She supports research aimed at examining the intricate relationship between race and nationality, as illustrated by her scholarship documenting the experiences of Afro-Italian women.

Hawthorne stresses the importance of recognizing the varied experiences of people who are of African descent regarding nationhood and citizenship across different contexts and advocates for the globalization of Black geographies. She urges the field of geography to consider the diverse strategies Black communities employ to navigate and redefine their spaces around the world, underscoring their history of resistance and identity formation characterizing Black spatial practices (Hawthorne, 2023). Her work also asks for expanded exploration of Black

spatial practices, challenging the field to extend its focus beyond the predominantly North American examples to include a wider array of global narratives for Black populations.

The collective research of Faria and Falola (C. Faria & Falola, 2020), Elledge and Faria (Elledge & Faria, 2020), Faria (C. Faria, 2014), and Faria and Jones (C. V. Faria & Jones, 2020) offers a critical examination of beauty labor within the contexts of nationalism and global trade. In the article "Disentangling Globalization," (C. Faria & Falola, 2020), Faria and Falola center on the global hair and beauty trade, with a particular emphasis on the connections between the Gulf and East Africa, employing a feminist commodity chain analysis. This approach is used to unpack the gendered, racial, and economic dynamics of the beauty industry, without specifically addressing the topic of natural African hair or its cultural and political implications.

Elledge and Faria (2020) investigated the intertwining of nationalism, development, and beauty labor in Uganda, focusing on the Miss Tourism Uganda beauty pageant. They argue beauty labor—comprising physical, emotional, and intellectual efforts by young women—is central to Uganda's tourism-based development strategy. This labor promotes an idealized national image to attract foreign investment and boost tourism, yet it often goes unremunerated. The study contributes to the geographies of beauty by highlighting how these beauty practices serve both neoliberal development goals and the participants' navigation of these spaces, offering insights into the complex roles of gender, nationalism, and neoliberalism in development strategies.

Caroline Faria's study, "Styling the nation: fear and desire in the South Sudanese Beauty Trade," examines the beauty salon industry in South Sudan, emphasizing the salons' role in nation-making through the lens of emotional geographies and the 'global intimate' (C. Faria, 2014, p. 133). This approach reveals the complexities of nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and

transnationalism within the post-conflict, newly independent nation. Faria highlights how beauty practices, including the use of imported hair products and styles, serve as mediums for expressing cosmopolitan identities while also navigating tensions around foreignness and national identity. The study specifically focuses on the implications of beauty labor in shaping national identity and the emotional landscapes of post-conflict South Sudan.

Faria and Jones's study, "A Darling of the beauty trade: race, care, and the Imperial Debris of synthetic hair," explores the synthetic hair trade in Africa (C. V. Faria & Jones, 2020). They focus on the Lebanese business expansion in this market, analyzing how contemporary care practices reflect and transform colonial legacies. The article highlights the role of Ugandan stylists and consumers in challenging and reshaping these legacies, demonstrating the complex interplay of racial power and care practices.

Theoretical Foundation

Holton's use of feminist and post-structuralist theories (Butler, 1990; Longhurst, 1995, 1997) enables an examination of hair's performances, and discourses and gives a perspective of his treatment of hair. This theoretical grounding facilitates an analysis transcending traditional considerations of hair as merely a biological feature, positioning it instead as a critical element in the construction of bodily spaces and identities. He examines how hair contributes to and disrupts the understanding of gendered, racialized, and individual identities by engaging in various practices, such as hair styling, cutting, and removal. These practices, though considered aesthetic or personal choices, are also laden with social meanings and implications, reflecting societal dynamics and power relations. Holton's analysis also extends to the emotional and symbolic dimensions of hair, highlighting its capacity to evoke intense feelings and convey deep meanings.

For instance, he discusses the fashion for mourning jewelry in the 18th century, where locks of hair were encapsulated within lockets and brooches, serving as poignant reminders of loved ones, and illustrating hair's role in maintaining social, cultural, and material linkages across time and space. Holton's (2020) work fills a critical gap in understanding the geographies of the body by foregrounding hair as a key element that influences, disturbs, transforms, and transcends bodily margins. He exemplifies hair's profound impact on shaping corporeal understandings, identities, and power dynamics, thereby contributing significantly to the fields of geography, gender studies, and geographic theory.

Hawthorne uses a blend of transnational feminist analysis and theories of racial capitalism to dissect the socio-economic and cultural landscapes in which Afro-Italian women operate (Hawthorne, 2021, 2023). Her work documents how Afro-Italian women entrepreneurs leverage their racial and gendered identities to carve out spaces for economic independence and to challenge and redefine notions of belonging and Italianness. Her approach research facilitates a deeper understanding of the complex interactions between personal identity, community activism, and the larger socio-political forces at play.

The unified theoretical discussion across Faria's studies (Elledge & Faria, 2020; C. Faria, 2014; C. Faria & Falola, 2020; C. V. Faria & Fluri, 2022; C. V. Faria & Jones, 2020) emphasize a multi-layered analysis of beauty labor in Africa. Feminist geography offers a lens to view beauty practices as spaces where gendered national identities and neoliberal development intersect. Commodity chain analysis sheds light on the global economic networks shaping local beauty industries, revealing the exploitation and agency within these dynamics. Postcolonial geography allows for the examination of how care practices in the beauty trade mediate colonial histories and contemporary racial hierarchies. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive

framework for understanding the complex roles beauty labor plays in negotiating identity, power, and resistance within the global context. The studies collectively underscore the need for deeper engagement with the cultural and political implications of beauty labor, particularly natural African hair, within these theoretical contexts.

Integrating the scholarly contributions of Holton, Hawthorne, and Faria (C. Faria, 2014; Hawthorne, 2021; Holton, 2020) provides a better understanding of the socio-political significance of hair, particularly through the lens of feminist, post-structuralist, and racial capitalism theories. Their research collectively emphasizes hair's pivotal role in navigating identity, power, and resistance within various socio-cultural and geopolitical contexts. However, there is a conspicuous absence of focus on natural African hair within the United States, a gap suggesting a need for expanded inquiry into the cultural and political ramifications of natural hair practices in this geographic and socio-political landscape. This oversight underscores the call for a more comprehensive engagement with the implications of beauty practices, advocating for a globalized perspective including the diverse experiences of Black individuals beyond the currently explored territories.

The Intersectionality of Hair

Holton identifies a significant gap in the geographic exploration of natural African hair, pointing out the need for future studies to delve deeper into the intersectionality of hair practices and performances about aspects like sexuality, disability, age, faith, and ethnicity. This suggests expanding the discipline of geography for academic inquiry, where hair can be examined for its contributions to identity and for its implications on geographic themes such as mobilities, migration, and citizenship. He recommends exploring natural African hair alongside other modifiable bodily dimensions (e.g., eyebrows, teeth, fingernails) and sensual enhancements (e.g.,

hearing aids, spectacles, prostheses) underscoring the potential to understand bodies in space and time more comprehensively. Holton views the body as a subjective entity moving through space and time and as a canvas of continual self and relational identity re-inscription, reshaping, and re-sculpting, thereby highlighting the profound and multifaceted significance of hair in the geographical discourse on bodies (Holton, 2020).

Within his geographic discourse on body politics, Holton describes natural African hair for women as a battleground for identity, where the treatment and appearance of natural African hair ignites contentious debates over racial aesthetics and the politics of assimilation versus authenticity (Holton, 2020). The act of hair relaxing, for example, is fraught with layered meanings—ranging from practical considerations within family life to its symbolic association with transitions in life stages and the cultural politics of 'race' and 'aesthetics' (Holton, 2020, p. 563). This complex interplay of cultural, social, and personal narratives around natural African hair is emblematic of African American women's struggle against the commodification of their bodies and the imposition of mythical stereotypes of female perfection (Crewe, 2001) and further analyzed by Mercer (2000). Mercer's critique of the 'deracialisation' practices associated with hair relaxing highlights the deep-seated tensions between embracing one's cultural heritage and navigating the pressures to conform to dominant beauty standards (Mercer, 2000).

Moreover, Holton finds the emotional and affective dimensions of natural African hair are pivotal in understanding its significance for many African American women, for whom hair is not "just hair" but a vital component of their lived experience and identity (Holton, 2020). The practices surrounding natural African hair maintenance—whether through chemical relaxing or the wearing of the hair in its natural state—are imbued with social meanings extending beyond the individual to reflect broader societal norms and expectations. He emphasizes this dynamic

and underscores how natural African hair serves as a medium through which the expectations of the white body are both resisted and negotiated. The engagement with natural African hair is positioned as an act of resistance against oppressive beauty norms, challenging the aesthetic standards imposed by society and confronting internalized pressures from within the African American community itself (Tate, 2007). He believes the significance of natural African hair is a crucial site for the examination of gendered and racialized bodies concerning national and cultural identities.

Then Global Dimensions of Natural Hair

Hawthorne identifies a significant gap in the geographic exploration of natural African hair, particularly pointing out the lack of research focusing on its implications within the Italian context and its connections to the larger African Diaspora experience (Frisina & Hawthorne, 2018; Hawthorne, 2021, 2023). She advocates for expanding this research lens to encompass a global perspective on the Natural Hair Movement, emphasizing the need for comparative studies bridging the diverse experiences of Black communities across different national and cultural contexts. Such an approach, she argues, would not only enrich the academic discourse on natural African hair, it would also contribute to a better understanding of post-colonial experiences and the ongoing struggles of Black women against racial and gendered discrimination globally. Her work emphasizes the significance of natural African hair care within the Afro-Italian community as a site of cultural creativity and spatial politics, tied to struggles for recognition and citizenship. The entrepreneurship surrounding natural African hair care and beauty products is a means for Afro-Italians to forge a new Diasporic sense of Italianness incorporating traditional Italian aesthetic sensibilities with influences from transnational African diasporic cultures. This focus on natural African hair care among Afro-Italian women illustrates a larger movement towards

rejecting Eurocentric beauty standards and asserting a proud Black identity within the Italian context.

Hawthorne's research advocates for a more inclusive examination of Black geographies accounting for the diverse experiences and spatial practices of African American communities across the globe. Her work invites future scholars to explore the global dimensions of the Natural Hair Movement and its implications for Black Diasporic identities, highlighting the need for comparative studies that include the experiences of natural African hair communities in the United States and beyond. Conclusively, this underscores the significance of natural African hair care inclusion in the discussions of race, gender, and entrepreneurship in Italy, providing a valuable contribution to understanding how Afro-Italian women navigate and contest the racialized and gendered boundaries of citizenship.

However, the absence of a focused discussion on the Natural Hair Movement in the United States within her research points to an important gap warranting further exploration in the field of geography. Addressing this gap could enrich the global dialogue on natural African hair, offering comparative insights and enhancing our understanding of the transnational flows of cultural practices and political activism related to natural hair care.

Hawthorne's contributions to the geographic discourse extends well beyond the traditional boundaries of the discipline, particularly in the context of natural African hair, which she observed serves as a symbol of cultural identity in Italy. She suggests including the narratives of African American women and their hair into the fabric of geographic research because she understands the significance of identifying with natural African hair, from its historical roots to its contemporary expression. She calls for empirical investigations looking at how African American women interact with, belong to, and navigate through different spaces. Hawthorne's

work invites the academic audience to consider how these notions of identity are interlaced with issues of space, place, and race, thereby advocating for a holistic approach to understanding African American women cultural identity and its profound implications for shaping the global context.

Addressing Global Beauty Standards

The articles by Faria and her collaborators primarily focus on the beauty labor, nationalism, and global beauty trade within African contexts, specifically Uganda and South Sudan, and their interactions with global markets (C. Faria, 2014; C. Faria & Falola, 2020). While providing valuable insights into beauty practices, gendered nationalism, and the impacts of colonial legacies, these studies do not specifically address natural African hair or natural African hair in the context of the United States. This omission suggests a potential area for further research, particularly in exploring the cultural and political significance of natural African hair within the American diaspora and its intersections with global beauty standards and practices.

Addressing the Gap for Studies on Natural Black Hair

Holton, Hawthorne, and Faria advocate for a multidisciplinary approach to bridge the gap in geographical research on natural African hair, emphasizing the exploration of its cultural, social, and spatial significance. Holton advocates for a comprehensive examination of natural African hair, urging for an interdisciplinary study merging geography with cultural studies, sociology, and history. He emphasizes the importance of understanding hair's role in identity formation, social dynamics, and cultural expressions, stressing the need for geographic research to explore hair's political significance and its impact on spatial experiences.

Because Hawthorne's scholarship focuses on Afro-Italian women and not on African American women in the United States, she advocates addressing the gaps in geography on natural African hair by focusing globally on natural African hair care. She believes scholarship around entrepreneurship challenges racial and gendered boundaries in Italian citizenship and promotes a more inclusive Italian identity (Hawthorne, 2023). She underscores the importance of scholarship aimed at understanding Blackness beyond traditional identity claims, through the experiences of Black Italians against the backdrop of colonial legacies. Hawthorne uses social media platforms to point to the significance of aesthetic practices and anti-racism efforts in fostering pride in African roots and challenging Eurocentric beauty standards, thereby contributing to a broader discourse on identity and belonging in Italy, not in the United States.

Faria and colleagues call for a multifaceted approach to the study of natural African hair, pushing beyond commodity chain analysis to delve into its sociocultural, political, and economic dimensions. Their research aims to understand how natural African hair serves as a medium of diasporic identity formation and resistance against Eurocentric beauty norms, looking at the intersections of beauty labor with neoliberal globalization, particularly as it pertains to racialized and gendered bodies in Africa, not the United States. Collectively, these scholars present a direction for addressing this significant gap in the geographic study of natural African hair. They advocate for research to fill this gap and enrich our geographic understanding of the interplay between race, gender, beauty, and globalization. Their work also calls for a deeper exploration into the cultural, political, and economic dynamics surrounding natural African hair, aiming to understand its comprehensive implications on individual and collective identities, as well as its influence on the socio-political landscape.

Conceptual Models for Placing Studies on Natural African Hair

This chapter seeks to discuss natural African hair using three geographic perspectives: cultural geography, Black geographies, and Black feminist geography. Three conceptual models were crafted from the existing geographic scholarship to serve as lenses through which the positioning of natural African hair in geography literature can be viewed. Towards the end, I propose another conceptual model for the placement of studies on hair central within current geographic literature. These models are pivotal in articulating the multidimensional spaces studies on natural African hair occupy within geographic literature. Integrating these conceptual models positions studies on natural African hair as a niche interest within geographical research and as a vital element intersecting with other discussions of culture, identity, space, and social justice. These conceptual models advocate for the inclusion and centrality of such studies in the geographic literature of African Americans and the spatial dimensions of hair as a potent symbol of cultural and political identity.

Conceptual Models

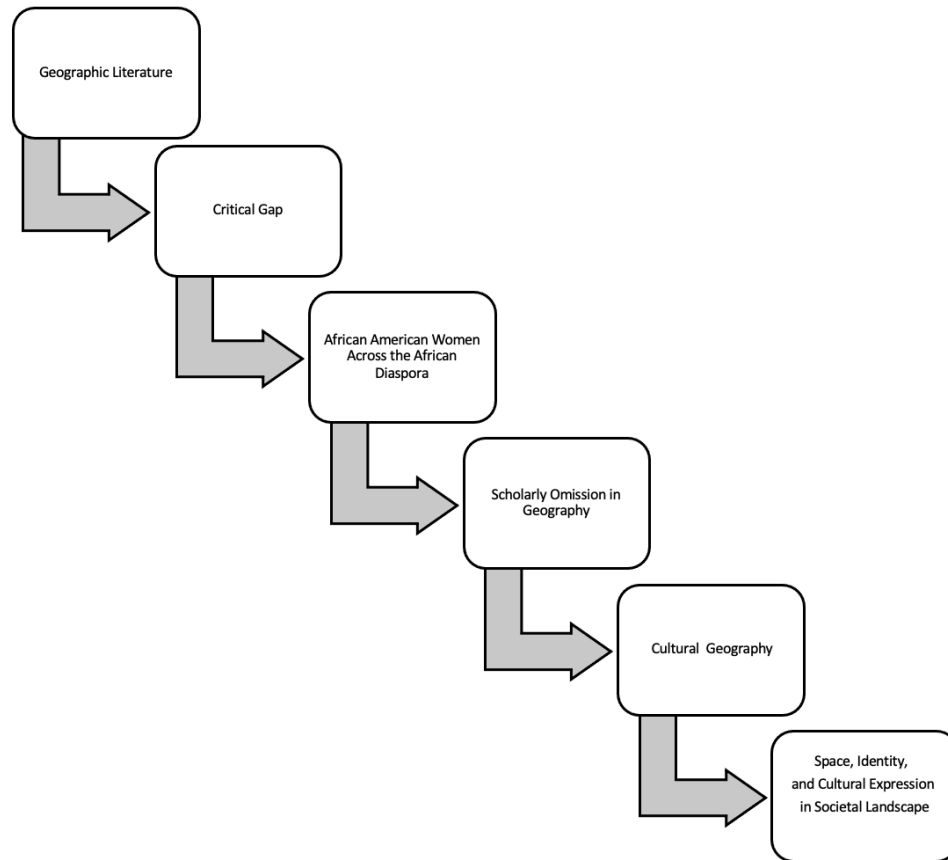
Cultural Geography

Within this expansive geographic literature, a critical gap emerges as a notable omission or a lack of attention to scholarly pursuits on African American women's issues (Hawthorne, 2023; Holton, 2020; McKittrick, 2011). This gap identifies specific areas or topics not receiving the scholarly attention they deserve, including the experiences of African American women across the African diaspora, particularly concerning their natural African hair (G. Davis, 2020; C. V. Faria & Jones, 2020; Goins, 2021; Lukate, 2022). Despite their rich cultural histories and diverse backgrounds within the United States, these women's experiences have typically been

marginalized or underrepresented within geographic research (Barnett, 2016; S. Z. Brown, 2023; Byrd & Tharps, 2014; hooks, 1981; T. Johnson & Bankhead, 2014).

To address this gap, the proposed conceptual model (see **Figure 1**) provides a cultural context for studies on natural African hair. As cultural geography gains prominence as a pertinent empirical perspective, it enables researchers to delve into the significance of natural African hair experiences. This exploration is inclusive of geographic concepts such as space, identity, cultural expression, and societal landscapes, highlighting the complex interplay between culture and the physical environment. This domain of geography facilitates an understanding of how individuals shape place, imbue specific locations with meaning, and express their identities and values through diverse cultural forms (Relph, 1976; Rose, 1993; Cresswell, 1996). Using this cultural geography conceptual model clarifies the placement of African American women's hair within the canon of geographic scholarship. From this perspective, cultural geography contributes to a more inclusive and elaborate understanding of this aspect of identity and culture within the African diaspora.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model Cultural Geography



Black Geographies

The acknowledgment of Black geographies as a distinct subfield and specialty group within the broader academic discipline of geography at the American Association of Geographers was a pivotal development, advancing efforts to bridge long-standing gaps in the representation of African American experiences in traditional geographical studies (Bledsoe et al., 2017; Hawthorne, 2019; McKittrick & Woods, 2007).

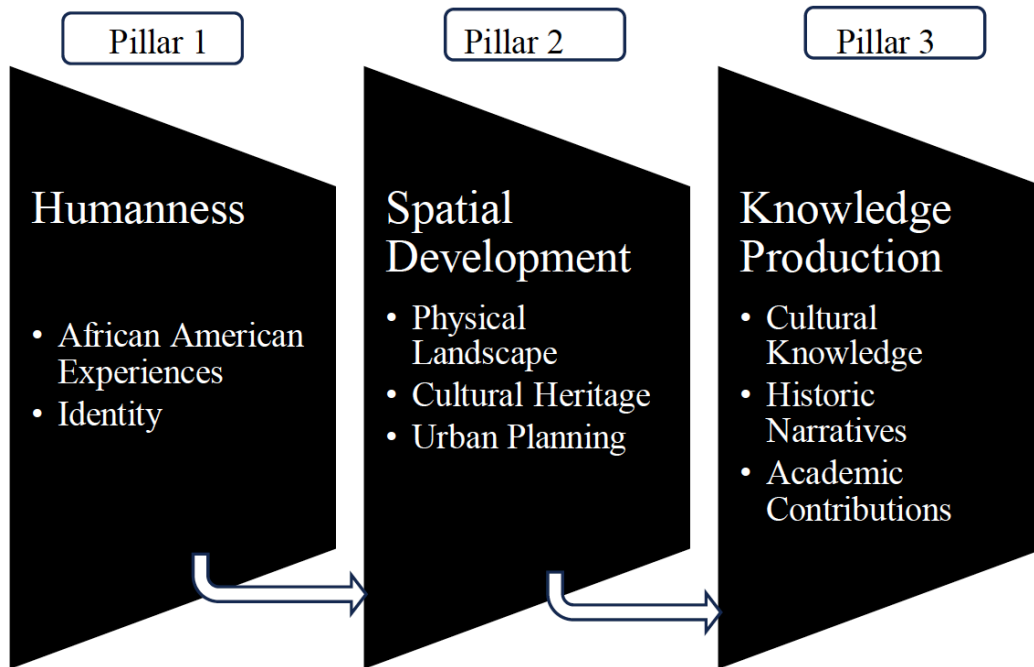
This subfield is distinguished by its rigorous documentation of the relationships African American communities maintain with their physical, social, and cultural landscapes, addressing

the long-overlooked narratives within this scholarly domain (Hawthorne, 2019). The emergence of Black geographies underscores the necessity of acknowledging historical disparities persist and have persisted within the discipline of geography. Eurocentric perspectives have long dominated geographic discourse, and privileged the viewpoints, expertise, and experiences of White males while neglecting the diverse range of human-environment interactions characterizing the experiences of African American populations (McKittrick, 2006). Consequently, this Eurocentric approach led to a limited understanding of the complex experience of African American life and the profound contributions they made to the cultural and spatial development of the United States and their communities (Allen et al., 2019; Bailey & Shabazz, 2014; Brand & Miller, 2020; Gilmore, 2007; Hudson et al., 2014; McKittrick, 2011). Therefore, Black geographies serve as a critical response to this historical imbalance within geography, offering a platform to rectify the marginalization of African American experiences. In this context, Black geographies address this grave historical disparity and offer a path toward a more comprehensive and equitable understanding of human-environment interactions within diverse communities.

This conceptual model (see **Figure 2**) within geography was generated using existing literature to serve as a structural scaffold for comprehending scholarship concerning African American women in Black geographies. I argue these three interconnected pillars signify the foundation of scientific studies with African American women. The first pillar recognizes the humanness of African American women, the second pillar addresses their significant contributions to spatial development, and the third pillar focuses on the unique forms of knowledge production emerging from their experiences. This conceptual model seeks to address the historical neglect and marginalization of African American women issues, including the

pivotal role they play within Black geographies and the broader geographic narrative. Furthermore, the use of interconnected pillars underscores the dynamic relationships and interplay between the dimensions within Black geographies. This interconnectedness recognizes the inherent complexity of Black geographies and underscores the necessity for an integrated approach to studying them.

Figure 2: Conceptual Model Black Geographies



Acknowledging the intricate web of relationships among the three-pillar structure encourages researchers to explore how these dimensions intersect and shape one another, leading to a more layered understanding of the subject matter. Its simplicity and visual clarity allow researchers to grasp the fundamental principles underpinning the study of African American populations and their environments. This accessibility ensures the framework effectively assists

with centering research findings, educating students, informing policy decisions, and engaging the wider community in discussions about Black geographies.

Interconnectedness and Synergy

The lines connecting each pillar symbolize the interconnectedness and synergy among these dimensions. They illustrate understanding African American women and their environments requires an approach that considers the humanness of individuals, and marginalization of African American women issues, including the pivotal role they play within Black geographies and the broader geographic narrative. Furthermore, the use of interconnected pillars underscores the dynamic relationships and interplay between the dimensions within Black geographies. This interconnectedness recognizes the inherent complexity of Black geographies and underscores the necessity for an integrated approach to studying them.

Acknowledging the intricate web of relationships among the three-pillar structure encourages researchers to explore how these dimensions intersect and shape one another, leading to a more layered understanding of the subject matter. Its simplicity and visual clarity allow researchers to grasp the fundamental principles underpinning the study of African American populations and their environments. This accessibility ensures the conceptual model (see **Figure 2**) effectively assists with centering research findings, educating students, informing policy decisions, and engaging the wider community in discussions about Black geographies.

Humanness

Central to this conceptual model is the affirmation of the intrinsic humanity of African American women. It marks their diverse emotions, aspirations, and complexities, overlooked or simplified in mainstream geographic discussions (S. Z. Brown, 2023; Cooper, 2017; Crenshaw, 1991; Gottschild, 2016; Hill Collins, 2000; hooks, 2015; Nash, 2019; U. Y. Taylor, 1998). This

pillar serves as a foundation for viewing African American women as multifaceted individuals, thereby enriching the understanding of their societal roles, and rejecting narratives dehumanizing them. Historically, these dehumanizing portrayals have been used to justify discrimination, marginalization, and in some cases annihilation (Barnett, 2016; Dash, 2006; Ford, 2019; Hobson, 2018; R. Jones, 2020; M. S. Lee & Nambudiri, 2021; Morgan, 2004; Strings, 2019; Wolcott, 2001). This conceptualization of African Americans encourages a more empathetic and respectful approach in scholarly examinations and discussions. It calls for an acknowledgment of their struggles, aspirations, and achievements, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of their role in shaping geographic narratives.

Subhuman Treatment of African American Women

The subhuman treatment of African American women in the realms and medical research revealed a disturbing history of exploitation and objectification. These occurrences are stark illustrations of how African American women have been systematically dehumanized and their bodies instrumentalized for scientific advancement without regard for their humanity or consent (Longhurst et al., 2008; Roberts, 2017; Washington, 2006). The case of Henrietta Lacks in 1951, emerged as a seminal example of this exploitation (Skloot, 2011). Lacks, an African American woman, was unknowingly propelled into the spotlight of medical research when her cancer cells were harvested without consent during treatment at Johns Hopkins Hospital (Skloot, 2011). These cells, named HeLa cells, displayed unprecedented qualities of survival and reproduction in laboratory settings. As a result, Lack's cells contributed significantly to scientific breakthroughs, including the development of the polio vaccine, cancer research, and AIDS treatment (Baptiste et al., 2022; Greely & Cho, 2013; Skloot, 2011). However, neither Lacks nor her family were informed or compensated, despite the profound impact and commercialization of HeLa cells

(Baptiste et al., 2022; Klitzman, 2022; Skloot, 2011). This case truly underlines a grievous oversight in ethical standards and highlights the exploitative treatment of Black bodies in medical research, raising critical questions about consent and recognition in scientific practices.

Another case further exemplifying this pattern of exploiting African American women in the name of research is the work of J. Marion Sims, often heralded as the “Father of Gynecology” (S. Harris, 1950; Roberts, 2017; Wall, 2020; Washington, 2006). In the 1840s, enslaved African American women, such as Anarcha, Betsy, and Lucy, were subjected to experimental surgeries without the use of anesthesia. These experiments, while contributing to advancements in gynecology, were marred by severe ethical violations (S. Harris, 1950; Roberts, 2017; Strings, 2019; Washington, 2006). The lack of consent and the infliction of pain and suffering on these women used as mere subjects in dangerous procedures, represent a disturbing chapter in medical history for African American women. Sims' legacy is a powerful testimony to the dehumanization and objectification of African American women under the guise of medical progress (Morgan, 2004; Wall, 2020; Washington, 2006).

Medical exploitation in a geographic context extended beyond individual cases, it reflects a historical pattern beginning during slavery. The era of slavery in the United States saw widespread medical experimentation on enslaved African American women (Camp, 2004; S. Harris, 1950; Long, 2012; Roberts, 2017; Strings, 2019; Washington, 2006). These experiments ranged from invasive surgical procedures to untested treatments, generally disregarding the women's well-being, pain tolerance, and humanity. An example is the practice of involuntary sterilization, particularly prevalent in the South in the 20th century. The “Mississippi Appendectomy Program” targeting African American women was part of eugenic efforts to control the reproduction of African American communities, further exemplifying the treatment

of African American women's bodies as mere objects to be manipulated (Dixon Omere & King, 2022; Sacks, 2019). The Tuskegee Syphilis Study, though not exclusively involving women, is another notorious example of the medical exploitation of African Americans reflecting a callous disregard for their lives and well-being in medical research (Barrett, 2019; Reverby, 2012; Roberts, 2017; Thomas & Quinn, 1991).

These few examples collectively illustrate a disturbing trend in the treatment of African American women as subhuman within the geographic and medical research fields. They justify reconsidering the ethical standards for research with African American women and support informed consent, and the recognition of humanity in all research subjects, especially African American women.

Spatial Development

The second pillar highlights the involvement of African Americans in shaping physical and cultural landscapes forms an essential part of American geography (Allen et al., 2019; Bottone, 2020). This acknowledgment counters the historical narrative often excluding or minimizing their contributions. Historically, the experiences of African Americans with racism and racial discrimination have necessitated the formation of distinct physical spaces, often defined by racial segregation, restricted access to resources, and the denial of social and economic opportunities. (Bottone, 2020; Packard, 2003; Percy, 2020; Rey & Knaap, 2024; Rothstein, 2018). African Americans were relegated to neighborhoods commonly referred to as "ghettos," marked by substandard housing and bleak economic disparities (Allen et al., 2019; Anderson, 2020). During the Jim Crow era in the South, African Americans were subject to racial segregation laws specifically creating separate public facilities and spaces, known as Jim Crow spaces (Slate, 2022). Moving forward, discriminatory housing policies, such as redlining,

denied African American communities access to loans and mortgages, perpetuating racial segregation (Fishback et al., 2022; Percy, 2020; C. L. Smith, 2009; Stermon & Lukinbeal, 2021). Urban renewal projects often resulted in the destruction of African American neighborhoods and the displacement of residents (Caro, 1974; Gale, 2021; Hemdahl, 1959). Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were established to provide higher education opportunities (Albritton, 2012; G. S. Johnson et al., 2017; Wade, 2021). Additionally, some cities fostered cultural and artistic hubs celebrating African American heritage (Allen et al., 2019; Mullen, 1999; Savage et al., 1994). Despite the challenges, these spaces have been resilient centers of culture, community, and activism, contributing significantly to American society (Allen et al., 2019). Black geography research focuses on addressing these historical injustices and promoting research equity in these areas (Allen et al., 2019; Bledsoe, 2020; S. Z. Brown, 2023; Cahill, 2019; Hawthorne & Heitz, 2018)

Urban Planning

African American women's role in urban planning and cultural development has been instrumental in advocating for community needs and leading initiatives fostering more inclusive and equitable urban spaces (Ducre, 2018; Soja, 2010). Additionally, their contributions in creating and sustaining cultural movements, as seen during the Harlem Renaissance have reshaped African American identity and expression in the urban landscape (Howes, 2001; L. Hunter, 2020; Sherrard-Johnson, 2007; Simawe, 2002). In the realm of spatial justice movements, African American women have been at the forefront, fighting against spatial inequalities, discriminatory urban policies, and environmental injustices (Goetz et al., 2020; Golub et al., 2013; T. W. Hunter, 1997; Schindler, 2014). Yet, the influence of African American women on spatial development extends to spatial dynamics and urban policies (Feldman & Stall,

2004; Rodriguez & Ward, 2018; Williams, 2004). They advocate for policies including combating gentrification and ensuring equitable access to public spaces and services. Hence, they create vital content for scientific study in the subfield of Black geographies (Bloch & Meyer, 2023a, 2023b; Boyd, 2021; Fullilove, 2016; Nyden et al., 2006; Summers, 2019; Taylor, 1992; Versey, 2018).

The legacy of African American women in molding cultural landscapes extends beyond advocacy and leadership in spatial justice and urban planning. Their strategic activism and community mobilization have catalyzed key policy reforms and reconfigured the urban fabric to foster enhanced inclusivity and equity. Their profound influence on spatial development has been consistently echoed in the reclamation and revitalization of neighborhood spaces, championing the right to the city for historically marginalized groups. This has been instrumental in reimagining and actualizing an urban future that prioritizes social justice and sustainability, aligning with broader goals of equitable urban development (Ducre, 2018; Hemdahl, 1959; Kanouse, 2007; Soja, 2010). Their endeavors, often intersecting with larger social movements, have reshaped public discourse and practices around urban living and community engagement, underpinning the transformative power of African American women's agency in the urban context.

Natural Hair Care and Entrepreneurship

The creation of spaces for natural African hair care by African American women represents a significant intersection of cultural expression, entrepreneurship, and resistance against mainstream beauty standards (Dash, 2006; Greer, 2019; Holton, 2020; Mbilishaka, 2018; White & White, 1995). Marginalization of natural African American hair textures and styles by prevailing beauty norms has driven African American women to become entrepreneurs and

innovators in the field of hair care. Madam C.J. Walker, a notable figure in this realm, developed a line of hair care products specifically for African American women in the early 20th century. Walker's entrepreneurial endeavors provided crucial hair care solutions, simultaneously offering employment and empowerment opportunities for African American women (Bundles, 2001; Graham, 2020; Peiss, 2011). Similarly, Annie Malone, another pioneering figure and a mentor to Walker, established a successful line of hair care products. Malone's Poro College, a cosmetology school, was instrumental in educating thousands of African American women in hair care, thus contributing significantly to economic empowerment and professional development within this community (Higbee, 1993; Marwick, 1988; Wingfield, 2008).

Hair Salons and Beauty Supply Stores

African American hair salons and beauty supply stores evolved into pivotal community centers. They serve as a point of exchange of products and services and also serve as platforms for social interaction, cultural exchange, and the reinforcement of communal bonds (Gill, 2010; Greer, 2019). They stand as a reflection of cultural identity, where diverse expressions of African American hair—from natural styles to braids and weaves—are celebrated and perpetuated (Ford, 2019; Hobson, 2018). The natural hair care industry has also been a conduit for economic empowerment for African American women who have established and managed spaces catering to specific natural hair care needs. African American women entrepreneurs have not only carved out significant market niches, some have also fostered economic independence and community development within their demographic (Byrd & Tharps, 2014).

In recent years, the NHM has catalyzed a shift towards embracing natural African hair textures, further expanding the market and cultural space for African American women in the hair care industry. This expansion is also facilitated by digital platforms, which have broadened

the reach and accessibility of hair care products and fostered a more inclusive discourse on beauty standards and natural hair care practices (Ellington, 2014, 2015; Haaruun & Watson, 2014; Phelps-Ward & Laura, 2016; M. M. Wright, 2005). Hairstyles and products, developed within these created spaces are imbued with layers of meaning, often signifying identity, resilience, and a form of resistance against hegemonic beauty norms (Dash, 2006; Davis-Sivasothy, 2011; Holton, 2020; Neely, 2018; Norwood, 2018; Wingfield, 2008). Indeed, these spaces transcend their commercial origins to become integral to the cultural and social fabric of the African American community, reflecting and reinforcing the unique need for empirical studies documenting the experiences of African American women.

Knowledge Production

The third pillar, knowledge production, acknowledges African American communities possess unique forms of knowledge rooted in their experiences, cultures, and histories. It encompasses cultural knowledge, historical narratives, and academic contributions. Within this pillar, researchers can tap the wealth of knowledge produced by African American women, spanning oral traditions, artistic expressions, historical accounts, and scholarly works. This pillar recognizes the value of these knowledge systems as essential components of the African American women's intellectual landscape. African American female geographers significantly enrich the field of geography with diverse perspectives, particularly regarding space and place. They challenge and expand traditional geographic theories, offering new understandings of spatial relationships and place-making, especially as these relate to intersecting social identities (Bledsoe, 2020; Eaves, 2017; Hawthorne, 2023; McKittrick, 2006, 2011). This contribution is crucial in comprehending how spaces are experienced differently based on race, gender, and other social factors.

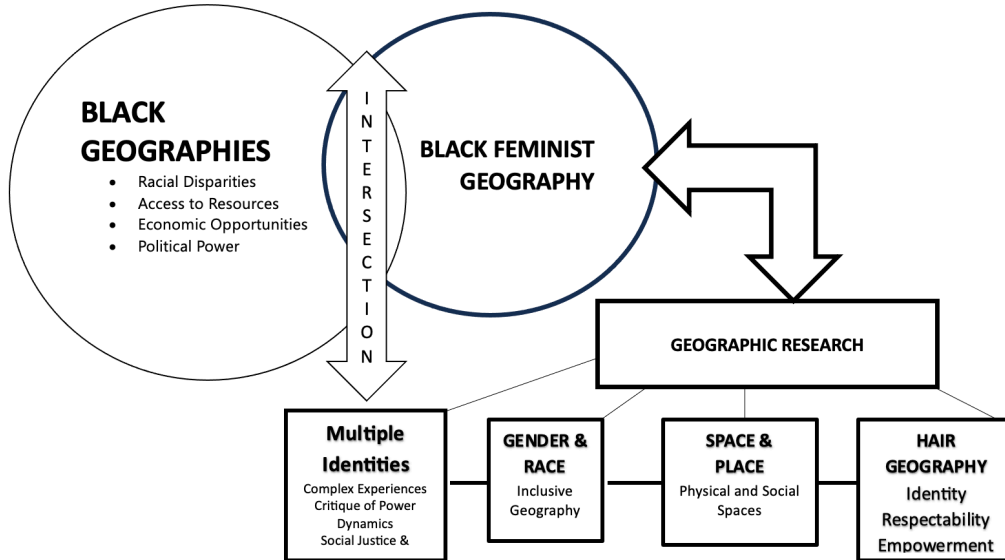
The emphasis on intersectionality in geographic research by African American female geographers provides insights into the complexities of marginalized groups' spatial experiences. Their research often concentrates on spatial justice, exploring the role of spatial arrangements in perpetuating or mitigating inequalities. This focus has tangible implications for urban planning and policy, advocating for more equitable spatial practices (Brand & Miller, 2020; Ducre, 2018; Kanouse, 2007). In the realm of cultural and historical geography, African American geographers examine the cultural heritage and historical narratives embedded in landscapes, emphasizing the significance of memory and heritage in geographic spaces (Allen et al., 2019; Ashanté M. Reese, 2019; Eaves, 2017). Furthermore, the work of African American female geographers shed light on how global processes affect local communities, such as studies on the South Korean economic stronghold on African American hair care products (Chin et al., 1996; Greer, 2019; Petrusis, 2021; Silverman, 2002).

Black Feminist Geography

This conceptual model (see **Figure 3**) illustrates that while both Black geographies and Black feminist geography share a profound commitment to unraveling and addressing the challenges facing African American communities, they diverge significantly in terms of their thematic focus, methodological approaches, and overarching aims. This conceptual model shows Black feminist geography emerged as a response to the perceived limitations of Black geographies in adequately addressing the interplay of race and gender within spatial contexts. It establishes a dedicated space for the narratives of African American women focused on the complexities of multiple identities, race and gender, space and place, and natural African hair. It underscores the significance of amplifying research with these historically marginalized groups within the context of geographic research. The box for hair geography indicates it is a vital part

of the intersection ideally positioned for geographic investigation. The box is labeled Hair Geography intentionally to signify it is a space for developing knowledge about hair and hair politics globally. This conceptual model advocates for a bidirectional exchange of knowledge and perspective, positing that insights gained from Black feminist geography can substantially influence and diversify the general field of geographic study. It calls for an integration of perspectives on intersectionality, place-making, and identity into mainstream geographic discourse, thereby advocating for a more representative and inclusive academic narrative. Such an integration not only enriches the academic discipline, it has practical implications for urban planning, policy-making, and community development, ensuring the lived experiences of African American women are considered and valued. The model, therefore, serves as a blueprint for an evolving geography, one that continuously adapts to incorporate the complexities and dynamism of the communities it studies, ultimately leading to more equitable and socially conscious research outcomes.

Figure 3: Conceptual Model: Black Feminist Geography and Natural African Hair



Distinguishing Black Geographies and Black Feminist Geography

At its core, Black geographies primarily center on the spatial dynamics of African American communities. This sub-field examines a range of issues, including residential segregation, economic disparities, and urban development, all within the broader context of racial identity (Ashanté M. Reese, 2019; Bailey & Shabazz, 2014; Bledsoe et al., 2020; S. Z. Brown, 2023; Eaves, 2017; Hawthorne, 2019; McKittrick & Woods, 2007). Scholars in Black geographies predominantly employ quantitative research methods and spatial analysis to scrutinize patterns of racial inequality and the consequences of systemic racism on the built environment (Bottone, 2020). The central goal of Black geographies is to gain insights into and rectify disparities in access to resources, economic opportunities, and political power, often within the domains of urban and regional planning (K. Harris, 2019).

In contrast, Black feminist geography places a unique emphasis on the experiences of African American women within geographic contexts (Noxolo, 2022). It navigates the

intersection of gender, race, and space, with a particular focus on illuminating the distinctive challenges and opportunities encountered by African Americans (Pulido, 2015). Because this is a nascent sub-field aimed at developing new and expanded empiricism, researchers in Black feminist geography employ qualitative research methods, narrative analysis, and critical theory to delve into the lived experiences of African American women and describe how these experiences profoundly shape their spatial relationships (Ducre, 2018; Keuchenius & Mügge, 2021; Okafor, 2018). The objective of Black feminist geography is to amplify the voices of African American women, deconstructing dangerous stereotypes and existing marginalizing narratives overshadowing their experiences, and advocating for both gender and racial equity within geographic research and practice. Black feminist geography is also a transformative framework that seeks to reorient one's understanding of space, place, and identity by centering the lived experiences and narratives of African American women. Black feminist geography challenges dominant paradigms historically excluding or marginalizing their perspectives. It employs an intersectional approach that acknowledges the complexity of identity, recognizing race, gender, class, and other social dimensions are inextricably linked and influence one's experience of the world. Through its commitment to equity and justice, Black feminist geography aims to create a more inclusive and equitable discourse in geographic research and practice, ultimately contributing to the dismantling of systemic inequalities and the empowerment of African American women and other marginalized groups. This approach enriches the field of geography and serves as a vital step towards societal transformation, promoting a deeper understanding of the diverse human experiences shaping our world.

Intersectionality in Black Geographies

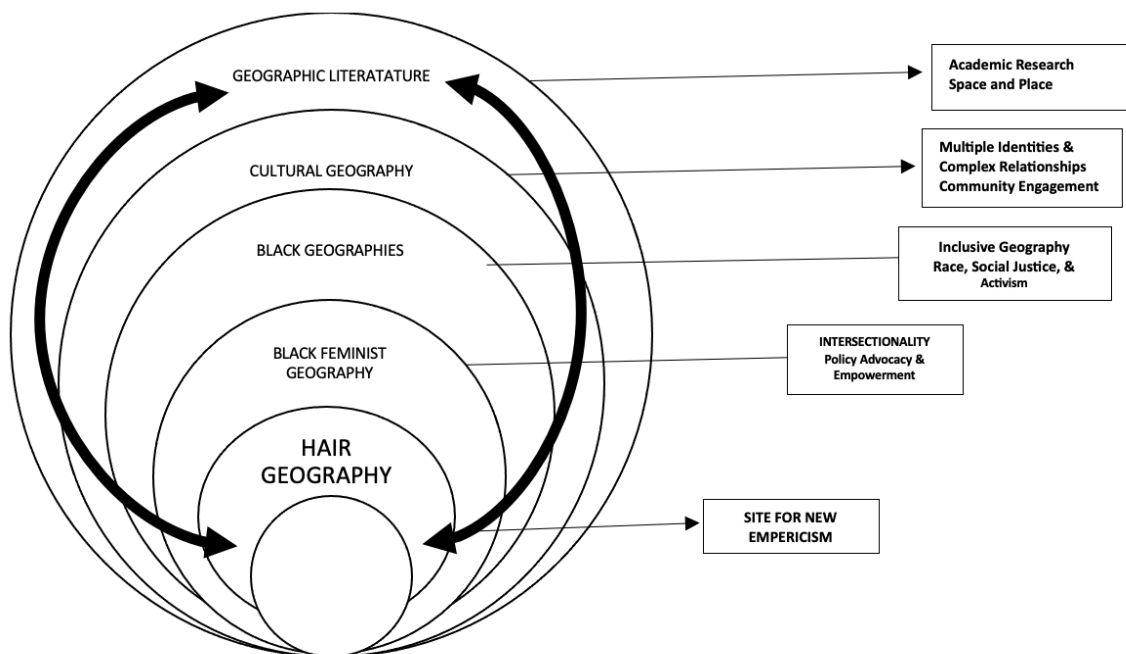
One pivotal factor driving the schism between Black feminists and Black geographies is the limited consideration of intersectionality within the latter (Carroll, 2017; Crenshaw, 1991; Keucheniuss & Mügge, 2021; Nash, 2019). While Black geography effectively addresses racial issues, it often neglects the multifaceted experiences of African American women at the intersection of race and gender. Black feminist geography emerged as a response to this deficiency by highlighting the need for a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to address this complexity. In addition, traditional Black geographies frequently fall short in their engagement with feminist theories and gender studies. In contrast, Black feminist geography actively embraces feminist frameworks, recognizing gender as an indispensable facet of identity profoundly influencing spatial experiences (Noxolo, 2022). This departure mirrors the broader feminist critique of male-dominated academic disciplines and reflects a commitment to creating an intellectual space genuinely reflective of the experiences of African American women.

The divergence from Black geographies facilitated the establishment of a dedicated platform where the narratives and perspectives of African American women could assume primacy, thus addressing the historical marginalization of African American women's voices within academic research and discourse (Bledsoe et al., 2020; Cahill, 2019; Eaves, 2017; Hawthorne & Heitz, 2018; Hirsch, 2020; McKittrick, 2000). Black feminism aims to facilitate a more comprehensive exploration of these multifaceted experiences attuned to the complex intersections of race and gender in the United States by departing from Black geographies (Cooper, 2017; Ducre, 2018; M. M. Taylor, 1992).

A Conceptual Model: For Natural African Hair

Why is the hair naturally growing out of the scalps of African American women's heads worthy of scientific inquiry? This conceptual model (see **Figure 4**) provides a starting point to position research aimed at deconstructing the negative narratives about natural African hair. This conceptual model positions hair geography at the center of scientific inquiry. It explains the layers of geographic literature and its interconnections with social and academic themes. At the core of this model is "Hair Geography," the foundational aspect or specific focus of study within the broader field of geography. The surroundings are broader categories, each encompassing the next. Moving outward, "Black Feminist Geography" surrounds "Hair Geography," followed by "Black Geographies," then "Cultural Geography," and finally, the largest circle labeled "Geographic Literature" implies a progression from a specific subject, hair geography, to increasingly broader fields of study.

Figure 4: Locating a Place for Hair Geography



The two arrows emanate from the "Geographic Literature" circle and lead to a set of boxes on the right, representing thematic areas or applications of geographic research in the areas indicated. The right-side boxes represent various thematic concerns or areas of focus within geographic literature, ranging from theoretical research in "Academic Research Space and Place" to more applied and activist concerns in "Inclusive Geography Race, Social Justice, & Activism." A separate arrow points directly from "Hair Geography" to "Site for New Empiricism," suggesting here is the place where studies focused on hair geography can provide the foundation for a new empirical approach within the field.

The box under "Inclusive Geography" highlights "Intersectionality Policy Advocacy & Empowerment," indicating the model's application to policymaking and empowerment through the lens of intersectionality, particularly within the realm of Inclusive Geography. This conceptual model represents a hierarchy of concepts within geographic literature, indicating the specific area of study for hair geography that will inform the broader geographic themes and contribute to the development of new empirical methods, as well as intersecting with social justice and advocacy work.

Part one of this chapter underscored a notable research gap, drawing attention to the insufficient representation of African American women's experiences with their natural African hair within geographic literature. This oversight represents a considerable gap in academic discourse that can be remedied by applying the proposed conceptual models delineated in this chapter, thereby carving out a distinct niche for hair studies within the domain of geography. As discussed, cultural geography is a fundamental framework for understanding how cultural practices and identities are shaped and expressed within specific geographic contexts. In the case of African American women and their natural African hair, cultural geography helps researchers

integrate the historical, social, and environmental factors that influence hair choices, styles, and perceptions. Scholars can investigate how natural African hair practices reflect larger cultural narratives and how they are influenced by the unique experiences of African American women across different geographic locations.

Black geographies is a critical subfield for emphasizing the experiences and contributions of African American individuals and communities in shaping the physical and social landscapes. In this context, Black geographies can be used to examine how African American women's relationships with their natural hair intersect with their experiences of racial discrimination, social inequality, and spatial segregation. Intersectionality found in Black feminism, highlights the interconnected nature of multiple identities and how they intersect to shape individual experiences. In the context of natural African hair, researchers can use the lens of Black feminism and intersectionality to explore how gender, race, class, and other identities intersect to influence hair choices, perceptions, and experiences. This perspective can be used to reveal how African American women's natural hair journeys are situated within broader systems of oppression and empowerment.

Researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the geographic dimensions of natural African hair experiences among African American women by integrating the proposed conceptual models. This interdisciplinary approach allows for a deeper exploration of the relationships between people, cultures, economies, and the physical spaces they inhabit. It also provides a means to examine how personal and cultural practices are both shaped by and shape the geographic context in which they occur. Furthermore, the establishment of a place to study hair within geography can contribute to a more well-rounded understanding of the intersections between identity, geography, and cultural significance for African American women fostering

greater awareness and appreciation of the cultural, social, and geographic dimensions of this complex phenomenon.

Reclaiming Space and Place

Just as Black feminist geography dissects the spatial dimensions of racial and gendered stereotypes to empower African American women, it also serves as a means for examining the multifaceted experiences and identities tied to natural African hair. Within geographic literature, there has been a longstanding gap in addressing the significance of natural African hair, its cultural importance, and its impact on the lived experiences of African American women. This gap represents an omission in our understanding of the spatial aspects of identity and resistance within African American communities. Natural African hair, as a form of self-expression and cultural heritage, functions as a unique geographic space for empirical investigation.

In essence, developing a space in geographic literature for natural African hair is not just an academic endeavor; it is a recognition of the spatial dimensions of identity and resistance within African American communities. Applying the principles of spatial analysis, geographic literature can amplify the voices and experiences of African American women concerning their natural hair, contributing to a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between identity, place, and society. This, in turn, contributes to a richer understanding of the geography of identity and self-expression within African American communities.

Chapter 2

Geography and Respectability Politics: A Historical Analysis of the Evolution of Natural African Hair Politics in the United States

Envision Aaliyah, a young African American girl, born at the dawn of the 21st century in a vibrant, historically African American neighborhood in the United States. Within her family, a variety of hair textures adorns the heads of her relatives—coils as tight as springs, curls cascading like waterfalls, kinks weaving complex narratives, and waves that tell stories of distant shores. Despite this rich diversity, a singular nightly tradition unites them: the careful wrapping of their hair in silk scarves or bonnets, a ritual steeped in the preservation of heritage and the nurturing of their crowns.

In the morning, Aaliyah observes her family members, one by one, unveil their hair from its nocturnal cocoon, readying themselves to face the world. This daily unveiling is more than a mere routine; it is a declaration of dignity, an assertion of their right to exist as they are—a lesson Aaliyah absorbs with keen interest. In her home, the unwritten rule is clear: when you step outside, you carry your identity and the legacy of those who came before you. Neatness and respectability in the presentation are not merely aesthetic choices, they are acts of defiance against a society quick to judge and label.

Yet, as Aaliyah ventures beyond the familiar confines of her community, she encounters a world less accepting of her inherited legacy. The local elementary school, with its stringent dress code, categorically bans natural hairstyles calling them "unconventional" or "distracting," including dreadlocks, cornrows, and twists. Suddenly, Aaliyah's hair, a source of familial pride, becomes a battleground for identity and acceptance. This early confrontation with the politics of hair and appearance sparks a journey of self-discovery and resistance for Aaliyah, one that

mirrors the experiences of countless African American women throughout history. This narrative sets the stage for an in-depth examination of the evolution of respectability politics surrounding natural African hair in the United States. This chapter will use a post-colonial theory to construct a conceptual model that will unpack the politicization of natural African hair. It will define respectability politics and discuss its historic impact on African American women's lives from post-emancipation to the Civil Rights Movement. A Black feminist perspective was used to reveal how hair has been transformed into a powerful symbol of culture, resistance, and self-expression.

Background Context

The Evolution of Natural African Hair Textures

The evolution of natural African hair textures within the African American community is marked by a confluence of racial intermixing and the significant influence of respectability politics, set against the backdrop of the United States' racial history. The 18th century, in particular, witnessed egregious practices of sexual exploitation, which affected the immediate victims and left a lasting imprint on the genetic diversity of hair textures among African American descendants. This period catalyzed a complex transformation, embedding a rich diversity of hair textures mirroring the intertwined narratives of African and non-African ancestries within the community. This historical context sets the stage for the emergence of respectability politics, which exerted a profound influence on African American women's self-presentation and societal interactions. The pressure to conform to prevailing societal norms and expectations regarding appearance underscored the struggle for dignity and recognition within a racially stratified society.

Defining Respectability Politics

The concept of respectability politics, first articulated by scholar Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham addresses the social and behavioral codes African American women in Black Baptist churches were urged to adopt during the Progressive Era (1890s to the 1920s) as a strategy for racial uplift and societal acceptance (Higginbotham, 1994). Higginbotham's research is deeply rooted in historical analysis and unveils how these imposed norms encompassed expectations of ladylike behavior, encompassing decorum, sexual purity, personal hygiene, and specific hair care practices, reflective of middle-class values aimed at contesting pervasive negative racial stereotypes (Higginbotham, 2017). This framework of respectability, although seeking to challenge derogatory views, paradoxically required adherence to a set of standards alienating African American women from their authentic selves, underlining a tension between societal acceptance and individual identity.

Within the realm of natural African hair, the influence of respectability politics has been profound, shaping perceptions, attitudes, and experiences significantly. Historically, these politics have exerted considerable pressure on African Americans to align with Eurocentric beauty ideals, privileging straightened hair over natural textures. Such standards have relegated natural African hair to the margins, often stigmatized as unprofessional or untidy in professional and public spheres. The adherence to these norms has led to the adoption of harmful practices, such as chemical straightening or the use of wigs and weaves, to comply with an imposed aesthetic standard, underscoring the complex dynamics at play between racial identity, societal expectations, and personal expression in the context of hair.

A Place for African American Bodies

The construct of what embodies respectability within the African American female form and the arbiters of such standards are central to this discussion. Hobson (2018), a distinguished scholar in *Women and Gender Sexualities*, engages with transnational feminist issues and the portrayal of African Diaspora women. In "Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty in Popular Culture," Hobson (2018) dissects American pop culture's race and gender ideologies, highlighting how White societal norms historically delineated the roles and places accessible to African American female bodies. The narrative of Sara Baartman, the Hottentot Venus, underscores the sexual fetishization and objectification of African American women, setting a stark contrast to the purity and idealization of White femininity. Hobson (2018) utilizes Foucault's concept of the body as a contested and surveilled site, demonstrating the African American female body's designation as a sexual spectacle. Morgan (2004) delves into the interplay of gender and race, particularly focusing on the Caribbean and the American South. Her research emphasizes the early 1800s, highlighting how enslaved African women's bodies were entwined with the economic fabric of plantations, valued for their labor and reproductive capabilities. Morgan elucidates the power dynamics at play, showing how African American women's physical attributes were misconstrued as indicators of savagery rather than femininity, reinforcing the dehumanization inherent in slavery (Morgan, 2004).

Private Place

Camp's (2004) work, "Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Resistance in the Plantation South," delves deep into the lived experiences of enslaved African Americans. She uncovers the strategies of resilience and resistance African American women cultivated within the oppressive confines of the American South's plantation system. Camp's analysis goes beyond mere survival,

highlighting the creative and subversive ways in which enslaved individuals reclaimed spaces for autonomy, dignity, and joy amidst a landscape defined by its intent to dehumanize and subjugate (Camp, 2004). Within these plantation boundaries, enslaved people carved out hidden nooks and natural enclosures that served as ephemeral yet vital refuges from the unyielding control and surveillance of their enslavers. In these concealed environments, the sounds of feet stamping in rhythm to African beats and melodies filled the air, creating a resonating ancestral memory and present defiance. Music and dance, integral elements of African culture, became acts of resistance, a way to preserve cultural identity, and a means of expressing the depth of their humanity.

Moreover, Camp (2004) illuminates how these secret assemblies were instrumental in fostering a sense of community and solidarity among the enslaved. They were occasions for the sharing of stories, laughter, and tears, nurturing a collective strength that transcended the individual's struggle for survival. The act of gathering itself was a declaration of their right to joy and fellowship, an affirmation of their existence beyond the labor they provided. Significantly, these sanctuaries of dance, music, and courtship also became stages for enslaved women to express their femininity and individuality, often stifled under the harsh conditions of plantation life. These women made bold statements of self-identity and aesthetic choice, defying the imposed invisibility and uniformity by adorning themselves with handmade garments and accessories. Their attire, dances, and songs were not just acts of cultural preservation, they were also personal and communal reclamation, challenging the degrading stereotypes and restrictive norms enforced by the plantation regime (Camp, 2004). In crafting these spaces of resistance, enslaved African Americans not only contested the physical and psychological confines of slavery, they laid the groundwork for a legacy of struggle and resistance that would echo through

generations. Camp's exploration of these dynamics offers a powerful testament to the human spirit's resilience and the enduring quest for freedom, identity, and dignity in the face of systemic oppression.

Public Image

Johnson's (2020) scholarship provides a meticulous examination of the complex interplay of freedom, bondage, and identity among African women in 18th-century New Orleans, a context deeply entrenched in the dynamics of slavery and racial intermixing. Her analysis foregrounds the Tignon Law of 1786 as a pivotal moment in the struggle for African American women's autonomy and self-expression (J. M. Johnson, 2020). This law, part of a larger system of sumptuary legislation, was specifically designed to control the physical appearance and, by extension, the social mobility and visibility of African American women. It was a direct response to the perceived threat that the elegance and attractiveness of African American women posed to the social order of a stratified society.

Despite the oppressive intent of such laws, African American women demonstrated resilience and agency in navigating these constraints. Johnson (2020) highlights how, within the confines of mandated head coverings, women found avenues for resistance and self-assertion. They transformed the tignon – a turban that resembles a West African gele - from a symbol of subjugation into one of resistance and cultural pride by incorporating vibrant fabrics, intricate designs, and accessories such as feathers, beads, and jewels. This act of sartorial defiance challenged the racial and gendered hierarchies imposed by colonial authorities and served as a powerful medium for the expression of personal identity and communal solidarity. Moreover, Johnson's (2020) work sheds light on the implications of these acts of resistance, illustrating how African American women's manipulation of their prescribed dress codes disrupted and

complicated prevailing notions of racial purity, social propriety, and beauty (J. M. Johnson, 2020). These women reclaimed a sense of agency over their bodies and appearances, crafting a distinctly African American aesthetic celebrating their heritage and defying the erasure of their identities by elegantly adorning their tignons.

In this intricate dance of power, visibility, and resistance, Johnson discusses how African American women in New Orleans navigated the interstices of a society that sought to marginalize them (J. M. Johnson, 2020). Through their creative subversion of oppressive laws, these women not only carved out spaces for autonomy and self-expression, they laid the groundwork for future generations to challenge and redefine the boundaries of racial and gendered respectability. Johnson's (2020) exploration of this period offers a poignant testament to the enduring spirit of resistance and resilience within the African American community, highlighting the complex negotiations of identity and power in the face of systemic oppression.

Place

In the domain of cultural geography, the concept of place transcends mere geographical coordinates, encapsulating the intricate layers of meaning, emotional attachments, and cultural significance attributed to specific locales. This nuanced understanding is further enriched by employing a postcolonial perspective, alongside Black feminist geography, to dissect the dynamics of place. Such perspectives offer a critical lens through which the emotional and cultural imprints on places, forged by historical narratives and memory, become vividly clear (Cresswell, 1996; Massey, 1994; Rose, 1993). These places are not mere backdrops but active participants in shaping human perceptions, behaviors, and a profound sense of belonging, emphasizing the intricate symbiosis between people and their environments (Bailey & Shabazz, 2014; McKittrick & Woods, 2007).

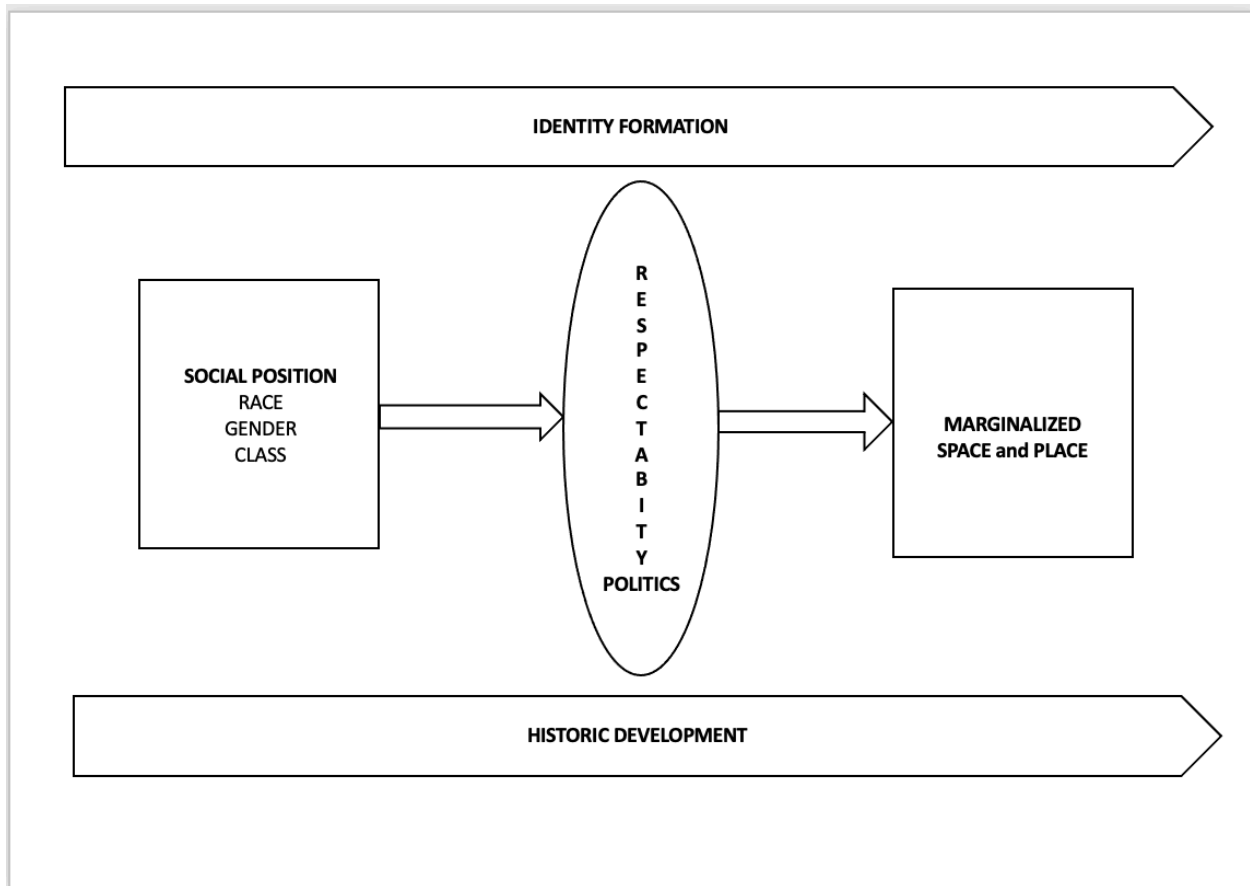
John Agnew's conceptualization of place as an integration of locale, sense of place, and location aspect unravels the complex interplay between physical spaces and the socio-cultural, and emotional dimensions of human life (Agnew et al., 2003). This framework, when viewed through the postcolonial lens, illuminates how colonial histories continue to influence how spaces are perceived and interacted with today (M. A. Hunter et al., 2016; Malpas, 2018; Relph, 1976; Seamon & Sowers, 2008). Placemaking, then, is understood as a manifestation of the reciprocal relationship between humans and their surroundings, a process where spaces are actively shaped and imbued with cultural values and aspirations reflective of community agency (Pred, 1984; Schneekloth, 1995; Wilhoit Larson, 2021). Within this discourse, the intersection of postcolonial theory with Black feminist geography becomes particularly salient in examining the politics of natural African hair. This dual analytical approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of how respectability politics, racial history, and the politics of presentation intersect with issues of race, gender, and space. It underscores how colonial legacies and gendered expectations have historically marginalized and stigmatized natural hair textures, highlighting the need for a critical examination of placemaking efforts about natural African hair (Hill, 2002; hooks, 2014, 2015; Joseph et al., 2018).

This analysis illuminates the dynamics of natural African hair with the lived experiences and narratives of African American women by incorporating both Black feminist geography and a postcolonial perspective. It highlights the critical importance of understanding these dynamics through the intersecting lenses of race, gender, and geographical space, all while acknowledging the profound influence of colonial histories and the ongoing struggle for autonomy and identity in the postcolonial world.

Concept Model of Respectability Politics

Using the current theoretical foundation a conceptual model of respectability politics was generated for this chapter (see **Figure 5**). This conceptual model depicts African American women identified by their race, gender, and social class status whose behaviors, manners, and values are filtered through the lens of respectability established historically by the dominant society. At the same time and within this context, African American women's identity formation ranges from self-affirmation to the perpetuation of conformity. In addition, this conceptual model posits adhering to respectability politics creates marginalized spaces and places for natural African hair.

Figure 5: Respectability Politics Concept Model



Conversely, respectability politics dictates adhering to established social norms can mitigate bias and discrimination (Barnett, 2016; Cooper, 2017; K. Harris, 2019; H. Lee & Hicken, 2016). It represents a strategic response to societal stigma, often entailing the conscious adoption of norms to navigate prevailing hierarchies and challenge stereotypes. It is intricately linked with identity, as it intersects with various aspects such as race, gender, and class (Dash, 2006; Hobson, 2018; Holton, 2020; hooks, 2015). While respectability politics can be thought of as suppression of one's authentic self to conform to oppressive norms, it also empowers African American women to challenge stereotypes (Ashley, 2014; S. Z. Brown, 2023; Hill Collins, 2000; Morgan, 2004; Wolcott, 2001). This framework adapts historically and contextually, reflecting changing societal norms and African American women's goal of asserting their dignity.

Historic Analysis Respectability Politics: A Reaction

Post-Emancipation Era

The Jim Crow Era, spanning from the late 18th century to the mid-20th century in the Southern United States, was a profoundly tumultuous period characterized by the systemic enforcement of racial segregation laws and policies (Gill, 2010; T. W. Hunter, 1997; Packard, 2003; Vaz & Leathem, 2018; Wingfield, 2008; M. M. Wright, 2005). The interplay of respectability politics and the Jim Crow Era provides a compelling lens through which to examine the intricate relationship between societal expectations, self-presentation, and the expression of identity, including the complex issue of African American women's hair (Byrd & Tharps, 2014; Ford, 2019; Greer, 2019). African American women were left positioned at the intersection of multiple forms of oppression shaped by the intersection of their race, gender, and socio-economic status, making respectability politics a crucial aspect of their lives (Dash, 2006; Hobson, 2018; Strings, 2019). The politics of respectability influenced how African American women presented themselves, how they navigated the racialized landscape of the Jim Crow South, and even how they groomed and styled their hair (Ford, 2019; E. Johnson, 2016; R. Jones, 2020; Packard, 2003; Peiss, 2011).

In the context of natural African hair, respectability politics dictated that African American women should conform to Eurocentric standards of beauty and professionalism (Hobson, 2018; Mbilishaka, 2018; Morgan, 2004; Wolcott, 2001). Straightened hair was viewed as more respectable than natural African hair textures (Giddings, 1996; Grosz, 1992; Hobson, 2018; Jackson II & Richardson, 2003; Patton, 2004). The prevailing norm of the era was natural African hair was incompatible with mainstream standards of beauty and decorum (Dash, 2006; Jacobs-Huey, 2006; Jolly, 2004; Patton, 2004; White & White, 1995). As a result, most African

American women, especially those who could afford it, felt compelled to conform to these expectations by straightening their hair in the hopes of gaining social acceptance and economic opportunities (Cooper, 2017; M. A. Hunter et al., 2016; Morgan, 2004; Wolcott, 2001).

Pressure to Conform

The pressure to conform to Eurocentric beauty standards for hair extended beyond personal choice for African American women and became a societal norm deeply entrenched in the workplace, educational institutions, and social interactions (Bacchus, 2008; Bacchus & Holley, 2005; Bellinger, 2007; Francis & Clarke, 2023; Robinson, 2011). African American women who resisted these norms and opted to wear their natural hair often faced discrimination and marginalization (Barnett, 2016; Byrd & Tharps, 2014; R. Jones, 2020; Neely, 2018). They encountered barriers in employment, education, and social mobility, which further reinforced the importance of adhering to respectability politics as a means of survival and progress (Awad et al., 2015; Ingrid-Penelope Wilson et al., 2018; Oyedemi, 2016; Peiss, 2011; White & White, 1995; Wingfield, 2008). Despite these challenges, African American women also displayed resilience and agency during the Jim Crow Era (Greer, 2019; Mbilishaka, 2018; Mitchell & Mitchell, 2002; Wolcott, 2001; D. R. Wright, 2001).

Many found ways to navigate respectability politics while maintaining a sense of cultural pride and identity (Cooper, 2017; Ford, 2019; Hobson, 2018; Jackson II & Richardson, 2003).

Some women chose to embrace their natural hair textures and challenged prevailing norms by wearing afros, braids, or other natural hairstyles (Dash, 2006; Patton, 2004; Shakur, 1999). Their choices were often perceived by members of dominant society as acts of resistance, yet for these women, they were simply asserting their right to define beauty on their terms by rejecting the devaluation of their natural selves (Hobson, 2018; Morgan, 2004; Wingfield, 2008; Wolcott,

2001). Indeed during this era, respectability politics can be viewed as a reaction to, or coping mechanism and strategy for survival in the hostile and racially segregated Jim Crow South (Marwick, 1988; Packard, 2003; D. R. Wright, 2001).

Influence of Madam C.J. Walker

Madam C.J. Walker, an entrepreneur and philanthropist from the South, developed a successful line of hair care products designed to address the unique needs of African American women's hair (Greer, 2019; Peiss, 2011). Her business provided economic opportunities for African American women and challenged prevailing notions about natural African hair (Barnett, 2016; Jolly, 2004; Kara W. Swanson, 2014; Marwick, 1988). Her accomplishments symbolized a shifting paradigm where African American women began to exercise their agency concerning personal grooming of their hair and self-presentation (Dash, 2006; Ford, 2019; Gill, 2010). This allowed many African American women to have a chance to be viewed as respectable (Byrd & Tharps, 2014; Cooper, 2017; Wolcott, 2001). Indeed, Madam C.J. Walker's contribution to fostering cultural pride and economic empowerment played a significant role in challenging and reshaping the contours of respectability politics during the Jim Crow Era (Cooper, 2017; Harlan, 1972).

The transition from enslavement to freedom had a profound impact on notions of respectability within the Black community. It led to the emergence of respectability as a reaction and strategy for social uplift, with Black hair politics becoming a symbolic battleground in challenging racial stereotypes and asserting dignity and agency. The era played a pivotal role in shaping these developments as African Americans sought to secure their rights and status as equal citizens in a racially divided society (Marwick, 1988; Packard, 2003; M. M. Wright, 2005).

Respectability Politics: A Response

The Great Migration (1916-1970s)

The Great Migration was a significant demographic shift for African American people who moved from the rural South United States to urban areas in the North and West of the country. This mass exodus primarily occurred in several waves between the early 20th century and the mid-20th century. This exodus was driven by factors such as escaping racial segregation, seeking economic opportunities, and participating in the cultural transformation of urban life. The First Great Migration started around 1916 and lasted until the 1940s, with the peak being in the 1920s. The Second Great Migration took place during and after World War II, from the 1940s to the 1970s (Fouka et al., 2022; Scott, 1988; Wilkerson, 2010). This migration occurred in response to the violence and discrimination in the South. The Great Migration was a monumental demographic shift in the geographical relocation of African Americans to the North and West (Fouka et al., 2022; Scott, 1988; Wilkerson, 2010). Push factors, driven by racial discrimination, violence, economic hardships, and limited opportunities in the South, compelled many African Americans to seek a better life elsewhere (Ford, 2019; Greer, 2019; Wilkerson, 2010). Pull factors, including job opportunities, the chance to escape racial segregation, improved access to education and services, and the prospects of social and political activism, drew them to Northern and Western cities (Black et al., 2015; Collins, 2021; Ford, 2019; Wilkerson, 2010). This migration had profound geographic implications, specifically regarding placemaking, as it reshaped the demographics, culture, and social dynamics of both the Southern and Northern regions of the United States (Collins, 2021; Greer, 2019; Scott, 1988; Wingfield, 2008).

Placemaking During the Great Migration

The Great Migration is also an example of the dynamic process of placemaking (Collins, 2021). As millions of African Americans migrated to urban centers in the North, they embarked on the creation of spaces and communities amenable to their distinct needs and aspirations (Dash, 2006; Fouka et al., 2022; Wilkerson, 2010). This process of placemaking involved the establishment of vibrant African American neighborhoods within Northern cities, such as Harlem, New York, Brownsville, Chicago, and the Paradise Valley district in Detroit, Michigan (Ford, 2019; Wilkerson, 2010). Within these newly formed communities, African Americans forged a sense of belonging and agency, crafting environments reflective of their cultural, social, and political values (Cooper, 2017; Scott, 1988; Wolcott, 2001). These neighborhoods became centers of African American culture and commerce, nurturing artistic and intellectual movements like the Harlem Renaissance and providing spaces for civic engagement and political activism (Dabiri, 2019, 2020; Jackson II & Richardson, 2003; Ransby, 2003; Sherrard-Johnson, 2007).

Urbanization of African American Women

The urbanization of African American women during the Great Migration had a notable impact on personal grooming and hair care practices (Barney, 2001; Marwick, 1988). This period witnessed a significant shift in beauty standards, self-presentation, and the availability of grooming and hair care resources (Black et al., 2015; Greer, 2019). The urban environment offered new opportunities and challenges influencing how African American women cared for and presented their hair. Urbanization brought African American women closer to urban centers with a growing beauty industry (Collins, 2021; Peiss, 2011; Wingfield, 2008). They experienced increased access to natural hair care services and products, economic opportunity in the beauty industry, and created unique hairstyles for this growing group of African American women (Ford,

2019; Greer, 2019). This shift allowed women to access professional hair care services, such as beauty salons and barbershops, because they were more readily available in cities (Ford, 2019; Gill, 2010). These establishments offered a range of services, including hair styling, straightening, and maintenance, providing women with options for achieving desired hairstyles, especially those acceptable to mainstream society (Jolly, 2004; Sherrard-Johnson, 2007).

Diversification of Hair Care Products

A pivotal aspect of urbanization was the diversification of hair care products and cosmetics, tailored explicitly to meet the unique needs of African American hair types (Furman, 1997; L. Hunter, 2020; Reed & Medvedev, 2023). African American women gained access to an expanding market of specialized hair care products designed to address the specific challenges and characteristics of their hair (Gimlin, 1996; Lukate, 2022; Willett, 2000). This market expansion was driven by both the increasing demand from the growing urban African American population and the entrepreneurial spirit of African American business owners who recognized the need for tailored solutions (Petrulis, 2021; Silverman, 2002).

Freedom to Experiment and Innovate

The availability of a wider array of hair care products and cosmetics provided African American women with a newfound freedom to experiment with different hairstyles and hair care routines (Dash, 2006; Davis-Sivasothy, 2011). This diversity of products enabled women to explore various styles, textures, and looks, empowering them to assert their personal preferences and creativity in self-presentation. Whether it was embracing natural curls or opting for sophisticated updos, women had the tools to craft their desired aesthetic (Gill, 2010; Reed & Medvedev, 2023). The diversification of hair care products also allowed for a greater degree of aesthetic flexibility (Dash, 2006; Gill, 2010; Peiss, 2011). Women could adapt their hairstyles to

suit various occasions, moods, or personal preferences. This newfound versatility played a significant role in shaping self-presentation among African American women during the Great Migration. It allowed them to present themselves in ways aligned with their evolving sense of identity and cultural pride (R. Jones, 2020; M. M. Wright, 2005). Thus, the urbanization of African American women during the Great Migration played a significant role in shaping respectability politics around how African American women cared for and presented their hair during this pivotal period in history (Black et al., 2015; Ford, 2019).

Passing

Wolcott (2001) specializes in African American history, with a particular focus on gender and sexuality dynamics looking at factors contributing to the success of African American female migrants in securing employment within the rapidly expanding industrial labor industry of Detroit, Michigan during the Great Migration. Wolcott identified two key factors instrumental in their success: class status and adherence to the ideology of racial uplift through the practice of respectability politics (Wolcott, 2001). These sentiments were reflective of a particular segment of elite African American women who were able to secure employment in the North due, in part, to their phenotype, including lighter skin and eyes, as well as a looser hair texture (T. Johnson & Bankhead, 2014; Wolcott, 2001). Many among this group could pass for White, a phenomenon noted by Bacchus & Holley (2005). Secondly, these women believed it was their responsibility to promote the ideology of racial uplift or assimilation into Eurocentric values and behavior (N. E. Brown, 2021; Cooper, 2017; Wolcott, 2001). In public spaces, they adhered to standards of cleanliness, grooming, and well-dressed appearances (Reed & Medvedev, 2023; Willett, 2000; Wolcott, 2001).

This shift in behavior marked the transfer of responsibility for enforcing respectability politics from White society to African American women (Cooper, 2017; Hobson, 2018). African American women now assume the crucial role of defining appropriate and respectable behavior and attire for themselves and for the broader African American community (Cooper, 2017; Ford, 2019; Greer, 2019). Their commitment to setting these standards for public conduct and appearance was in response to the continued experience of race and gender discrimination and segregation in the North (Camp, 2004; Cooper, 2017; Gates, 1988). These women believed promoting respectability politics was integral to their survival as well as to their self-perception and role within the larger African American community (Barnett, 2016; Byrd & Tharps, 2014; Cooper, 2017; Greer, 2019). This viewpoint is echoed in the work of scholars who all underscored the significance of how African American women presented themselves as a reflection of broader sociocultural expectations and values within the African American community.

Cultural Expression and the Harlem Renaissance

The Great Migration facilitated the flourishing of African American cultural expression, especially during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s (Delgado-Tall, 2001; Pochmara, 2011). African American artists, writers, musicians, and intellectuals converged in urban centers, particularly Harlem, creating a rich cultural milieu (Boyd, 2021; Howes, 2001; L. Hunter, 2020). This period witnessed the emergence of literary giants like Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Claude McKay, along with influential artists such as Aaron Douglas and Jacob Lawrence (Delgado-Tall, 2001; Ford, 2019; L. Hunter, 2020). The geographic concentration of these talents in Northern cities gave rise to a profound cultural renaissance

leaving an indelible mark on African American art, literature, music, and intellectual discourse (Greer, 2019; Marwick, 1988; Sherrard-Johnson, 2007).

Cultural Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance was characterized by an efflorescence of African American artistic creativity and intellectual inquiry. Writers like Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Claude McKay produced literary works exploring the African American experience with depth and nuance (Balshaw, 1999; Boyd, 2021; Howes, 2001; Thaggert, 2010). Visual artists such as Aaron Douglas and Jacob Lawrence brought forth powerful visual narratives (Hobson, 2018; L. Hunter, 2020; Thaggert, 2010). Musicians like Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong created jazz compositions that revolutionized American music (André, 2015; L. Hunter, 2020; Thaggert, 2010). The geographic proximity of creative minds within the urban enclaves of the Great Migration facilitated a rich interchange of ideas and perspectives. Intellectual salons, literary gatherings, and artistic circles thrived, providing a platform for African American intellectuals and artists to engage in dialogues about identity, race, and societal transformation (Boyd, 2021; Pochmara, 2011; Sherrard-Johnson, 2007). This exchange of ideas transcended geographic boundaries, influencing artistic movements and cultural well beyond the confines of Harlem (Barney, 2001; Byrd & Tharps, 2014; Dash, 2006; L. Hunter, 2020).

The cultural output of the Harlem Renaissance also served as a powerful vehicle for political and social commentary (Boyd, 2021; Thaggert, 2010; Wilkerson, 2010). Writers and artists used their works to confront issues of racial injustice, inequality, and the complexities of African American identity. Their creations challenged prevailing stereotypes and provided a platform for discussions on Civil Rights and social change (Balshaw, 1999; Boyd, 2021;

Delgado-Tall, 2001). The artistic expression of this era contributed significantly to the broader discourse on race and civil rights in America.

Shifts in Political Engagement and Civil Rights Activism

The Great Migration also played a pivotal role in reshaping the political landscape and the African American struggle for Civil Rights (Ashley, 2014; Foster Davis, 2013; Giddings, 1996; Hall, 2023; Marable, 2011). In the North, African Americans encountered a different political climate allowing for greater opportunities for political engagement and advocacy (Banks, 2000; Camp, 2004; Morgan, 2004; M. M. Wright, 2005). The increased concentration of African American voters in Northern cities exerted political pressure on local governments and contributed to the emergence of influential African American political leaders (Farrington, 2005; Giddings, 1996; Higginbotham, 1994; Packard, 2003). This shift in political dynamics eventually paved the way for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, with Northern cities serving as important hubs for organizing and activism (C. L. Smith, 2009; Stewart, 2019; M. M. Wright, 2005).

Impact of the Great Migration

The Great Migration had a far-reaching impact on African Americans, beyond mere geographic relocation (Massood, 2003; McCammack, 2018; Rabinovitch-Fox, 2019; Scott, 1988). It played a pivotal role in reshaping the political landscape and advancing Civil Rights Movement (Foster Davis, 2013; Greer, 2019; Halley, 2019; S. Harris, 1950). In Northern cities, African Americans found a more conducive political climate allowing for increased political engagement and advocacy. The concentration of African American voters in these urban centers exerted significant political pressure on local governments and fostered the emergence of influential African American political leaders (J. D. Bell, 2018; S. Z. Brown, 2023; Levy, 1998;

Marable, 2011; Uschan, 2010). This shift in political dynamics ultimately laid the groundwork for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, with Northern cities serving as pivotal hubs for organizing and activism (Ford, 2019; Giddings, 1996; S. Harris, 1950).

Furthermore, the Great Migration significantly impacted African American economic prospects by enabling the transition from agrarian Southern regions to industrial Northern cities (Ford, 2019; Greer, 2019; Wilkerson, 2010). This demographic shift provided access to better employment opportunities and higher wages, despite persisting racial disparities and discrimination. Consequently, many African American families experienced an improvement in living standards, contributing to the growth of the African American middle class (Archer & Blau, 1993; Aron, 2001; Bacchus & Holley, 2005; Marwick, 1988).

As African Americans moved to urban centers across the country, they encountered new opportunities and challenges that significantly influenced their perception of beauty and grooming practices. In the urban landscape, the demand for specialized hair care products and services grew, fostering the development of a distinct Black hair care industry. Simultaneously, the migration led to increased exposure to diverse cultural influences, inspiring shifts in beauty standards and the acceptance of natural hairstyles (Peiss, 2011; Wingfield, 2008). However, the migration also brought forth complexities, as the expectation to conform to mainstream grooming standards persisted. Consequently, the interplay between migration, urbanization, and evolving societal norms laid the foundation for the intricate landscape of Black hair politics, where questions of self-expression, identity, and cultural authenticity became central themes in the ongoing narrative of the Black community.

Additionally, these urban centers had better-funded schools and educational resources in comparison to their Southern counterparts (Hobson, 2018; Slate, 2022; Stackhouse, 2022; White

& White, 1995). Thus, African American families prioritized the education of their children, resulting in increased literacy rates and expanded educational opportunities for subsequent generations (Ingrid-Penelope Wilson et al., 2018; King & Niabaly, 2013; Mbilishaka, 2018).

The Civil Rights Era (mid-1950s- late 1960s)

Respectability politics held significant sway during the Civil Rights Era during the 1950s through 1960s, exerting a profound impact on the strategies and behaviors of African American leaders and activists seeking to advance the cause of Civil Rights and social justice (J. D. Bell, 2018; Ferleger & Lavalee, 2020; Halley, 2019). The emphasis on nonviolence and moral uprightness was central to respectability politics. There was a staunch commitment to nonviolent protest and the cultivation of a moral high ground. Martin Luther King Jr. championed nonviolent civil disobedience as a means to challenge segregation and discrimination (Gray, 2022; Levy, 1998; Uschan, 2010). This approach sought to present African Americans as morally upright citizens who were peacefully pursuing justice, to garner sympathy and support from the broader American public (Levy, 1998; Slate, 2022). The use of media to shape public perception was another dimension influenced by respectability politics (Farrington, 2005; Hobson, 2018; Peiss, 2011). African American leaders recognized the significance of presenting themselves and their cause in a positive light to garner support. Media coverage was strategically employed to highlight their unwavering commitment to nonviolence and respectability, influencing how the Civil Rights Movement was portrayed to the American public (Dash, 2006; Ford, 2019).

Respectability politics played a pivotal role in shaping the debate between integrationists and proponents of separatism (Cooper, 2017; Wingfield, 2008; Wintz et al., 2015). Integrationists argued that African Americans should strive to be fully included in mainstream American society and institutions, showcasing their worthiness through respectable behavior. In contrast, African

American separatists rejected integration and pursued self-determination. Often, they rejected respectability norms in the process, advocating for a more confrontational stance (N. E. Brown, 2021; E Frances White, 2010).

Respectability politics significantly influenced the attire and grooming choices of African Americans both male and female. Demonstrators often adhered to traditional norms of dress and grooming, opting for neat and conservative attire (Cooper, 2017; Ford, 2019; Wolcott, 2001). This strategy aimed to counteract stereotypes and project an image of respectability, reinforcing the idea that those participating in the Civil Rights Movement were responsible and upstanding citizens (Gray, 2022; Greer, 2019; E. Johnson, 2016; Jolly, 2004). Demonstrators and activists received training in nonviolent resistance, and they were strongly encouraged to maintain composure and show respect even in the face of violence and provocation. This commitment to remaining calm and respectful was intended to draw a sharp contrast between the peaceful Civil Rights Movement and the brutality and aggression often displayed by segregationists and white supremacists (Ferleger & Lavalee, 2020; Peiss, 2011; Slate, 2022; Uschan, 2010).

While respectability politics had its merits in terms of gaining public support and challenging stereotypes, it can be argued it imposed an unfair burden on African Americans to conform to White middle-class standards, while diverting attention from the systemic issues of racism and discrimination. Ultimately, respectability politics placed the responsibility on African Americans to change rather than addressing the root causes of inequality (Cooper, 2017; Dazey, 2021; P. Harris, 2003).

Natural African Hair and the Civil Rights Movement

Natural African hair during the Civil Rights Movement reflected a complex dichotomy of middle-class values, respectability politics, and the broader struggle for civil rights. Hair

grooming choices became a deeply personal and political act, representing a spectrum of perspectives within the African American community as it navigated the complexities of the Civil Rights struggle (J. D. Bell, 2018; Halley, 2019). The way individuals chose to groom and style their hair became a powerful form of self-expression and a statement about their alignment with or divergence from these values such as conforming to middle-class ideals (Aron, 2001; Elwood et al., 2015; Molloy & Herzberger, 1998). Many middle-class African Americans adhered to respectability politics by adopting conservative grooming practices. This often meant straightening hair through processes like chemical relaxers or using heat and straightening combs to achieve a more Eurocentric appearance. The choice to conform to these grooming norms was to present oneself as dignified and professional, in line with middle-class values (Greer, 2019; Wingfield, 2008).

The dichotomy in grooming choices was also influenced by gender dynamics. African American women often contended with societal expectations of neat and conservative hairstyles as a way to align with respectability politics, while also navigating the desire to embrace their natural hair and cultural identity. The choice to wear natural styles, such as afros or braids, was a declaration of both racial and gender pride and also made political statements during the Civil Rights Movement (Halley, 2019; Slate, 2022). They were seen as a visual rejection of racial discrimination and an assertion of their identity. Leaders like Angela Davis, who famously wore an afro, exemplified how hair choices could be intertwined with political activism and embody the multifaceted nature of the era's social and cultural dynamics (Dash, 2006; A. Y. Davis, 1994; Gray, 2022; hooks, 2015; Shakur, 1999). Specifically, it reflected the tension between conformity to middle-class values and the desire to assert cultural identity and challenge racial discrimination.

Alignment with Respectability Norms

During this time frame, African American female leaders displayed a broad spectrum of perspectives and strategies concerning their engagement with respectability politics. For example, African American women leaders embodied a diversity of stances on respectability politics. Some, such as Mary McLeod Bethune, staunchly advocated for the promotion of an exemplary image of African American women as diligent, morally upright citizens deserving of equal rights (Hanson, 2003; Slate, 2022; Warren, 2023). Bethune's philosophy centered on the belief education, self-discipline, and moral rectitude, African Americans could overcome discrimination (Dash, 2006; S. Harris, 1950). This approach, although firmly aligned with traditional respectability norms, also challenged stereotypes and prejudices ingrained in society.

Conversely, another cohort of women leaders, including figures like Ella Baker, adopted a more pragmatic stance toward respectability politics (Grant, 1998; Versey, 2014). They acknowledged the importance of adhering to certain societal norms to achieve social and economic progress and they were cognizant of the limitations of respectability politics in addressing deeply entrenched systemic racism. Baker's emphasis lay on empowering ordinary individuals to assert their rights through collective action, with a particular focus on grassroots activism and community organizing (Gray, 2022; Marable, 2011; Ransby, 2003). While these leaders did not explicitly reject respectability politics, their emphasis on systemic change signaled a perspective transcending traditional norms.

Rejection of Respectability Politics

A third group of women leaders actively challenged the traditional respectability norms, viewing them as restrictive and complicit with white supremacy. Women like Audley "Queen Mother" Moore adopted an activist stance, engaging in direct protest, civil disobedience, and

more confrontational tactics to demand equal rights (Farmer, 2022; McDuffie, 2018; Richmond, 2019). Their rejection of conformity to respectability politics was evident in their militant activism and confrontational approach. This spectrum of respectability politics extended to influential African American male leaders during the Great Migration era. Booker T. Washington's approach underscored the importance of vocational training, economic advancement, and self-help, aligning with certain facets of respectability politics (Giddings, 1996; Harlan, 1972; D. R. Wright, 2001). In his view, African Americans needed to prove their economic worthiness through hard work and moral uprightness, adhering to traditional norms. On the other hand, W.E.B. Du Bois advocated for higher education and intellectual achievement within the African American community, while also recognizing the imperative of equal rights and opportunities for all African Americans (Collins, 2021; Higbee, 1993; Wolcott, 2001). A. Philip Randolph's focus on organizing labor unions further diversified the spectrum, emphasizing economic rights over strict adherence to respectability politics (Bynum, 2010; W. P. Jones, 2012; Wintz et al., 2015).

The variations within the spectrum of respectability politics among both male and female leaders are paramount for comprehending the multifaceted nature of the Great Migration era. These leaders contributed uniquely to the broader Civil Rights Movement, shaping racial equality and social justice discourse. Their diverse approaches enriched the movement and facilitated a more comprehensive strategy for achieving racial equality and justice.

Conceptual Model of Respectability Politics Revisited

The conceptual model of respectability politics (**figure 5**) shows respectability politics and identity development run parallel over time. On one hand, respectability politics has continued to influence the professional and social realms, where adhering to certain standards

impacts career advancement and social acceptance. On the other hand, there has been a growing movement among African American women to embrace their authentic selves, which includes challenging and rejecting the tenets of respectability politics. In contemporary times, the influence of respectability politics on identity development varies. For some, these politics remain a significant aspect of navigating predominantly white, corporate, or elite spaces (Bacchus, 2002; Ellington, 2023; R. Jones, 2020). For others, particularly younger generations influenced by more recent social justice movements, there is a conscious rejection of these norms (Donahoo & Smith, 2022; Drumond, 2020; Jaima, 2023; Mutz & Brown, 2022; Norwood, 2018).

This conceptual model recognizes the identity of African American women in the United States is in a state of continual evolution, influenced significantly by the interplay between respectability politics and a growing consciousness of authentic self-expression. While respectability politics continue to play a role in the social and economic mobility of African American women, the forward-pointing arrow shows there is a continual shift towards embracing and celebrating unique cultural and racial identities. This evolution reflects the diverse and multifaceted nature of African American womanhood and points towards a future where identity is increasingly self-defined and liberated from traditional constraints.

In exploring the evolution of natural African hair politics within the United States, this chapter has traversed the complex terrain of postcolonial history, cultural geography, and Black feminist thought. At the heart of this examination lies the acknowledgment that the politics surrounding natural African hair are not mere byproducts of contemporary beauty standards. Beauty standards are deeply rooted in the United States' convoluted history of racial discrimination, respectability politics, and the struggle for African American identity and empowerment. The historical analysis presented highlights how, from the post-emancipation

period through the Civil Rights Movement, African American women navigated a societal landscape that continually marginalized and policed their bodies and identities. In the face of such adversity, African American women employed respectability politics as a strategy to counteract pervasive stereotypes and to claim a space within the public sphere. This was a double-edged sword because, while offering a means of societal navigation, it also imposed constraints on self-expression and identity.

This chapter illuminated how space and place are integral to understanding the politics of natural African hair. These disciplines provide a lens to comprehend how physical and social geographies influence and are influenced by the ways African American women engage with their hair. Cultural practices surrounding hair are personal decisions shaped by the socio-political and economic landscapes in which these women reside. This interplay between space, place, and body politics underscores the geographical dimensions of natural African hair politics. Moreover, the incorporation of a postcolonial perspective in this discussion has enriched the understanding of how colonial legacies continue to impact perceptions of beauty, identity, and respectability. This viewpoint underscores the global dimensions of natural African hair politics, linking the experiences of African American women to broader discourses of decolonization, racial mixing, and the reclamation of African heritage. It highlights the ongoing struggle against a Eurocentric beauty paradigm that diminishes diversity and perpetuates racial hierarchies.

In conclusion, the politics of natural African hair in the United States encapsulates African American women's struggle, resistance, and empowerment. This chapter provided the foundation for understanding the complexities surrounding natural African hair by examining this issue through the postcolonial lenses of cultural geography and Black feminist geography. It reveals how these politics are not merely about aesthetics. They are deeply intertwined with the

larger struggles for racial equality, identity, and autonomy. Moving forward, it is crucial to continue challenging the norms and narratives constraining the expression of natural African beauty. The journey toward the acceptance and celebration of natural African hair is ongoing, requiring the collective efforts of individuals, communities, scholars, and policymakers. It is through scientific study and action that these remnants of colonial and racist ideologies can be dismantled and have long-dictated standards of beauty and respectability. In doing so, I believe geography can affirm the beauty and diversity of natural African hair and embrace a future where all individuals are free to express their identities unapologetically and without fear of discrimination or criminalization.

Chapter 3

Respectability Politics: A Rejection of Eurocentric Beauty Standards and A Reclaiming of Natural African Hair

In the heart of downtown Houston, Texas, Aaliyah, a 25-year-old African American woman, steps into her new role with a sense of pride and defiance that transcends her professional achievements. Her hair, styled regularly in a glorious tapestry of twists, braids, and puffs depending on her mood, is not merely a style but a statement, an assertion of identity in a space historically dominated by Eurocentric norms. At fifteen, Aaliyah embarked on a Natural Hair Journey (NHJ), a transformative journey towards self-discovery, challenging the narrative that had defined her aesthetic choices since the age of five when she first encountered the stinging application of a relaxer. This moment of awakening was not just about embracing her natural texture; it was about dismantling the layers of societal expectations and reclaiming her autonomy. During her NHJ, she obtained support from her online communities and through music such as Solange Knowles “Don’t Touch My Hair” (Knowles & Sampha, 2016) and music videos that allowed her she can embrace her hair without fear.

Fast forward to 2024, and Aaliyah's confidence in her natural hair is bolstered by a landmark legislative victory—the Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act or the CROWN Act of 2022. This Act, originating in California in 2019, represents a significant stride toward eradicating discrimination based on hair texture and protective styles in workplaces and educational settings. While the CROWN Act focuses on hair texture and protective hairstyles like braids, dreadlocks, twists, and afros, it does not address hair length, underscoring an ongoing dialogue about the nuances of racial discrimination. The legislation emerges as a crucial counterpoint to a history of policies that have sought to regulate Black bodies, marking a departure from the conventional narratives of professional aesthetics and respectability politics.

Seated at her desk, Aaliyah reflects on the journey that led to this moment—a journey marked by the resilience of individuals who dared to defy and redefine the standards of beauty and professionalism. The CROWN Act of 2022, for Aaliyah, is more than legal protection; it is an acknowledgment of her right to express her cultural identity without fear of retribution. It is a testament to the tireless activism and advocacy that have woven the rich history of the Natural Hair Movement (NHM) into the fabric of American Civil Rights. As Aaliyah contemplates the significance of this act, she recognizes it as a milestone in the ongoing struggle against racial discrimination, a beacon of progress in the pursuit of diversity and inclusion.

This scenario opens a discourse on the evolution of respectability politics and its impact on natural African hair, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of the historical, cultural, and legislative milestones that have shaped the narrative of African American hair. This chapter embarks on an analytical journey beginning with the Black Power Movement (BPM) and its indelible impact on the perception and representation of natural African hair. The narrative unfolds from the transformative era of the 1960s, a period marked by seismic shifts in social consciousness and political activism within the African American community. It was during this time the Black Power Movement emerged as a formidable force, challenging systemic racism and advocating for racial pride and self-determination. Central to this ideological and cultural upheaval was the reclamation of natural African hair, which became a potent symbol of resistance against Eurocentric beauty standards and a declaration of African heritage and pride.

The resurgence of the NHM in the 2000s is pivotal to the continuing struggle for the recognition and acceptance of natural African hair. This renewed movement, fortified by digital platforms and social media, catalyzed a profound reevaluation of beauty standards, championing self-acceptance and challenging the entrenched biases that have historically marginalized natural

hair textures and styles. This cultural and social renaissance not only amplified voices advocating for the celebration of African heritage but also intensified the call for legal protections against hair-based discrimination. The culmination of these collective efforts and advocacy is exemplified in the historic enactment of the CROWN Act of 2022. This legislation represents a watershed moment in the fight against racial discrimination, codifying the legal right to don natural and protective hairstyles in both workplaces and educational institutions. This chapter moves forward to discuss the significant shift in the discourse surrounding racial equality, respectability politics, and the acceptance of African American cultural identity and continues to recount the historical journey of natural African hair from a symbol of resistance to a celebrated aspect of African American identity and underscores the legislative triumphs marking the path toward embracing diversity and eradicating racial discrimination.

Respectability Politics A Rejection

The Black Power Movement (1960s -1970s)

The perception of natural African hair as a political statement and symbol of rebellion during the Black Power Movement (BPM) varied significantly by geography, reflecting regional differences in the movement's influence (Banks, 2000; Ford, 2015; E. Johnson, 2016). In major urban centers like New York, Chicago, and Oakland, where the BPM had a strong presence, natural African hair became a powerful symbol of resistance against Eurocentric beauty standards (Ashley, 2014; J. M. Bell, 2014; Ellington, 2023). The movement empowered African Americans in these cities to embrace their cultural identity and challenge societal norms related to hair (Banks, 2000; Dash, 2006). The sense of community and solidarity in urban environments contributed to the widespread celebration of natural African hair as a political statement (Barnett, 2016; Lorde, 1984). Conversely, in rural areas and smaller towns, where the influence of the

BPM was less pronounced, adherence to traditional respectability norms persisted. These communities often had fewer resources and limited access to the political and cultural movements of urban centers. Consequently, many African American women in these regions continued to conform to societal expectations, including the straightening of their hair (Ford, 2015; Hill Collins, 2000; Shakur, 1999).

The perception of natural African hair also differed between Southern and Northern states. In the South, where the Civil Rights Movement had achieved significant legal victories, some African Americans were cautious about fully embracing the more radical aspects of the BPM, including natural African hair. They feared such expressions might jeopardize the progress made in the fight for Civil Rights (Byrd & Tharps, 2014; Marable, 2011; Uschan, 2010). In contrast, Northern states, where challenges related to segregation and discrimination took different forms, were often more receptive to the ideals of the BPM. Cities like Detroit and Philadelphia saw a renewed sense of cultural pride and a willingness to challenge respectability norms, including those related to hair, among African American communities (J. D. Bell, 2018; Levy, 1998). Additionally, even within the same city or region, the perception of natural African hair varied based on community and neighborhood dynamics. Some communities embraced the ideals of the BPM more fervently, leading to a widespread celebration of natural African hair. However, certain neighborhoods adhered more closely to traditional respectability norms, influenced by factors such as socioeconomic status, education, and generational differences. These variations within communities highlighted the complex interplay of social factors in shaping perceptions of natural African hair (Ingrid-Penelope Wilson et al., 2018; J. P. Jones et al., 1997; K. C. Smith, 2006). Institutional factors, including churches, schools, and workplaces, also played a role in shaping these perceptions. Institutions in urban areas aligning with the ideals of

the BPM often supported the celebration of natural African hair. In contrast, institutions in more conservative or rural regions tended to uphold traditional norms and expectations regarding appearance and grooming (Crenshaw, 1991; Hill Collins, 2000; hooks, 2015). These regional variations highlight the complexity of the BPM and its impact on African American women's identity and self-expression. Understanding these geographical nuances elucidates the multifaceted nature of the movement's legacy and its enduring influence on perceptions of natural African hair.

Female Leaders in the Black Power Movement

Female leaders within the BPM shared ideas and positions regarding respectability politics, providing insights into their influence on the broader discourse within the movement. Among the African American female leaders who rejected traditional respectability norms were Kathleen Cleaver and Assata Shakur. Cleaver, a prominent member of the Black Panther Party (BPP), was instrumental in challenging mainstream ideals by advocating for revolutionary change (Austin, 2008; Bloom & Martin, 2016; Musgrove, 2019). Her affiliation with the Black Panthers symbolized the rejection of respectability politics. Assata Shakur, also associated with the Black Panther Party and later the Black Liberation Army engaged in militant activism that directly challenged established norms (Austin, 2008; Bloom & Martin, 2016; Ford, 2019). These women's actions and beliefs reflected a bold rejection of traditional respectability politics.

Angela Davis and Ella Baker adopted positions emphasizing systemic change over adherence to respectability norms. Davis, a key figure in the movement, was known for her radical activism and affiliation with the Communist Party USA (Ford, 2019; Shakur, 1999). Her advocacy for prisoners' rights marked her as an unconventional activist who challenged mainstream norms. Ella Baker, on the other hand, believed in grassroots organizing and

empowering ordinary people to advocate for their rights (Grant, 1998; Ransby, 2003). While not explicitly rejecting respectability politics, their emphasis on systemic change indicated a focus beyond traditional norms. A third group of African American leaders leaned towards celebrating African American identity and pride, rather than rejecting respectability politics. Frances Beal and Sonia Sanchez represented this faction and often challenged mainstream respectability norms in the process. Beal, known for her work on African American women's liberation, believed in challenging patriarchy and racism and embracing authentic identities (Beal, 2008; Beal & dePass, 1986). Similarly, Sonia Sanchez, associated with the Black Arts Movement, celebrated Black pride and identity and sometimes defied traditional norms (Sanchez, 1999). Their contributions reflected a celebration of African American identity and pride intersecting with but did not strictly adhere to, respectability politics.

Post-Civil Rights Era and Respectability Politics

In the Post-Civil Rights Era, from the 1970s to the present, respectability politics continued to influence African American communities, with notable shifts. While the core principles of self-improvement, education, and moral values remained relevant, there was a growing recognition that achieving Civil Rights and combating systemic racism required more than adhering to traditional respectability norms (Banks, 2000; Levy, 1998; Uschan, 2010). African American activists and leaders began emphasizing broader issues of racial and social justice, including economic equality, political representation, and cultural authenticity. Respectability politics continued to encourage African Americans to present themselves positively and professionally, yet the definition of what was considered respectable began to expand (Cooper, 2017; Dash, 2006; Dazey, 2021; Wolcott, 2001). The emphasis on conformity to white middle-class norms began to wane as African Americans asserted their cultural identity

and demanded acceptance on their terms. The notion of respectability evolved to include a broader acceptance of diverse cultural expressions and a rejection of oppressive beauty standards influencing the perception of natural African hair.

The era from the mid-1960-1970s witnessed the emergence of the *Black is Beautiful* movement, which celebrated African American culture, heritage, and physical attributes, including natural African hair (Baird, 2021; Craig, 2017; P. C. Taylor, 2016; Umoja et al., 2018). This movement encouraged African Americans to embrace their natural hair textures, challenging societal norms stigmatizing and marginalizing natural African hair for decades. Once again, natural hairstyles, such as the Afro, braids, and twists, became symbols of cultural pride and resistance to Eurocentric beauty standards (Dash, 2006; Gill, 2010; Umoja et al., 2018). African American women proudly wore their hair in its natural state, rejecting chemical relaxers and straightening methods prevalent during earlier eras. This shift represented a powerful assertion of cultural identity and a rejection of the pressure to conform to Eurocentric ideals.

Respectability Politics: A Reclaiming

The Modern Natural Hair Movement

The resurgence of donning natural African hair in contemporary times represents another shift in the perception of beauty, particularly within the context of African American identity. This resurgence reflects historical significance and a challenge to deeply ingrained notions of beauty. In the context of African American identity, natural African hair serves as a powerful symbol of authenticity, self-acceptance, and cultural pride. For African American women embracing natural African hair texture is seen as a rejection of external pressures and a reclamation of individual agency (Bellinger, 2007; DeLongoria, 2018; Hobson, 2018; Neely, 2018; Ngandu-Kalenga Greensword, 2022). It signifies a connection to ancestral roots, a

celebration of diversity within the African American community, and an assertion of the right to define one's beauty. The modern Natural Hair Movement (NHM), for instance, has gained substantial momentum. This movement encouraged African Americans to embrace their natural hair textures, promoting a message of self-acceptance and self-love. It asserts natural African hair is beautiful and is a powerful form of resistance against discriminatory beauty standards.

Natural Hair Journey

The Natural Hair Journey (NHJ), in the 2000s marked the transformative shift in beauty standards and self-expression within the African American community. Fueled by the desire to embrace one's natural African hair texture and challenging or rejecting the Eurocentric beauty standards were being questioned during the rise of online communities, blogs, and social media platforms. On these social platforms, women share their natural hair journeys, and provide styling tips, and experiences, emphasizing self-love and authenticity. As more individuals embraced their natural hair, the movement became a celebration of diversity and a catalyst for redefining beauty standards.

The Natural Hair Journey (NHJ) unfolds in stages such as transitioning and the Big Chop. Experimenting with styling techniques transcends mere physical change, it nurtures psychological and cultural empowerment. The transitioning stage involves growing out the chemically treated or straightened hair and allowing the hair to grow without continued use of damaging practices. Some individuals may choose to gradually cut off the damaged hair until the natural African hair pattern is revealed. The BC consists of chopping several inches of the damaged hair or shaving all the hair to reveal their natural African hair texture.

Social Media Influence

Social media platforms play a pivotal role in amplifying these modern movements (Drumond, 2020; L. A. Lee, 2017; Stewart, 2019). Social Media platforms such as Facebook (Meta), Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok provide a space for individuals to share their journeys of embracing natural hair, and a place for fostering a sense of community and empowerment. These digital communities provide support, inspiration, and education to those looking to embrace their natural African hair. Representation in mainstream media has also improved with more African American celebrities and public figures proudly showcasing their natural hair. These collective efforts have a transformative impact on redefining beauty standards by expanding the definition of beauty to encompass a broader spectrum of natural hair textures and styles.

Adherence to Respectability Politics

Amid the rejection of respectability politics surrounding natural African hair and the growing embrace of its diverse textures, some African American women continue to adhere to Eurocentric beauty standards by relaxing their natural African hair or opting for long Eurocentric-styled wigs and weaves (Beal, 2008; Greene et al., 2000; Joseph et al., 2018; Norwood, 2018). This choice underscores the complexity of personal grooming decisions, influenced by a variety of factors. Some factors include generational social conditioning, historical legacies of systemic racism, and workplace expectations (Bacchus & Holley, 2005; Banks, 2000; Francis & Clarke, 2023; Patton, 2006). Together these factors contributed to the persistence of Eurocentric ideals. Some individuals may simply prefer the aesthetics or convenience of relaxed hair or wigs, while others might lack awareness about natural African hair care. Peer pressure, family expectations, and the evolving landscape of beauty trends also

play a role. Additionally, concerns about stigma, discrimination, or bias against natural hair in certain contexts may lead some to opt for Eurocentric styles. Presently, the Natural Hair Movement acknowledges the diversity of preferences within the African American community as it navigates the complex terrain of identity, self-acceptance, and self-expression.

The evolution of the relationship between respectability politics and natural African hair politics underscores the profound impact of historical and cultural shifts. From the limitations imposed by slavery to the challenges faced during the Jim Crow era and the transformative power of social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement and the Natural Hair Movement, the perception of natural African hair and respectability has evolved significantly over time (Awad et al., 2015; Dash, 2006; DeLongoria, 2018). Today, embracing one's natural hair texture represents not only a fashion statement, it is also a powerful political and cultural declaration. It challenges historical norms seeking to stigmatize and suppress natural African hair and promote a more inclusive, authentic, and diverse understanding of beauty and identity (Bloom & Martin, 2016; Hobson, 2018; Peiss, 2011). This ongoing journey reflects the resilience and agency of individuals and communities in reshaping societal norms and celebrating the rich tapestry of Black heritage.

Intersectionality

The historical experiences of African American women in the context of respectability politics are deeply intertwined with the complexities of race, the enduring legacy of slavery, and the pervasive effects of systemic racism. Together, these factors profoundly influenced societal perceptions of African American women. Commonly held stereotypes portray them as hypersexualized, morally deficient, or lacking in virtue (Caldwell, 2003; Greer, 2019; Halley, 2019; T. W. Hunter, 1997).

Race

To counteract these detrimental stereotypes and seek social acceptance, African American females faced the expectation of conforming to Eurocentric ideals of respectability by adopting behaviors and appearances aligning with mainstream White culture. The conventional notion of respectability has been in direct conflict with their cultural heritage and genuine identities. Navigating this intricate intersection involves a delicate negotiation between the imperative to challenge racial stereotypes and the desire to express one's authentic self (King & Niabaly, 2013; Makkar & Strube, 1995; Molloy & Herzberger, 1998). This negotiation can manifest in various ways, including the embracing of cultural practices such as hairstyles and clothing countering traditional Eurocentric standards.

Gender

The intersection of respectability politics with gender adds further layers of complexity to the experiences of African American women. Not only are these women subjected to racial expectations, they are also subjected to gendered expectations (Ford, 2019; Massood, 2003; McKittrick, 2006; Rose, 1993). The pervasive *strong Black woman* stereotype frequently portrays them as resilient and self-sacrificing individuals, a characterization inadvertently leading to the suppression of their needs and emotions (Bacchus & Holley, 2005; Holton, 2020; Strings, 2019). To maintain respectability, African American women may find themselves expected to adhere to traditional gender roles, conforming to societal notions of femininity and domesticity while simultaneously challenging racial stereotypes.

This dual expectation places African American women in a precarious balancing act, where they must assert themselves as both women and African American individuals, all the while adhering to the demanding norms of respectability. The interplay of these intersecting

identities can create unique challenges in negotiating their roles within both their immediate communities and the broader society.

Class

Class dynamics intersect significantly with respectability politics for African American women. Respectability, as a concept, closely aligns with middle-class values and behaviors. This alignment can inadvertently foster divisions within the African American community. African American women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face economic constraints limiting their ability to conform to middle-class norms, potentially leading to perceptions of being less respectable within their communities. Those who were perceived as not conforming to these norms, often due to economic constraints, were sometimes stigmatized or marginalized. This division could be particularly pronounced along class lines, with middle-class or upwardly mobile individuals sometimes distancing themselves from those they considered less respectable. African American women from more affluent backgrounds had greater resources to invest in markers of respectability, such as education, clothing, and grooming. However, this affluence also exposed them to criticisms of elitism or detachment from the experiences of working-class African American women.

Economic, Social, and Political Impact

Economic

In the 1960s, the United States developed geopolitical ties with South Korea during the Korean War. South Korea became a manufacturer of wartime infrastructure (combat boots, concrete, plywood, and military jeeps). These geopolitical alliances created opportunities for cultural exchange between Korean and African American soldiers, specifically in the United States military district of Seoul where African American media (e.g.

and Jet magazine) were easily accessible (Chang et al., 2022; Petrulis, 2021; Silverman, 2002; Stackhouse, 2022). The December 1962 cover of Ebony magazine featured Cicely Tyson in a wig on the cover (**Figure 6**), highlighting the enthusiasm of African American women and the wig industry, and thus wigs became a popular part of African American women's fashion. African American women wore wigs for easy hairstyling, relinquishing the need to chemically process or straighten their hair (Ford, 2019; Greer, 2019; Marwick, 1988). The availability of these wigs offered African American women the freedom to protect their natural hair with wigs but was still a form of oppression because it covered/hides one's natural hair. This shift in the landscape of beauty empowered these individuals to express their personal style and identity without judgment, marking a turning point in the broader cultural shift towards celebrating diversity in hairstyles.

Figure 6: EBONY Magazine December 1962 Cicely Tyson (Company, 1962)



Also, during this specific timeframe, African American women played a significant role in the wig-buying market, accounting for 25 percent of wig buyers, despite comprising only 11 percent of the total U.S. population (Chang et al., 2022; Chin et al., 1996; Greer, 2019; Petrulis, 2021). The growth of the Korean wig export business was attributed to the keen understanding of Korean wig merchants who recognized African American women constituted a fundamental and substantial customer base for their products (Chang et al., 2022; Chin et al., 1996; Greer, 2019). This awareness played a crucial role in shaping their business strategies and product offerings to cater specifically to the needs and preferences of African American women. Additionally, the granting of business licenses to Korean immigrants in predominantly African American communities, while simultaneously denying these licenses to African Americans seeking to serve their communities, highlights a troubling aspect of socio-economic dynamics during this period (Furman, 1997; Reed & Medvedev, 2023; Silverman, 2002; Willett, 2000). This disparity in access to economic opportunities and licenses further underscores the complexities of race, entrepreneurship, and competition within communities, reflecting broader issues related to systemic discrimination experienced by African American communities.

Social Impact

The ongoing movement to embrace natural African hair has led to significant changes in how it is perceived and received in these different contexts. For individuals who choose to wear their natural African hair, it often represents a powerful statement of self-acceptance, cultural pride, and authenticity (Bellinger, 2007; Christiani, 2014; Knowles & Sampha, 2016; Rowe, 2022). This choice has profound implications for personal identity as it allows individuals to celebrate their heritage and resist societal pressures to conform to Eurocentric beauty standards. Natural African hair has evolved as a symbol of empowerment. It encourages African Americans

to embrace their unique hair textures and styles, fostering a sense of self-confidence and self-worth. This shift in personal identity is a means of self-expression and a form of activism, challenging historical norms and advocating for a more inclusive and diverse understanding of beauty.

Expanding Group Pride

The transformation in societal perceptions of natural African hair has a profound impact on individuals as it encourages them to see themselves represented and valued in mainstream culture. The movement to embrace natural African hair is not limited to the Black community in the United States. It has gained traction among individuals of various racial backgrounds across the diaspora, in the Dominican Republic, and Ecuador (Candelario, 2020; G. Davis, 2020; Goins, 2021; Lyon, 2020). This demonstrates the larger societal influence of this movement in redefining beauty standards and promoting inclusivity. This phenomenon is underscored by the cross-pollination of ideas and practices across diverse cultural traditions, resulting in individuals drawing inspiration from a rich reservoir of sources and incorporating elements from various ethnic groups into hair care routines and styling choices (Barnett, 2016; Hobson, 2018; Holton, 2020).

Furthermore, as individuals from different cultural backgrounds interact and share their respective hair care techniques and styling methods, they engage in a creative process leading to the development of hybrid styles. These hybrid styles are emblematic of the fusion of different cultural influences and traditions, resulting in unique and vibrant aesthetics. Such hybridization transcends cultural boundaries, offering a testament to the interconnectedness of various communities and their shared interest in exploring and experimenting with diverse hair aesthetics. One of the key implications of this cultural fusion is the celebration of diversity and

the recognition of the beauty inherent in various hair textures and styles. It challenges narrow definitions of beauty and encourages individuals to appreciate the richness of cultural heritage. As natural African hair care practices and styles intersect with those of other communities, a more inclusive understanding of beauty emerges.

Work-Related

In the workplace, the social impact of natural African hair is an ever-evolving issue. While progress has been made in addressing hair discrimination through legislation such as the CROWN Act (Donahoo & Smith, 2022; M. S. Lee & Nambudiri, 2021; Pitts, 2021) many individuals still face challenges related to their natural hair. For example, African American men and women still face workplace discrimination, including being told their natural African hair is unprofessional or not in line with company grooming policies (Jaima, 2023; Mutz & Brown, 2022). However, the growing awareness and advocacy surrounding natural African hair rights have led to increased workplace protections and an understanding that natural African hair should not be a barrier to career advancement (Dash, 2006; M. S. Lee & Nambudiri, 2021). In some instances, embracing natural African hair can positively impact workplace dynamics by challenging stereotypes and contributing to a more inclusive work environment. It can also inspire others to embrace their authentic selves, fostering a sense of solidarity among coworkers (Adams, 1999; Appleford, 2016; Edwards, 2020; R. Jones, 2020; Norwood, 2018).

Demographic Changes

Indeed, the growing mixed-race population in the United States further underscores the need for inclusivity within the context of cultural fusion in hair care and styling practices. As the United States continues to experience demographic shifts and an increase in mixed-race individuals, it becomes increasingly important to recognize and embrace the diversity of hair

textures and styles representing a myriad of cultural backgrounds (Dash, 2006; Ford, 2019; Greer, 2019). This demographic shift calls into question conventional beauty standards based on uniformity and fosters a more inclusive perspective on beauty and identity.

The expanding mixed-race population also embodies the blending of various ethnic backgrounds and traditions, often resulting in unique combinations of hair textures and features. Their experiences exemplify the interconnectedness of diverse cultures and underscore the richness that arises from this blending. The struggles faced by mixed-race children with white mothers underscore the importance of inclusivity and education regarding natural African hair. Educational initiatives can play a significant role in equipping parents, regardless of their racial background, with the knowledge and skills needed to care for and embrace their children's natural African hair. The experiences of mixed-race children with White mothers highlight the intersectionality of identity, where race, ethnicity, and African hair texture intersect. These individuals may identify with multiple racial and cultural backgrounds, emphasizing the need for society to recognize and respect the complexity of their identities (C. Faria & Falola, 2020; Hawthorne, 2023; Jacobs-Huey, 2006; Winters, 2016). Hair care and styling practices accommodating the needs and preferences of mixed-race individuals are essential. Mixed-race individuals should see themselves represented in media, fashion, and beauty standards. They should be empowered to embrace their unique identities and hair aesthetics without feeling compelled to conform to narrowly defined norms.

Political Impact

Natural African hair has been the target of political actions, including criminalization, mutilation, and legislation, which have had profound implications for the African American community. First, the criminalization of natural African hair has deep roots in the history of racial

discrimination and white supremacy in the United States (Camp, 2004; L. Hunter, 2020; Rowe, 2022; Wilkerson, 2020). During slavery, enslaved African American females were forced to cut their hair and later forced to conform to Eurocentric ideals of appearance. The act of wearing natural African hair textures was labeled noncompliant and subversive, leading to punishment, including physical abuse. Even after emancipation, the criminalization of natural African hair persisted. Laws and regulations prohibiting specific hairstyles or mandated the straightening of hair were implemented in some states. These laws were a manifestation of institutionalized racism, aimed at suppressing cultural expressions and maintaining Eurocentric standards of beauty and professionalism (Cooper, 2017; A. Y. Davis, 1994; Morgan, 2004).

Legislation aimed at regulating natural African hair has been evident in various forms throughout United States history. From dress codes in schools and workplaces explicitly prohibiting certain Afrocentric hairstyles to more recent examples of discriminatory policies in educational institutions, such as the banning of dreadlocks or afros. These measures have disproportionately targeted African Americans. One notable example is the CROWN Act (Jaima, 2023; Versey, 2014; Winters, 2016) which seeks to prohibit discrimination based on hairstyle and hair texture. The current standing of the CROWN Act in several states (see Appendix A) represents a significant step in addressing the legislative aspects of hair discrimination.

However, the necessity of such legislation underscores the persistent challenges faced by African Americans in asserting their cultural identity through their natural hair (Carroll, 2017; hooks, 2015; Peiss, 2011; Wingfield, 2008). Criminalization and legislation targeting natural African hair reflect the deeply rooted history of racism and discrimination in the United States. While progress has been made through advocacy and legal changes, the legacy of these political

actions continues to influence discussions surrounding beauty, identity, and societal norms within the African American community.

In concluding this chapter, the significant evolution of natural African hair is contemplated, tracing its trajectory from being an emblem of defiance during the Black Power Movement in the 1960s to its recognition and protection under the CROWN Act of 2022. This historical analysis encapsulates a shift in societal attitudes and legal frameworks, reflecting a journey from marginalization to celebration within the African American community. Aaliyah's experience in a contemporary corporate environment embodies this transformation, illustrating the intersection of personal identity with dominant cultural and legislative shifts toward racial equality and acceptance of diversity. The CROWN Act of 2022 stands as a legislative landmark, affirming the right of African American women to wear natural and protective hairstyles without fear of discrimination. This act addresses specific issues related to hair texture and style; it also signifies a rejection of respectability politics and Eurocentric beauty norms that have historically policed African American bodies. It marks a departure from a legacy of policies aimed at regulating African American women's identities within public and professional spheres, towards embracing a more inclusive understanding of professionalism and aesthetics.

Through a postcolonial lens, the Natural Hair Movement's resurgence and the legislative success of the CROWN Act are evidence of the dynamic interplay between cultural movements and legal recognition in challenging entrenched biases. It underscores the importance of natural African hair as a cultural symbol, intertwined with the struggles and achievements of the Civil Rights Journey. The narrative of natural African hair, from a symbol of resistance to an acknowledged aspect of African American identity, parallels the larger narrative of striving for a society that acknowledges and respects cultural diversity. This discourse serves to recount the

historical journey of natural African hair and to reflect on the ongoing challenges and progress within the discourse of racial equality, respectability politics, and cultural identity acceptance. It underscores the legislative triumphs as milestones on the path toward dismantling racial discrimination and fostering an environment where diversity is recognized and celebrated. As geographic knowledge advances, the legacies of the movements and legislation discussed herein illuminate the ongoing quest for a society where the freedom of cultural expression is a universal right, unfettered by historical prejudices.

Chapter 4

Claiming Place: A Netnography for Placemaking on YouTube for Natural African Hair

In the face of historical adversities associated with securing amenable spaces for cultural and communal engagement, African American women have strategically embraced digital platforms to create a place of their own. This transition to the digital sphere, particularly through content creation on YouTube, emerges as a response to systemic barriers traditionally impeding the establishment of physical locales for the expression of identity and solidarity (Daly, 2021; Henriksen & Hoelting, 2016; Phelps-Ward & Laura, 2016). These endeavors in digital placemaking notably address the gap left by the absence of accessible, inclusive physical spaces, showcasing an innovative pivot towards virtual environments. As content creators centered on the theme of natural African hair, these women have effectively generated prime online territories, or "real estate," dedicated to the celebration and exploration of natural African hair culture. YouTube, with its extensive user base and interactive nature, provides a fertile ground for the dissemination of knowledge, cultural practices, and personal narratives related to natural African hair care and its significance within the broader contexts of identity, race, and aesthetics. Through the creation and curation of content, they cultivate rich online communities, facilitating a global dialogue transcending the limitations imposed by physical geography.

This act of digital placemaking does more than merely occupy virtual space; it actively participates in the reclamation and reinterpretation of cultural narratives. In this context, the contributions of African American women as content creators on YouTube illuminate the intricate relationship between technology, cultural expression, and identity politics. Their pioneering use of digital platforms addresses the practicalities associated with natural African

hair care and fosters a deeper engagement with themes of racial identity, gender dynamics, and societal beauty standards, marking a significant evolution in the discourse of digital cultural spaces. Given its empirical potential, this chapter asks the question, can a netnography describe placemaking for natural African hair by African American women on YouTube? This chapter will explore relevant theory and online ethnographic research methods (i.e. netnography) and their application to African American women content creators on YouTube.

Geographic Theory

Space and Place on Land

The distinction between space and place is a central theme in the discipline of human geography, offering insights into their roles within one's lived experiences. Scholars such as Lefebvre (1991) and Soja (1996) conceptualize space not just as a physical expanse but as a vibrant canvas for human interaction and experience. This perspective underscores space as a multidimensional construct, where the perceived, conceived, and lived realities converge, illustrating the complex relationship between social structures and personal experiences. Lefebvre introduces the idea of social space as produced and shaped by societal dynamics, emphasizing its role in facilitating or constraining social practices (Lefebvre, 1991). Soja builds on this, presenting space as simultaneously real and imagined, a realm where social relations and physicality intersect in constantly evolving ways (Soja, 1996).

Conversely, as articulated by scholars like Agnew, Shelley, and Pringle (2003), and Cresswell (1996), delves deeper into the specificities that imbue a location with distinctive meaning and significance (Agnew et al., 2003; Cresswell, 1996). This concept moves beyond the mere physical attributes to include the emotional and experiential ties that bind individuals and communities to a particular locale. Place embodies its geographic location and the sense of

belonging and identity arising from the interactions and memories forged within its bounds. Through these scholarly lenses, the distinction between space and place emerges not as binary opposites but as interconnected aspects of human existence. Space provides the stage for human action, while place gives this action context and meaning, rooted in the personal and collective narratives that define our relationship with the world around us. This interplay between space and place underscores the importance of understanding how environments shape and are shaped by the human experience, highlighting the rich tapestry of meanings, values, and connections that inform our interactions with the physical world.

Space and Place Online

Online, the distinction between space and place manifests through the virtual realm, with the worldwide web serving as the overarching space within which digital interactions occur. Social media platforms, such as YouTube, function as smaller, delineated spaces within this digital landscape. YouTube, specifically, emerges as a place where content creators carve out a distinct niche for themselves and their audiences, akin to the process of placemaking observed in physical environments (Gill, 2015; Phelps-Ward & Laura, 2016). Digital placemaking, as conceptualized by scholars (Ash et al., 2018; Elwood & Leszczynski, 2018; Halegoua & Polson, 2021; Cresswell, 2014), involves leveraging digital media to create and cultivate online places imbued with meaning and significance.

Literature Review

Historically, African American populations have grappled with feelings of placelessness stemming from forced removal from their homeland and displacement in the United States (McKittrick, 2011; Relph, 1976). As Relph articulates “The essence of place lies not so much in [landscapes, cities, and homes] as in the experience of an ‘inside’ that is distinct from an

‘outside’... To be inside a place is to belong to it and to identify with it.” (Relph, 1976, p. 49). This sentiment underscores the significance of claiming space and constructing place, both physically, and psychologically as it is central to identifying formation and empowerment (Allen et al., 2019; Carmen Hutchinson Miller, 2016; McKittrick, 2011). Hair, as a symbol of cultural identity and resistance, occupies a central role in this process. From the kitchen salons of the past to the online communities of today, African American women have sought to create places where their hair and experiences are validated and celebrated (Gill, 2010; Marwick, 1988; Peiss, 2011; Wingfield, 2008). YouTube, with its expansive reach and interactive features, offers a unique opportunity for African American women to reclaim agency over their narratives and foster solidarity in online communities. African American women content creators use their autobiographical accounts and creative expressions to cultivate curated places where natural African hair is celebrated and embraced.

African American Women Online

Since the early 2000s, YouTube emerged as a significant space for African American women to engage, share experiences, and find support, particularly concerning their natural African hair. Scholarly studies have delved into the impact of these virtual spaces on perceptions and support surrounding African American women’s hair. Ellington (2014) contributes to the discourse on the intersection of digital media, beauty standards, and identity, examining how blogs and vlogs on platforms like YouTube connect African American women and provide virtual support systems for embracing their natural hair. Ellington’s (2014) exploration of online content highlights the role of content creators’ influence in shaping perceptions of natural African hair and fostering a sense of community (Ellington, 2014). In a related study (Haaruun & Watson, 2014) explored the concept of digital beauty and analyzed YouTube content within the

natural hair community culture. Their research examined how online spaces redefine beauty standards and create support systems for African American women's hair (Haaruun & Watson, 2014). This study underscored the diversity of beauty standards for African American hair and emphasizes the agency of African American women in shaping their digital identities within these spaces.

Building upon previous research, Ellington (2015) delves deeper into social networking sites' role in supporting African American women embracing their natural African hair. This study examined how platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube foster safe and encouraging places for community-building and identity formation. Ellington's research acknowledges the historical context of hair politics in the United States and emphasizes the role of social networks in fostering collective pride and identity among African American women.

Another scholar, Gill (2015) investigated the use of hashtags, particularly #TeamNatural, as symbols of unity and activism within digital spaces (Gill, 2015). This study examined the politics of natural African hair in digital media and community building, underscoring the role of digital media in challenging conventional beauty norms and celebrating natural African American hair. Another study focusing on African American adolescent girls, (Phelps-Ward & Laura, 2016) explores how YouTube serves as a place for self-expression, self-love, and counter-narratives surrounding natural hair care experiences. This study offered insights into identity formation within online places and illustrated how YouTube vlogs empower young African American girls to reclaim agency over their narratives and foster a sense of pride and identity online.

Additionally, researchers (Ellington, 2023; Norwood, 2018) contributed to the literature by examining the intersection of African American women's hair with digital media and online

communities. These studies highlight the role of YouTube and other social networking sites in reshaping beauty standards and providing supportive spaces for African American women to share their hair journeys and experiences. Collectively, these studies highlight the significant role of online communities in shaping perceptions, fostering support, and challenging societal norms for African American women embracing their natural hair. These virtual places provide platforms for self-expression and contribute to broader conversations about African American beauty and identity on a global scale.

Netnography

Netnography, a term coined by Kozinets (2002), combines the practices of ethnography with the digital world, offering a methodological framework for understanding cultures and communities that form and operate online. His research approach adapts traditional ethnographic techniques to study the social interactions and cultural practices within digital spaces, making it particularly relevant for examining phenomena like the online communities of African American women who create content centered on natural African hair. The relevance of netnography to digital spaces, especially those cultivated by African American women focusing on natural African hair, lies in its ability to uncover deep insights into the cultural and social dimensions that characterize these online communities. Through netnography, researchers can analyze textual and multimedia content, interactions among community members, and the broader discourses that emerge within these digital platforms. This method allows for an in-depth understanding of how African American women use YouTube and other online spaces not just for content dissemination but also for community building, cultural exchange, and identity formation.

For African American women, digital platforms offer unique opportunities to counter mainstream beauty narratives and promote a more inclusive and diverse understanding of beauty

that embraces natural African hair. Netnography provides the tools to explore how these content creators influence perceptions, practices, and attitudes toward natural African hair, examining how they challenge existing beauty standards and foster a sense of pride and empowerment within their communities. Moreover, netnography's relevance extends to exploring the dynamics of digital placemaking. African American women content creators are not only sharing their experiences and knowledge about natural hair care, they are also actively participating in the creation of virtual spaces that serve as safe havens for expression, learning, and solidarity. These digital places become sites of resistance against cultural marginalization and platforms for advocating change, both within and beyond the African American community.

Pink's Contribution

Pink is a prominent scholar in the field of anthropology and has made significant contributions to ethnographic research specifically in terms of placemaking and conducting online ethnographies or a netnography (Pink, 2015; Postill & Pink, 2012). Her work revolves around understanding the intersection of people, place, and digital technologies, particularly in contemporary urban environments. Pink's approach to ethnographic placemaking involves using innovative methods to study how individuals engage with and construct meanings in a digital space. Pink's theory on ethnographic placemaking emphasizes the importance of understanding the relationship between people and places through an embodied sensory and situated approach, studying how individuals interact with the spaces around them and recognizing that place is not solely defined by physical attributes, it is also layered with meaning and emotions the people have attached to these spaces.

Pink argues traditional ethnographies should encompass the interactions between physical and digital spaces where technology, specifically Web 2.0, is part of our everyday experiences.

Pink theorizes, the digital world allows for new fieldwork and new types of ethnographic work (Poatill and Pink, 2012). Pink believes a successful netnography includes four types of user groups that can be studied—tourist, minglers, devotees, and insiders- that engage on social media and participate in catching up, sharing information, exploring the subject, interacting with content, or archiving data. Each group has different levels of engagement with social media platforms from tourist casual browsers to insiders to have strong ties to the online group.

Dodd's Contribution

Dodds significantly contributes to the discipline of geography through the application of online ethnographies, as demonstrated in his study "Popular Geopolitics and Audience Dispositions: James Bond and the Internet Movie Database (IMDb)" (Dodds, 2006). This research posits that online platforms like IMDb serve as rich resources for gleaning audience interpretations and interactions with geopolitical themes embedded within popular culture, particularly through the lens of James Bond films. Dodds' methodology offers an expanded exploration of how cinema, as a medium, is consumed and interpreted by viewers by engaging with user-generated content on online message boards. The utilization of online message boards for analyzing audience engagement with James Bond films reveals a multifaceted landscape of perception and discourse. This approach underscores the diversity of interpretations and illuminates how geopolitical narratives are negotiated and understood by global audiences.

Moreover, Dodds' study foregrounds the significance of online communities as vibrant spaces for the exchange of ideas and opinions, thereby demonstrating the capacity of online ethnographic research to unravel the complexities of how media content is engaged within digital spaces. Through this innovative methodological framework, Dodds enhances our comprehension of the intricate relationship between popular culture and geopolitical discourse. The study

accentuates the importance of considering audience dispositions and the role of digital platforms in shaping contemporary understandings of geopolitics, offering valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between media, culture, and audience engagement in the age of digital communication.

Dittmer and Dodd's Contribution

Building on his foundational work in 2006, Dodds, in collaboration with Dittmer, further enriched the geography discipline by advancing research methodologies through the introduction of online ethnographies. Their landmark study, "Popular Geopolitics Past and Present Future: Fandom, Identities and Audiences"(Dittmer & Dodds, 2008) heralded a methodological evolution, seamlessly blending traditional ethnographic techniques with the study of digital environments. This innovative approach opened novel pathways for geographers, broadening the horizons of geographic inquiry to encompass the digital realm. Their research methodologically underscores the impact of digital spaces on human experiences, identities, and social interactions, providing new insights into the confluence of physical and virtual realities. Investigating a variety of online communities, from social media to virtual worlds, Dittmer and Dodds established a foundational framework for examining digital engagement and its ramifications for geographic studies.

This pioneering work has spurred further research across a spectrum of topics, notably including studies on digital media within online communities formed by African American women. These investigations highlight the intricate ways digital technology intersects with cultural identity and social dynamics, enriching our understanding of digital spaces as platforms for cultural expression, identity development, and community engagement. Dittmer and Dodds's contributions have been instrumental in capturing the complex dynamics of digital spaces,

propelling forward the exploration of how these environments interact with and shape the geographical imagination. Their work facilitates a deeper examination of digital navigation and community dynamics and emphasizes participatory Internet culture, exploring the creation of collective memory, resistance narratives, and alternative geopolitical discourses. Moreover, their research emphasizes the importance of ethical considerations in online ethnography, addressing the challenges of privacy, consent, and the implications of digital research footprints. By advocating for a reflexive, ethical research approach, Dittmer and Dodds's methodology respects the autonomy and privacy of online community participants, paving the way for responsible geographic inquiry into digital spaces.

Ethical Considerations

Several ethical considerations were addressed to ensure the research's integrity and cultural sensitivity. First, care was taken to approach the subject matter with the utmost integrity, ensuring the representation of the sample's experiences with natural African hair and placemaking was accurate and authentically represented the cultural significance of their stories. All identifiable information was carefully anonymized before inclusion in the study. Usernames, locations, and any other personal details that could lead to the identification of individuals were altered. This research was designed with a conscious awareness of cultural sensitivity. It recognized the importance of approaching the digital spaces where African American women discuss natural African hair and placemaking with respect and cultural understanding. This involved a personal familiarity with the cultural values, practices, and dialogues within these communities.

Addressing these ethical considerations allowed for the study to contribute to the discourse on placemaking and identity among African American women in a manner that was

ethically sound and culturally respectful. This attention to ethical considerations underscores the study's commitment to responsible and respectful research practices, particularly when dealing with vulnerable or marginalized groups within digital environments.

Research Question

Can a netnography be used to study placemaking for natural African hair by African American women on YouTube?

This research question aims to observe placemaking and sense of place for natural African hair content on YouTube.

Placemaking

What motivated African American women to create content specifically on YouTube as a place for sharing knowledge, experiences, and expertise related to natural African hair care? How does this motivation intersect with the process of placemaking, where African American women content creators actively carve out a dedicated space for natural African hair within the digital landscape of YouTube? This overarching research question seeks to explore the motivations driving African American women to utilize YouTube as a platform for sharing content related to natural African hair while also investigating how these motivations intersect with the process of placemaking within the digital space (Haaruun & Watson, 2014; Tate, 2007). It aims to understand the underlying reasons why content creators choose YouTube as the primary location for their natural African hair content and how they engage in placemaking strategies to establish and cultivate a distinct place within the platform. Examining the motivations behind content creation and the active process of placemaking aims to uncover the complex interplay between individual aspirations, community-building efforts, and the broader sociocultural context shaping the representation and visibility of natural African hair on YouTube.

Sense of Place

What are the experiences and perceptions of viewers regarding the sense of place or sense of community fostered by natural African hair content on YouTube? This research question aims to explore the subjective experiences and perspectives of viewers regarding the community aspects of consuming natural African hair content on YouTube. It seeks to understand the depth of engagement, feelings of belonging, and connections established within this online community. An examination of comments on the videos provides data to discuss whether viewers' interactions, support systems, and shared experiences, provide valuable insights to foster a sense of place among individuals with natural African hair on YouTube.

Methods

Sample

Sampling strategies involved a purposive approach using hashtags and keywords to identify relevant YouTube videos created by African American women content creators discussing natural African hair. A purposive sample of five (N=5) content creators was selected based on the videos they posted in January 2010 -December till 2011. The sample for this study comprised early YouTubers, specifically selected for their detailed biographical information and metrics such as number of subscribers, views, comments, and likes. Out of a larger pool of (N=20) African American YouTubers during the specified timeframe, a subset of five individuals was chosen.

These content creators were selected due to the clarity and detail of their biographical information, as well as the availability of metrics necessary for analysis. The data from these five individuals was coded and organized by themes to provide insights into the broader landscape of

African American content creators on YouTube during the specified period. The aim is to gain insights into the foundational stages of natural hair discourse within the YouTube community.

Data Collection

Data collection involved systematic searches using relevant keywords and hashtags to draw a sample of five YouTube videos focusing on various aspects of natural African hair. Engagement metrics, such as likes, views, and comments, were gathered from the chosen videos to gauge audience interaction. Furthermore, to enrich the quantitative analysis, qualitative data encompassing viewer comments and the themes explored within the videos were also compiled. This approach aimed to capture a comprehensive insight into audience perceptions and experiences.

Data Analysis

Data analysis utilized a netnographic approach, involving systematic coding and categorization of data from content creators' YouTube bios and engagement metrics. To ensure consistency and reliability in the coding process, a codebook was developed utilizing the Text Analysis Markup System (TAMS) Analyzer, a qualitative research tool tailored for analyzing various forms of textual data, including interview transcripts and survey responses, commonly used in social science research (Haaruun and Watson, 2014).

Data Reporting

Data was summarized by a detailed analysis of netnographic observations, highlighting key themes such as the portrayal of natural African hair culture, the dynamics of community interaction, and the strategies employed to foster inclusive digital environments. Quantitative data, such as engagement metrics (views, likes, comments), was presented alongside qualitative insights gained from content analysis, user interactions, and the emotional narratives woven into

the digital content. This multimodal presentation of data was contextualized within the larger discourse of digital placemaking, emphasizing the role of emotional realism in creating meaningful online spaces. Special attention was given to the ethical considerations and cultural sensitivities encountered during the research process, ensuring the reporting respects the privacy and dignity of the community members involved.

Through visual aids, such as charts and thematic maps, alongside rich narrative descriptions, the report aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how African American women content creators utilize digital platforms to challenge mainstream beauty standards, celebrate cultural identity, and build empowering online communities. This approach ensures the data is not only accurately reported but also resonates with both academic and general audiences, highlighting the transformative power of these digital placemaking practices.

Validity

Triangulation was used to cross-verify data by assessing the number of subscribers, comments, likes, and views ensuring the analysis accurately captured the nuances of the online discourse surrounding natural African hair care within the YouTube community. Throughout the research process, ethical considerations, such as ensuring anonymity through the use of pseudonyms and employing data coding, were implemented to uphold the rights and confidentiality of both content creators and viewers. This was done to protect from potential harm or backlash from conducting the study, adhering to the principle of non-maleficence (Blok et al., 2022; R. Lee & Kozinets, 2010; Postill & Pink, 2012). In addition, the use of data coding further reinforces the commitment to confidentiality, allowing for the analysis of patterns and themes without compromising any content creator's identity. This methodological practice

ensures the research findings are grounded in the data itself, minimizing bias and maintaining the credibility of the study.

Discussion

Online Placemaking

At the heart of this chapter lies the distinction between space and place, a theoretical delineation crucial for understanding the dynamics of online communities centered around natural African hair. Space, as a physical or virtual expanse, becomes a place when infused with meanings, emotions, and identities. Lefebvre (1991) and Soja (1996) articulate space as a dynamic arena, shaped by interactions and experiences, whereas scholars like Agnew, Shelley, and Pringle (2003), and Cresswell (1996) emphasize place as imbued with significance through the layering of memories, attachments, and social relations. This distinction is pivotal in analyzing how digital platforms transform from mere spaces into meaningful places for African American women to discuss, celebrate, and advocate for natural hair culture. Building on this foundational understanding, the significance of claiming space and constructing place becomes evident in the context of natural African hair. Digital platforms offer African American women the opportunity to carve out spaces that challenge mainstream beauty norms and foster a sense of belonging. Through content creation and community engagement, these digital environments are transformed into places of empowerment, where the collective experiences of natural hair care are shared and celebrated.

The act of claiming space in the digital realm transcends mere occupancy; it involves a deliberate process of place-making where cultural identity, personal expression, and communal support coalesce. This dynamic illustrates how online communities dedicated to natural African hair do not just occupy digital spaces but actively construct places that reflect and support the

cultural and personal identities of African American women. These places of digital engagement become sites where the physical and social dimensions of natural hair care are negotiated and redefined. They embody a counter-narrative to prevailing beauty standards, offering a platform for self-love, self-expression, and the exchange of knowledge about natural hair care practices. The creation and nurturing of such places underscore the power of digital technologies to facilitate meaningful cultural exchange and identity formation. It highlights the intricate ways in which African American women utilize digital spaces to navigate the complexities of natural hair care, transforming online platforms into vibrant communities that resonate with their lived experiences and aspirations.

Use of Netnography

This chapter identified netnography, as a methodological adaptation of ethnography to the online environment, as a viable research approach for understanding placemaking for natural African hair in digital spaces. This suitability stems from several key aspects of netnography that align closely with the unique characteristics of online communities and the specificities of cultural expression related to natural African hair. First, netnography allows for an in-depth exploration of the rich, multifaceted interactions occurring within digital platforms. Given discussions about natural African hair span various online forums, social media platforms, and content-sharing sites, netnography provides a lens through which to analyze these diverse interactions. This method excels in capturing the organic conversations, content creation, and community engagement practices that collectively contribute to the construction of digital places dedicated to natural African hair. A netnography enables researchers to gain authentic insights into the lived experiences, cultural expressions, and identity negotiations of African American women by focusing on the naturally occurring data within these digital environments.

Second, netnography's emphasis on cultural immersion and participant observation translates effectively into the online realm, offering researchers the opportunity to engage deeply with the community's dynamics without the constraints of physical presence. This aspect is particularly relevant for studying online placemaking, as it allows researchers to observe and participate in the community's evolution over time, fostering a nuanced understanding of how digital spaces become meaningful places of cultural and personal significance. Furthermore, netnography addresses the complexities of digital placemaking by recognizing the interplay between technology, culture, and identity. It acknowledges online communities are virtual extensions of physical spaces and are unique places where cultural practices are reflected and reshaped. This perspective is crucial for examining how African American women use digital platforms to challenge mainstream beauty standards, share knowledge, and foster solidarity around natural hair care. Netnography's sensitivity to the digital context enables the exploration of how these platforms facilitate new forms of cultural expression and community building.

Lastly, netnography provides a framework for ethical research in digital spaces, emphasizing informed consent, privacy, and cultural sensitivity. These ethical considerations are paramount in studies focusing on cultural identity and personal experiences, such as those related to natural African hair. Adhering to netnographic principles ensures investigations respect the autonomy, privacy, and dignity of community members, thereby enhancing the validity and integrity of their findings.

Invoking Emotions in Digital Spaces

The application of Fletchall's emotional realism theory emerges as a critical lens through which to understand the dynamics of community engagement on social media platforms. As shown by Fletchall et al. (2013), emotional realism bridges lived experiences with the virtual

environments of media, facilitating a unique form of community participation and placemaking. This approach underscores how media representations of emotions are intricately crafted, not mere reflections of reality, yet constructed through specific artistic techniques and narratives aimed at eliciting targeted emotional responses from audiences. In the context of African American women content creators on YouTube, this approach becomes particularly salient. American women content creators skillfully employ storytelling, editing, and music, alongside personal narratives, and compelling titles, to deeply engage viewers on an emotional level. Their content fosters a connection with viewers and plays a pivotal role in the emotional landscape of digital placemaking. Emotional realism allows for insight into how these digital environments become meaningful spaces of engagement, identity formation, and community solidarity.

This chapter demonstrated how emotional authenticity and relatability are central to enhancing viewer engagement and fostering community bonds in the digital realm. The emotional dynamics curated by African American women content creators exemplify the transformative potential of YouTube as a platform for cultural expression and placemaking. Fletchall's emotional realism theory offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing the complex interplay between emotions, media representations, and the cultivation of digital spaces. It highlights the critical role of content creators in shaping the emotional and cultural contours of online communities, underscoring the significance of emotional engagement in the process of digital placemaking for natural African hair. This exploration enriches our understanding of the digital content creation landscape for African American women and contributes to the broader discourse on technology, culture, and identity in the digital age.

African American Women Emotional Engagement

Fletcher's theory of emotional realism sheds light on the experiences of digital placemaking related to natural African hair, emphasizing the skill with which African American female content creators on YouTube utilize personal narratives to elicit a broad spectrum of emotions, thereby cultivating a profound connection with their viewers. These narratives share journeys of embracing natural hair and combatting the marginalization rooted in Eurocentric beauty standards, thereby empowering viewers and promoting self-acceptance. The theory posits media representations extend our lived experiences into digital realms, enhancing community engagement and participation in placemaking. This deep emotional engagement, underscored by the sharing of educational content such as hair care tips and product recommendations, strengthens community bonds and fosters a culture of gratitude. It transforms digital spaces into meaningful sites of solidarity, empowerment, and celebration.

African American women content creators masterfully navigate and shape the emotional and cultural landscapes of these platforms, demonstrating the powerful role of online communities in challenging and redefining beauty norms. The integration of emotional realism with the narratives of these content creators reveals the digital space as a critical venue for disseminating counter-narratives to mainstream beauty standards. By fostering emotional resonance and facilitating active participation in a shared cultural landscape, these creators not only redefine beauty standards but also bolster a sense of identity, belonging, and empowerment among their viewers. Consequently, the digital platform emerges as a dynamic place for cultural and emotional exchange, illustrating the pivotal role of emotional engagement in digital placemaking and affirming the significance of African American women content creators in cultivating supportive and inclusive online communities.

Media Convergence

Mains (2022) work focuses on media convergence, illustrating how content fluidly transitions across various platforms and formats to facilitate connections within online communities, surmount geographical barriers, and amplify diverse narratives (Mains, 2022). Mains underscore the capacity of digital platforms, especially social media, to serve as conduits for social justice advocacy, enabling content creators to evoke emotional responses and mobilize support through the dissemination of protest actions online. This analysis of convergent media as a tool for emotional engagement and community mobilization seamlessly integrates with Fletchall's emotional realism theory, which further dissects the emotional underpinnings of digital community interactions. Building upon the foundational concepts introduced by Mains and Fletchall, African American women content creators exemplify the fusion of digital and physical realms in cultivating a vibrant community centered around natural hair culture. Through engaging online narratives and participation in natural hair events, meet-and-greets, and educational panels, these creators transcend the digital space to forge tangible connections with their audience. Their ventures into real-world events (See **Appendix A**) and collaborations with brands on natural hair care initiatives further solidify the emotional connections established online, creating a feedback loop enriching the community experience.

The seamless navigation between online content creation and offline community engagement highlights a symbiotic relationship that bolsters the NHM.. This multifaceted approach strengthens community bonds and facilitates a deeper exchange of knowledge and support, underscoring the transformative power of convergent media in fostering spaces for shared experiences and empowerment. Through the lens of Mains's media convergence and Fletchall's emotional realism, the dynamic interplay between digital presence and physical

interaction emerges as a pivotal strategy for African American women content creators. This strategy amplifies their influence, fosters inclusive communities, and champions the celebration of natural hair culture across both digital and physical landscapes.

This chapter explored the use of netnography to describe online placemaking by African American women content creators. It has demonstrated how YouTube is a pivotal space for fostering communities centered around the celebration, education, and advocacy of natural African hair. These African American women share their journeys and insights, challenge mainstream beauty standards, and cultivate digital environments where expressions of cultural identity, empowerment, and solidarity thrive. The use of netnography as a research method allows for detecting the intricate ways African American women utilize digital spaces to construct meaningful places of belonging and resistance. These digital places are extensions of physical spaces and are vibrant communities embodying the lived experiences, cultural narratives, and emotional connections of their members. The application of Fletchall's emotional realism theory further enriches our understanding of these online communities, highlighting how emotional engagement plays a critical role in the placemaking process (Fletchall et al., 2012). It shows how content creators harness the power of emotional narratives to foster deep connections with their audience, thereby facilitating a participatory culture where viewers are not just passive consumers but active contributors to the community.

Moreover, the chapter has addressed the phenomenon of media convergence, illustrating how African American content creators adeptly navigate across digital platforms to amplify their voices and reach wider audiences. This strategic cross-platform engagement enhances the impact of their content, allowing them to advocate for social justice, challenge discriminatory beauty norms, and foster a collective identity centered on natural hair pride. Through their online and

offline engagements, these creators have established a comprehensive community experience that transcends the digital realm, offering spaces for real-world interactions, knowledge exchange, and collective empowerment. The exploration of online placemaking in this chapter also underscores the significance of cultural sensitivity and ethical considerations in netnography research. As research focuses on the digital expressions and interactions of African American women around natural African hair culture, it is imperative to approach this research with an awareness of the cultural, historical, and social contexts shaping these communities. Ethical netnography demands a reflexive and respectful engagement with the community, ensuring that the research process honors the autonomy, privacy, and dignity of its members.

Moving forward, it is essential to continue exploring the evolving landscape of digital placemaking, particularly in the context of marginalized communities. The strategies employed by African American women to navigate and shape digital spaces offer lessons on resilience, creativity, and the power of community. Their ability to transform digital platforms into places of cultural affirmation and resistance contributes to the discourse on natural African hair and adds to the larger narrative of identity, belonging, and empowerment in the digital age.

This chapter demonstrated online placemaking through netnography opens up new avenues for understanding how digital communities are formed, sustained, and mobilized to effect social change. As digital technology continues to evolve, so too will how communities use these tools to carve out spaces for expression, activism, and connection. The work of African American women content creators in the realm of natural African hair culture stands as a testament to the transformative potential of digital placemaking, offering a blueprint for future explorations into the power of online communities to challenge and advocate for a more inclusive and equitable digital landscape.

Chapter 5

Case Study: When Natural African Hair Trends: African American Female Content Creators on YouTube

Digital platforms have ushered in unprecedented opportunities for content creation, community engagement, and cultural expression. Among these platforms, YouTube has emerged as a pivotal space for sharing knowledge, experiences, and expertise, particularly in the realms of personal care and beauty. This netnography seeks to explore a distinct phenomenon within this digital expanse: the motivation behind African American women's decision to create content specifically related to natural African hair care, styling, and maintenance on YouTube. The impetus for these women to engage in content creation extends beyond mere information sharing; it is intricately tied to a broader cultural and social endeavor—placemaking within the digital landscape.

Placemaking, in this context, refers to the process by which African American women content creators actively construct a dedicated space for natural African hair on YouTube. This endeavor is not just about carving out a niche; it is about establishing a realm where the nuances of natural African hair are explored, celebrated, and normalized. The motivation for these creators stems from a desire to challenge mainstream beauty narratives, provide solidarity and support for individuals on their natural hair journeys, and foster a sense of community among those who have historically been marginalized in discussions of beauty and hair care.

Through their content, these creators share valuable insights into natural hair care and contribute to the shaping of a digital environment that embraces diversity, champions authenticity, and promotes cultural pride. This chapter discusses the motivations behind content creation on YouTube and examines how these motivations intersect with the transformative

process of placemaking, highlighting the significant role of African American women content creators in enriching the digital landscape with their unique perspectives and expertise on natural African hair care. This case study offers a nuanced understanding of how African American women content creators utilize YouTube to challenge mainstream beauty standards, celebrate cultural identity, and cultivate empowering online communities, thereby underscoring the transformative impact of digital placemaking practices in the discourse surrounding natural African hair care.

Sample

Five (N=5) content creators were selected for this study. Jasmine, from Atlanta, Georgia, the visionary behind "Curls Empowered." Jasmine leverages her educational background to enrich her tutorials on natural hair care with historical and cultural contexts, making her content not just informative but deeply educational. She aims to foster a community where self-acceptance is celebrated, and the rich heritage of African American hairstyles is appreciated and discussed openly.

On the West Coast in Oakland, California, Kiara, an environmental advocate, combines her passion for sustainability with natural hair care on her channel "EcoChic Mane." Kiara's content spans eco-friendly routines and DIY hair products, emphasizing a lifestyle that respects both individual wellness and the planet. Through her channel, Kiara challenges stereotypes, illustrating that beauty and environmental consciousness can coexist harmoniously.

In the bustling city of Chicago, Illinois, Morgan Bailey offers a unique blend of entrepreneurship and African American hair care through "Bailey's Business Beats." Morgan's channel serves as a beacon for those interested in the beauty business, providing insights into starting and growing a business, highlighting African American brands, and sharing invaluable

marketing strategies. Her content underscores the power of building a business as a means of personal success and community upliftment.

Simone, hailing from New York City, brings the art of storytelling to life on "The Hairitage Hub." As a modern-day griot, she delves into the hair stories of African American women, exploring both personal journeys and the global significance of African American hair culture. Simone's channel is a celebration of heritage, aiming to build a community that recognizes and takes pride in the diversity and richness of African American hairstyles.

Lastly, Destiny from Los Angeles, California, introduces a holistic perspective to hair care with her channel "Mindful Manes." As a wellness coach and yoga instructor, Destiny intertwines hair care with overall well-being, offering content that spans stress-free hair routines to mindfulness practices. She advocates for a holistic approach to beauty, stressing the importance of a healthy mind in achieving healthy hair and inspiring her viewers to embrace their natural beauty through positive self-care practices. Together, these women embody the spirit of innovation, community, and empowerment, each contributing to the digital landscape of YouTube in their unique way. Their channels serve as platforms for sharing knowledge and experiences and as spaces for African American women to connect, learn, and be inspired. Through their diverse content, they promote a message of self-love, heritage appreciation, and empowerment, making significant strides in the representation and celebration of natural African hair.

Methods

Utilizing a purposive sampling strategy, the study selected a sample of five (N=5) African American women content creators on YouTube from January 2010 to 2011, based on criteria such as the creators' biographical detail, and video engagement metrics like subscribers, views,

comments, and likes. This period was chosen to gain insights into the early stages of natural hair discourse within the YouTube community. Data collection entailed systematic searches using relevant keywords and hashtags, drawing on videos that cover various aspects of natural African hair. Engagement metrics and qualitative data, including viewer comments and thematic video content, were compiled to provide a comprehensive understanding of audience perceptions and creator-audience interactions. The analysis employed a netnographic approach, systematically coding and categorizing the content creators' biographical information and engagement metrics using TAMS Analyzer (Haaruun & Watson, 2014)

A detailed analysis of this data illuminated key themes, such as the portrayal of natural African hair culture, community dynamics, and strategies for fostering inclusive digital spaces. This multimodal presentation of data was contextualized within the broader discourse of digital placemaking, underscoring the importance of emotional realism in the creation of meaningful online communities. To ensure the validity of the findings, triangulation was used to cross-verify data, while ethical considerations like anonymity and data coding rigorously adhered to protect participants' confidentiality and integrity.

Results

What motivated African American women to create content specifically on YouTube as a place for sharing knowledge, experiences, and expertise related to natural African hair care, styling, and maintenance, and how does this motivation intersect with the process of placemaking, where African American women content creators actively carve out a dedicated space for natural African hair within the digital landscape of YouTube?

Motivation

African American female YouTube content creators were motivated by a combination of personal experiences, a desire for representation and empowerment, a passion for education, community building, creative expression, and opportunities for monetization and growth. These influencers share common themes in their bios describing their motivation to begin creating content on YouTube. These themes collectively create a positive and empowering narrative resonating with their audience, fostering a sense of community and shared experiences.

The decision by these five African American women content creators to use YouTube specifically for content around natural African hair stems from several reasons reflecting both the platform's unique capabilities and the specific needs of their target audience. Each of these YouTube creators—Jasmine with 396k subscribers, 294k likes, and 737k views, Kiara boasting 582k subscribers, 1,153k likes, and 872k views, Morgan with 1.340k subscribers, 552k likes, and 767k views, Simone 55k subscribers, 39k likes, and 84k views and Destiny with 111k subscribers, 142k likes, and 61k views —brings their unique flair and passion to YouTube. Collectively they enrich the dialogue surrounding natural African hair and beauty online and in person. Through their diverse content, ranging from eco-conscious hair care routines and business strategies to celebrating the heritage and integrating wellness into beauty practices, and provide valuable resources for natural African hair practices and products.

Why YouTube?

YouTube's visual and interactive format makes it an ideal platform for showcasing hair care techniques, transformations, and visual narratives, particularly in the context of natural African hair. Creators like Jasmine and Kiara leverage this medium to provide step-by-step guidance on styling, product application, and care routines, effectively communicating with their

audience through clear demonstrations. Furthermore, YouTube's global reach enables content creators such as Simone and Destiny to spread awareness and education about the beauty and diversity of natural African hair to viewers worldwide. They can connect with a wide audience, fostering self-acceptance and cultural pride beyond their local communities by challenging global stereotypes and promoting positive narratives. The platform's community-building and engagement features allow creators like Morgan to directly interact with their audience, fostering a sense of belonging and support among viewers. This aspect of YouTube is crucial for building networks of empowerment, sharing experiences, and offering encouragement, making it an attractive space for those seeking to create a positive impact. Moreover, YouTube provides creators with opportunities for monetization, including ad revenue, sponsored content, and merchandise sales. Entrepreneurs like Morgan can leverage these opportunities to grow their businesses, promote African American-owned hair care brands, and explore partnerships that align with their mission.

In addition to its community-building and monetization aspects, YouTube serves as a valuable educational resource, often referred to as "YouTube University." Creators like Jasmine utilize the platform to stay updated on hair care education, ensuring their content remains informative and up to date. Furthermore, YouTube allows content creators to fill the representation gap in mainstream beauty and hair care media, particularly for African American women. These African American women content creators celebrate their identity and inspire others to do the same, promoting visibility and representation in the online environment by showcasing natural African hair and controlling their narratives. Overall, YouTube's capabilities enable these content creators to make a significant impact in promoting the beauty and diversity of natural African hair on a global scale.

Jasmine Turner - "Curls Empowered"

Jasmine is a content creator from Atlanta, Georgia, who started her YouTube channel, "Curls Empowered," to share her journey of embracing her natural hair. She has a background in education, so her video tutorials on natural hair care also dive deep into the history and cultural significance of African American hairstyles. Her stated mission is to empower her viewers by promoting self-acceptance and educating them about the beauty of natural curls. Through her engaging content, Jasmine builds a strong community where discussions about natural beauty standards and self-love are encouraged.

She stated:

This video shows my transition from relaxed to natural hair. There are pics of the many styles that I wore throughout my transition and the style that I am currently rockin'. I hope this video will inspire and encourage those of you who are considering being natural, transitioning, and those who are currently natural.

She also stated:

I wanted to post my journey because I took a lot of inspiration from the other videos, I saw here on YouTube...When I thought "I can't do this, I'm going to relax it," all I had to do was go online and see all the other stories, and know that what I am feeling is natural and I WILL get through this. So, thank you to everyone who posts natural hair care/journey videos, you really do make a difference and inspire women like me who never knew they could make it this far and feel so free!

Kiara Johnson - "EcoChic Mane"

Kiara is an environmental advocate from Oakland, California, and is the creator of "EcoChic Mane." Her content focuses on self-love and empowerment. She merges her passions for sustainability and natural hair care. Her channel focuses on eco-friendly hair care routines, Do It Yourself natural hair products, and promoting a lifestyle respectful of both one and the planet. Kiara's content challenges stereotypes by showcasing beauty and environmental consciousness can go hand in hand, inspiring her audience to make greener choices in their beauty routines.

She stated:

Every curl on our head is a reminder of the diversity of our planet, and how we care for our hair should reflect our commitment to caring for the Earth. Choosing eco-friendly hair care routines and products allows me to nurture myself and make a positive impact on the environment. My wish is for us to embrace our natural beauty in a way that honors and preserves the world around us.

She further stated:

Beauty shouldn't come at the expense of our planet. I created 'EcoChic Mane,' to explore how our choices in hair care can be both an act of self-love and an act of environmental love. EcoChic is proof that you can be fabulous and eco-conscious at the same time. Join me in making beauty a powerful force for change, one curl at a time.

Morgan Bailey - "Bailey's Business Beats"

Morgan Bailey uses her YouTube channel, "Bailey's Business Beats," as a place to explore the intersection of entrepreneurship and African American hair care in Chicago, Illinois. Morgan gives insights into starting and growing a beauty business, highlights African American hair care brands, and shares marketing tips for other entrepreneurs. Her channel is a resource for

African American women seeking to enter the business side of beauty. She makes content, offering inspiration, business strategies, and community support. She shares:

Building a business in the beauty industry is a path to personal success and an opportunity to uplift my community. I want to showcase African American culture through hair care. On 'Bailey's Business Beats,' I talk about female entrepreneurs who turned their passion for natural hair into a business. It's about creating a legacy that celebrates African American identity and empowers the next generation of African American women entrepreneurs.

She also stated:

Success in the beauty business isn't just about the products you sell; it's about the stories you tell and the communities you build. We feature African American hair care brands, we're talking entrepreneurship and participating in a movement that values diversity, inclusion, and empowerment. Join me as I navigate the ins and outs of the industry, and together, let's carve out spaces where our voices are heard, and our natural beauty is celebrated.

Lastly, she stated:

There's a power in seeing someone who looks like you are running a business you admire. That's why 'Bailey's Business Beats' isn't just a channel; it's a place for inspiration, strategy, and support. Whether you're drafting your first business plan or looking to expand your brand, we're here to guide you through. Let's break barriers and build bridges together so our entrepreneurial dreams can be a reality.

Simone Richards - "The Hairitage Hub"

Simone is a griot or African American storyteller who created "The Hairitage Hub" to celebrate the hair stories of African American women. Her content ranges from interviewing other women about their hair journeys to exploring the global impact of African American hair culture. Simone's channel is focused on building a vibrant community that appreciates the heritage and diversity of African American hairstyles, promoting a sense of pride and collective identity. She is from New York City.

She gives her reason for creating a YouTube channel:

There is a story in every curl, coil, and kink, waiting to be told. This is more than a YouTube channel; it's a gathering place for the stories of resilience, beauty, and diversity that define our natural hair journeys. These stories celebrate our heritage as African American women. Let's embrace our hair as a powerful expression of our history and identity.

She further states:

Our hair is a bridge connecting us to our ancestors...It is a testament to our struggles and a celebration of our uniqueness. The Hairitage Hub,' also explores the global impact of natural hair culture. We showcase how our roots influenced the world far beyond our communities. It's a call to recognize and honor the beauty in our diversity, to see our hair as a crown forged by the stories of generations. Join me in this journey, and together, let's claim our place in the global narrative of beauty and strength.

Destiny Washington - "Mindful Manes"

Destiny is a wellness coach and yoga instructor from Los Angeles, California. She started a YouTube channel called "Mindful Manes" to integrate hair care with overall wellness. Her

channel focuses on holistic approaches to beauty and emphasizes the connection between healthy hair and a healthy mind. Destiny's videos are inspirational and discuss stress-free hair routines, mindfulness practices for self-acceptance, and the importance of inner beauty. She inspires her viewers to embrace their natural beauty by fostering a positive mindset and self-care practices.

She stated:

True beauty comes from a place of inner peace and wellness...' Mindful Manes,' believes that taking care of your hair is a form of self-love and an extension of mindfulness. Every strand tells a story of your journey towards self-acceptance and well-being. Let's nurture our hair and our minds with the same tenderness...creating routines to enhance our natural beauty and bring peace to our busy and sometimes crazy lives.

She also stated:

My hair is a reflection of my overall health and state of mind. Through this channel, I explore how stress-free hair routines can create a peaceful life. It's about transforming your beauty practices into meditative moments...Let me inspire you to wellness where you can learn to love your hair and ourselves one breath at a time.

Furthermore:

Mindful Manes' is dedicated to showing how a positive outlook can transform our health, our hair and our entire being. Mindfulness practices and natural hair care is a holistic approach to beauty that acknowledges the strength within...We have the power to redefine our beauty standards and focus on the harmony between mind, body, and soul...Namaste!

Summary

Their motivations for African American women creating content on this YouTube are multifaceted and deeply rooted in a desire to empower, educate, and build a community around the celebration of natural hair. These women are driven by the need to fill a representational gap in mainstream beauty narratives, offering an alternative that emphasizes the beauty, versatility, and dignity of natural African hair. They aim to counteract the prevalent Eurocentric beauty standards by showcasing the richness and diversity of African American hair textures, thereby fostering a sense of pride and self-acceptance among their viewers.

Additionally, these content creators are motivated by the desire to support others on their natural hair journeys by providing practical advice, tips, and inspiration. They recognize the challenges many face in embracing their natural hair, from societal pressures to lack of knowledge, and seek to alleviate these challenges through their content. Beyond hair care, some creators also delve into entrepreneurship, aiming to inspire viewers to pursue their business ambitions, particularly within the beauty industry, thus further empowering their community.

In essence, these African American women content creators are driven by a commitment to empowerment, education, and community building. Their work on YouTube goes beyond personal expression; it catalyzes change, inspiring viewers to embrace their natural beauty, support one another, and pursue their ambitions with confidence. Through their efforts, they contribute to creating a more inclusive and supportive online space for African American women and beyond.

What are the experiences and perceptions of viewers regarding the sense of place fostered by natural African hair content on YouTube?

Common Themes

Natural Hair Journey

African American women content creators use the landscape of YouTube to create online places. Data shows they occupy virtual real estate on YouTube where they convene to share stories about their natural hair journeys. This emerged as a powerful theme resonating in viewer's comments. These comments touch on other topics such as self-discovery, empowerment, and the courage to embrace one's authentic self in the face of societal expectations and stereotypes (Gill, 2010; Haaruun & Watson, 2014; Phelps-Ward & Laura, 2016). Among the comments, two quotes stand out, highlighting the impact these videos have on individuals navigating their own paths toward self-acceptance and love. One viewer shared:

Your video has truly inspired me to let go and be secure with who I am. underscores the transformative power of seeing others confidently embrace their natural beauty. It echoes the idea representation and visibility matter, thus offering the reassurance there is support along their journey. Another viewer recounts a moment in their life, saying, "I recently big chopped...I was really scared about being judged, but you've really helped me with those fears.

This statement reflects some of the emotions involved in the "big chop," which is one of the first steps along the natural journey- cutting off the chemically treated or damaged part of their hair. The support and encouragement found in these video comments serve to guide viewers from uncertainty and fear to a place of acceptance and pride. These quotes summarize what it means to these content creators and viewers who share and witness natural hair journeys on YouTube.

Compliments on Hair Growth and Beauty

The comments showed personal narratives and shared experiences played a pivotal role in fostering a sense of community of support and admiration. Within this dialogue, direct engagements and affirmations served as expressions of personal sentiment and as reflections of broader societal attitudes towards natural hair. Among these comments, several quotes stand out, highlighting both the admiration for natural African hair's inherent qualities and the communal appreciation of its beauty. For instance, the observation,

“Your hair grows fast!” reflects a recognition of the natural characteristics of African-textured hair, challenging historical stereotypes and misconceptions about its growth patterns and health.

Further enriching this conversation, is the exclamation, “I wish I had those genes!!!” signifies a broader acknowledgment of the genetic diversity and richness underpinning the unique attributes of natural African hair. This expression of envy, far from being a superficial desire, underscores a growing appreciation for the genetic determinants of natural hair texture and growth that moves beyond traditional Eurocentric beauty standards to embrace a more inclusive understanding of beauty. Moreover, the compliment,

“Your crown is beautiful!” encapsulates the sentiment of admiration towards natural African hair, elevating it from a basic physical attribute to a symbol of identity, pride, and heritage. This terminology, referring to hair as a "crown," imbues it with a sense of dignity and respect, reflecting a cultural shift towards valuing and celebrating natural African hair in its many forms (Everett, 2002; Holton, 2020; T. Johnson & Bankhead, 2014)

These comments illustrate a positive perception and attitude towards natural African hair, marking a departure from historical prejudices to a more inclusive appreciation. These comments also highlight the aesthetic appeal of natural African hair and its deeper cultural and symbolic significance. This discourse contributes to a narrative empowering African American women to embrace their natural beauty and heritage with pride and confidence.

Expressions of Gratitude and Inspiration

The comments document African American women content creators are increasingly central to disseminating knowledge, fostering inspiration, and building supportive communities. The dialogue between these content creators and their audiences is rich with expressions of gratitude, admiration, and personal growth, underscoring the usefulness and impact of shared wisdom and encouragement in the journey toward self-acceptance and empowerment.

Expressions such as,

“Thank you for your hair wisdom.”

reflect the value placed on the knowledge shared by content creators, acknowledging the significance of their insights in navigating the complexities of natural African hair care. This gratitude speaks to the importance of education and mentorship within the natural African hair community, where the sharing of information serves as a vital resource for individuals seeking to embrace and care for their natural hair. Similarly, statements like,

“You are such an inspiration to me...and Thanks for being an inspiration!”

highlight the motivational role influencers play in the lives of their followers. These expressions of admiration found in the comments underscore the content creator’s ability to transcend just sharing hair care tips, to becoming symbols of resilience, beauty, and self-confidence. Through their journeys, challenges, and successes, the comments show these African American women

content creators inspire their audiences to embrace their own paths with courage and enthusiasm. For example, the sentiment:

“You've really helped me with those fears.”

reveals the personal impact of African American women content creators' work, addressing the anxieties and insecurities often accompanying the process of accepting their natural African hair. This comment also acknowledgment points to the transformative power of support and reassurance provided by the online community, enabling viewers to overcome obstacles and embrace their natural beauty with confidence.

Lastly, the statement,

“I just want to say thank you and keep doing what you do...”

sums up the appreciation for African American women content creators' contributions to the Natural Hair Movement. They serve as an encouragement for continued advocacy, education, and support, and the ongoing need to champion the beauty and diversity of natural African hair. These comments express gratitude and admiration and indicate an interconnected community where knowledge, inspiration, and support flow freely.

Shared Experiences and Emotional Connections

The comment related to the NHJ reveals the multifaceted challenges individuals encounter, encompassing aspects of growth, acceptance, and a sense of solidarity throughout these shared transformative experiences. These comments summarize this dynamic and provide insight into the emotional depth and communal support found in the NHM In the confession,

“I began to cry because I experienced the same horrible feelings during my first big chop.”

Speaks to the emotional turmoil commonly accompanying the decision to embrace her natural hair texture fully. The BC can evoke feelings from fear to liberation, and sometimes regret. This shared experience in the comments underscores the importance of empathy and understanding within the natural hair community, acknowledging the emotional weight of such a transformative decision (Norwood, 2018; Tate, 2007). This comment:

“I had no idea that I would hit such a low, but I am SO THANKFUL that I did because my sense of worth is now wrapped in WHO I am and no longer WHAT I look like...”

reflects how the natural hair journey leads to self-discovery and redefinition of self-worth beyond physical appearance. This comment shows the transformative potential of embracing one's natural African hair as a pathway to deeper self-acceptance and identity affirmation. It illustrates the shift from valuing oneself based on Eurocentric beauty standards to a more intrinsic appreciation of their essence and values (Dash, 2006; Greer, 2019; Wingfield, 2008). Lastly, the affirmation,

“I’m not against a sister with a weave or a wig or a relaxer, but I am sending a special shout-out to my natural sisters...”

emphasizes inclusivity and respect for individual choices within the broader discourse on natural African hair. This comment acknowledges the diversity of ways in which African American women choose to wear their hair, while also celebrating the specific choice to go natural. This comment fosters a sense of solidarity among those who opt to wear their hair in its natural state, without alienating those who prefer other styles, further reinforcing that beauty and identity expression are deeply personal choices.

Acknowledgment of Impact on Personal Choices

The comments included personal testimonials underscoring the influence individuals draw from one another's experiences. These comments highlight the decision-making process behind embracing natural African hair and reflect the supportive and motivational role shared stories play in navigating this journey. One individual credits their transformative decision directly to the influence of another, stating:

“Your hair is the reason why I've decided to go natural.”

This declaration signifies the impact of visual representation and shared success stories in motivating others to embark on their journeys toward natural hair acceptance. Another person shared their concerns and the quest for guidance, noting,

“I was a worried mom and have been looking for inspirational hair videos.”

This comment illustrates the search for community and resources for both encouragement and practical advice for those navigating the care and styling of natural African hair, especially when looking to foster a positive self-image in their children. The natural hair journey's initiation is often rooted in personal observations about hair health, as one individual remarks,

“I started going natural in May of 2012 because I noticed how thin my hair started getting.”

This insight points to the health-driven motivations behind the choice to go natural, underscoring the desire for healthier, stronger hair as a catalyst for change. Celebrating milestones is a common theme, with remarks such as,

“I just hit 4 months post-BC (Big Chop), and everything is lovely.”

showcases the milestones and positive outcomes associated with the natural hair journey. These accomplishments provide hope and reassurance for African American women at various stages of

their paths found in embracing their natural texture. These comments reflect the diverse motivations and experiences within the natural hair community.

Requests for Advice and Product Information

These comments show inquiries and requests for feedback within the natural African hair community occur regularly. The comments underscore these videos are a place for knowledge-seeking and sharing effective natural hair care practices tailored to diverse natural hair textures and styles. One question,

“I was wondering what your hair type is?”

highlights the importance of understanding hair texture and type when seeking personalized hair care solutions. This comment also reflects the quest for knowledge within the community, where knowledge of the specifics of her hair type can significantly influence the choice of products and routines. Another inquiry,

“Do you have a video on how you co-wash while wearing your 2 strands?”

showcases African American women’s desire for detailed, technique-specific advice, emphasizing the value placed on learning from others’ experiences (Awad et al., 2015; Ellington, 2015; Norwood, 2018). This comment points to the community’s reliance on shared knowledge to navigate the complexities of maintaining and styling natural hair, particularly when employing protective styles like two-strand twists. The statement,

“I have used the Cantu and As I Am products. My hair is more manageable.”

offers insight into the trial-and-error process inherent in finding the right hair care products. It highlights the importance of product selection in achieving desired outcomes for hair health and manageability. This comment contributes to the community-building aspect of YouTube by

creating the sense this is a place to receive aid and provide aid to others in making informed decisions about their natural African hair care routines.

Expressions of Admiration and Enthusiasm

Some comments reflect personal admiration and celebration of natural African hair and its beauty and resilience. The declaration,

“You are my hair crush!!”

encapsulates the admiration for someone's natural hair journey and achievements, signaling the inspirational role African American women content creators play in online communities. This term of endearment signifies aesthetic appreciation and represents a recognition of the journey, care, and love invested in nurturing natural African hair. Similarly, the accolade,

“You are my natural hair heroine!”

elevates the content creator's status to a role model within this online community. It shows how African American women can empower others by witnessing another's natural hair journey, offering motivation and encouragement to continue along this path. Reflecting on one's beginnings, one viewer comments,

“I just went back to see your 'original journey'... my goodness, you are such a natural, beautiful sistah.”

This comment acknowledges physical beauty and celebrates the authenticity and strength demonstrated throughout their natural hair journey. This comment also recognizes the courage to publicly share her journey online, reinforcing the notion YouTube is a place to celebrate natural beauty and identify sources of inspiration. Together, these comments reflect a sense of place where shared experiences and emotional connections are made. It is also a place for expressing gratitude, providing support, and giving inspiration to the natural hair community on YouTube.

Discussion

Netnography

This case study demonstrated the power of netnography as a viable methodological approach in unraveling the complex dynamics of digital placemaking by African American women on YouTube. This qualitative research technique, adapted from traditional ethnography to the digital realm, offers a nuanced lens through which to explore the rich tapestry of content creation, community engagement, and cultural expression found within YouTube channels dedicated to natural African hair care and products. Through netnography, the case study meticulously analyzed the motivation to create content on YouTube by African American women creators. Motivation ranged from wanting to create hair care tutorials and product reviews to personal narratives of self-love and empowerment. This approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of how these creators share their expertise and experiences and actively construct and cultivate digital spaces that affirm and celebrate the identity and beauty of natural African hair. The thematic analysis of video content, viewer comments, and engagement metrics revealed how these digital spaces function as sites of placemaking, where community members gather to exchange knowledge, offer support and reinforce collective cultural values.

Netnography also facilitated the identification of key themes central to the digital placemaking process, such as empowerment, community building, and resistance against mainstream beauty standards. This case study highlighted the platform's role in fostering a sense of belonging and collective identity among viewers by examining how African American women use YouTube to articulate their identities and narratives. Furthermore, netnography provided insights into the motivations driving African American women to create content on YouTube to challenge societal norms, share empowering messages, and support others in their natural hair

journeys. This methodological approach underscored the significance of these motivations in the larger context of digital placemaking, demonstrating how personal narratives and shared experiences become foundational elements in building inclusive and supportive online spaces.

Through netnographic analysis, the chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics at play in the creation and sustenance of digital communities centered around natural African hair care, highlighting the transformative impact of these spaces on individual and collective levels.

Placemaking

Placemaking on YouTube by African American content creators focused on natural African hair represents a vibrant intersection of culture, identity, and digital community building. These creators have skillfully utilized the platform to carve out spaces to disseminate knowledge about natural hair care and foster a sense of belonging and empowerment among viewers. Through their content, they challenge prevailing beauty standards, advocate for the acceptance and celebration of natural African hair, and contribute to the reshaping of narratives around beauty and identity. The role of these African American women on YouTube transcends mere content creation; it embodies an act of digital placemaking where online spaces become sites of cultural expression and community engagement. Their channels serve as platforms for sharing personal journeys, offering hair care advice, and discussing the broader cultural and social implications of embracing natural hair. This has fostered inclusive and supportive communities that empower viewers to embrace their natural beauty and navigate their hair care journeys with confidence. Moreover, the motivations behind these content creators' efforts highlight a commitment to visibility, representation, and empowerment. They are driven by a desire to provide a counter-narrative to mainstream media portrayals of beauty, to support others in their

personal and entrepreneurial endeavors, and to build a sense of community among those who have been marginalized by conventional beauty standards. Through their work, they underscore the significance of digital spaces in fostering diverse expressions of identity and beauty, marking a significant contribution to the discourse on natural African hair and the empowerment of African American women.

African American Women Content Creators

African American women content creators on YouTube emerged as trailblazers in the digital landscape, carving out spaces to celebrate natural African hair and foster communities where freedom of expression and safety are paramount. These creators, through their dedication and innovation, have established online environments offering alternatives to the often restrictive and monolithic narratives found in traditional media (Ford, 2019; Gill, 2010; L. A. Lee, 2017). Their work is critical in providing a platform for voices and stories that have historically been marginalized or overlooked. The role of these content creators extends beyond mere information dissemination; they are architects of digital placemaking, crafting spaces that are inclusive, empowering, and reflective of the diverse experiences within the African American community. This act of placemaking is not just about creating content; it's about building a community that values diversity, encourages self-expression, and supports individual journeys toward self-acceptance.

Freedom of expression is a cornerstone of these digital spaces. Online platforms provide African American women with the opportunity to share their experiences, insights, and creativity without the constraints encountered in offline environments. This freedom is essential for fostering innovation, encouraging diversity of thought, and promoting cultural understanding. In the context of natural African hair, it allows for a wider exploration of styles, products, and care

techniques not widely represented in mainstream beauty outlets. Safety is another critical aspect of the digital spaces created by African American women content creators. Online communities offer a refuge where individuals can explore their identities, share their experiences, and seek advice without fear of judgment or discrimination. For many, these spaces may be the first environments where they feel truly seen and supported in their natural hair journey. The safety found in these online communities is not merely physical but emotional and psychological, providing a sanctuary from the microaggressions and biases that can pervade everyday life. These content creators act as educators and mentors, guiding their viewers through the complexities of hair care, self-care, and personal growth. They leverage their online presence to advocate for change, raise awareness about social and environmental issues, and inspire action within their communities. Their role as trailblazers is underscored by their ability to mobilize and empower others, driving forward a movement that transcends the boundaries of the digital world and impacts society at large.

Media Convergence

Mains's (2022) exploration of media convergence provides a critical framework for understanding how African American content creators leverage multiple digital platforms to expand the reach and impact of their message, especially in the context of natural African hair care and cultural identity (Mains, 2022). This strategy is particularly effective for African American women who use platforms like YouTube to share their journeys, tips, and stories about natural hair care. Once content is created, it can be adapted and shared on social media sites like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter (X), where the nature of interaction varies but the core message of empowerment, education, and community remains constant. This not only enhances the visibility of their content, it also engages with audiences who may prefer one platform over

another, thus broadening the conversation about natural hair acceptance and the challenges faced by the African American community.

Mains's insights into how protest organizations use media convergence to become trending topics online further illuminate how African American content creators can mobilize their online communities for advocacy and social change. By employing similar tactics, creators can highlight issues surrounding beauty standards, racial discrimination, and representation, transforming individual narratives into powerful collective movements. This expanded message resonates with a wider audience, garnering support, sparking dialogue, and influencing societal perceptions. The use of media convergence by African American content creators amplifies their message and fosters a sense of belonging and solidarity among viewers. It creates a multi-platform ecosystem where individuals can engage with content that reflects their experiences, learn from others' journeys, and participate in a larger dialogue about identity, culture, and acceptance. This approach underscores the importance of digital spaces as sites of cultural expression and community building, where messages of self-love, empowerment, and resistance against mainstream narratives can flourish.

The effectiveness of media convergence lies in its ability to create a seamless experience for audiences as they navigate between platforms, encountering consistent messages of empowerment and community. This continuity strengthens the creators' brand and message, making it more likely for their content to be shared, discussed, and acted upon. In essence, each platform becomes a piece of a larger puzzle, contributing to a comprehensive narrative that supports African American women's journey toward self-acceptance and empowerment. Furthermore, the strategic use of media conversion facilitates engagement with a broader demographic, including those who may not be directly part of the African American natural hair

community but are allies or interested in learning more. By making content accessible across different platforms, creators invite wider conversations around diversity, representation, and inclusivity, extending the impact of their work beyond their immediate audience. This expanded approach also offers an opportunity for content creators to experiment with different formats and styles of communication, tailoring their message to fit the unique characteristics and audience preferences of each platform. For instance, a detailed tutorial video on YouTube can be complemented by a series of quick tips on Instagram, a reflective post on Facebook, and a lively discussion on Twitter. This not only amplifies the message but also enriches the content ecosystem, providing varied entry points for engagement with the topic of natural African hair care.

Incorporating media convergence into their content strategy, African American women creators on YouTube are not just disseminating information; they are actively participating in a digital dialogue that spans platforms, cultures, and communities. Their efforts underscore the dynamic potential of digital media to connect, inspire, and mobilize individuals around shared experiences and goals. As they continue to navigate and utilize the interconnected landscape of digital platforms, these creators are at the forefront of shaping a more inclusive and empowered online narrative for African American women and beyond.

This netnography was used to understand the digital placemaking by African American women on YouTube. It focused on their motivations, the content they produce, and the vibrant communities they foster around natural African hair care. Through systematic analysis, it has illuminated how these creators share invaluable insights into hair care practices and engage in deeper conversations about identity, culture, and empowerment, thereby constructing meaningful online spaces that challenge mainstream beauty narratives and celebrate diversity. The

motivations driving these women to create content on YouTube are multifaceted, rooted in a desire to fill a void in representation, counteract prevailing stereotypes, and provide a platform for voices and stories often sidelined in traditional media. These creators have turned their channels into beacons of inspiration and self-acceptance. They encourage viewers to embrace their natural beauty, pursue personal and entrepreneurial ambitions, and support each other in their natural hair journeys.

The content produced by these trailblazers ranges from detailed tutorials and product reviews to personal narratives of self-discovery and empowerment. This rich tapestry of content not only educates and informs but also creates a sense of belonging and solidarity among viewers. It highlights the transformative power of sharing experiences and knowledge in fostering a supportive and inclusive digital environment where African American women can explore and celebrate their natural hair. The study's netnographic approach offered comprehensive insights into the dynamics of these online communities, showcasing how African American women content creators utilize YouTube as a platform for cultural expression and community engagement. Through media convergence, they amplify their message across digital landscapes, broadening their reach and impact. This strategic dissemination of content across platforms exemplifies the creators' role in navigating and shaping digital spaces, making significant contributions to the discourse surrounding natural African hair care and the broader cultural and social narratives.

Looking forward, this case study opens avenues for future research in digital placemaking and the role of social media in shaping cultural identities and communities. Further studies could explore the long-term impact of these digital communities on societal perceptions of beauty, the evolution of content strategies in response to changing social dynamics, and the

potential for digital platforms to foster global movements centered on inclusivity and representation. Additionally, examining the challenges and opportunities presented by algorithmic changes on platforms like YouTube could provide valuable insights into sustaining and growing digital communities in an ever-evolving online ecosystem. This case study underscores the significance of African American women content creators on YouTube as pioneers of digital placemaking, using netnography to unravel the complexity of their contributions. Their work enriches the digital landscape with diverse narratives and perspectives and fosters a global community united in the celebration of natural African hair. As we move forward, their legacy and ongoing efforts provide a fertile ground for future research, promising to deepen our understanding of digital culture, identity, and community in the 21st century.

Conclusion

This dissertation on placemaking and natural African hair traverses the intricate relationship between African American women, their hair, and the geographical spaces, both physical and digital, they navigate and create. It unpacks the historical, cultural, and societal dimensions that intertwine with the perceptions and representations of natural African hair, using a comprehensive methodological approach spanning from historical analysis to netnography. This concluding chapter synthesizes the insights gained from each chapter, reflecting on the journey of natural African hair through postcolonial, cultural, and digital lenses, and proposes directions for future geographical studies in this area.

Synthesis of Insights

Beginning with Chapter 1, it sets the stage by identifying a scholarly gap in geographical research related to natural African hair in the United States and advocates for its place within academic discourse. It highlighted the significance of natural African hair as a critical dimension of African American culture and identity, shaped by the interplay of race, gender, and social class. Chapter 2 delved into the historical roots of natural African hair, examining the impact of sexual exploitation and coerced liaisons during slavery on the diversity of hair textures. It explored how pre and postcolonial respectability politics have influenced perceptions and representations of natural African hair, highlighting the need for a geographical analysis of these phenomena. Moving on to Chapter 3 which traced the evolution of natural African hair as a symbol of resistance to its current status as a celebrated aspect of African American identity. It underscored the importance of digital platforms and social media in redefining beauty standards and advocating for rights and protections against hair-based discrimination, culminating in the CROWN Act of 2021. Chapter 4 discussed the utility of netnography in exploring the digital

placemaking efforts of African American women on YouTube. Lastly, Chapter 5 revealed how content creators use the platform to redefine beauty norms, resist mainstream ideals, and foster communities around natural African hair. The analysis highlighted the motivations behind these digital endeavors and the significance of these online spaces in promoting empowerment, identity formation, and broader beauty discourse.

Geography Research

Future geographic studies could extend this research by supporting empirical investigations aimed at exploring intersectionalities, which are global in scale, addressing the impact of placemaking on digital platforms, looking at spatial practices and physical places, and analyzing Policy and Legal Frameworks.

Exploring Intersectionality

This complexity is not merely a backdrop but actively informs the spaces—both physical and digital—where African American women engage with and celebrate their natural hair. To further examine this interplay, it is essential to conduct research into how these intersecting identities influence the creation, negotiation, and perception of places dedicated to natural African hair.

Race, as a foundational aspect of identity for African American women, is central to the discourse on natural African hair. It shapes the historical context of hair texture biases and the ongoing struggle against Eurocentric beauty standards. The racialized experiences of African American women influence their engagement with spaces related to hair care, such as salons, beauty supply stores, and digital platforms like YouTube. These places become sites of cultural affirmation and resistance, where the racial aspects of hair politics are both challenged and celebrated.

Gender further complicates the geography of natural African hair. Women's bodies and appearances have long been subjected to societal scrutiny, with hair playing a significant role in perceptions of femininity and attractiveness. For African American women, natural hair is not just a personal choice but a gendered statement that defies traditional norms of beauty. The gendered dimensions of natural African hair discourse are manifested in the places where women share their hair journeys, seek advice, and offer support to each other, reinforcing solidarity and empowerment among women navigating similar paths.

Class intersects with race and gender to influence access to resources, knowledge, and spaces related to natural hair care. Economic factors can determine the availability of hair care products, salon services, and even participation in online communities (considering digital access). The class aspect also shapes the discourse around "professional" appearances, with natural African hair often stigmatized in corporate settings. This economic dimension of natural African hair discourse prompts a reevaluation of geographical spaces where class barriers are negotiated, and strategies for inclusivity and accessibility are developed.

The interplay of race, gender, and class thus creates a complex geographical landscape for natural African hair discourse and placemaking. Future studies could explore how these intersecting identities shape the creation and utilization of spaces for natural African hair care, both in physical communities and online platforms. Research could also examine how these identities influence the strategies employed by African American women to navigate societal barriers, foster community, and advocate for broader acceptance and celebration of natural hair. Such studies would not only contribute to a deeper understanding of the geographical dimensions of natural African hair discourse but also offer insights into the broader dynamics of identity, space, and place-making in contemporary society.

Global Perspectives

The discourse surrounding natural African hair is deeply embedded within a specific cultural and societal context, predominantly focused on the experiences of African American women in the United States. However, the global dynamics of race, identity, and beauty standards suggest the conversation around natural African hair transcends national boundaries, influenced by a complex web of transnational exchanges and cultural flows (Barnett, 2016; Byrd & Tharps, 2014; Dash, 2006). Expanding the focus of research to include global perspectives on natural African hair opens up a nuanced understanding of how cultural practices, beauty standards, and the politics of hair are negotiated across different geographies. Transnational exchanges play a crucial role in shaping perceptions and practices surrounding natural African hair. The globalization of media and digital platforms allows for the rapid dissemination of beauty ideals, hair care techniques, and cultural narratives, creating a shared space for dialogue and exchange among women of African descent worldwide. This global network fosters a sense of solidarity and collective identity, while also highlighting the diversity of experiences and cultural approaches to hair care within the African diaspora.

The influence of global beauty standards on natural African hair cannot be understated. Western beauty ideals often permeate global media, impacting perceptions of beauty and self-worth among women of African descent in various countries (Carmen Hutchinson Miller, 2016; Dash, 2006; Patton, 2006). Exploring how these standards are resisted, reinterpreted, or embraced in different cultural contexts can provide insight into the global struggle against Eurocentric norms and the efforts to valorize natural African hair textures. Cultural practices related to hair care are also deeply rooted in history and tradition, varying significantly across the African continent and among African diaspora communities. Examining these practices in a

global context allows researchers to uncover the rich tapestry of techniques, rituals, and meanings associated with natural African hair. This exploration can reveal how cultural heritage and contemporary influences converge to shape hair care practices and the celebration of natural hair textures. Furthermore, the transnational dialogue surrounding natural African hair has the potential to challenge and redefine beauty standards on a global scale. As women of African descent share their journeys of embracing natural hair, they contribute to a broader discourse that questions dominant beauty narratives and advocates for diversity and inclusion in beauty representations.

Future geographic studies could explore the impact of migration across the diaspora, and digital connectivity on the global discourse of natural African hair. Research might focus on comparative analyses of Natural Hair Movements in different countries, the role of social media in facilitating transnational cultural exchanges, and the impact of globalization on local hair care practices and beauty standards. Such studies would not only enrich our understanding of the geographical dimensions of natural African hair discourse but also highlight the interconnectedness of cultural identity, beauty practices, and global dynamics in shaping the experiences of women of African descent around the world.

Impact of Digital Platforms

The digital revolution ushered in a new era where cultural norms and practices are increasingly mediated through online platforms. Among these, social media and content sharing platforms play a pivotal role in shaping discussions around identity, beauty standards, and cultural practices. For African American women and the larger community of people with natural African hair, these digital spaces have become crucial for sharing experiences, advice, and advocacy related to natural hair care. However, the evolving role of these platforms, influenced

significantly by algorithmic changes, raises important questions about the visibility and impact of content related to natural African hair.

Algorithms, the complex sets of rules determining what content is displayed to users on digital platforms, have a profound influence on which voices are amplified and which are marginalized. As these algorithms prioritize content based on engagement metrics like clicks, likes, and shares, they can inadvertently favor certain types of content over others. This dynamic has significant implications for content creators focusing on natural African hair, as the algorithmic biases may limit the reach of their content, affecting its overall impact and the ability to foster community and dialogue. Furthermore, algorithmic changes can alter the digital landscape overnight, shifting the visibility of content without warning. For creators and communities centered around natural African hair, staying abreast of these changes is crucial for maintaining engagement and ensuring their messages reach their intended audiences. The challenge lies in navigating a system where the rules are often opaque and subject to change, requiring creators to adapt their content strategies to maintain visibility.

The role of digital platforms in shaping cultural norms and practices extends beyond the mechanics of algorithms to encompass the broader implications for cultural representation and identity formation. As digital spaces become the primary sites for cultural exchange and community building, how natural African hair is represented and discussed online has real-world implications. These discussions can challenge prevailing beauty standards, offer support and advice, and foster a sense of belonging among individuals exploring their natural hair journeys. Future geographic studies could delve into the complex interplay between digital platforms, algorithms, and cultural practices related to natural African hair. Investigating how algorithmic changes affect the visibility of content could shed light on broader questions of digital equity,

representation, and the power dynamics at play in online spaces. Research could also explore strategies employed by content creators to navigate algorithmic challenges, as well as how digital communities adapt to ensure the continued celebration and discussion of natural African hair. Such studies would contribute to a deeper understanding of the digital geography of natural African hair discourse, highlighting the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age. They would also provide insights into the resilience and creativity of communities in maintaining vibrant spaces for cultural expression and advocacy, despite the shifting algorithms that shape our digital world.

Spatial Practices and Physical Places

Future studies can explore physical places associated with natural African hair care, notably salons and community centers, opening up a rich vein of geographic inquiry into how these spaces function as crucibles of cultural exchange, identity formation, and social interaction. These locales are not merely venues for hair care services; they are vibrant, dynamic spaces where individuals come together, sharing experiences, knowledge, and practices that extend far beyond the realm of hair maintenance. Understanding the role of these physical places in the broader discourse on natural African hair care offers insights into how cultural norms and identities are negotiated, affirmed, and challenged within specific geographic contexts.

Salons specializing in natural African hair care serve as epicenters of cultural exchange and education (Furman, 1997; Gill, 2010; Willett, 2000; Wingfield, 2008) They are spaces where the practical aspects of hair care are intertwined with discussions about beauty standards, cultural heritage, and personal identity. In these settings, hairdressers and clients engage in a dialogue that transcends the transactional nature of the service provided, delving into shared experiences of race, gender, and societal expectations. The salon becomes a site where knowledge is transmitted

about hair care techniques and also about the historical and cultural significance of natural African hairstyles. This exchange fosters a sense of community and belonging among clients, who find in these spaces a supportive environment that validates their experiences and choices regarding their hair.

Similarly, community centers play a pivotal role in the placemaking process for the natural African hair community. These venues often host workshops, seminars, and events focused on natural hair care, providing a platform for education, advocacy, and community building. Through these gatherings, individuals explore the complexities of natural African hair care, share tips and strategies, and engage in discussions about the implications of embracing natural hair. Community centers thus become nodes of cultural and social interaction, where the collective exploration of identity and heritage is encouraged and facilitated. Both salons and community centers contribute to the formation of identity by providing spaces where individuals can openly express and celebrate their natural African hair, free from the pressures to conform to mainstream beauty standards. These places offer a counter-narrative to prevailing perceptions of beauty, challenging stereotypes and fostering a positive self-image among African American women and others within the African diaspora. The physical act of coming together in these spaces reinforces a collective identity centered around the pride and acceptance of natural African hair, strengthening the bonds within the community.

Future geographic studies could delve deeper into the spatial dynamics of these places, exploring how they are shaped by and reflect the communities they serve. Research could examine how these spaces facilitate cultural continuity and change, contribute to the empowerment of individuals and communities, and act as focal points for resistance against discriminatory beauty norms. Additionally, such studies could investigate the impact of

geographic location, socio-economic factors, and urban planning on the accessibility and significance of salons and community centers within different communities. In essence, examining the physical places associated with natural African hair care reveals the intricate ways in which spaces are imbued with cultural, social, and political meanings. These sites of cultural exchange and identity formation play a crucial role in the placemaking process for the natural African hair community, highlighting the importance of geography in understanding the multifaceted relationship between place, identity, and culture.

Policy and Legal Frameworks

The enactment of policies and legislation, notably the CROWN Act, marks a significant milestone in the legal recognition and protection of natural African hair, addressing long-standing issues of racial discrimination and social injustice. This legislation prohibits discrimination based on hair texture and hairstyles and symbolizes a societal acknowledgment of the cultural, historical, and personal significance of natural African hair. Analyzing the impact of such legal frameworks on the geographical distribution of natural hair care resources reveals the intersection of law, geography, and racial justice, offering insights into the spatial dynamics of accessibility and the broader implications for social equity.

The CROWN Act, by legally affirming the right to wear natural and protective hairstyles, potentially influences the geographical landscape of natural hair care resources in several ways. First, it may encourage the proliferation of salons and businesses specializing in natural hair care, as the demand for services that cater to natural hairstyles is legitimized and protected by law. This could lead to an increased presence of such businesses in diverse geographic areas, improving accessibility for individuals seeking professional care and advice for their natural hair. The geographical spread of these resources could challenge existing disparities in access,

particularly in regions where such services were previously limited or stigmatized. Second, the legal protection afforded by the CROWN Act and similar legislation might stimulate the development of educational programs and community initiatives focused on natural hair care, further enriching the ecosystem of resources available. Schools, community centers, and non-profit organizations could play pivotal roles in disseminating knowledge and skills related to natural hair care, fostering a culture of empowerment and self-care that transcends geographic boundaries. These educational efforts could mitigate the information gap that often exists in underserved communities, contributing to a more equitable distribution of knowledge and resources. Third, the impact of the CROWN Act extends beyond the provision of hair care services and education; it challenges systemic racial discrimination embedded within societal norms and practices. The Act prompts a reevaluation of institutional policies and practices in workplaces, schools, and other public spaces. This legislative shift has the potential to transform social attitudes and behaviors towards natural African hair, contributing to a broader cultural and societal acceptance that transcends geographic locations.

The broader implications of the CROWN Act and similar legislation for social justice are profound. They signal a move towards a more inclusive understanding of racial and cultural identity, where diversity in appearance is celebrated rather than suppressed. Analyzing the geographical distribution of natural hair care resources in the wake of such legislation offers a lens through which to examine progress toward racial equity and social justice. It highlights the ongoing challenges in ensuring that legal protections translate into tangible improvements in accessibility and acceptance across different communities. Future studies could explore the long-term effects of the CROWN Act on the availability and distribution of natural hair care resources, examining the nuances of how legislation interacts with geographic, economic, and

social factors. Research could also investigate the lived experiences of individuals and communities navigating the landscape of natural hair care post-legislation, providing insights into the successes, challenges, and unintended consequences of legal interventions aimed at combating racial discrimination.

Geography Education

Geography education holds a pivotal role in shaping and teaching the complex interactions between identity, place, and societal norms. The discussion surrounding code-switching the ability to , respectability politics, social class, race, skin color, and hair texture underscores several critical implications for geography education. First and foremost, geography educators are responsible for emphasizing the significance of diverse perspectives and experiences within different communities. Geographic education can incorporate case studies and examples reflecting the intersections of race, class, and identity so that students can gain a deeper understanding of how these factors shape geographic patterns and human experiences.

Additionally, geography education should raise awareness of social justice issues related to respectability politics, colorism, and beauty standards. Courses in geography and subfields should integrate these topics, encouraging students to critically examine how societal norms influence geographical dynamics and perpetuate geography educators should foster an understanding of the rich array of cultural practices, identities, and experiences within African American communities. This can be achieved through readings, discussions, and activities exploring the significance of hair texture, skin color, and cultural expressions in different geographic contexts.

Critical thinking should be at the core of geography education, prompting students to analyze how geographic contexts intersect with social identities. By challenging prevailing norms

and biases related to race, beauty, and identity, students can explore the spatial dimensions of these issues and develop a more nuanced perspective. Real-world examples and case studies can bring these concepts to life. Geography educators can incorporate examples that highlight the geographic implications of respectability politics and societal beauty standards, encouraging students to examine issues such as the spatial distribution of beauty salons or access to hair care products.

Moreover, the concept of intersectionality should be central to geography education. Educators should help students understand how multiple dimensions of identity, including race, gender, class, and more, intersect to shape individuals' experiences and geographical patterns. This holistic approach enriches students' comprehension of the intricate nature of human geography. In creating inclusive learning environments, geography education should ensure students from diverse backgrounds feel valued and heard. This inclusivity extends beyond the curriculum to encompass diversity among faculty, staff, and guest speakers within geography departments. Supporting open dialogue and empathetic discussions on topics related to race, identity, and beauty standards are crucial. Geography education can provide a safe space for students to engage in constructive conversations, fostering a deeper appreciation for different perspectives.

Finally, geography educators should stay current with research developments in the field, especially in areas related to social justice, race, and identity. Incorporating the latest research findings into the curriculum ensures that students receive up-to-date information and insights, empowering them to become informed, empathetic, and socially conscious geographers and citizens. Incorporating these implications into geography education can profoundly impact the way students perceive and engage with the world, equipping them with the knowledge and

critical thinking skills needed to navigate the complex intersections of identity, place, and society.

In concluding this dissertation, I am deeply moved by the intricate story woven by African American women through their relationships with their natural African hair. This journey, rooted in both the annals of history and the immediacy of today's digital world, reveals the enduring strength and resilience of these women. Their stories, set against a backdrop of geographical contexts, shine a beacon on the transformative act of placemaking. This is not just about occupying physical or digital spaces; it is a profound declaration of identity, a gathering of community, and a form of resistance that reverberates with the echoes of their ancestors. The emotional gravity of what these women have achieved cannot be overstated. Through the simple yet revolutionary act of embracing their natural African hair, they challenge centuries-old narratives, reclaiming a sense of self that has been contested and marginalized. Each twist, curl, and coil are a testament to their fortitude, a symbol of their refusal to be defined by external standards. In digital realms, their voices form a chorus of empowerment, echoing through the corridors of social media platforms, creating spaces where others can find solace, inspiration, and camaraderie.

As I conclude, it is impossible for me not to feel a profound sense of admiration and solidarity with these trailblazers. Their journeys, rich with insights into culture, geography, and digital media, invite the research community to continue the exploration, to delve deeper into these dynamic landscapes. The path they carve, marked by both challenges and triumphs, offers invaluable lessons for understanding the complex interplay between identity and place. This dissertation is but a snapshot of a much larger narrative, one that continues to evolve with each passing day. The courage of African American women to chart new territories in the face of

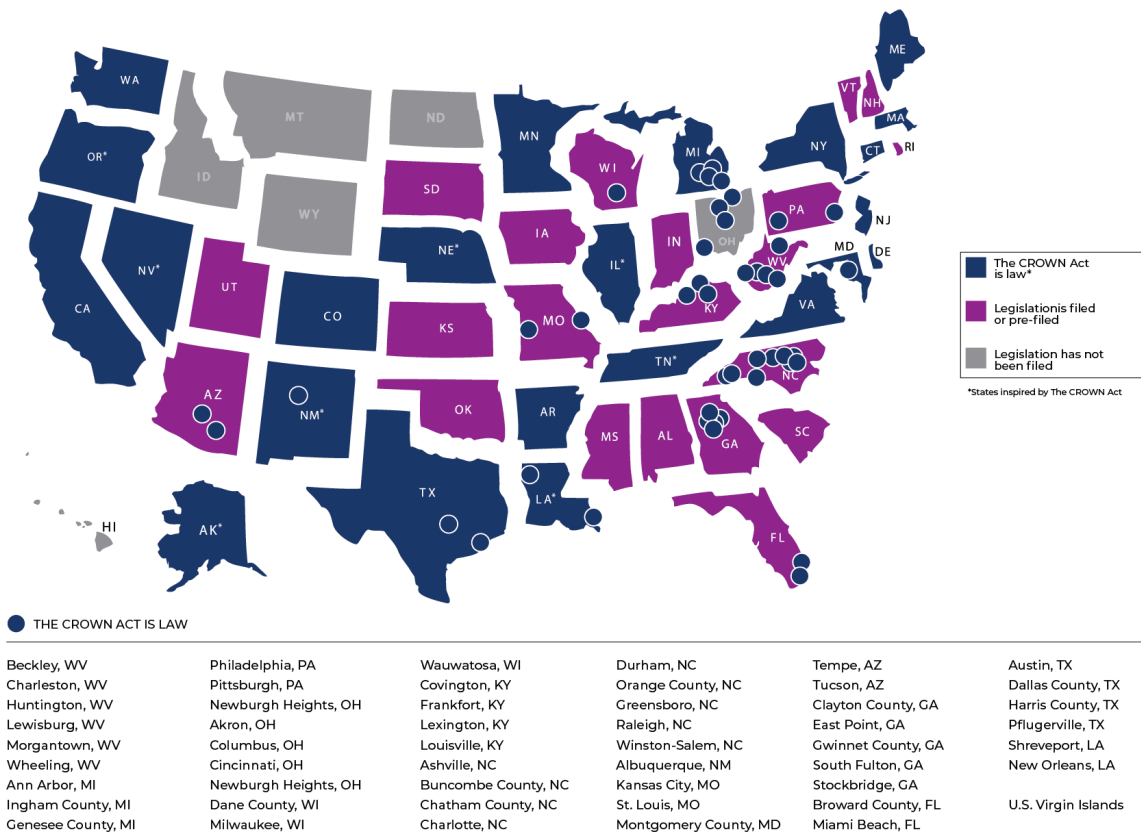
adversity offers hope and inspiration, reminding us of the power of individual actions to effect collective change. Their story is a clarion call to further explore the intersections of culture, geography, and digital media, encouraging future studies to build upon this foundation and continue the work of unraveling the rich, complex relationship between African American women and their natural hair.

In essence, this dissertation is a celebration—a celebration of resilience, of beauty, and of community. It stands as a testament to the indomitable spirit of African American women who, through the act of placemaking, affirm their place in the world, undeterred and unapologetically themselves. As we look to the future, their stories beckon us, especially African American female geographers to keep listening, learning, and exploring, ever mindful of the profound impact of our interconnected lives.

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX A -

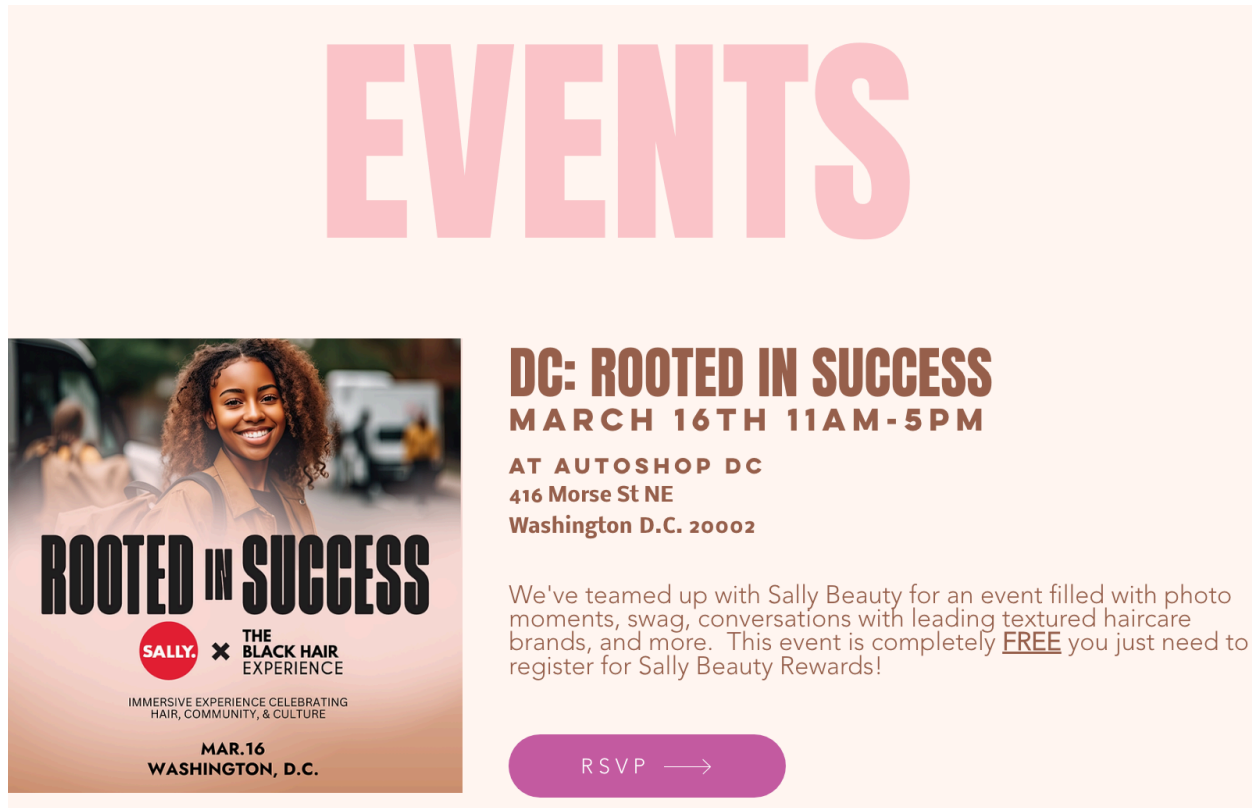
Figure 1 23 States Down, 27 To Go: The CROWN Act Legislative Status as of 2024



Source: (Dove The Crown Coalition, 2023)

APPENDIX B -

Figure 2: Sally's Beauty and The Black Hair Experience



EVENTS

DC: ROOTED IN SUCCESS
MARCH 16TH 11AM-5PM

AT AUTOSHOP DC
416 Morse St NE
Washington D.C. 20002

We've teamed up with Sally Beauty for an event filled with photo moments, swag, conversations with leading textured haircare brands, and more. This event is completely **FREE** you just need to register for Sally Beauty Rewards!

ROOTED IN SUCCESS

SALLY. X **THE BLACK HAIR EXPERIENCE**

IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE CELEBRATING
HAIR, COMMUNITY, & CULTURE

MAR.16
WASHINGTON, D.C.

RSVP →

Source: (*Events at The Black Hair Experience, 2024*)

References

Adams, J. (1999). Local Color: The Southern Plantation in Popular Culture. *Cultural Critique*,

- 42, 163. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1354595>
- Agnew, J. A., Shelley, F. M., & Pringle, D. G. (2003). Agnew, J.A. 1987: Place and Politics: the geographical mediation of state and society. *Progress in Human Geography*, 27(5), 605–614. <https://doi.org/10.1191/0309132503ph451xx>
- Albritton, T. J. (2012). Educating Our Own: The Historical Legacy of HBCUs and Their Relevance for Educating a New Generation of Leaders. *The Urban Review*, 44(3), 311–331. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-012-0202-9>
- Allen, D., Lawhon, M., & Pierce, J. (2019). Placing race: On the resonance of place with black geographies. *Progress in Human Geography*, 43(6), 1001–1019. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132518803775>
- Anderson, B. (2020). Cultural geography III: The concept of ‘culture.’ *Progress in Human Geography*, 44(3), 608–617. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132519856264>
- André, N. (2015). Immigration and the Great Migration: Porgy and Bess in the Harlem Renaissance. *American Music Review*, XLV(1).
- Appleford, K. (2016). Being seen in your pyjamas: The relationship between fashion, class, gender and space. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 23(2), 162–180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2015.1013439>
- Archer, M., & Blau, J. R. (1993). Class Formation in Nineteenth-Century America: The Case of the Middle Class. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19(1), 17–41. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.19.080193.000313>
- Aron, C. S. (2001). The Evolution of the Middle Class. In *A Companion to 19th-Century America* (pp. 178–191). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470998472.ch14>

- Ash, J., Kitchin, R., & Leszczynski, A. (2018). Digital turn, digital geographies? *Progress in Human Geography*, 42(1), 25–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132516664800>
- Ashanté M. Reese. (2019). *Black Food Geographies: Race, Self-Reliance, and Food Access in Washington, D.C.* The University of North Carolina Press; eBook Comprehensive Academic Collection (EBSCOhost).
<http://ezproxy.library.arizona.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e025xna&AN=2044782&site=ehost-live>
- Ashley, W. (2014). The Angry Black Woman: The Impact of Pejorative Stereotypes on Psychotherapy with Black Women. *Social Work in Public Health*, 29(1), 27–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19371918.2011.619449>
- Austin, C. J. (2008). *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party.* University of Arkansas Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1ffjh84>
- Awad, G. H., Norwood, C., Taylor, D. S., Martinez, M., McClain, S., Jones, B., Holman, A., & Chapman-Hilliard, C. (2015). Beauty and Body Image Concerns Among African American College Women. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 41(6), 540–564. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798414550864>
- Bacchus, D. N. A. (2002). *Stress and coping among professional Black women: An application of coping theory and exploration of the use of coping resources* [ProQuest Dissertations Publishing]. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/305469829?pq-origsite=primo>
- Bacchus, D. N. A. (2008). Coping with Work-Related Stress: A Study of the Use of Coping Resources Among Professional Black Women. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 17(1), 60–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15313200801906443>
- Bacchus, D. N. A., & Holley, L. C. (2005). Spirituality as a Coping Resource: The Experiences

- of Professional Black Women. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 13(4), 65–84. https://doi.org/10.1300/J051v13n04_04
- Bailey, M. M., & Shabazz, R. (2014). Gender and sexual geographies of Blackness: New Black cartographies of resistance and survival (part 2). *Gender, Place and Culture : A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 21(4), 449–452. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2013.786303>
- Baird, M. L. (2021). ‘Making Black More Beautiful’: Black Women and the Cosmetics Industry in the Post-Civil Rights Era. *Gender & History*, 33(2), 557–574. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.12522>
- Balshaw, M. (1999). New Negroes, new women: The gender politics of the Harlem renaissance. *Women (Oxford, England)*, 10(2), 127–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09574049908578383>
- Banks, I. (2000). *Hair matters: Beauty, power, and Black women’s consciousness*. University Press. <http://ezproxy.library.arizona.edu/login?url=http://www.netLibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=74306>
- Baptiste, D.-L., Caviness-Ashe, N., Josiah, N., Commodore-Mensah, Y., Arscott, J., Wilson, P. R., & Starks, S. (2022). Henrietta Lacks and America’s dark history of research involving African Americans. *Nursing Open*, 9(5), 2236–2238. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nop2.1257>
- Barnett, M. (2016). The Politics of Black Hair. *IDEAZ*, 14, 69–100. Humanities Source Ultimate.
- Barney, W. (2001). *A Companion to 19th-Century America*. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uaz/detail.action?docID=350858>
- Barrett, L. A. (2019). Tuskegee Syphilis Study of 1932–1973 and the Rise of Bioethics as Shown Through Government Documents and Actions. *DttP*, 47(4), 11–16. <https://doi.org/10.5860/dttp.v47i4.7213>
- Beal, F. M. (2008). Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female. *Meridians (Middletown, Conn.)*,

- 8(2), 166–176. <https://doi.org/10.2979/MER.2008.8.2.166>
- Beal, F. M., & dePass, T. (1986). The Historical Black Presence in the Struggle for Peace. *The Black Scholar*, 17(1), 2–7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.1986.11414379>
- Bell, J. D. (2018). *Lighting the Fires of Freedom: African American Women in the Civil Rights Movement*. New Press, The.
- Bell, J. M. (2014). *The Black power movement and American social work*. Columbia University Press.
- Bellinger, W. (2007). WHY AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN TRY TO OBTAIN “GOOD HAIR.” *Sociological Viewpoints*, 23, 63–72.
- Black, D. A., Sanders, S. G., Taylor, E. J., & Taylor, L. J. (2015). The Impact of the Great Migration on Mortality of African Americans: Evidence from the Deep South. *The American Economic Review*, 105(2), 477–503. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20120642>
- Bledsoe, A. (2020). The primacy of anti-blackness. *Area (London 1969)*, 52(3), 472–479. <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12599>
- Bledsoe, A., Eaves, L. E., & Williams, B. (2017). Introduction: Black Geographies in and of the United States South. *Southeastern Geographer*, 57(1), 6–11.
- Bledsoe, A., Wright, W. J., & Eaves, L. (2020). Black Geographies. In A. Kobayashi (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography (Second Edition)* (pp. 347–350). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-102295-5.10451-2>
- Bloch, S., & Meyer, D. (2023a). Displacement and affective economies in gentrification research. *Dialogues in Urban Research*, 1(3), 248–251. <https://doi.org/10.1177/27541258231210200>
- Bloch, S., & Meyer, D. (2023b). Displacement beyond dislocation: Aversive racism in

- gentrification studies. *Dialogues in Urban Research*, 1(3), 206–225.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/27541258231179188>
- Blok, A., BangCarlsen, H., & Albris, K. (2022). *How to Conduct Quali-Quantitative Digital Methods Research*. SAGE Publications, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529611205>
- Bloom, J., & Martin, W. E. (2016). *Black against empire: The history and politics of the Black Panther Party* (1st ed.). University of California Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520966451>
- Bottone, E. (2020). ‘Please Mention the Green Book’: The Negro Motorist Green Book as Critical GIS. *Historical Geography, GIScience and Textual Analysis: Landscapes of Time and Place*, 51–64.
- Boyd, R. L. (2021). The Harlem Renaissance and Blacks’ Employment in Cultural Expression Occupations. *Journal of African American Studies (New Brunswick, N.J.)*, 25(1), 82–101.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-021-09514-w>
- Brand, A. L., & Miller, C. (2020). Tomorrow I’ll Be at the Table: Black Geographies and Urban Planning: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 35(4), 460–474.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0885412220928575>
- Brown, N. E. (2021). 6 Black Women’s Hair Matters: The Uneasy Marriage of Electoral Politics and (Dis)Respectability Politics. In R. de Geus, E. Tolley, E. Goodyear-Grant, & P. J. Loewen (Eds.), *Women, Power, and Political Representation* (pp. 62–70). University of Toronto Press. <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781487536459-008>
- Brown, S. Z. (2023). Mapping pleasure and pain on Black women’s bodies: Southern Black feminist geographic interventions. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 30(2), 237–255.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2022.2035694>

- Bundles, A. P. (2001). *On her own ground: The life and times of Madam C.J. Walker*. Scribner.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge.
- Bynum, C. L. (2010). *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights*. University of Illinois Press.
- Byrd, A., & Tharps, L. (2014). *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America*. Macmillan.
- Cahill, L. S. (2019). BlackGirl Geography: A (Re)Mapping Guide towards Harriet Tubman and Beyond. *Girlhood Studies*, 12(3), 47–62.
<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy3.library.arizona.edu/10.3167/ghs.2019.120306>
- Caldwell, K. L. (2003). “Look at Her Hair”: The Body Politics of Black Womanhood in Brazil. *Transforming Anthropology*, 11(2), 18–29. <https://doi.org/10.1525/tran.2003.11.2.18>
- Camp, S. M. H. (2004). *Closer to freedom enslaved women and everyday resistance in the plantation South*. University of North Carolina Press.
<http://ezproxy.library.arizona.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=137897>
- Candelario, G. E. B. (2020). Hair Race-ing: Dominican Beauty Culture and Identity Production. *Meridians (Middletown, Conn.)*, 19(3), 22–50.
- Carmen Hutchinson Miller. (2016). Uncovering the Kink Celebrating my Black Identity: Perceptions on Afro-Costa Ricans Natural Hair. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 5(5), 78–95.
- Caro, R. A. (1974). *The power broker: Robert Moses and the fall of New York*, ([1st ed.]). Knopf.
- Carroll, T. W. (2017). Intersectionality and Identity Politics: Cross-Identity Coalitions for Progressive Social Change. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 42(3),

600–607. <https://doi.org/10.1086/689625>

- Chang, F. B., Rakhra, A., & Thompson, J. (2022). Racially Collusive Boycotts: African American Purchasing Power in the Wigs and Hair Extensions Market Symposium: Law, Markets, and Distribution. *Boston University Law Review*, *102*(4), 1277–1300.
- Chin, K.-S., Yoon, I.-J., & Smith, D. (1996). Immigrant Small Business and International Economic Linkage: A Case of the Korean Wig Business in Los Angeles, 1968–1977. *International Migration Review*, *30*(2), 485–510.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/019791839603000205>
- Christiani, P. E. (2014). Shake Up Your Natural. *Essence*, *45*(7), 55–56.
- Cloete, E., Khumalo, N. P., & Ngoepe, M. N. (2019). The what, why and how of curly hair: A review. *Proceedings of the Royal Society. A, Mathematical, Physical, and Engineering Sciences*, *475*(2231), 20190516–20190516. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rspa.2019.0516>
- Collins, W. J. (2021). The Great Migration of Black Americans from the US South: A guide and interpretation. *Explorations in Economic History*, *80*, 101382-.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eeh.2020.101382>
- Company, J. P. (1962, December). Ebony. *Johnson Publishing Company*, *18*, 164.
- Cooper, B. C. (2017). *Beyond respectability: The intellectual thought of race women*. University of Illinois Press. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/UAZ/detail.action?docID=4866471>
- Craig, M. L. (2017). Black Women and Beauty Culture in 20th-Century America. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.433>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, *43*(6), 1241–1299.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>

- Cresswell, T. (1996). *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press.
- Cresswell, T. (2014). Place. In *The SAGE Handbook of Human Geography: Two Volume Set* (1–2, pp. 3–21). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446247617>
- Crewe, L. (2001). The Besieged Body: Geographies of Retailing and Consumption. *Progress in Human Geography*, 25(4), 629–640.
- Dabiri, E. (2019). *Don't Touch My Hair*. Penguin UK.
- Dabiri, E. (2020). *Twisted: The tangled history of black hair culture* (First U.S. edition). Harper Perennial.
- Daly, D. (2021). *Humans R Social Media* (Open Textbook Edition). Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona.
- Daniels, G., Fraser, A., & Westgate, G. E. (2023). How different is human hair? A critical appraisal of the reported differences in global hair fibre characteristics and properties towards defining a more relevant framework for hair type classification. *International Journal of Cosmetic Science*, 45(1), 50–61. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ics.12819>
- Dash, P. (2006). Black hair culture, politics and change. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 10(1), 27–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110500173183>
- Davis, A. Y. (1994). Afro Images: Politics, Fashion, and Nostalgia. *Critical Inquiry*, 21(1), 37–45.
- Davis, G. (2020). Ecuador is Black: Afro-Ecuadorian Literary Resistance in *Drums Under My Skin*. *Student Scholars Day Oral Presentations*. https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/ssd_orals/10

- Davis-Sivasothy, A. (2011). *The Science of Black Hair: A Comprehensive Guide to Textured Hair*. SAJA Publishing Company.
- Dawson, J., & Murina, A. T. (2021). Biology of Hair. In B. S. Li & H. I. Maibach (Eds.), *Ethnic Skin and Hair and Other Cultural Considerations* (pp. 23–33). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-64830-5_3
- Dazey, M. (2021). Rethinking respectability politics. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 72(3), 580–593. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12810>
- Delgado-Tall, S. (2001). The New Negro Movement and the African Heritage in A Pan-Africanist Perspective. *Journal of Black Studies*, 31(3), 288–310. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002193470103100304>
- DeLongoria, M. (2018). Misogynoir:* Black Hair, Identity Politics, and Multiple Black Realities. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 12(8), 39–49.
- Dittmer, J., & Dodds, K. (2008). Popular Geopolitics Past and Future: Fandom, Identities and Audiences. *Geopolitics*, 13(3), 437–457. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040802203687>
- Dixon Omere, Z., & King, J. (2022). America’s History of Health Disparities: How Does this Affect the Future of Healthcare In Mississippi? *Honors Theses*. https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon_thesis/2708
- Dodds, K. (2006). Popular geopolitics and audience dispositions: James Bond and the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). *Transactions - Institute of British Geographers (1965)*, 31(2), 116–130. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2006.00199.x>
- Donahoo, S., & Smith, A. D. (2022). Controlling the Crown: Legal Efforts to Professionalize Black Hair. *Race and Justice*, 12(1), 182–203. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2153368719888264>

- Dove The Crown Coalition. (2023). *The CROWN Act Map 23 States Down, 27 To Go*: [Map].
<https://www.thecrownact.com/about>
- Drumond, S. E. (2020). *Hair: How Naturals Are Using Social Media to Reshape the Narrative and Visual Rhetoric of Black Hair*. 100.
- Ducre, K. A. (2018). The Black feminist spatial imagination and an intersectional environmental justice. *Environmental Sociology*, 4(1), 22–35.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23251042.2018.1426089>
- E Frances White. (2010). *Dark Continent Of Our Bodies: Black Feminism & Politics Of Respectability*. Temple University Press.
- Eaves, L. E. (2017). Black Geographic possibilities: On a Queer Black South. *Southeastern Geographer*, 57(1), 80–95. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sgo.2017.0007>
- Edwards, T. K. (2020). From the Editorial Board: Tangled Discrimination in Schools: Binding Hair to Control Student Identity. *The High School Journal*, 103(2), 53–56.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2020.0006>
- Elledge, A. M., & Faria, C. (2020). “I want to ... let my country shine”: Nationalism, development, and the geographies of beauty. *Environment and Planning. D, Society & Space*, 38(5), 829–848. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775820911953>
- Ellington, T. N. (2014). Bloggers, Vloggers, and a Virtual Sorority: A Means of Support for African American Women Wearing Natural Hair. *Journalism and Mass Communication*, 4(9), 552–564.
- Ellington, T. N. (2015). Social networking sites: A support system for African American women wearing natural hair. *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, 8(1), 21–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17543266.2014.974689>

- Ellington, T. N. (2023). *Black hair in a white world*. The Kent State University Press.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/UAZ/detail.action?docID=30621293>
- Elwood, S., Lawson, V., & Nowak, S. (2015). Middle-Class Poverty Politics: Making Place, Making People. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 105(1), 123–143.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2014.968945>
- Elwood, S., & Leszczynski, A. (2018). Feminist digital geographies. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 25(5), 629–644. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1465396>
- Events at The Black Hair Experience*. (2024, March 16). Theblackhairexperience.
<https://www.theblackhairexperience.com/events>
- Everett, A. (2002). The Revolution Will Be Digitized: AFROCENTRICITY AND THE DIGITAL PUBLIC SPHERE. *Social Text*, 20(2), 125–146.
https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-20-2_71-125
- Faria, C. (2014). Styling the nation: Fear and desire in the South Sudanese beauty trade. *Transactions - Institute of British Geographers (1965)*, 39(2), 318–330.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12027>
- Faria, C., & Falola, B. (2020). *Disentangling Globalization*. Routledge Handbooks Online.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315164748-13>
- Faria, C. V., & Jones, H. (2020). A Darling® of the beauty trade: Race, care, and the imperial debris of synthetic hair. *Cultural Geographies*, 27(1), 85–99.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474019864987>
- Farmer, A. D. (2022). Disorderly Distribution: The Dispersal of Queen Mother Audley Moore’s Archives and the Illegibility of Black Women Intellectuals. *The Black Scholar*, 52(4), 5–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2022.2111648>

- Farrington, L. E. (2005). *Creating their own image: The history of African American women artists*. Oxford University Press. <https://openlibrary.org/books/OL7390763M>
- Feldman, R. M., & Stall, S. (2004). *The Dignity of Resistance: Women Residents' Activism in Chicago Public Housing*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ferleger, L. A., & Lavalee, M. (2020). Lending a Hand: Black Business Owners' Complex Role in the Civil Rights Movement. *Enterprise & Society*, 21(2), 494–515. <https://doi.org/10.1017/eso.2019.38>
- Fishback, P., Rose, J., Snowden, K. A., & Storrs, T. (2022). New Evidence on Redlining by Federal Housing Programs in the 1930s. *Journal of Urban Economics*, 103462. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jue.2022.103462>
- Fletcher, A., Fletcher, A., Lukinbeal, C., & Mchugh, K. (2012). *Place, television, and the real Orange County*. Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Ford, T. C. (2015). *Liberated Threads Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul* (1 Edition.). University of North Carolina Press.
- Ford, T. C. (2019). *Dressed in dreams: A black girl's love letter to the power of fashion* (First edition.). StMartin's Press.
- Foster Davis, J. (2013). Realizing marketplace opportunity: How research on the black consumer market influenced mainstream marketers, 1920-1970. *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 5(4), 471–493. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHRM-02-2013-0006>
- Fouka, V., Mazumder, S., & Tabellini, M. (2022). From Immigrants to Americans: Race and Assimilation during the Great Migration. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 89(2), 811–842. <https://doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdab038>
- Francis, K. A., & Clarke, A. M. (2023). *Women of Color and Hair Bias in the Work Environment*.

IGI Global.

<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=lZjiEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR1&ots=S-ZHwJeETz&sig=cZL1FNWTGoRnemmmKaqtEs26v6iw>

Frisina, A., & Hawthorne, C. (2018). Italians with veils and Afros: Gender, beauty, and the everyday anti-racism of the daughters of immigrants in Italy. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(5), 718–735. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1359510>

Fullilove, M. T. (2016). *Root shock: How tearing up city neighborhoods hurts America, and what we can do about it* (New Village Press edition, [second edition]). New Village Press.

Furman, F. K. (1997). *Facing the mirror: Older women and beauty shop culture*. Routledge.

Gale, D. E. (2021). *The misunderstood history of gentrification: People, planning, preservation, and urban renewal, 1915-2020* (1st ed.). Temple University Press.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/UAZ/detail.action?docID=28372207>

Gates, H. L. (1988). The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black. *Representations*, 24, 129–155.

Giddings, P. (1996). *When and where I enter: The impact of Black women on race and sex in America* (1st Quill ed.). W. Morrow.

<http://ezproxy.library.arizona.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=267209>

Gill, T. M. (2010). *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry*. University of Illinois Press.

Gill, T. M. (2015). #TeamNatural: Black Hair and the Politics of Community in Digital Media. *Nka Journal of Contemporary African Art*, 2015(37), 70–79.

<https://doi.org/10.1215/10757163-3339739>

Gilmore, R. W. (2007). *Golden gulag: Prisons, surplus, crisis, and opposition in globalizing California*. University of California Press.

<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb33866.0001.001>

Gimlin, D. (1996). Pamela's Place: Power and Negotiation in the Hair Salon. *Gender & Society*, 10(5), 505–526. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124396010005002>

Goetz, E. G., Williams, R. A., & Damiano, A. (2020). Whiteness and Urban Planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 86(2), 142–156.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2019.1693907>

Goins, M. R. (2021). Afro Love: Counter-literacies in Brazilian natural hair communities. *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, 14(2), 99–115.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17528631.2022.2091378>

Golub, A., Marcantonio, R. A., & Sanchez, T. W. (2013). Race, Space, and Struggles for Mobility: Transportation Impacts on African Americans in Oakland and the East Bay. *Urban Geography*, 34(5), 699–728. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2013.778598>

Gottschild, B. (2016). *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Graham, P. J. (2020). *Madam C.J. Walker: Entrepreneur and self-made millionaire* (First edition.). Cavendish Square.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/UAZ/detail.action?docID=5795326>

Grant, J. (1998). *Ella Baker: Freedom bound*. Wiley. <https://openlibrary.org/books/OL686126M>

Gray, B. (2022). *Phenomenology of Black Spirit*. University Press.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/UAZ/detail.action?docID=30256604>

- Greely, H. T., & Cho, M. K. (2013). The Henrietta Lacks legacy grows. *EMBO Reports*, *14*(10), 849–849. <https://doi.org/10.1038/embor.2013.148>
- Greene, B., White, J. C., & Whitten, L. (2000). Hair texture, length, and style as a metaphor in the African American mother–daughter relationship: Considerations in psychodynamic psychotherapy. In *Psychotherapy with African American women: Innovations in psychodynamic perspective and practice*. (pp. 166–193). The Guilford Press.
- Greer, B. W. (2019). *Represented: The Black imagemakers who reimagined African American citizenship*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/UAZ/detail.action?docID=5976978>
- Grosz, E. (Ed.). (1992). *Sexuality and Space* (pp. 241–253). Princeton Architectural.
- Haaruun, A., & Watson, M. (2014). *Digital Beauty: Screening Black Hair in Cyberspace* (pp. 99–113). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9781848882997_010
- Halegoua, G., & Polson, E. (2021). Exploring ‘digital placemaking.’ *Convergence*, *27*(3), 573–578. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565211014828>
- Hall, A. D. (2023). *Driving the Green book: A road trip through the living history of Black resistance* (First edition.). HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers.
- Halley, C. (2019, July 3). *How Natural Black Hair at Work Became a Civil Rights Issue*. JSTOR Daily. <https://daily.jstor.org/how-natural-black-hair-at-work-became-a-civil-rights-issue/>
- Hanson, J. A. (2003). *Mary McLeod Bethune and Black Women’s Political Activism* (1st ed., Vol. 1). University of Missouri Press.
- Harlan, L. R. (1972). *Booker T. Washington*. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Harris, K. (2019). A Methodology for Black Geographies. *Geosciences Theses*.
<https://doi.org/10.57709/14346677>

- Harris, P. (2003). Gatekeeping and Remaking: The Politics of Respectability in African American Women's History and Black Feminism. *Journal of Women's History*, 15(1), 212–220. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2003.0025>
- Harris, S. (1950). *Woman's surgeon; the story of J. Marion Sims*,. Macmillan.
- Hawthorne, C. (2019). Black matters are spatial matters: Black geographies for the twenty-first century. *Geography Compass*, 13(11), e12468. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12468>
- Hawthorne, C. (2021). Making Italy: Afro-Italian entrepreneurs and the racial boundaries of citizenship. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 22(5), 704–724. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2019.1597151>
- Hawthorne, C. (2023). Black Mediterranean geographies: Translation and the mattering of Black Life in Italy. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 30(3), 484–507. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2022.2064836>
- Hawthorne, C., & Heitz, K. (2018). A seat at the table? Reflections on Black geographies and the limits of dialogue. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 8(2), 148–151. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820618780578>
- Hemdahl, R. (1959). *Urban Renewal*. Scarecrow Press, i.
- Henriksen, D., & Hoelting, M. (2016). A Systems View of Creativity in a YouTube World. *TechTrends*, 60(2), 102–106. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-016-0047-2>
- Higbee, M. D. (1993). W.E.B. Du Bois, F.B. Ransom, the Madam Walker Company, and Black Business Leadership in the 1930s. *Indiana Magazine of History*, 89(2), 101-.
- Higginbotham, E. B. (1994). *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920*. Harvard University Press.
- Higginbotham, E. B. (2017). “The Metalanguage of Race,” Then and Now. *Signs: Journal of*

- Women in Culture and Society*, 42(3), 628–642. <https://doi.org/10.1086/689893>
- Hill Collins, P. (2000). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203900055>
- Hill, M. E. (2002). Skin Color and the Perception of Attractiveness among African Americans: Does Gender Make a Difference? *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 65(1), 77–91. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3090169>
- Hirsch, L. A. (2020). In the wake: Interpreting care and global health through Black geographies. *Area*, 52(2), 314–321. <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12573>
- Hobson, J. (2018). *Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty in Popular Culture* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315299396>
- Holton, M. (2020). On the geographies of hair: Exploring the entangled margins of the bordered body. *Progress in Human Geography*, 44(3), 555–571. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132519838055>
- hooks, bell. (1981). *Ain't I a woman: Black women and feminism*. South End Press. <https://openlibrary.org/books/OL18368275M>
- hooks, bell. (2014). *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Taylor & Francis Group. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uaz/detail.action?docID=1813115>
- hooks, bell. (2015). *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315743226>
- Howes, K. K. (2001). *Harlem Renaissance*. UXL.
- Hudson, P. J., McKittrick, K., & Caribbean Philosophical Association. (2014). The Geographies of Blackness and Anti-Blackness: An Interview with Katherine McKittrick. *The CLR James Journal*, 20(1), 233–240. <https://doi.org/10.5840/clrjames201492215>

- Hunter, L. (2020). Laila Haidarali, *Brown Beauty: Color, Sex, and Race from the Harlem Renaissance to World War II*. New York: New York University Press, 2018. Pp. 335. \$34.99 (paper). *The Journal of African American History*, 105(3), 502–504. <https://doi.org/10.1086/709346>
- Hunter, M. A., Pattillo, M., Robinson, Z. F., & Taylor, K.-Y. (2016). Black Placemaking: Celebration, Play, and Poetry. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 33(7–8), 31–56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276416635259>
- Hunter, T. W. (1997). *To 'joy my freedom: Southern Black women's lives and labors after the Civil War*. Harvard University Press. <https://openlibrary.org/books/OL1010898M>
- Ingrid-Penelope Wilson, Afiya M Mbilishaka, & Marva L Lewis. (2018). “White folks ain’t got hair like us”: African American Mother–Daughter Hair Stories and Racial Socialization. *Women, Gender, and Families of Color*, 6(2), 226–248. <https://doi.org/10.5406/womgenfamcol.6.2.0226>
- Jackson II, R. L., & Richardson, E. B. (2003). *Understanding African American Rhetoric: Classical Origins to Contemporary Innovations*. Taylor & Francis Group. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uaz/detail.action?docID=1694364>
- Jacobs-Huey, L. (2006). *From the Kitchen to the Parlor: Language and Becoming in African American Women's Hair Care*. Oxford University Press.
- Jaima, A. (2023). In Defense of the Crown Act. *Philosophia (Ramat Gan)*, 51(4), 1977–1992. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-023-00648-7>
- Johnson, E. (2016). *Resistance and Empowerment in Black Women's Hair Styling*. Routledge.
- Johnson, G. S., Gray, V., Gray, L. D., Richardson, N. L., Rainey-Brown, S. A., Triplett, K. L., & Bowman, L. E. (2017). *Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the*

- Twenty First Century: An Exploratory Case Study Analysis of their Mission. *Race, Gender & Class*, 24(3–4), 44–67.
- Johnson, J. M. (2020). *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uaz/detail.action?docID=6272489>
- Johnson, T., & Bankhead, T. (2014). Hair It Is: Examining the Experiences of Black Women with Natural Hair. *Publications and Research*. https://academicworks.cuny.edu/me_pubs/32
- Jolly, P. (2004). Hair: Untangling a Social History. *Art History*.
https://creativematter.skidmore.edu/art_his_fac_schol/8
- Jones, J. P., Nast, H. J., & Roberts, S. M. (1997). *Thresholds in feminist geography: Difference, methodology, representation*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Jones, R. (2020). What the Hair: Employment Discrimination against Black People Based on Hairstyles. *Harvard BlackLetter Law Journal*, 36, 27.
- Jones, W. P. (2012). A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights, by Cornelius L. Bynum. *Labor History: Working Space: An Interdisciplinary Conversation about Geographical Consciousness in Labor and Working-Class Scholarship*, 53(3), 435–436.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0023656X.2012.695568>
- Joseph, R. P., Coe, K., Ainsworth, B. E., Hooker, S. P., Mathis, L., & Keller, C. (2018). Hair As a Barrier to Physical Activity among African American Women: A Qualitative Exploration. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 5, 367. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2017.00367>
- Kanouse, S. (2007). *What Makes Justice Spatial? What Makes Spaces Just? Three Interviews on the Concept of Spatial Justice Critical Spatial Practice Reading Group*.
https://www.academia.edu/71225857/What_Makes_Justice_Spatial_What_Makes_Space

s_Just_Three_Interviews_on_the_Concept_of_Spatial_Justice_Critical_Spatial_Practice_
Reading_Group

- Kara W. Swanson. (2014). *Banking on the Body*. Harvard University Press; eBook
Comprehensive Academic Collection (EBSCOhost).
<http://ezproxy.library.arizona.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e025xna&AN=663458&site=ehost-live>
- Keucheniuss, A., & Mügge, L. (2021). Intersectionality on the go: The diffusion of Black feminist knowledge across disciplinary and geographical borders. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 72(2), 360–378. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12816>
- King, V., & Niabaly, D. (2013). *The Politics of Black Womens' Hair*. 13, 20.
- Klitzman, R. (2022). Henrietta Lacks' family's lawsuits: Ethical questions and solutions. *Trends in Biotechnology (Regular Ed.)*, 40(7), 769–772.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tibtech.2022.02.009>
- Knowles, S., & Sampha. (2016, September 20). *Don't Touch My Hair- A Seat at the Table*. Saint, Colombia. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTtrnDbOQAU>
- Kozinets, R. V. (2002). The Field behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39(1), 61–72.
<https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.39.1.61.18935>
- Lee, H., & Hicken, M. T. (2016). Death by a Thousand Cuts: The Health Implications of Black Respectability Politics. *Souls*, 18(2–4), 421–445.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10999949.2016.1230828>
- Lee, L. A. (2017). Black Twitter: A Response to Bias in Mainstream Media. *Social Sciences*, 6(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci6010026>

- Lee, M. S., & Nambudiri, V. E. (2021). The CROWN act and dermatology: Taking a stand against race-based hair discrimination. *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*, 84(4), 1181–1182. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaad.2020.11.065>
- Lee, R., & Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*, London: Sage Publications, 2010. 221 pp. ISBN: 978-1-84860-645-6. *Field Methods*, 22(4), 449–451. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X10370922>
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space* (1991). In *The People, Place, and Space Reader*. Routledge.
- Levy, P. B. (1998). *The civil rights movement*. Greenwood Press.
<https://openlibrary.org/books/OL676315M>
- Long, G. (2012). *Doctoring Freedom: The Politics of African American Medical Care in Slavery and Emancipation*. University of North Carolina Press.
https://doi.org/10.5149/9780807837399_long
- Longhurst, R. (1995). The Body and Geography. *Gender, Place, and Culture*, 2(1), 97–106.
- Longhurst, R. (1997). (Dis)embodied geographies. *Progress in Human Geography*, 21(4), 486–501. <https://doi.org/10.1191/030913297668704177>
- Longhurst, R., Ho, E., & Johnston, L. (2008). Using “the Body” as an “Instrument of Research”: Kimch’i and pavlova. *Area*, 40(2), 208–217.
- Lorde, A. G. (1984). *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Crossing Press.
- Lukate, J. M. (2022). Space, race and identity: An ethnographic study of the Black hair care and beauty landscape and Black women’s racial identity constructions in England. *Journal of Social Issues*, 78(1), 107–125. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12433>
- Lyon, J. (2020). Pajón power: Styling citizenship and Black politics in the Dominican natural

- hair movement. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 43(12), 2120–2139.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2019.1671601>
- Mains, S. P. (2022). Bearing witness through pandemic borders and film: Convergent media, mobility and Windrush Betrayal. *GeoJournal*, 87(Suppl 1), 115–124.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-022-10652-1>
- Makkar, J. K., & Strube, M. J. (1995). Black Women’s Self-Perceptions of Attractiveness Following Exposure to White Versus Black Beauty Standards: The Moderating Role of Racial Identity and Self-Esteem. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 25(17), 1547–1566. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1995.tb02632.x>
- Malpas, J. (2018). *Place and experience: A philosophical topography* (Second edition.). Routledge. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/UAZ/detail.action?docID=5302003>
- Marable, M. (2011). *Malcolm X: A life of reinvention*. Viking.
<https://openlibrary.org/books/OL24657704M>
- Marwick, A. (1988). *Beauty in history: Society, politics, and personal appearance*. Thames and Hudson. <https://openlibrary.org/books/OL2221347M>
- Massey, D. (1994). *Space, Place, and Gender*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Massood, P. J. (2003). *Black city cinema: African American urban experiences in film*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Mbilishaka, A. (2018). PsychoHairapy: Using Hair as an Entry Point into Black Women’s Spiritual and Mental Health. *Meridians (Middletown, Conn.)*, 16(2), 382–392.
<https://doi.org/10.2979/meridians.16.2.19>
- McAndrew, M. (2010). A Twentieth-Century Triangle Trade: Selling Black Beauty at Home and Abroad, 1945–1965. *Enterprise & Society*, 11(4), 784–810.

- McCammack, B. (2018). *Landscapes of hope: Nature and the Great Migration in Chicago*.
Harvard University Press.
- McDuffie, E. S. (2018). “We Owe a Debt to Her, She Taught Us How to Think”: Eloise Moore and Her Impact on Queen Mother Moore and Twentieth-Century Grassroots Black Nationalism. *Palimpsest (Albany, N.Y.)*, 7(2), 135–158.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/pal.2018.0020>
- McKittrick, K. (2000). ‘Who do you talk to, when a body’s in trouble?: M. Nourbese Philip’s (un)silencing of black bodies in the diaspora. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 1(2), 223–236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649360020010220>
- McKittrick, K. (2006). *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (NED-New edition). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
<https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctttv711>
- McKittrick, K. (2011). On plantations, prisons, and a black sense of place. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 12(8), 947–963. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2011.624280>
- McKittrick, K., & Woods, C. A. (2007). *Black geographies and the politics of place*. Toronto, Ont. : Between the Lines.
- Mercer, K. (2000). Black hair/style politics. *Black British Culture and Society: A Text Reader*, 34.
- Mitchell, W. J. T., & Mitchell, W. J. T. (2002). *Landscape and Power, Second Edition*. University of Chicago Press.
- Molloy, B. L., & Herzberger, S. D. (1998). Body image and self-esteem: A comparison of African American and Caucasian women. *Sex Roles*, 38(7/8), 631–643.
- Morgan, J. L. (2004). *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*.

- University of Pennsylvania Press.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uaz/detail.action?docID=3442010>
- Mullen, B. (1999). *Popular Fronts: Chicago and African American Cultural Politics, 1935-46*. University of Illinois Press.
- Musgrove, G. D. (2019). “There Is No New Black Panther Party”: The Panther-Like Formations and the Black Power Resurgence of the 1990s. *The Journal of African American History*, 104(4), 619–656. <https://doi.org/10.1086/705022>
- Mutz, R., & Brown, K. (2022). The CROWN Act: A Potential Solution to a Hairy Discrimination Issue. *TortSource*, 25(1), 9–11.
- Nash, J. C. (2019). *Black feminism reimaged: After intersectionality*. Duke University Press.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/UAZ/detail.action?docID=5609560>
- Neely, T. (2018). I AM My Hair, and My Hair is Me: #BlackGirlMagic in LIS. *Pushing the Margins: Women of Color and Intersectionality in LIS*, 121–146.
- Ngandu-Kalenga Greensword, S. (2022). Historicizing black hair politics: A framework for contextualizing race politics. *Sociology Compass*, 16(8), n/a.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.13015>
- Norwood, C. R. (2018). Decolonizing my hair, unshackling my curls: An autoethnography on what makes my natural hair journey a Black feminist statement. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 20(1), 69–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2017.1369890>
- Noxolo, P. (2022). Geographies of race and ethnicity 1: Black geographies. *Progress in Human Geography*, 46(5), 1232–1240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03091325221085291>
- Nyden, P., Edlynn, E., Davis, J., Araujo, A., Sharma, A., Craig, K., Hilvers, J., Rivera, J., Rodriguez, M., & Wiggins, G. (2006). *The differential impact of gentrification on*

communities in Chicago.

- Okafor, C. (2018). Black Feminism Embodiment: A Theoretical Geography of Home, Healing, and Activism. *Meridians, 16*(2), 373–381. <https://doi.org/10.2979/meridians.16.2.18>
- Oyedemi, T. (2016). Beauty as violence: ‘Beautiful’ hair and the cultural violence of identity erasure. *Social Identities, 22*(5), 537–553.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2016.1157465>
- Packard, J. M. (2003). *American Nightmare: The History of Jim Crow*. Macmillan.
- Patton, T. O. (2004). Reflections of a Black Woman Professor: Racism and Sexism in Academia. *Howard Journal of Communications, 15*(3), 185–200.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10646170490483629>
- Patton, T. O. (2006). Hey Girl, Am I More than My Hair?: African American Women and Their Struggles with Beauty, Body Image, and Hair. *NWSA Journal, 18*(2), 24–51.
- Pearcy, M. (2020). “The Most Insidious Legacy”—Teaching About Redlining and the Impact of Racial Residential Segregation. *The Geography Teacher, 17*(2), 44–55.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19338341.2020.1759118>
- Peiss, K. (2011). *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America’s Beauty Culture*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Petrulis, J. (2021). “A Country of Hair”: A Global Story of South Korean Wigs, Korean American Entrepreneurs, African American Hairstyles, and Cold War Industrialization. *Enterprise & Society, 22*(2), 368–408. <https://doi.org/10.1017/eso.2019.69>
- Phelps-Ward, R. J., & Laura, C. T. (2016). Talking back in cyberspace: Self-love, hair care, and counter narratives in Black adolescent girls’ YouTube vlogs. *Gender and Education, 28*(6), 807–820. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1221888>

- Pink, S. (2015). *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473917057>
- Pitts, B. (2021). “Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears a Crown”: A Critical Race Analysis of the CROWN Act. *Journal of Black Studies*, 52(7), 716–735.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00219347211021096>
- Pochmara, A. (2011). *The Making of the New Negro: Black Authorship, Masculinity, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance*. Amsterdam University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.5117/9789089643193>
- Postill, J., & Pink, S. (2012). Social media ethnography: The digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture & Policy*, 145, 187–200.
- Pred, A. (1984). Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time-Geography of Becoming Places. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 74(2), 279–297. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1984.tb01453.x>
- Pulido, L. (2015). Geographies of race and ethnicity 1. *Progress in Human Geography*, 39(6), 809–817. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132514563008>
- Rabinovitch-Fox, E. (2019). Fabricating black modernity: Fashion and African American womanhood during the first great migration. *International Journal of Fashion Studies*, 6(2), 239–260. https://doi.org/10.1386/infs_00007_1
- Ransby, B. (2003). *Ella Baker and the Black freedom movement: A radical democratic vision* (1st ed., p. xvii+470-xvii+470). University of North Carolina Press.
<http://www.aspresolver.com/aspresolver.asp?BLTC;S17061>
- Reed, J., & Medvedev, K. (2023). A Missing Site of Black Beauty History: The Black Beauty Supply Store. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 0887302X231160428.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X231160428>

Relph, E. C. (1976). *Place and placelessness*. Pion.

Reverby, S. M. (2012). *Tuskegee's Truths: Rethinking the Tuskegee Syphilis Study*. The University of North Carolina Press.

Rey, S. J., & Knaap, E. (2024). The Legacy of Redlining: A Spatial Dynamics Perspective. *International Regional Science Review*, 47(1), 3–44.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/01600176221116566>

Richmond, S. J. (2019). Race, Class, and Antislavery: African American Women in the Transatlantic Antislavery Movement. *Journal of Women's History*, 31(3), 57–77.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2019.0027>

Roberts, D. E. (2017). *Killing the black body: Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty* (Second Vintage books edition., Twentieth anniversary edition.). Vintage Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

Robinson, C. L. (2011). Hair as Race: Why “Good Hair” May Be Bad for Black Females. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 22(4), 358–376.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2011.617212>

Rodriguez, C., & Ward, B. (2018). Making Black Communities Matter: Race, Space, and Resistance in the Urban South. *Human Organization*, 77(4), 312–322.

<https://doi.org/10.17730/0018-7259.77.4.312>

Rose, G. (1993). *Feminism and geography: The limits of geographical knowledge*. Polity Press.

Rothstein, R. (2018). *The color of law: A forgotten history of how our government segregated America* (Reprint edition.). Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company.

- Rowe, K. L. (2022). Tangled: Black Hair and Texturism in Ethnodrama. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 22(1), 32–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15327086211049708>
- Sacks, T. K. (2019). The Mississippi Appendectomy: Race and Reproductive Healthcare. In T. K. Sacks (Ed.), *Invisible Visits: Black Middle-Class Women in the American Healthcare System* (p. 0). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190840204.003.0005>
- Sanchez, S. (1999). *Shake Loose My Skin: New and Selected Poems* (1st ed., Vol. 12). Beacon Press.
- Savage, B. L., Shull, C. D., & National Register of Historic Places. (1994). *African American historic places*. Preservation Press. <https://openlibrary.org/books/OL1107933M>
- Schindler, S. B. (2014). Architectural Exclusion: Discrimination and Segregation through Physical Design of the Built Environment. *Yale Law Journal*, 124, 1934.
- Schneekloth, L. H. (1995). *Placemaking: The art and practice of building communities*. Wiley.
- Scott, J. (1988). *The great migration*. Elm Tree.
- Seamon, D., & Sowers, J. (2008). Place and placelessness (1976): Edward Relph. In *Key Texts in Human Geography* (pp. 43–52). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446213742.n5>
- Shakur, A. (1999). *Assata An Autobiography*. Lawrence Hill Books.
<http://ezproxy.library.arizona.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=512196>
- Sherrard-Johnson, C. (2007). *Portraits of the new Negro woman: Visual and literary culture in the Harlem Renaissance*. Rutgers University Press.
- Silverman, R. M. (2002). *Doing Business in Minority Markets: Black and Korean Entrepreneurs in Chicago's Ethnic Beauty Aids Industry*. Taylor and Francis.

- Simawe, S. A. (2002). *Black Orpheus: Music in African American Fiction from the Harlem Renaissance to Toni Morrison* (1st ed., Vol. 9). Taylor and Francis.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203904404>
- Skloot, R. (2011). *The immortal life of Henrietta Lacks* (1st pbk. ed.). Broadway Paperbacks.
- Slate, N. (2022). Between Utopia and Jim Crow: The Highlander Folk School, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Racial Borders of the Summer Camp, 1956–1961. *The Journal of American History* (Bloomington, Ind.), 109(3), 571–595.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jaac345>
- Smith, C. L. (2009). Economic deprivation and racial segregation: Comparing Superfund sites in Portland, Oregon and Detroit, Michigan. *Social Science Research*, 38(3), 681–692.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2009.03.005>
- Smith, K. C. (2006). Childhood, the Body, and Race Performance: Early 20th-Century Etiquette Books for Black Children. *African American Review*, 40(4), 795–811.
- Soja, E. W. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Blackwell.
- Soja, E. W. (2010). *Seeking Spatial Justice*. (1st ed.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Stackhouse, L. (2022). *A Different World: The Experiences of Black Women at a Southern Predominantly White Institution*. <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/2411/>
- Stermon, M., & Lukinbeal, C. (2021). Institutionalized Racism: Redlined Districts Then and Now in Boston, Detroit, and Los Angeles. *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers*, 83(83), 81–97.
- Stewart, T. J. (2019). “Where We Are, Resistance Lives”: Black Women, Social Media, and Everyday Resistance in Higher Education.

<https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/98420>

Strings, S. (2019). *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia* (1st ed.). NYU Press.

Summers, B. T. (2019). *Black in Place: The Spatial Aesthetics of Race in a Post-Chocolate City* (1st ed.). The University of North Carolina Press.

https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469654034_summers

Tanus, A., Oliveira, C. C. C., Villarreal, D. J. V., Sanchez, F. A. V., & Dias, M. F. R. G. (2015). Black women's hair: The main scalp dermatoses and aesthetic practices in women of African ethnicity. *Anais Brasileiros de Dermatologia*, *90*(4), 450–465.

<https://doi.org/10.1590/abd1806-4841.20152845>

Tate, S. (2007). Black beauty: Shade, hair and anti-racist aesthetics. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *30*(2), 300–319. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870601143992>

Taylor, M. M. (1992). Can You Go Home Again? Black Gentrification and the Dilemma of Difference. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, *37*, 101–128.

Taylor, P. C. (2016). *Black is Beautiful: A Philosophy of Black Aesthetics* (1st ed., Vol. 6). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119118527>

Taylor, U. Y. (1998). Making Waves: The Theory and Practice of Black Feminism. *The Black Scholar*, *28*(2), 18–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.1998.11430912>

Thaggert, M. (2010). *Images of Black modernism: Verbal and visual strategies of the Harlem Renaissance*. University of Massachusetts Press.

Thomas, S. B., & Quinn, S. C. (1991). The Tuskegee Syphilis Study, 1932 to 1972: Implications for HIV education and AIDS risk education programs in the black community. *American Journal of Public Health* (1971), *81*(11), 1498–1504.

- <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.81.11.1498>
- Umoya, A. O., Stanford, K. L., & Young, J. A. (2018). *Black power encyclopedia: From “Black is beautiful” to urban uprisings*. Greenwood, an imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC.
- Uschan, M. V. (2010). *The civil rights movement*. Lucent Books.
- <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/UAZ/detail.action?docID=5440490>
- Vaz, K. M., & Leathem, K. T. (2018). *Walking raddy: The Baby Dolls of New Orleans*. Jackson : University Press of Mississippi.
- Versey, H. S. (2014). Centering Perspectives on Black Women, Hair Politics, and Physical Activity. *American Journal of Public Health, 104*(5), 810–815.
- <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301675>
- Wade, E. (2021). The History of HBCUs: Lessons on Innovation from the Past. In G. B. Crosby, K. A. White, M. A. Chanay, & A. A. Hilton (Eds.), *Reimagining Historically Black Colleges and Universities* (pp. 5–13). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80043-664-020211002>
- Wall, L. L. (2020). The controversial Dr. J. Marion Sims (1813–1883). *INTERNATIONAL UROGYNECOLOGY JOURNAL, 31*(7), 1299–1303.
- <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00192-020-04301-9>
- Warren, K. C. (2023). Mary McLeod Bethune’s Feminism: Black Women as Citizens of the World. *Gender & History, 35*(1), 323–339. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.12556>
- Washington, H. A. (2006). *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*. DOUBLEDAY.
- Watson Coleman, B. (2022, March 21). *H.R.2116 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act of 2022 (2021/2022)* [Legislation].

- <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/2116>
- White, S., & White, G. (1995). Slave Hair and African American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. *The Journal of Southern History*, 61(1), 45–76.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2211360>
- Wilhoit Larson, E. (2021). Creating home at work: Humanistic geography and placemaking in organizations. *Culture and Organization*, 27(6), 437–455.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14759551.2020.1861453>
- Wilkerson, I. (2010). *The great migration* (1st ed.). Random House.
<https://openlibrary.org/books/OL23962677M>
- Wilkerson, I. (2020). *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (First edition). Random House Publishing Group.
- Willett, J. A. (2000). *Permanent waves: The making of the American beauty shop*. University Press.
<http://ezproxy.library.arizona.edu/login?url=http://www.netLibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=100436>
- Williams, R. Y. (2004). *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles against Urban Inequality*. Oxford University Press.
- Wingfield, A. H. (2008). *Doing business with beauty: Black women, hair salons, and the racial enclave economy*. Rowman & Littlefield. <https://openlibrary.org/books/OL10721851M>
- Winters, L. Z. (2016). *The mulatta concubine: Terror, intimacy, freedom, and desire in the Black transatlantic*. The University of Georgia Press.
- Wintz, C. D., Washington, B. T., Garvey, M., & Randolph, A. P. (2015). *African American Political Thought, 1890-1930: Washington, Du Bois, Garvey and Randolph* (1st edition.).

Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315706641>

Wolcott, V. W. (2001). *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit*.

The University of North Carolina Press.

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uaz/detail.action?docID=1107595>

Wright, D. R. (2001). African Americans. In *A Companion to 19th-Century America* (pp. 193–208). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470998472.ch15>

Wright, M. M. (2005). Finding a Place in Cyberspace: Black Women, Technology, and Identity. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 26(1), 48–59.