

**Black hair politics: the representation of African women on  
*True Love* magazine front covers and hair advertisements**

by

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## DECLARATION

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## ABSTRACT

The literature about race and gender includes extensive research on the representation of black women. However, most of these studies have been conducted in the West; only a few have been done in Africa in general and in South Africa in particular. To address this gap, I use quantitative content and visual semiotic analysis to examine selected examples of South African *True Love* magazine's front-page covers and hair advertisements and how these represent black African women. Paying particular attention to hair, this thesis examines the hair products, hair types, lengths, colours and hairstyles that feature prominently in the visual texts. By doing so, it seeks to uncover the myths and ideologies that are constructed and promoted. This study also employs focus group interviews to find out to what extent the images on the covers and advertisements influence the respondents' self-esteem and hair styling practices, while also exploring their own perceptions of black hair.

The results of the semiotic analysis and quantitative content analysis showed that *True Love* has increased the visibility of black African women. Through a survey questionnaire and focus group interviews, this study found that respondents attached different meanings to hair. My study found that the intersectionality of race, gender and class impacted on the selected black African women's notions of black hair. In terms of their hairstyling practices the study found that the respondents embraced both Westerncentric and Afrocentric styles. However, with respect to hair types and styles featured on *True Love* covers and advertisements, a quantitative content analysis suggests that the Westerncentric ideal of long, straight hair dominated. Additionally, hair altering and enhancement products featured prominently, as if to suggest that black hair is only beautiful when it is altered.

The respondents' perceptions provided new insights on black hair and styling. My research suggests that hair styling among black African women is a complex issue. Black hair is a politically charged subject, and hairstyling and hair care routines are governed by social, cultural, religious, economic and political factors. For instance, it emerged that the reason for relaxing hair has little to do with emulating 'white' standards or copying ideals promoted in *True Love*; it is mainly associated with maintenance as most respondents pointed out that they relaxed their hair to make it easier to comb and style. In addition, some wear long hair for professional reasons, while others adopt long weaves to attract men.

Furthermore, *True Love* presents the different faces of black African women by portraying them as mothers, wives, married and single, and as glamorous, independent and successful career women. Nevertheless, the magazine still uses stereotypical tropes by objectifying, infantilising, and hyper-sexualising them in many cases. The findings support the claim that the dominant ideologies of patriarchy, capitalism and consumerism are a consistent pattern throughout the covers and advertisements. Additionally, from the above it is clear that the magazine presents contradictory messages about black femininities owing to its diverse readership and various factors such as global trends, commercial considerations and ownership structure, which influence the content that is published. These findings provide insights that have implications for hair brands that advertise in *True Love*.

**Keywords:** representation of black African women, black hair, good and bad hair, hair alteration, hair enhancements, front covers, hair advertisements, black femininities, myth, ideology, *True Love*.

## **Dedication and acknowledgements**

Why research about hair? I have a serious reason: hair maketh a (wo)man. I have another reason: while living in Dubai, my hair and the way I styled it was often seen as exotic and was always a topic of discussion with ‘non-black’ friends, colleagues and even strangers. I’d field questions such as “are cornrows done by a machine?” and listen to observations like “how come your hair grows so fast, yesterday you had short hair but today its waist-length?” Yes, every now and then I indulge myself and splurge on Brazilian and Peruvian weaves. I have a third reason: back in the Motherland people are fascinated with *ufuzo lwami* (my grey hair). I have found many a kindred spirit because of the salt and pepper look that I wear with pride. I have a fourth reason: people (I won’t mention names) hardly recognise me when I change hairstyles. I hope this is enough to whet the curiosity.

To all those who are intrigued by African hair, in the hope that they may join me as I get to the roots and unravel the mysteries of black hair.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated in this study; those who filled out the pre-group questionnaires and those who attended focus group interviews. Thank you for sharing your experiences. I also wish to thank the University of Pretoria for providing financial assistance for my studies. Special thanks to my supervisors Prof Jeanne van Eeden and Dr Nomusa Makhubu. With their intellectual stimulation and moral support, I completed this thesis in record time.

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Ngiyabonga. Thank you. Dankie.

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>Page</b>
DECLARATION .....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xi
LIST OF TABLES.....	xiv
<b>1 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background and context to the study .....	2
1.1.1 <i>The politics of black hair in South Africa</i> .....	3
1.1.1 <i>Rationale for the study</i> .....	5
1.2 The research problem.....	8
1.2.1 <i>Aims and objectives of the study</i> .....	9
1.3 Justification for choosing <i>True Love</i> magazine.....	11
1.4 Literature review .....	13
1.4.1 <i>Studies conducted in diaspora</i> .....	14
1.4.2 <i>African studies and scholarly views</i> .....	17
1.5 The theoretical framework .....	19
1.5.1 <i>Semiotic theories</i> .....	19
1.5.2 <i>The representation theory</i> .....	20
1.6 The research methodology .....	21
1.6.1 <i>Quantitative content analysis</i> .....	21
1.6.2 <i>Visual semiotic analysis</i> .....	22
1.6.3 <i>Focus group interviews</i> .....	23
1.7 Feasibility of study and ethical implications.....	23
1.8 Outline of chapters.....	24
<b>2 THE BLACK BODY AND BLACK HAIR POLITICS .....</b>	<b>26</b>
2.1 Blackness in the black and white imagination .....	26
2.2 Overview of South Africa .....	30
2.2.1 <i>Pre-colonial and colonial history of South Africa</i> .....	32
2.2.2 <i>Apartheid in South Africa</i> .....	35
2.2.3 <i>Democratic rule in South Africa</i> .....	37

2.3	Dehumanisation of black people .....	38
2.4	The counter-hegemonic movements .....	43
2.5	The dawn of a new era .....	46
CONCLUSION.....		48
<b>3</b>	<b>SIGNIFICANCE AND POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BLACK HAIR .....</b>	<b>49</b>
3.1	The morphological structure of hair.....	51
3.2	The characteristics of African hair .....	52
3.3	Cultural and social significance of African hair.....	53
	3.3.1 <i>Hair as an identity marker</i> .....	55
	3.3.2 <i>Hair as a symbol of social status</i> .....	57
	3.3.3 <i>Aesthetic and psychological significance</i> .....	57
	3.3.4 <i>Religious significance</i> .....	58
3.4	The cultural norms, beliefs and taboos associated with African hair.....	59
3.5	Globalisation and the commodification of hair.....	60
	3.5.1 <i>Discourses on black hair</i> .....	62
3.6	The hair and beauty industry in South Africa .....	66
	3.6.1 <i>Black hair products in South Africa</i> .....	69
	3.6.2 <i>Marketing initiatives</i> .....	71
	3.6.3 <i>Distribution channels</i> .....	71
CONCLUSION .....		72
<b>4</b>	<b>MAGAZINE CULTURE AND REPRESENTATION.....</b>	<b>74</b>
4.1	What is a magazine .....	74
	4.1.1 <i>History of True Love magazine</i> .....	75
	4.1.2 <i>Target audience and geographic reach</i> .....	80
	4.1.3 <i>True Love magazine content</i> .....	84
	4.1.4 <i>Factors that influence choice of content</i> .....	88
	4.1.5 <i>Major advertisers and type of advertisements carried by the magazine</i> .....	92
	4.1.6 <i>True Love magazine design and choice of covers</i> .....	94
	4.1.7 <i>Purpose of the cover</i> .....	95
	4.1.8 <i>The making of the cover</i> .....	99
4.2	Cultural studies.....	101

4.2.1	<i>British cultural studies</i>	103
4.2.2	<i>African and South African cultural studies</i>	105
4.3	Cultural studies and the role of magazines in society	107
4.3.1	<i>Magazines as socialising agents</i>	107
4.3.2	<i>Magazines and construction of identity</i>	110
4.3.3	<i>Magazines as vehicles for selling consumer culture</i>	111
CONCLUSION		112

## **5 APPLICATION TO *TRUE LOVE*: QUANTITATIVE CONTENT**

<b>ANALYSIS</b>		114
5.1	Quantitative content analysis	114
5.1.1	<i>A quantitative content analysis of covers and advertisements</i>	117
5.1.2	<i>Age of the women featured on covers and advertisements</i>	119
5.1.3	<i>Type of hair featured on covers and advertisements</i>	121
5.1.4	<i>The length of hair featured on covers and advertisements</i>	122
5.1.5	<i>The colour of hair featured on covers and advertisements</i>	123
5.1.6	<i>Profession of the women featured on covers</i>	124
5.1.7	<i>The body size of the women featured on covers</i>	126
5.1.8	<i>The poses of the women featured on covers</i>	128
5.1.9	<i>The type of clothing featured on covers</i>	129
5.1.10	<i>Types of products featured on advertisements</i>	130
5.1.11	<i>Dry hair products featured on advertisements</i>	132
5.1.12	<i>Discussion of findings from the quantitative content analysis of covers and advertisements</i>	133
CONCLUSION		135

## **6 APPLICATION TO *TRUE LOVE*: VISUAL SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS**

<b>OF THE ADVERTISEMENTS</b>		136
6.1	Semiotic analysis	136
6.2	Perceptions of the black body and advertising for the 'African market'	137
6.3	Semiotic analysis of the advertisements	140
6.3.1	<i>Invoking African heritage</i>	140
6.3.2	<i>Incorporating nature and the natural</i>	144



6.3.3	<i>Benefits that accrue to the consumer</i> .....	146
6.3.4	<i>Enticing with the quality bait</i> .....	150
6.3.5	<i>The magnetic allure of fantasy and escapism</i> .....	153
6.3.6	<i>Using the appeal factor as a draw card</i> .....	156
6.3.7	<i>Discussion of findings from visual semiotic analysis of advertisements</i> .....	159
CONCLUSION.....		162
<b>7</b>	<b>APPLICATION TO <i>TRUE LOVE</i>: VISUAL SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE COVERS</b> .....	<b>163</b>
7.1	Semiotic analysis of the covers.....	163
7.1.1	<i>Phuti Khomo, True Love, June 2015</i> .....	164
7.1.2	<i>Bonnie Mbuli, True Love, July 2015</i> .....	167
7.1.3	<i>Denise Zimba, True Love, August 2015</i> .....	169
7.1.4	<i>Nomzamo and Maps, True Love, September 2015</i> .....	171
7.1.5	<i>Kelly Khumalo, True Love, October 2015</i> .....	173
7.1.6	<i>Thando, True Love, November 2015</i> .....	175
7.1.7	<i>Khanyi Mbau, True Love, December 2015</i> .....	177
7.1.8	<i>Bassie Kumalo, True Love, January 2016</i> .....	178
7.1.9	<i>Pearl Thusi, True Love, February 2016</i> .....	180
7.1.10	<i>Manaka Ranaka, True Love, March 2016</i> .....	182
7.1.11	<i>Boity, True Love, April 2016</i> .....	183
7.1.12	<i>Connie Ferguson, True Love, May 2016</i> .....	184
7.1.13	<i>Discussion of findings from visual semiotic analysis of covers</i> .....	185
7.2	Stereotypes, myths and ideologies promoted in <i>True Love</i> covers and advertisements.....	189
7.2.1	<i>The beauty myth</i> .....	192
7.2.2	<i>Physical appearance and the communicative power of products</i> . ....	194
7.2.3	<i>Naturalisation of heterosexual romance</i> .....	196
7.2.4	<i>The discourse of dominance and subordination</i> .....	197
7.2.5	<i>Partriachal ideology and the objectification of black African women</i> .....	199
7.2.6	<i>Happiness associated with consumerism</i> .....	202
CONCLUSION.....		204

<b>8</b>	<b>FINDINGS FROM PRE-GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS</b>	206
8.1	Pre-group questionnaire	206
8.1.1	<i>Selecting respondents</i>	207
8.1.2	<i>The respondents' demographics</i>	208
8.2	Focus group interviews	209
8.2.1	<i>The benefits and limitations of using focus group interviews</i>	212
8.3	Findings from pre-group questionnaire and focus group interviews	216
8.3.1	<i>Descriptions of African hair and hairstyles</i>	217
8.3.2	<i>Reasons for reading True Love</i>	219
8.3.3	<i>To what extent do the covers and advertisements influence black African women</i>	220
8.3.4	<i>Other sources of influence</i>	223
8.3.5	<i>Preferred hair types and hairstyles</i>	230
8.3.6	<i>Attitudes towards hair enhancements</i>	236
8.3.7	<i>Attitudes towards hair alteration</i>	241
8.3.8	<i>Financial implications related to hair care and hairstyling practices</i>	247
8.3.9	<i>Discussion of pre-group questionnaire and focus group findings</i>	250
	CONCLUSION	252
<b>9</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	254
9.1	Main findings of the study	254
9.2	Strengths of the study	259
9.3	Limitations of the study	260
9.4	Contribution of the study	261
9.5	Recommendation for future studies	265
9.6	Concluding remarks	266
	SOURCES CONSULTED	271
	ADDENDA	298
	Addendum A: <i>True Love</i> magazine covers	298
	Addendum B: <i>True Love</i> magazine hair advertisements	300

Addendum C: Tables and pie charts.....	304
Addendum D: Pre-group questionnaire and focus group interview guide ..	322
Addendum E: Focus group interview transcriptions ..	331

<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Figure 1: Phuti Khomo, cover of <i>True Love</i> , June 2015	298
Figure 2: Bonnie Mbuli, cover of <i>True Love</i> , July 2015	298
Figure 3: Denise Zimba, cover of <i>True Love</i> , August 2015	298
Figure 4: Nomzamo and Maps, cover of <i>True Love</i> , September 2015	298
Figure 5: Kelly Khumalo, cover of <i>True Love</i> , October 2015	298
Figure 6: Thando Thabethe, cover of <i>True Love</i> , November 2015	298
Figure 7: Khanyi Mbau, cover of <i>True Love</i> , December 2015	298
Figure 8: Bassie Kumalo, cover of <i>True Love</i> , January 2016	298
Figure 9: Pearl Thusi, cover of <i>True Love</i> , February 2016	298
Figure 10: Manaka Ranaka, cover of <i>True Love</i> , March 2016	299
Figure 11: Boity, cover of <i>True Love</i> , April 2016	299
Figure 12: Connie Ferguson, cover of <i>True Love</i> , May 2016	299
Figure 13: Advertisement for Dark and Lovely Moisture Plus No.1 Relaxer Kit, <i>True Love</i> , June 2015:41	300
Figure 14: Advertisement for Caivil colour shines range, <i>True Love</i> , June 2015:75	300
Figure 15: Advertisement for Sofn’free HairXperts range, <i>True Love</i> , June 2015:107	300
Figure 16: Advertisement for MPL Olive Oil Hair Oil. 4 in 1 Solution, <i>True Love</i> , August 2015:39	300
Figure 17: Advertisement for Caivil Luxurious hair range, <i>True Love</i> , August 2015:41	300
Figure 18: Advertisement for Dark and Lovely Fat Protein Bodifying Relaxer, <i>True Love</i> , September 2015:12-13	300
Figure 19: Advertisement for Inecto Plus Cranberry Cocktail Permanent Hair Colour Creme, <i>True Love</i> , September 2015:14-15	300
Figure 20: Advertisement for Inecto Plus Sunkissed Blonde, <i>True Love</i> , October 2015:91	301
Figure 21: Advertisement for Afri True True to African Hair range, <i>True Love</i> , October 2015:101	301
Figure 22: Advertisement for Stylin’ Dredz, <i>True Love</i> , October 2015:103	301
Figure 23: Advertisement for ORS Hair Strengthening Argan Oil Hair Care,	

<i>True Love</i> , October 2015:119	301
Figure 24: Advertisement for Inecto Plus Plum Crazy (Permanent hair colour crème), <i>True Love</i> , November 2015:33	301
Figure 25: Advertisement for Jabu Stone Natural Hair Care, <i>True Love</i> , November 2015:47	301
Figure 26: Advertisement for Sta-Sof-Fro Braids, <i>True Love</i> , November 2015:103	302
Figure 27: Advertisement for Dove Advanced Hair Series, <i>True Love</i> , November 2015:109	302
Figure 28: Advertisement for Schwarzkopf Smooth Shine range, <i>True Love</i> , December 2015:45	302
Figure 29: Advertisement for Frika braid, Maxi dread 18 Rich Black, <i>True Love</i> , December 2016:51	302
Figure 30: Advertisement for Frika Yaki Braid, <i>True Love</i> , December 2016:53	302
Figure 31: Advertisement for Frika Hotex 18” Weave, <i>True Love</i> , December 2016:55	302
Figure 32: Advertisement for Inecto Plus Just Copper Hair colour, <i>True Love</i> , December 2015:69	302
Figure 33: Advertisement for Caivil Fusion oil Competition for readers, <i>True Love</i> , December 2016:101	302
Figure 34: Advertisement for Frika product range Competition for readers, <i>True Love</i> , December 2015:125	302
Figure 35: Advertisement for Inecto Plus Red Wine Hair Colour, <i>True Love</i> , January 2016:37	303
Figure 36: Advertisement for Dark and Lovely colour intensity, Chocolate Brown, <i>True Love</i> , February 2016:25	303
Figure 37: Advertisement for Inecto Plus Black Velvet Permanent Hair Colour Crème, <i>True Love</i> , February 2016:45	303
Figure 38: Advertisement for Sta-Sof-Fro Wigs & Weaves, <i>True Love</i> , March 2016:10	303
Figure 39: Advertisement for Sta-Sof-Fro Blow Out Relaxer, <i>True Love</i> , March 2016:11	303
Figure 40: Advertisement for Afri True True to African Hair Range Promotion, <i>True Love</i> , March 2016:89	303

Figure 41: Advertisement for Revlon Realistic Hair Range, <i>True Love</i> , April 2016:73	303
Figure 42: Age of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	304
Figure 43: Professions of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	305
Figure 44: The body type of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	306
Figure 45: Poses of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	307
Figure 46: Type of clothing worn by the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	308
Figure 47: Type of hair of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	309
Figure 48: Length of hair of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	310
Figure 49: Colour of hair of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	311
Figure 50: Types of products featured in <i>True Love</i> hair advertisements	314
Figure 51: Dry hair products featured in <i>True Love</i> advertisements	315
Figure 52: Types of hair featured in <i>True Love</i> advertisements	316
Figure 53: Hair colours featured in <i>True Love</i> advertisements	318
Figure 54: Length of hair featured in <i>True Love</i> advertisements	319
Figure 55: Age of models featured in <i>True Love</i> advertisements	321
Figure 56: Pre-group questionnaire	322
Figure 57: Focus group interview guide	328
Figure 58: Focus group X transcript	331
Figure 59: Focus group Y transcript	342
Figure 60: Focus group Z transcript	359

<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 1: Age of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	304
Table 2: Profession/occupation of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	305
Table 3: The body type of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	306
Table 4: Poses of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	307
Table 5: Amount of clothing worn by the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	308
Table 6: Type of hair of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	309
Table 7: Length of hair of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	310
Table 8: Colour of hair of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>	311
Table 9: Hair-related advertisements published between June 2015 and May 2016	312
Table 10: Sample of advertisements	313
Table 11: Types of products featured in <i>True Love</i> hair advertisements	314
Table 12: Dry hair products featured in <i>True Love</i> advertisements	315
Table 13: Types of hair featured in <i>True Love</i> advertisements	316
Table 14: Hair colours featured in <i>True Love</i> advertisements	317
Table 15: Length of hair featured in <i>True Love</i> advertisements	318
Table 16: Age of models featured in <i>True Love</i> advertisements	320

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The way black African women<sup>1</sup> have been represented in the media during different historical epochs continues to have an impact on their self-esteem and standing in society. Focussing on the representation of black African women in advertisements and front covers of South African *True Love*, paying particular attention to hair, this research adds to the stories of and about black women living in Africa to a transdisciplinary body of knowledge. The study examines visual images and linguistic texts<sup>2</sup> published in *True Love*, a magazine targeted at black African women who live in big cities and towns in South Africa, and have an average monthly household income of R16,348 (South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) AMPS 2015 [Jul14-Jun15]). *True Love* features prominent black African women, including celebrities such as actresses and musicians on the covers. Owing to the proliferation of new technologies many people are exposed to visual images of black African women more frequently, hence it is important to explore how the ideologies they promote might influence people, particularly black African women living in South Africa.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the background and context of the study. It then highlights the research problem, and shows how the topic of representation of black African women on the covers and hair advertisements in *True Love* magazine fits in the larger field of

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<sup>1</sup> In its broad sense, the term ‘black’ is used to refer to dark-skinned people of African or Australian Aboriginal ancestry. During apartheid South Africa, the Population Registration Act of 1950, which classified the population into four racial groups, namely, Asian, Black, Coloured, and White, defined black as a person who is, or is generally accepted as, a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa. The Act was repealed in 1991; however, the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and Employment Equity programmes are still using the categories to redress the past imbalances and have extended the meaning of black to include Africans, Asians and Coloureds. Kolawale (2002:96) defines an African as “any person, male or female, who has the legal citizenship of a nation located on the African continent”. The term African has also provoked debate; according to Beck (2000:xi-xiv), “whites generally apply it only to the Bantu-speaking peoples who migrated into South Africa over the last 2,000 years and not to the Khoisan peoples who are indigenous to southern Africa and also Africans”. During apartheid rule white people also used several terms to refer to Africans, for example, *kaffirs*, natives, blacks, and *bantu*. For the purposes of this study, I use the term “black African women”, which is also used by Statistics South Africa, to refer to African women who are South African citizens, including mixed-race or coloured women who identify themselves as black; expatriates from the African continent residing in South Africa; and black women who live on the continent of Africa. In relation to hair, the term “black hair” will be used interchangeably with “African hair”.

<sup>2</sup> In this study, the visual images of the black women on the covers and advertisements will be analysed alongside the cover lines and textual messages in the advertisements. It is important to analyse both the visual and the linguistic signs (Barthes 1967) because the linguistic message, which often accompanies the visual image, serves an anchoring role if it directs “the reader through the visual signifieds” (Ott & Mack 2010:106) or fulfils a relay function if it reinforces the image.



Visual Studies. Thereafter, I conduct a comprehensive literature review that engages broadly with hair, race and gender politics globally. I then provide a rationale for grounding my research focus in cultural studies as a theoretical framework, and for the methodology that is used in the study. I argue that using mixed methods is beneficial for this study because qualitative and quantitative methods complement each other.

### **1.1 Background and context to the study**

While hair is a lifeless biological phenomenon, when worked on or processed by cultural practices it takes on social meaning and value. It is an important feature in most cultures and symbolises various things depending on the socio-cultural and political context. African hair (which I also refer to as black hair in this study) holds political power and is often used as a metaphor for talking about other issues such as race, culture, language and identity. Black hair is one of the defining characteristics that set Africans apart from other racial groups. The notion of assuming identity through comparison with the ‘Other’ is explained by Homi Bhabha (1994:45), who observes that identification is a process that the “representation of the subject in the differentiating order of otherness”. Therefore, black hair, which is distinct from Caucasian and Asian hair (see 3.2), represents blackness. It is and has always been viewed with fascination, and sometimes courted controversy among those inside and outside the black community.

Black hair and the way one wears it is an essential signifier and central to one’s identity, hence, hairstyling is intricately linked to “culture and psychosocial beliefs tied to hair, appearance, and general body image shape” (Versey 2014:813). Hairstyles signify something about an individual and can mean different things in different societies; for example, in many African communities it can signify marital status or serve as a marker of ethnicity. In addition, Rose Weitz (2001:667) observes that “hairstyles serve as important cultural artifacts because they are simultaneously public (visible to everyone), personal (biologically linked to the body), and highly malleable to suit cultural and personal preferences”. In a nutshell, in addition to its protective and adornment functions, hair also serves as a symbol of personal and group identity.

### *1.1.1 The politics of black hair in South Africa*

Hair plays a fundamental role in terms of a woman's body image. As stated above, in communities across the globe, it has social, cultural, aesthetic, religious and psychological significance. As a result, hair is a valued and politicised asset that serves as a signifier of class, gender, ethnicity, conformity/non-conformity, authority, and power (Sherrow 2006). African hair holds political power because it shapes black people's consciousness about broader social, cultural, religious, and economic issues.

The politics<sup>3</sup> of hair in South Africa has some similarities and differences with that of other countries on the continent and beyond. However, although South Africa has a shared colonial history with other countries in Africa such as Zimbabwe and Ghana, Zimbabweans and Ghanaians were not subjected to the same inhumane practices that black South Africans suffered. The politics of black hair in South Africa is largely rooted in the segregation laws introduced during colonisation and apartheid. During colonial and apartheid eras, African hair and hairstyles were disparaged (Barnard 2000:351) and presented as bad, inferior and uncivilised, while the white ideal of long straight hair<sup>4</sup> was represented as superior. Black African women were discriminated against because of the colour of their skin and texture of their hair. The racial hierarchy created by the Population Registration Act of 1950 enabled certain groups of people to "pass" from a lower category to a higher one. For example, black people with straight hair and lighter skin tone were allowed to "pass" to the Coloured category while Coloureds with lighter skin tone "passed" to the White category. Since hair prevented black African women from obtaining upward social mobility they had to come up with new ways to style their hair. To gain social acceptance and move up the social ladder, some black African women felt compelled to copy hairstyles and skin tones that resembled the Westerncentric ideal.<sup>5</sup> These women resorted to chemically altering their hair, wearing wigs, and applying skin lightening products on their faces to change their skin tone. By

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<sup>3</sup> Politics in this context can be defined as a struggle between actors pursuing conflicting desires that may result in an authoritative allocation of values (Winter & Bellows 1985). This definition implies that politics involves struggle for power whereby one group seeks to control the behaviour of another by imposing its preferences on it.

<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that not everyone subscribes to the long straight hair ideal. In this study I use the phrase 'white ideal of long straight hair' in relation to the media-generated ideal that has prevailed for many years in westernised societies.

<sup>5</sup> A similar tendency of emulating 'white' hairstyles was witnessed among black slaves in America. The black women straightened their hair because long, straight hair carried certain meanings in the society (see 1.4.1).

## Chapter One: Introduction

engaging in these practices, they assumed new identities that were perceived to be closer to white ideals. It is important to note that others resisted, based on their own convictions and teachings of movements that promoted black pride, such as the Black Consciousness Movement (see 2.4).

The trend of hair straightening and skin lightening still persists in the post-apartheid era, more than two decades after the inception of democratic rule. There is a predicament of social acceptability where black African women contend with embracing their natural hair, or performing the white ideals that were imposed through colonisation and are perpetuated by hegemonic global fashion and beauty trends and celebrity culture, which are produced and circulated through advertising, international mass media and online platforms (see 3.5).

It seems that black African women are still under pressure to conform to the white ideal. Practices that disparage the black body, particularly hair, still persist as is evident in an incident at Pretoria Girls High School in August 2016 where black female pupils were instructed to straighten their “untidy” natural hair or risk being barred from writing examinations.<sup>6</sup> One of the white teachers allegedly described a black girl’s hair as a bird’s nest. Describing African hair and styles as untidy raises a lot of questions, for instance, what constitutes ‘neat’ hair and who defines ‘neat’ hair? Tate (2017:94) observes that “black natural hair is vulnerable to political, aesthetic, psychic, social and affective attack by the ideology, politics and practice of the white/whitened state as it operates through school policies”. Banning and calling Afrocentric hairstyles such as dreadlocks and afro ‘untidy’ and forcefully imposing Westerncentric standards of ideal beauty strips black people of their cultural identity. This may have a profound effect such as feeling humiliated, low self-esteem, and self-hatred, on the girls and society at large because hair, which is considered a symbol of pride in the black communities, continues to be disparaged.

Hair debates have highlighted other pertinent issues of discrimination and racist practices in South Africa, particularly at schools. The language issue was cited as one of the ways used to

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<sup>6</sup> Media reports show that this problem is not unique to South Africa; in other parts of the world including the US and the UK, black students have been discriminated against and victimised because of their hair. In 2013, a 12-year-old African American girl from Florida was threatened with expulsion over her natural hair (Girl says Florida school... 2013). In the UK, a 12-year-old boy of African Caribbean origin was refused entry into a school because he had cornrows (Boy, 12, banned... 2011). His case was taken to the High Court in London.

discriminate against black pupils; for example, Sans Souci Girls' High School in Cape Town banned 'exotic' hairstyles and students from speaking Xhosa at school. Pupils who spoke Xhosa within the school premises were punished and sent to detention. Gauteng MEC for Education, Panyaza Lesufi intervened and the Department of Basic Education has begun reviewing legislation that governs all schools in South Africa to ensure that no child is discriminated against and that codes of conduct are in line with the South African Constitution. Government officials, political parties, including the African National Congress (ANC) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), and Public Protector Thuli Madonsela also weighed in on the black hair debate.<sup>7</sup> Following public outcry, several schools, including Parktown High School for Girls and Sans Souci Girls' High School began amending their hair policies (Ngoepe 2016). In a Facebook post, Parktown High School for Girls stated that it was amending its hair policy to make "it possible for all girls to attend school feeling comfortable with what they consider to be their natural hair".

### *1.1.2 Rationale for the study*

The issue of representation of black women has gained prominence in other parts of the world and historically, studies on African beauty and hair have mainly focused on women of African descent living in diaspora in places such as America, the Caribbean and Europe (Tate 2007; Bellinger 2007; Capodilupo & Kim 2014). Preliminary investigation revealed that only a few research studies, including Zimitri Erasmus' (1997) autobiographical, personal account, Eve Bertelsen (1998) and Jere-Malanda (2008), have been undertaken on this topic in the African context, and this study is an attempt to fill that gap. Since most studies of this kind have been conducted in the West (Versey 2014; Bellinger 2007; Tate 2007), they may not

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<sup>7</sup> Susan Shabangu, Minister of Women in the Presidency described the hair policy at Pretoria High School for Girls as racist and a tool meant to erode the identity of black pupils (Ngcobo 2016), while ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe said the hair debate reminded him of the pencil test (Grootes 2016). EFF acting spokesperson, Fana Mokoena said his party was deeply saddened that "22 years into democracy, there are still institutions of any kind that still seek to directly suppress blackness in its aesthetics and culture ... This is a direct result of a society still struggling with transformation and failing to address white hegemony ... A white minority culture is still so dominant that it can decree on a black majority what they should look like and how they should behave. This culture is as old as slavery itself and does not belong in a democratic dispensation such as ours". Public Protector Thuli Madonsela described the Pretoria High incident as "unintended racism" and noted that "We do the things that we've always done when we were allowed to discriminate; now we're not allowed to discriminate because we haven't given ourselves an opportunity to reflect on what do we regard as normal ... what the paradigm of a normal society is" (Public Protector talks hair...).

## Chapter One: Introduction

apply to the African context. Moreover, most international studies such as Cheryl Thompson's (2009) Canadian study and Tracey Owens Patton's (2006) research among African American women tend to focus on black women in the diaspora; their findings reveal that exposure to ideal images of femininity influence women's self-evaluations of themselves negatively. However, my exploratory study into the representation of black African women in the hair advertisements and covers of *True Love* magazine focuses on representations of black African women in a predominantly black society. The findings from my study will add to the body of knowledge by giving insight into how black women living in a largely black society are influenced by media images. In addition, my findings can be used in future comparative studies and compared with research from studies conducted in the West to shed light on whether black women living in a predominantly white society are influenced by media images in the same way or differently from their counterparts living in a black society.

Focusing on the African context and conducting a study in South Africa, a multiracial society with a volatile history that was characterised by discrimination and advancement of white supremacy during the colonial and apartheid eras, I will add a new dimension to the discussion surrounding the images of black femininity promoted in the media. In view of South Africa's history, it is important to examine whether trends have changed in the post-apartheid era where black people and white people co-exist.

My study examines the signifiers used to represent African "beauty" by focusing mainly on black hair.<sup>8</sup> A sample of 12 magazine front covers and 29 hair advertisements featured in 12 issues of *True Love* published between June 2015 and May 2016 is drawn for a quantitative content analysis and visual semiotic analysis. The 12 issues covering a whole year have been chosen to reflect the seasonal trends in the world of fashion. Furthermore, 30 black African women who read *True Love* are sampled to establish whether the visual images impact on their perceptions and hairstyling practices.

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<sup>8</sup> Several terms have been used to refer to black people's hair including "black hair", "African hair", "kinky hair", and "afro". Ralph M Trüeb (2015:42) uses the term afro-textured hair and defines it as "the natural texture of black African hair that has not been altered by hot combs, flat irons, or chemicals with the purpose of perming, relaxing, or straightening". For the purposes of this study, the terms "black hair" and "African hair" are used interchangeably and are used to refer to black people's hair in both its natural and heat or chemically altered state because even in its altered form, black hair is distinctive from other hair types such as Caucasian and Asian.

## Chapter One: Introduction

This study focuses on black African women because they tend to style and colour their hair more often than men. Stability is the norm for men as evidenced by the fact that over the years, men's hairstyles have not changed much especially when compared to women's (Stevenson 2001:145). Furthermore, society does not expect men "to wear their hair differently for dinner or a special occasion" (Stevenson 2001:145). This study does not include black women living in diaspora or men and women of other races. However, this does not imply that black women living in diaspora or black men and women who belong to other racial groups are less concerned with their hair. Women from other racial groups are just as much influenced by media images and societal pressures; however, more has been written about them, and I wanted to explore the construction of hair in the black imaginary. The study mainly focuses on black African women living in South Africa because of their unique circumstances. In apartheid South Africa, hair was used to position black African women across different hierarchies including racial, gender, social class and economic standing. Although black African men were also discriminated against because of the texture of their hair, black African women were more marginalised because they occupied the lowest tier in the racial-gender hierarchy. Being African or black defined their class position, which came with restrictions imposed by the colonial regime. As women, they suffered under the patriarchal system because they were regarded as inferior to men and were discriminated against by black males within the framework of apartheid. For example, black African women had no rights to land in Bantustans (the so-called homelands) where the land was controlled by a male-dominated tribal council under the jurisdiction of a chief.<sup>9</sup>

The movement of black African women, particularly into cities, was restricted in the 1960s under the apartheid government. Under the Urban Areas Act, Section 10, a black person could reside in an urban area if the individual was born there and continued to live in the area or if they had worked continuously for one employer for ten years. It was difficult for black African women to fulfil these requirements because most of them travelled to their homelands to be with their parents during child birth. In addition, the Bantu Laws Amendment Act of 1964 banned black Africans from entering urban areas except on visitor's permit. This meant that black African women could not register as tenants in the cities. The

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<sup>9</sup> During apartheid rule the term tribal land was used to refer to reserves that were allocated to black people according to the culture ascribed to them, and the leaders were called tribal authorities (after democratic elections the title changed to traditional councils). The term chief was used to refer to a native or Bantu leader, African ruler and leader of a tribal or traditional community. Under the new constitution 'traditional leader' replaced the word 'chief' (Spiegel & Boonzaier 1988:49).

## Chapter One: Introduction

law posed problems because black African women were rendered homeless upon the death of a husband or in cases of divorce. Such women were immediately deported to the Bantustans. Conversely, these oppressive laws did not apply to white women; hence they enjoyed higher status than black African women because of their race. In addition, whiteness is usually promoted as the norm; using a questionnaire and focus group interview, my study seeks to examine the intersectionality of race, gender, sexuality and class and how these dynamics influence perceptions and meanings that respondents assign to black hair. Drawn from black feminism, intersectionality explores the inextricable link between racism, gender identity, sexism and class, and how these intersect and impact on black stylisation. In addition, through a survey questionnaire and focus group interviews, the respondents' emotional, epistemological, and phenomenological responses to perceptions of black hair are explored. Adopting this approach is helpful in uncovering how the selected black African women negotiate their black identity through their hair in their everyday lives.

During colonial and apartheid rule in South Africa, black African women's physical traits such as kinky hair, large hips and thick lips were represented as inferior and objects of ridicule. It is worth noting that this form of discrimination and 'othering' was also experienced by black people living beyond the South African national boundaries. However, in keeping with the purpose of my study, the focus is mainly on black African women living in South Africa and other black people's experiences are referred to only where relevant. More than two decades after the end of apartheid rule, black African women's hair is (often) still treated as the 'Other' and referred to as 'ethnic hair', while Caucasian women's is simply referred to as 'hair' as if to suggest that Caucasian hair is regarded as the mainstream. Black hair is a contested terrain that this study seeks to untangle by using visual semiotic analysis to expose the signs and codes that are used to represent black African women and their hair in the selected issues of *True Love*. The next section focuses on the research problem.

### **1.2 The research problem**

This cross-sectional, exploratory study uses quantitative content analysis, qualitative visual semiotic analysis, a questionnaire and focus group interviews to examine how black African women are constructed and represented on 12 covers and 29 hair advertisements of *True Love* magazine, published between June 2015 and May 2016. In addition, the study discusses how

30 black female readers who are aged between 18 and 45<sup>10</sup> and live in urban areas in South Africa experience the ideals and ideologies of beauty promoted in the texts.

### ***The research question***

The study poses the main research question and lists the aims and objectives of the research. The main research question is: how is black femininity, with a particular focus on the determinant of hair, constructed in the selected hair advertisements and front covers of *True Love* magazine?

#### ***1.2.1 Aims and objectives of the study***

This study examines how black African women and their hair are represented in the hair advertisements and covers of South African *True Love*, a monthly glossy magazine targeted at black African women, with the aim to identify and interpret images of the personal appearance that is promoted. The main thrust of this exploratory study is to examine to what extent these representations of the stylisation of black African women might influence black African women living in South Africa.

First, using a quantitative content analysis, the study examines the hairstyles, hair textures, length and colour, and hair products that are shown on the 12 covers and 29 advertisements featured in 12 issues of *True Love* magazine published between June 2015 and May 2016. Moreover, the quantitative content analysis examines whether magazine covers and advertisements published in *True Love*, a home-grown magazine targeted at black African women and featuring images of black celebrities, promotes natural hair<sup>11</sup> and African hairstyles or hair altering practices that are arguably fuelled by consumerism and neo-colonialism. In addition it explores whether mediated messages conveyed in *True Love* magazine front covers and advertisements advance the notion that black hair is only beautiful when it is altered. The 12 issues have been chosen because they reflect the latest trends in the

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<sup>10</sup> According to South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) AMPS 2015 [Jul14-Jun15] the majority of *True Love* readers are black women aged between 18 and 45. The average age of the reader is 36 (see also Chapter Three).

<sup>11</sup> Several definitions have offered to describe what constitutes natural hair, in my quantitative content analysis I use the term natural hair to refer to hair of birth that has not been altered using heat and chemicals while black and African hair are used to describe the hair that grows on the scalp of a black African person, including that whose texture has been altered. For a discussion of natural, African hair and fake hair, see 8.3.1).



## Chapter One: Introduction

representation of black African women, while *True Love* magazine has been selected because the magazine features black African women on its covers.

Thereafter, employing qualitative visual semiotic analysis, this cross-sectional, exploratory study describes the visual and verbal elements used in gender representation, and investigates how black African women are represented in covers and hair advertisements. During colonisation and apartheid in South Africa, black African women's beauty was devalued while the white aesthetics were promoted. Against this backdrop, drawing on black feminist theories and cultural studies, my study examines the beauty ideals and feminine identities that are featured prominently in the images, while also examining whether *True Love* has increased the visibility of black African women in South Africa. The study identifies and interprets the codes and signs used to construct and represent black African women and their hair. Using visual semiotic analysis, it explores the stereotypes, myths and ideologies that are promoted by visual images and the accompanying verbal texts. Drawing on the three approaches to representation, namely reflective, intentional and constructionist (Hall 2003:15), the study strives to show how representation tends to be selective by highlighting some aspects and overshadowing others.

Third, informed by the framework of intersectionality, this study tries to investigate how the black African women living in South Africa experience the images represented in the hair advertisements and covers of *True Love* magazine. I therefore examine the impact of exposure to the texts and whether the images exert pressure on black African women living in South Africa. The research explores the level of influence of the images on the covers and hair advertisements on the perceptions, self-esteem and hairstyling practices of the selected *True Love* readers. To what extent do visual images influence what the selected *True Love* black female readers consider to be beautiful hair and in turn shape their hair care regimen and styling decisions? It further examines the cultural and economic implications for black African women who embrace the ideals of beauty promoted in the advertisements and covers. Moreover, the research endeavours to examine if the respondents are fixated with long hair and hair altering techniques. This will be established by means of a questionnaire and focus group interviews with 30 black female readers of *True Love* living in South Africa. Furthermore, focus group interviews are employed to give an insight into how the selected black African women read the covers and advertisements, and whether they engage in dominant, oppositional or negotiated readings.

To sum up, this study therefore explores the impact of colonialism, and by extension apartheid in South Africa, more than 20 years after the democratic elections in 1994. The study examines the signifiers of female black beauty promoted by *True Love* by focussing on the representation of black African women's bodies, especially their hair and attempts to answer the question: in what ways do these signifiers draw from the signifiers of female white beauty? To explore the research problem, my study seeks to uncover the cultural values, myths and ideologies that the images of black African women featured on the front covers and in hair advertisements in *True Love* promote. Since the magazine is targeted at a specific market, my research tries to find out the myths that associate hair with urbanity and racialised class in post-1994 South Africa. For instance, try to investigate whether expensive weaves signify that a person has money and belongs to a higher class. Through reviewing existing research, in this study I provide context by drawing out nuances and identifying wherein the continuities and discontinuities lie pertaining to the representation of black African women after two decades of (mostly masculine) black majority rule. More importantly, how do the 30 selected black African women experience the messages on the covers and hair advertisements?

Having drawn attention to the research problem, the focus turns to the basis for selecting *True Love* magazine for this study and why it is important to analyse visual texts such as covers and advertisements.

### **1.3 Justification for choosing *True Love* magazine**

This research analyses the representation of black African women in the hair advertisements and covers of *True Love* magazine because the media are a powerful source of ideas about race and gender, and provide a platform where these ideas are “articulated, worked on, transformed and elaborated” (Hall 1995b:20).

*True Love* magazine was founded in 1972 as the sister magazine to *Drum*.<sup>12</sup> With the tag line “All a woman needs”, the magazine covers beauty, fashion, health, food and entertainment,

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<sup>12</sup> *Drum* is a weekly family magazine. Founded in 1951, it became the first magazine aimed at black people. It focused on investigative journalism covering township life and included photographs of black people. Over the decades it has grown to include celebrity news, food, and advice on issues such as health, finance and relationships.

## Chapter One: Introduction

sex and relationships. Over the past 45 years, it has positioned itself as a leading women's magazine with a readership of 2,2 million and paid circulation of 53,761 per month (South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) AMPS 2015 [Jul14-Jun15]). According to the South African entertainment and media outlook: 2013-2017 (including Nigeria and Kenya) report, *True Love* is one of the most-read publications in the country in the consumer magazine segment (Horsten 2013:162). Its competitors include the rival magazines aimed at black people, *Bona* (which reaches over 3 million people every month) and *Drum* (which has a readership of 3,281,000 and paid circulation of 86,873 weekly); the weekly general interest magazine *You* (with a readership of 2,215,000 and paid circulation of 136,762); and the Afrikaans weekly *Huisgenoot*, which has a readership of 2,108,000 and paid circulation of 245,388 (Media24.com).

*True Love* also competes with traditionally 'white' magazines like *Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour South Africa*, and social media (see 4.1.1). Most of *True Love* readers belong to the LSM 6 (30 per cent) and others belong to LSM 7 (21 per cent), LSM 1-5 (14 per cent), LSM 8 (14 per cent), LSM 9 (15 per cent), and LSM 10 (6 per cent). *True Love* readers are predominantly black (95 per cent) and young, (the 15-24 age group constitutes 21 per cent, the 25-34 age group make up 32 per cent, the 35-49 make up 28 per cent and those aged 50 and above constitute only 19 per cent), and the average readership age is 36. They have an average personal monthly income of R7,603 (South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) AMPS 2015 [Jul14-Jun15]). The magazine claims to provide content that defines South African style (*True Love Magazine statistics*), and its geographic market is both national and global since readers can access its content online, on the website, Twitter and Facebook. Google Analytics statistics show that the website gets around 55,355 page views and 22,521 unique visitors per month.

On the one hand, it is important to analyse the front covers, as they are the selling point of the magazine. Douglas Kellner (1995:257) argues that images present a great many themes and issues, which is instrumental in configuring the self. For David Abrahamson and Marcia R Prior-Miller (2015:377), the magazine cover combines three important elements, namely, artwork, editorial and marketing, and its purpose is to promote the magazine's qualities and voice and to sell the copies. Therefore, in addition to having content of cultural significance, the purpose of the cover is to move newsstand copies; hence, analysing the images and cover lines gives an insight into what readers find appealing about the images of black African

## Chapter One: Introduction

women and their hairstyles. Drawing on Kellner (1995:257) and other theorists, this study interrogates how visual images such as covers and advertisements draw attention to role models, proper and unacceptable conduct, beauty and fashion trends, and steer readers towards imitating and embracing some characteristics while shunning others.

As established above, magazine covers are generally subject to editorial control. Advertisements, on the other hand, were chosen for the study because magazines survive on revenue generated from advertising. Jib Fowles (1996:13) defines advertising as “paid-for messages that attempt to transfer symbols onto commodities to increase the likelihood that the commodities will be found appealing and be purchased”. It is worth mentioning that advertising uses symbols, images and icons to represent products. Michael Herbst (2005:14) argues that advertising images consist of signs that are arranged together for the purposes of attracting, intriguing and impressing the consumer. On the other end of the spectrum, Richard Hoggart (1998) argues that advertising is a form of blackmail like political propaganda since it abuses audiences emotionally. Furthermore, Hoggart (1998:12) notes that advertisers capitalise on people’s fears, anxieties, hopes and aspirations to sell their products.

However, it is worth noting that consumers are not passive victims; Joan Gibbons (2005:6) argues that advertising also provides guidance and pleasures that enrich people’s lives. Advertisers employ fear appeal, a notion that comprises three concepts, namely fear, threat, and perceived efficacy. For scholars such as P Gore, S Madhavan, D Curry, G McClurg, M Castiglia, SA Rosenbluth and RA Smego (1998:36) fear appeals yield good results when they contain high levels of threat and high levels of efficacy; hence, advertising messages tend to include a threat or problem as well as a solution in the form of a product or procedures individuals should use to solve the problem. This study examines the extent to which black African women living in South Africa are influenced by the images they see and messages they read in the hair advertisements. After giving the rationale for conducting the research on *True Love* covers and advertisements, the next section focuses on the literature review.

### **1.4 Literature review**

Several studies into the influence of media messages on black women have been conducted in Africa and in diaspora in places such as Britain, America, Canada and Brazil. Most scholars agree that (black) women are influenced by the images they see in the media; however, the

cause of disagreement is to what extent media images influence women and with what consequences.

### *1.4.1 Studies conducted in diaspora*

Various research findings reveal that some beauty ideals are promoted at the expense of others. For instance, over the years dating back to slavery and colonisation, the white beauty ideals have been favoured and considered the acceptable yardstick of feminine beauty. Byrd and Tharps (2001:181-182) argue that among Americans, both black and white, the beauty ideal has not significantly changed since the late 1800s. They note that “large breasts, small waists, and masses of flowing hair are still the look desired by men and sought after by many women ...”, adding that “black people looking to fit into the mainstream visually still overwhelmingly have to contend with the same standards as in the past” (Byrd & Tharps 2001:181-182).

Employing two theoretical frameworks, namely, Afrocentric theory and standpoint theory, Patton (2006) explored the effect of the white standard of beauty on African American women, paying particular attention to its effects on conceptions of beauty, body image, and hair. The study found that the representation of black femininity in the West draws on stereotypes that were prevalent during slavery and in seventeenth century Europe where black women were hypersexualised<sup>13</sup> and mainly represented as “hot momma” or “Jezebel”. The slave masters drew on their own cultural frameworks to construct the above stereotypes that were based on the racial and patriarchal vision. This is evident in that in most images analysed by Simon Schama (1988:375) in his study of Dutch culture in the seventeenth century, most women were depicted in domestic settings and featured as housewives or hussies. However, although some images of independent women such as Anna Maria van Schurman, midwife Vrouw Schrader, painter Judith Leyster and actress Afrianna Nozeman were analysed, they were still cast as objects for the (white) male gaze. To reinforce the notion of the (white) male spectator, Schama (1988:412) notes that there were indications in Dutch culture that women “could be seen for what they were, rather than for how they ought to be”. Schama’s assertion seems to resonate with Berger’s notion of the surveyed female.

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<sup>13</sup> The term ‘hypersexualisation’ refers to the sexualisation and exoticisation of the black body through the lens of the colonialists who were preoccupied with racial differences (Sanger 2007:277).

## Chapter One: Introduction

To fit into the mainstream during the chattel slave era, black women tended to emulate white hairstyles, especially straight hair because it symbolised and carried different meanings in black communities, for example, “free versus slave; employed versus unemployed; educated versus uneducated; upper class versus poor” (Patton 2006:28). Patton (2006:26) shows that not much has changed in modern times in America because black women are still disparaged and their beauty wrought with racist stereotypes. Sander L Gilman (1985:206) argues that in the iconography of the nineteenth century, “the female Hottentot [Sara Baartman] comes to represent the black female *in nuce*, and the prostitute to represent the sexualised woman”. At the other end of the spectrum, Patton (2006:26) observes that black women are represented as an asexual “mammy” that dates back to the plantations or the “matriarch”. My study explores whether black African women featured on the front covers and hair advertisements of *True Love* magazine are represented in such racist stereotypes.

In her study on black women’s health, H Shellae Versey (2014:810) found a correlation between lack of exercise and hair maintenance among African American women. She concluded that “culture and psychosocial beliefs tied to hair, appearance, and general body image shape decisions about whether to exercise” (Versey 2014:813). Rebecca R Hall, Shani Francis, Melicia Whitt-Glover, Kismet Loftin-Bell, Katrina Swett and Amy J McMichael (2013:310-314) conducted a study on leisure-time physical activity among African American women, and their research revealed that out of a sample of 123 women aged between 21 and 60, 38 per cent said they avoided exercise because of their hair. The study further found that 35.9 per cent cited hair concerns as preventing them from engaging in water activities such as swimming, 29.1 per cent avoided aerobic and gym activities because they did not want to sweat out the hairstyle and did not have time to wash, dry, and style their hair (Hall *et al.* 2013:310-314). Drawing on Hall *et al.*’s research, this study examines the cultural and economic implications associated with maintaining black hair and how this manifests in *True Love* readership specifically. Thompson’s (2009:851) study among Caribbean women and women of Caribbean and Indian descent living in Canada is also useful in this respect.

Patricia Pinho’s (2006:275) study in Brazil found that advertisements for ethnic hair products promoted the straight hair ideal. The products were shown to transform girls with kinky hair into beautiful princesses. While Pinho’s (2006) research seems to suggest that kinky hair is ugly and needs to be altered, Whitney Bellinger (2007:63) who conducted a study among African American women to ascertain what constitutes “good hair” found that some young

## Chapter One: Introduction

African Americans changed their hair's chemical make-up for "time, ease of styling, and the creation and perpetuation of healthy hair". Other respondents pointed out that they opted not to alter their hair "based on racial pride taught to them by their mothers" (Bellinger 2007:63). The results of Bellinger's (2007:63) study among African Americans have similarities with Beatrice Amunga Etemesi's (2005:24) Kenyan research.

Data from Bellinger's (2007:71) American study showed that some respondents said they altered their hair to resemble Caucasian hair to increase their chances of finding employment and gaining promotions. This echoes findings from Thompson's (2009) Canadian study, which revealed that Westerncentric beauty ideals have an impact on black women because they influence their perceptions of beauty, and have a bearing on the prospects of finding a romantic partner. In South Africa, where black people are the majority, it is worth exploring the reasons for changing one's hair to resemble Caucasian texture. Using focus group interviews, my study examines whether black African women adopt Westerncentric hairstyles in order to improve their job and promotion prospects.

A study exploring the relationships among race, ethnicity, culture, discrimination, and body image for African American and black women revealed that in all the focus groups, respondents mentioned the importance of their hair as a physical feature. Of particular interest, "they discussed hair texture (i.e. kinky, vs. straight), length, and colour" (Capodilupo & Kim 2014). Another theme that emerged during the focus group discussions centred on keeping hair natural versus relaxing it or wearing a weave, and the social consequences of these decisions. This resonates with Pinho's (2006:275) observation that some black Brazilian women who straightened their hair reported that they were "accused of denying the 'natural blackness', or of desiring to whiten themselves". Drawing on these studies, my research quantifies the number of women featured on *True Love* covers and advertisements wearing natural hairstyles<sup>14</sup> and those shown with relaxed hair or wearing wigs and weaves. Using focus group interviews, my study further explores the sampled black African women's attitudes towards hair alteration and enhancements as well as factors that influence hair care and styling choices. However, it is worth mentioning that hairstyles that are described as natural are also constructed. Kobena Mercer (1997:40) notes that Afros and dreadlocks are

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<sup>14</sup> The phrase natural hairstyle is used to describe a hairstyle that does not involve the use of chemicals such as relaxers or hair straighteners.

not natural *per se*, but socially and politically constructed styles within a specific historical milieu as a way of challenging white dominance.

Pinho (2006:287) notes that white beauty standards were used to discriminate and exclude black people in Bahia, Brazil from participating in cultural festivals based on aesthetics as they were deemed ‘ugly savages’. As a result, some black people responded by adopting Afro-aesthetics, which incidentally excluded people with lighter skin tones. A similar pattern was observed by Shirley Tate (2007:307) in her study among “mixed race” black women in Britain. Tate (2007:307) found that “shade and its companion hair, matter for acceptance into Black community”. Using conversations between women of British Caribbean heritage, Tate’s (2007:301-302) research focuses on how women’s readings of experiences mediate racialising discourses of belonging and exclusion. In a more recent study, Tate (2017) examines the libidinal economies of black hair, particularly in the context of schools in South Africa, America and Britain. Tate (2017:94) explores newspaper coverage of banning and exclusions of certain Afrocentric hairstyles in schools in the three countries and concludes that afro and cornrows are “objects of commodity capitalism and can adorn heads transracially” but “remain troubling for schools when they become forms of surfacing for Black bodies”. Having looked at studies in the diaspora, the next section focuses on research conducted in Africa.

### ***1.4.2 African studies and scholarly views***

While the above studies focus on black women living in diaspora, there is a crop of researchers who have turned their attention to the African continent. For example, while Thompson’s (2009) study focused on American magazines targeted at black women, Sanger (2007) conducted research on the representation of black women in white women’s magazines in South Africa. Sanger’s (2007:277) study found that women’s magazines with predominantly white readerships tended to “sexualise black femininities in a manner that is reminiscent of white male colonial obsession with black bodies”. Unlike Sanger’s (2007) research that focused on magazines targeted at white women, my study analyses images published in *True Love*, a glossy South African magazine whose primary readership is black African women.



## Chapter One: Introduction

Zimitri Erasmus (1997:16) recounts her hairstyling experiences as a mixed-race child while growing up in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and argues that “hair is gendered, racialised and sexualised”. Erasmus (1997:14) states that racist notions of beauty shaped and still shape South African black women’s perceptions of what constitutes good hair. However, she observed 20 years ago that although media images promote the straight hair ideal, more and more black women were coming to accept that good hair is “healthy hair whatever the texture”. In part, my study aims to establish if there have been any changes in trends since Erasmus’s research was published.

In a study on the impact of the use of hair relaxer by women in the Nakuru district, Kenya, Etemesi (2007:24) found that out of a sample of 242 women and girls aged between 15 and 51, “142 (59 per cent) had relaxed hair, and 100 (41 per cent) had previously relaxed their hair, but now wore it naturally (cut short, plaited, or blow-dried), or were using a different type of chemical (not a relaxer)”. The findings showed that women found relaxed hair to be more manageable “allowing them to transform it into different styles, making them feel that they ‘looked good’ and well groomed” (Etemesi 2007:25). Some researchers such as Bellinger (2007:71) have revealed that black women in America relax their hair because they want it to resemble European and Asian textures; however, Etemesi’s study shows that black women in Kenya relax their hair to make it manageable and easier to style. Etemesi’s research is used in my study to determine to what extent the images on the covers of *True Love* and hair advertisements impact on hair altering and hairstyling techniques among black African women living in South Africa.

A study by Masina (2010) using quantitative content analysis and critical discourse analysis examined representations of black women appearing in two South African magazines, *True Love* and *Destiny*. The study found that in both magazines, “relaxed hair dominated the representations, appearing on nearly all of the pages reserved for hair products”. While Masina’s study explored the media texts only, my research goes a step further and includes the production and reception of the messages. My study includes the perspectives of the team responsible for publishing *True Love* and also examines to what extent the texts influence the haircare and hairstyling regimen of the selected black African women.

The use of hair extensions, weaves, and wigs is popular in the West (Berry 2008:64) and has made its way to the developing world. Esther R Berry’s (2008:67) article on the global

exchange of human hair discusses the use of weaves and wigs. My study records the number of black African women featured in *True Love* wearing hair enhancements such as hair extensions, weaves, and wigs. A visual semiotic analysis further explores the types of hair enhancements worn by the women and explains what they may signify and the myths and ideologies that they promote.

### **1.5 The theoretical framework**

This study employs cultural studies as a theoretical point of departure. The discipline that is now known as cultural studies got its name and was institutionalised at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1960s. My study borrows tools from both British cultural studies and African cultural studies theorists to examine how cultural products such as race, class and gender promote ideology. This study uses semiotic and representation theories, which fall under cultural studies, a discipline that focuses on culture and its effects on society (see 4.2).

#### **1.5.1 Semiotic theories**

Drawing from semiotic theorists, including Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce, Roland Barthes, and social semiotic theories advanced by Theo van Leeuwen (2005), Gunther Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), this thesis examines visual and verbal texts to gain insight into the signs used and what they signify. De Saussure (1974:67) argues that the linguistic sign is divided into two components, namely the signifier, a sound pattern and the signified, the concept it represents. Although De Saussure (1974:67) focussed on the linguistic sign it can be extended to apply to visual signs, therefore based on his theory, this study assumes that hair is a signifier and certain types of hairstyles are used to signify things such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and social and economic status.

Considering Charles Sanders Peirce's (1977) triadic sign model, which comprises the "representamen", "interpretant" and an object, the study examines images and identifies the three types of signs, namely, iconic, indexical and symbolic signs. The iconic sign, also known as the first-order sign, resembles the object that it signifies, for example a photograph of an actress looks like the actress. The front covers of *True Love* are iconic signs because the photographs resemble the women they signify. In the second order signs or indexical signs, a

## Chapter One: Introduction

signifier may not resemble the signified object; the link between the two can be inferred, hence it can be denotative or connotative in nature. Third, symbolic signs are conventional and determined by the society. Peirce's "representamen" corresponds to Saussure's signifier while the "interpretant" resembles the signified. Furthermore, the front covers and hair advertisements are analysed using Barthes' (1977) three levels of meaning, namely, denotation, connotation, and myth and ideology.

Semiotics is used to understand how advertisers and the editorial team construct meaning in the magazine and how *True Love* readers interpret and assign meaning to these visual texts. Meaning does not reside in the text only but is also influenced by the context. Keyan Tomaselli and Vanessa McLennan-Dodd (2004:224) observe that "meaning results from a ceaseless negotiation between the two dimensions [text and context]". Semiotics provides tools to examine the construction and interpretation of meaning and how these are influenced by the context in which texts are produced and consumed.

### ***1.5.2 The representation theory***

Stuart Hall's (2003:15) representation theory, which can be divided into three approaches, reflective, intentional and constructionist, is employed to identify the hair textures, length of hair, hair care products, beauty ideals and images of femininity that feature prominently and those that are excluded from the hair advertisements and covers of *True Love* magazine. Hall (2003:5) argues that signs "stand for or represent our concepts, ideas and feelings in such a way as to enable others to 'read', decode or interpret their meaning in roughly the same way we do". Drawing on Hall (2003), my study assumes that hairstyles are signs used to communicate certain messages.

The systems of representation in a society produce identities. Howarth (2006:6) argues that "representations have to be seen as alive and dynamic - existing only in the relational encounter, in the inbetween space we create in dialogue and negotiation with others". Moreover, Douglas Kellner (1995:60) notes that in a world where messages are mediated, the representations are instrumental in forging one's identity and getting information about gender roles. Representation is also linked to power and has an ideological component. Howarth (2006:22) introduces the notions of hegemonic and oppositional constructions of reality. On the one hand, hegemonic representations are often widely circulated while on the

other hand, oppositional representations tend to be less circulated. Representations of gender and race also employ stereotypes and ‘Othering’ (Said 2003), a concept that involves objectification of an individual or group of people. Advertisements and covers use visual images and text that are used to represent ideals and values that are acceptable or unacceptable in society. After a discussion of the theoretical framework that guides the study, the next section addresses the methodology.

### **1.6 The research methodology**

Drawing on mixed methods, including quantitative and qualitative research, the thesis studies the visual images using quantitative content analysis and visual semiotic analysis. On the one hand, quantitative content analysis is instrumental in establishing and determining the number of advertisements featuring, for example, type of hair such as natural, straight and naturally styled, and length of hair such as short, medium and long, and so on. On the other hand, semiotic analysis is useful for uncovering mythic and ideological meanings. By using content analysis and semiotic analysis, the research uncovers both manifest and latent meaning of texts, respectively.

Additionally, this research employs a pre-group questionnaire and focus group interviews to establish to what extent the visual images impact on and influence the sampled black African women’s notions of beautiful hair and their hairstyling choices. The results from the quantitative content analysis are presented first, followed by findings from the visual semiotic analysis and thereafter the results from the focus group interviews. The results from the three methods are integrated where applicable to determine whether there were any links.

#### ***1.6.1 Quantitative content analysis***

I use quantitative content analysis (see 5.1 for further discussion) to theorise and think critically about the categories of the images representing women on the covers and in hair advertisements. Categories and sub-categories such as hair texture (straightened, straightened and curled, natural state and naturally styled), length of hair (close crop, ear length, shoulder length, waist length, length of hair not visible), hair products (hair styling, hair colourants, hair treatments, cleansers, and lustre enhancers) and hair enhancements (hair extensions, wigs and weaves) are developed to categorise the images.

### 1.6.2 *Semiotic analysis*

In this thesis, I use semiotics as both theory and research method for analysing and interpreting data. A visual semiotic analysis of magazine covers and advertisements investigates how black African women are represented, paying particular attention to hair. For the visual semiotic analysis, a sample of 12 covers and 29 hair advertisements is drawn from 12 issues of *True Love* published between June 2015 and May 2016. I chose this method because it allows for an in-depth analysis, which gives an insight into the codes that are used to construct and represent black African women. I am not suggesting that semiotics is an exhaustive methodology and theoretical framework. Other approaches such as discourse analysis, which is mainly concerned with power and how race, gender and class create, reproduce or change social systems, could have been employed. Discourse analysis is concerned with the study of social relations, exchanges and texts and what they mean and how they construct the world. I did not include discourse analysis in this study because it is connected to, although distinct from, semiotics. While discourse analysis has its merits, semiotics has been chosen and is used as both theory and method in this study because it is helpful in capturing cultural meanings entrenched in codes. Semiotics provides a means and a language for describing and deciphering how myths and ideologies are constructed and manipulated to legitimise certain actions. Semiotic theory is helpful in unpacking how meanings and myths change over time in relation to the prevailing political, economic and social environment.

I analysed full-page, half-page, one-third page and double page (DPS) advertisements, and the main image on each cover, taking note of codes of content and form. Each image is analysed taking note of codes such as type of shot, camera angle, words used on the cover lines, age of the woman, and length, texture and colour of her hair. Specifically, women on the covers and advertisements are scrutinised in terms of gender, appearance, attire, pose, *mise-en-scène*, and the verbal message (cover lines, headlines and other forms of text) that accompanies the image. Codes that are used are identified and discussed, for example, femininity, romance, beauty, and sensuality.

### **1.6.3 Focus group interviews**

I conducted three focus group interviews to establish the level of impact of the images on the covers and advertisements on *True Love* readers. Thematic content analysis is used to analyse data from focus group interviews. The codes and categories were generated for the purposes of coding data obtained from focus group interviews. I did not determine the codes and categories *a priori*, instead they emerged from the data as I carefully read the texts identifying key words, themes, and concepts.

For pre-group questionnaire and focus group interviews, I used snowball sampling to select a sample of 30 women comprising black females who read *True Love* magazine and are South African citizens or expatriates from the African continent currently residing in South Africa. From the 30, I chose 18 women who fit the criteria for the three focus group interviews. To be eligible for selection a woman had to be black, aged between 18 and 45, have been reading *True Love* magazine for at least two years, she had to have her own buying power, should live in the city, and have access to salons, shops and different ranges of hair products. This age group has been chosen because they are the primary buyers of beauty products and as previously noted the average readership age of *True Love* is 36. The sample does not include interlocutors on the service side of the hair economy such as stylists and other professionals in the hair care industry because the main focus of my study is *True Love* magazine. My study is mainly concerned with how media texts impact on the hair care and styling routine of 'ordinary' black African women in South Africa. The thrust of my study is not on how media messages flow to opinion leaders (stylists) first, then to their clients (black African women).

### **1.7 Feasibility and ethical implications of the study**

The topic was feasible and researchable in terms of time and costs. Eight back copies of the magazine were obtained from *True Love* magazine offices, three copies were purchased from the newsstand and one issue was accessed from the National Library of South Africa. The topic is ethically acceptable because it addresses a pertinent issue of how the representation of African women influences their choices in life. The publishers of *True Love* and hair brands that advertise in the magazine may get an insight into what black African women like or dislike about images of females featured in the magazine. In addition, in a country with a

## Chapter One: Introduction

long history of racism, my study facilitates critical thinking relating to dynamics in the representation of black African women. More specifically, it highlights their own perceptions and agency within those dynamics.

Furthermore, in social science research, ethics should be observed throughout the project from choosing the topic right up to reporting findings. The topic of representation of black African women and its influence on black African women living in South Africa is ethical because the concerns are significant and warrant investigation. In addition, the respondents who participated in this study are adults and above the age of 18. Informed consent was obtained from the participants. All the participants were informed that participation was voluntary and anonymous and they could withdraw at any stage during the research if they felt uncomfortable. To adhere to ethics, honesty in conducting and reporting findings was ensured. In addition, material obtained from other studies and publications is properly acknowledged.

### **1.8 Outline of chapters**

This study comprises nine chapters. The first chapter gave the background, aims and objectives of the study. It further demonstrated that *True Love* magazine is appropriate for this study because the glossy magazine is primarily targeted at black African women and also features black African women on its covers. The theoretical framework that is informed by cultural studies was outlined, as well as the literature review and methodology.

In the second chapter, perceptions of the body, particularly hair is explored. Before delving into the dehumanisation of black people, a historical overview of South Africa is given to offer context to the policies that had a bearing on the perceptions of black hair. Thereafter, Chapter Three highlights the morphological structure of black hair and moreover, endeavours to show that there is more to hair than meets the eye because when processed by cultural practices, this lifeless biological phenomenon takes on social meaning and value. Hairstyles and rituals associated with hair care have symbolic meanings and can signify, among other things, one's religious beliefs, mental state, health status, age, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

## Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter Four focuses on *True Love* magazine. It draws on insights from cultural studies, particularly theories of representation and semiotic theories. This discussion covers the history of *True Love*, the magazine's target audience, and factors that influence the choice of content and covers that are published. It also provides a springboard for a detailed analysis of the covers and advertisements using visual semiotic analysis in Chapters Six and Seven.

The fifth chapter is concerned with a quantitative content analysis of the covers and advertisements, focussing on variables such as hair length, colour and texture. The quantitative content analysis provides an important conduit to the next two chapters, which deal with the myths and ideologies, as well as the impact of the images on black African women that is explored in Chapter Eight.

Analysing the 29 advertisements and 12 covers in Chapters Six and Seven, respectively, I unpack the signifiers that are used to represent black African women. I argue that certain stereotypes are used to depict black African women to produce and reproduce certain identities and shed light on the notion of a post-apartheid black middle class. While Chapter Five quantified various units of analysis, these two chapters delve deeper and examine the myths and ideologies that are propagated.

After employing quantitative content analysis and visual semiotic analysis, in Chapter Eight I subsequently use a questionnaire and focus group interviews to determine the validity of some of the claims derived from the previous chapters. Additionally, the eighth chapter explores how *True Love* texts impact on the selected black African women's lives.

Finally, Chapter Nine presents a summary of findings and demonstrates whether the results refute or support the research assumptions. In addition, in this chapter I draw attention to the strengths and limitations of the study and further give recommendations for future research.



## CHAPTER TWO: THE BLACK BODY AND BLACK HAIR POLITICS

This chapter aims to establish why the subject of the black body, and in particular black hair, is politically charged. To understand the nuances of the politics of the black body it is important to begin by exploring how blackness is perceived in the black and white imaginery. Thereafter an historical overview of South Africa, focusing on its unique history, the advent of democracy, and the current socio-cultural, economic and political climate is given. Moreover, this chapter focuses on dehumanisation of the black body, and the counter-hegemonic strategies such as the Black Consciousness Movement's initiatives that were adopted to fight Afrikaner nationalism. Highlighting the chronological events that have and continue to shape the country is helpful in understanding how black African women experience and navigate societal influences. This provides a framework for the study and sets the context for the analysis of *True Love* that follows in subsequent chapters.

### 2.1 Blackness in the black and white imagination

In Western thought difference is often explained in biological terms rather than through race, gender and class. As such, society is believed to constitute of bodies such as female bodies, male bodies, white bodies and black bodies. Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí (1997) argues that it is believed that an individual's "beliefs and social position or lack thereof" can be ascertained by merely looking at their body. In other words, the body is a sign system that carries certain meanings. Based on this line of thought, hair becomes an important signifier of self and is linked to identity, which in turn is intricately related to consumption. In addition, identity is not fixed but ever changing and is rooted in social and historical milieu. Homi Bhabha (2004:70) suggests that identity is "always poised uncertainly, tenebrously, between shadow and substance". Oyěwùmí, Oyèrónké (1997:7) notes that differences in people's physical appearance and social ranking order are bestowed on the body.

To gain a better understanding of what shapes black African women's perceptions of their identity and beauty ideals, it is important explore black subjectivity, a notion that is defined through identity categories such as race, gender, sexuality, and class. In this section, I explore blackness relationally to whiteness and interrogate how it is expressed as a dialectic of whiteness. Moreover, I examine the nature of blackness in various historical periods and geographical settings because blackness is not a matter of what, but of "when and where it is

## Chapter Two: The black body and black hair politics

being imagined, defined, and performed and in what locations, both figurative and literal” (Wright 2015:3).

Drawing on Yancy (2008:x), the term ‘whiteness’ is used to refer to a “symbolic structure around which values and meanings are organised” and it is a concept that is “learned ... and lived on the inside as well as attributed to one’s external appearance”. On the other hand, in his essay “The fact of blackness”, which was written at the height of oppression of black people by their colonial masters in the 1950s, Frantz Fanon (2008) notes that blackness is not an identity that is created by black people themselves, but is a tag that is thrust upon those who are categorised as black by external forces. African cultural studies scholars such as Keyan G Tomaselli and Handel Kashope Wright (2011:5) concur when they argue that “black people in ‘predominantly black’ countries in Africa do not self identify as black but rather become black or are assigned blackness as an identity marker in the West”. For Fanon (2008:86), blackness became a social uniform that served to alienate the colonised black people. He observes that unlike a Jew, who is a white man and can sometimes go unnoticed, a colonised black man becomes the “slave not of the ‘idea’” that the others have of him but of his/her own appearance (Fanon 2008:87). Commenting on the representation of black people, Yancy (2008:20) argues that during the colonial period, in the European mind they were not just perceived as divergent from white people, but were further viewed as a different species. Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe (1977) posits that during colonisation some Westerners sought to “set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe’s own state of spiritual grace will be manifest” (this is discussed under the anthropomorphisation of Africa; see 2.3).

During the colonial era and in the present age, whiteness identifies itself through the imaginary of the ‘other’, that is blackness. As Fanon (2008:82-83) argued “not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man”. Put another way, the ‘positive’ whiteness does not exist without the ‘negative’ blackness. Although Fanon was chronicling the experiences of the colonial subject, the black body is still dehumanised, as evident in how black girls in Pretoria were derided because of the texture of their hair in the example cited earlier. In addition, Patton (2006:36), who describes the contemporary American situation, notes that the images of black beauty are often portrayed as the

## Chapter Two: The black body and black hair politics

“antithesis of ‘white’ beauty, ‘white’ hair<sup>1</sup> and ‘white’ norms”. Exploring the dialectics of blackness and whiteness is helpful in comprehending a world riddled with paradox. For instance, on the one hand, the “negro” is classified as bad, mean and ugly (Fanon 2008:86), yet on the other hand, the black body is portrayed as exotic and sexually desirable. Yancy (2008:x) notes that the black body is to be “feared and yet desired, sought out in forbidden white sexual adventures and fantasies;<sup>2</sup> it is constructed as a source of white despair and anguish, an anomaly of nature, the essence of vulgarity and immorality” (for detailed discussion see 2.3).

Interestingly, there are also representations of whiteness in the black imagination and these arose mainly out of reactions to white racist domination and to some extent “responses to white stereotypes of blackness” (hooks 1992:169-170). In black people’s imagination, which was shaped by suffering under white domination, hooks (1992:170) points out that white people were regarded as terrorists and racists who ill-treated black people. Fanon (2008:89) sums it up succinctly where he quotes Sir Alan Burns who observes that colour prejudice results in “unreasoning hatred of one race for another, the contempt of the stronger and richer peoples for those whom they consider inferior themselves and the bitter resentment of those who are kept in subjection and are so frequently insulted”.

Blackness cannot only be defined and perceived in relation to white racism, slavery and colonial history, because it is also rooted in the unique experiences of black people themselves. Third-wave black feminists in the West and in Africa, including Shirley Anne Tate (2009) and bell hooks (1989), and Zimitri Erasmus (1997) have added their voices to the debate. Writing about their own bodies, these black women introduce another dimension by exploring the intersection between class, politics and an individual’s personal preferences, and how these shape a person’s identity and perceptions of their own body. As Kimberle Crenshaw (2005:283) suggests, examining the intersectionality of the different frameworks rather than exploring each separately gives a better understanding of the multiple factors that shape black women’s identity.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Black’ hair is used to refer to African hair and ‘white’ to Caucasian hair. However, ‘white’ does not necessarily denote the colour of Caucasian hair because white people’s hair comes in different colours such as blonde and brunette.

<sup>2</sup> White people feared and despised black people, yet during colonisation and apartheid white men had children with black women and there were cases of black domestic workers who were abused sexually by their white male employers.

## Chapter Two: The black body and black hair politics

Drawing on Edward Said (1978), these black feminists view beauty as a raced and classed site of 'Othering' but differ in terms of their notions of hairstyling practices. One group of third-wave feminists believes that beauty is a "primary source of [black] women's oppression" (Tate 2009:11) under the patriarchal and racialised system because on the one hand, they groom themselves to please men and on the other hand, try to emulate the white ideal. The other camp within third-wave feminists that is opposed to the popular images that are often circulated about black women, suggests that the woman's body is presented as a source of power, and the beauty practices they engage in empower them. Based on this, my study examines the focus group respondents' reasons for wearing certain hairstyles and further explores whether opting for them is linked to the white ideal or self-fashioning.

Black feminists argue that black women are not agency-less dupes. Erasmus (1997:16) acknowledges that "hair is gendered, racialised and sexualised". Erasmus (1997:14) asserts that racist notions of beauty shaped and still shape South African black women's perceptions of what constitutes good hair. However, she observes that although media images promote the straight hair ideal, more and more black African women have come to accept that hair texture alone cannot be used to determine good from bad hair (Erasmus 1997:14). This shows that the white ideal is not the only standard of beauty that is used as a yardstick; there are other sources such as cultural and social mores and values, and the prevailing political climate.

Tate (2009:13) aptly observes that the significance of black hair is not only shaped by white visual ideals, but also informed by other factors such as the politics of the day. For example, during apartheid, campaigns such as the Black Consciousness Movement promoted, as part of the decolonisation of the black mind, natural hair and frowned upon hair straightening and skin lightening. It came up with slogans such as 'Black is beautiful' to entrench black pride. More than two decades after the inception of democratic rule, artists such as Hugh Masekela oppose the use of weaves and wigs, while on the political front South African President Jacob Zuma has called upon black African women to "embrace styles and avoid straightening their hair with chemical products" (Diseko 2013). This shows that positions taken by influential people and organisations have an impact on the types of hairstyles that are considered desirable or undesirable in the South African black communities. In the above examples, it is interesting that the influential people, who are telling women what they ought to do with their hair, are men.

## Chapter Two: The black body and black hair politics

In view of the above, Tate (2009:12) notes that the ideals of black are not only drawn from and dependent on white standards. For example, black women writing about their own experiences reveal that they straighten their hair for different reasons. hooks (1989:1) is an example; she notes that for her straightening hair was not a means to look like white women but was “to move from being perceived as a child (whose hair could be neatly combed and braided) to being almost a woman”. Erasmus (1997:16) concurs where she says that she straightened her hair during her teenage years not to feel or look white but because it made her feel “proud and confident”. Erasmus (1997) and hooks’ (1989) experiences are evidence that beauty is socially defined and involves “aesthetic and political contestation between local and global norms” (Tate 2009:4). Tate (2009:1) argues that black beauty is “performative and as such is an on-going negotiation of aesthetics, stylisation and politics produced through the mobility and mobilisation of beauty knowledge, stylisation technologies ...”. Like beauty, race is performative; hence both black and white beauty are constructed by means of racialised dynamics and styling traditions.

Black people also set their own standards of beauty and since black women are not homogeneous, black beauty is multifaceted. For instance, *True Love* features only black African women of a certain type on its covers. Some are featured wearing bustiers and sporting naturalised African hairstyles; they are neither waif-thin like white models nor overweight, because obesity is associated with lack of control of one’s body. This shows that some of the Western-centric stereotypes persist, while others have been given new meanings. What has not changed is that the beauty ideals promoted on the covers are still difficult to attain. This study uses tools from African cultural studies, which is performative, to analyse black beauty, particularly the politics of black hair and the race dynamics that influence the way it is consumed and interpreted. The next sections give an overview of South Africa, focusing on pre-colonial, colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid history to give the study a chronological background.

### **2.2 Overview of South Africa**

South Africa is one of the largest countries in Southern Africa. According to Statistics South Africa’s Mid-year Population Estimates (2015), 54.96 million people inhabit this country as at July 2015. Black people are the majority and constitute 80 per cent (44.23 million) of the total South African population. Coloureds make up the second largest population group,

which is estimated to be 4,83 million, while the white population stands at 4,53 million. The smallest population group comprises Indians/Asians who are estimated to be 1,36 million (Statistics South Africa 2015:8). About 51 per cent (around 28,07 million) of the population is female.

In terms of geographical distribution, Gauteng is the most populous of the nine provinces<sup>3</sup> in South Africa with an estimated population of 13.20 million (24 per cent). It is followed by KwaZulu-Natal at 19.9 per cent, and then Eastern Cape (12.6 per cent), Western Cape (11.3 per cent), Limpopo (10.4 per cent), Mpumalanga (7.8 per cent), North West (6.7 per cent), Free State (5.1 per cent), and Northern Cape (2.2 per cent). About 19.2 million people live in rural areas while the rest live in urban areas. The population figures show that there are more people living in urban areas compared to rural areas. These figures are important as they illustrate that there are many black African women who live in urban areas and they are more likely to consume hair and beauty products because they have more disposable income and are more exposed to media mediated messages compared to their rural counterparts.

South Africa is one of the richest countries in Africa and is ranked 116 out of 188 countries and territories in the world in the United Nations *Development Programme* Human Development Index<sup>4</sup> (Human development report 2015:2). With a Human Development Index value of 0.666 for 2014, South Africa falls under the medium human development category in world rankings. The country scored above the average of 0.630 for countries in the medium human development group and above the average of 0.518 for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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<sup>3</sup> The way South African territory is divided geographically has gone through several changes. In the 1860s, during the colonial era, South Africa was divided into two British colonies, the Cape and Natal, and two Afrikaner republics, namely the Orange Free State and Transvaal. In 1910, the British colonies and Afrikaner republics were merged to form the Union of South Africa. During apartheid rule four independent Bantustans or homelands, and six non-independent Bantustans were established for black people (Beck 2000:4), and the rest of the land remained in the hands of the white minority. After the 1994 democratic elections, the Bantustans were abolished and nine provinces established.

<sup>4</sup> The *United Nation Development Programme's Human Development Index* measures achievement in three areas of human development, namely a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living. The indicator for the health dimension is life expectancy at birth, and the indicator for knowledge is the mean of years of schooling for adults aged 25 years and more and expected years of schooling for children of school entering age. The standard of living dimension is measured by gross national income per capita (UNDP Human Development reports).

The country is home to several ethnic groups including the Zulus, Xhosas, Ndebeles, Swazis, Pedis, Sothos, Tswanas, Vendas, Afrikaners, and the English.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the diverse citizen population, there are expatriates from around the world working in South Africa and this has resulted in cultural cross-pollination. The country's GDP stands at 0.6 per cent, while the unemployment rate is 24.5 per cent<sup>6</sup> (Statistics South Africa:iv). With the high unemployment rate people have to compete for the few jobs and once hired try to rise through the ranks. Women looking for employment opportunities have to look good to increase their chances of getting a job;<sup>7</sup> hence they spend more money on hair and beauty products and are likely to copy hairstyles they see on magazine covers and advertisements. The focus group interviews are employed to establish to what extent *True Love* covers and advertisements influence the selected black African women (see Chapter Eight). To give context to the study, the following section discusses the pre-colonial and colonial history of South Africa.

### **2.2.1 Pre-colonial and colonial history of South Africa**

Archaeological evidence shows that the land that is now known as South Africa was populated by humankind's earliest ancestors such as the *Australopithecus africanus* (the southern ape of Africa) and the *Homo sapiens* (Beck 2000:10). The native inhabitants of the land are the San, who were hunter-gatherers and the Khoikhoi, who were pastoralists. Around 2,000 years ago the Bantu groups, including the Nguni-speaking and Sotho-speaking people began arriving in southern Africa.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that the above mentioned ethnic distinctions were created mainly to advance the policies of the colonial and apartheid governments. Prior to colonisation, the Bantu-speaking people gave more importance to clan and totemic connections (Landau 2010:51).

<sup>6</sup> The Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Quarter 4, 2015 shows that out of the working-age population of 36,3 million, 16 million people are employed, 5,2 million unemployed and 15,1 million not economically active (Statistics South Africa:iv).

<sup>7</sup> Research shows that employers judge employees by their physical appearance. A Yale University study found that beautiful people make more money compared to the less attractive, and another study published in the *American Economic Review* found that women who wear makeup earn more than those who do not adorn themselves (Kiisel 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Apartheid historians argue that white people arrived in South Africa roughly at the same time as the Bantu-speaking peoples. These historians suggest that the whites and blacks met in the Cape in the 1700s. The 1974 *Official yearbook of the Republic of South Africa* states that the Bantu tribes migrated from the great lakes of Central East Africa owing to the push and pull of economic conditions and tribal conflict. The apartheid historians further suggest that "the concept of permanent fatherland, geopolitically defined, was practically unknown ... Roughly a century after the establishment of the Cape settlement their south-westerly migration and the north-easterly expansion of white pioneers would culminate in an epoch-making contact situation" (South Africa 1974:124-125). They did this to give credence to their occupation of the land because they argued that they

## Chapter Two: The black body and black hair politics

In 1652, Jan van Riebeeck and his expedition of Dutch Calvinist settlers landed at the Cape, and it remained under Dutch rule until British occupation in 1795. During the Napoleonic wars the Cape Colony went back briefly to the Batavian Republic,<sup>9</sup> but was recaptured by the British in 1806. The British introduced segregation laws such as Resolution (159) 1855, which prohibited anyone who was not a burgher to own land. In 1887, the Parliamentary Voters Registration Act was introduced and black people were excluded because they owned land under the communal or tribal ownership system. This resolution clearly stated that black people could not have burgher rights. However, the arrival of English and Scottish missionaries, who were lenient towards the Khoisan and Bantu-speaking groups, brought about some changes. This caused friction between the British and Afrikaners because, coupled with the abolition of slavery, the English legal system allowed black people to testify against their masters in courts of law and the British undermined the Afrikaans language.<sup>10</sup> Frustrated, many Dutch settlers including the *trekboers* and *voortrekkers*<sup>11</sup> began moving inland during the 1830s. They encountered the Xhosa in Transkei and Zulus in Natal, who had been living on the land as early as the fifteenth century (Harrison & Heese 2006:19). Several battles were fought between the Afrikaners and ‘Bantu-speaking ethnic groups’.

The Afrikaners founded their first republic Natalia (Pietermaritzburg became the capital) in 1837. Under the Dutch, black people were “denied political rights, reduced to servitude, racially segregated, and generally mistreated” (Beck 2000:66). The Dutch rule ended in 1842 when the British annexed Natal. Afrikaners went on to establish two more republics, Transvaal and the Orange Free State. By the 1860s, South Africa was divided into two British colonies (the Cape and Natal) and two Afrikaner republics (the Orange Free State and Transvaal). The discovery of minerals, such as diamonds in Kimberley and gold in the Witwatersrand goldfields in 1886, which coincided with the scramble for Africa, led to the immigration of black people to mines to look for jobs. The discovery of gold also changed

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occupied virgin land that was not inhabited by anyone. However, insights from history, archaeology and anthropology documented by historians such as Landau (2010:50) and Mason (1983:261) have since dispelled the myth by demonstrating that black people were already living in southern Africa during the Early Iron Age long before the arrival of the first Europeans.

<sup>9</sup> When France overthrew the Dutch Republic in 1795 it established a “pro-French Batavian Republic in the Netherlands. The Batavian Republic then took charge of the Dutch East India Company (VOC)” (Beck 2000:42). The Batavian Republic ruled the Cape from 1803 to the beginning of 1806.

<sup>10</sup> Boers (farmers) in the Cape Colony, including those of French and German descent who spoke Dutch, developed their own local language they called Afrikaans (Giliomee & Mbenga 2007:71).

<sup>11</sup> The *trekboers* are the semi-nomadic pastoral farmers who moved away from the British-controlled Cape Colony in search of land for their cattle while *voortrekkers* are groups of Dutch-speaking people who moved north in wagons to seek freedom from British rule.



## Chapter Two: The black body and black hair politics

the country's economy from "agricultural to industrial and its society from rural to urban" (Beck 2000:78). Several laws which subjugated black people, including Pass laws<sup>12</sup> were tightened to control the influx of black people into mines. The Afrikaners were not spared; the British invaded the Transvaal and the relations between the British and Boers soured and this led to the South African War (1899 to 1902).

During the South African War, black African people were caught between the two sides with some supporting or working for the British and others supporting or working for the Boers. After a series of protracted battles, the British emerged victorious. In 1909, the British Parliament passed the South Africa Act, which sought to reconcile the English- and Afrikaner-speaking groups and exclude blacks, Asians and coloureds from participation. The Act resulted in the merging of the two British colonies and two Afrikaner republics, forming the Union of South Africa in 1910. The provisions of the Act, which served as the Union's constitution until 1961, designated the Union a British territory.

When Louis Botha<sup>13</sup> became the first Prime Minister of the "white" republic, he introduced laws that controlled the flow of black people to urban areas while at the same time assisting white employers to find suitable black workers (Doxey 1961). The Mines and Works Act (Colour Bar Act) of 1911, which created a divided labour force and the Land Act of 1913 that promoted territorial segregation, were introduced (Beinart 1994:261). Under the Land Act black people were forced to live on reserves, black farmers could not work as sharecroppers and black people living on farms had to work for a wage (Omer Cooper 1994:163-175). In 1914, the National Party (NP) was formed and more laws that led to impoverishment of black people were promulgated, including the Native Urban Areas Act passed by Jan Smuts' government in 1923, which called for the establishment of locations for black people at the edges of the cities. The Act was meant to control the influx of black people into towns; they were required to carry a pass and those caught without it were arrested. The year 1926 saw the amendment of the Mines and Works Act that reserved some jobs for white people (Wentzel 1993:1-2), while the Natives' Trust and Land Act of 1936 increased land allocated

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<sup>12</sup> The Pass laws were first introduced by the Boers in the Cape Colony in the 1700s to regulate the movement of slaves. The laws meant to segregate and control movement of non-whites were amended frequently during British colonial rule and Afrikaner apartheid rule.

<sup>13</sup> Born in Natal in 1862, Louis Botha was a Boer general who was elected Prime Minister of Transvaal in 1907 and in 1910 became the first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa. He died in 1919 and was succeeded by General Jan Smuts.

to reserves to try and keep Africans in reserves and prevent them from moving to urban areas. As if the aforementioned restrictive legislations were not enough, in 1948 the newly-elected National Party started to introduce apartheid, a system that promoted white supremacy.

### **2.2.2 *Apartheid rule in South Africa***

Apartheid was a continuation of segregationist policies of previous governments and was characterised by biological/scientific and cultural racism. The central premise of apartheid was the inferiority of a black person in relation to a white person. The system legitimised the dehumanisation of black people as the “Other”. Black people were perceived as stupid and child-like, and were dominated and exploited both physically and psychologically.

During the apartheid era (1948-1994), resources were controlled by the white minority. Black people who constituted the majority of the population were meant to live in 13.5 per cent of the land in reserves.<sup>14</sup> Black people moved to ‘white’ areas to look for jobs because they could not make a living on arable land and they needed money to pay the heavy taxes. Those who could not find employment went back to Bantustans<sup>15</sup> because they could not get the documents that afforded them legal status to reside in ‘white’ areas. The migrant labour system impacted negatively on family life as men moved to the ‘white’ areas<sup>16</sup> to look for work and left their wives and children behind. The men were earning meagre salaries as migrant workers and were not able to send money to their families. Some were forced to stay away from their families for long periods, in some cases for years. Some men started new lives in the towns and never went back to their families.

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<sup>14</sup> About 70 per cent of the South African population was black (Butler, Rotberg & Adams 1978:2), yet the land allocated to them was not proportionate with their numbers. According to the 1977 government estimates, the population of South Africa was 26,946,000 comprising 19,369,500 Africans, 4,379,000 whites, 2,432,000 Coloureds and 765,000 Asians.

<sup>15</sup> Bantustans, also known as homelands, were independent states within South Africa that were established for the black people during apartheid to facilitate political and social segregation. The 10 Bantustans, which jointly constituted less than 13 per cent of the total area of the Republic were granted “a measure of self-government”. The three largest homelands were Transkei for the Xhosas; KwaZulu for Zulus; Bophuthatswana for Tswanas (Butler *et al.* 1978:ix). The other seven were Ciskei for the Xhosa, Lebowa for the Pedi and Northern Ndebeles, Venda for the Vendas, Gazankulu for Shanganis and Tsongas, Qwa Qwa for the Sothos, Swazi for Swazis and KwaNdebele for Ndebeles.

<sup>16</sup> In the 1970s 1,25 million Tswanas and 2 million Zulus were employed in the “white sector of the Republic” (Butler *et al.* 1978:13).

## Chapter Two: The black body and black hair politics

Left on their own, women suffered economic and emotional stress as they had to look after children and the homestead. The absence of men<sup>17</sup> disrupted the division of labour and had adverse effects on women since they had to do chores that were traditionally meant for men such as herding cattle, thatching huts, erecting fences around fields to protect crops from animals, as well as traditionally feminine chores like plastering the huts with mud, cultivating crops and looking after the home. Eking out a living from the land became increasingly difficult owing to overpopulation and overgrazing in the Bantustans. Some women were forced by poverty to join the labour force worked as domestic servants, in laundries and factories. They earned meagre salaries and were accommodated in single-sex bachelor hostels or in their employers' single quarters.

In urban areas there were forced removals of black people to enforce the Group Areas Act of 1950 in places such as Sophiatown, Johannesburg (1955-1963) and District 6, Cape Town (1968) when the areas were declared white (Desmond 1971). Black people were relocated to segregated townships in other parts of the country. Some black people responded to these displacements by setting up shantytowns in places like Crossroads in the Cape.

In 1961, the NP government under Prime Minister HF Verwoerd declared South Africa a republic after winning a whites-only referendum on the issue. A new currency, the rand,<sup>18</sup> and a new flag, anthem, and coat of arms were introduced. The apartheid regime also introduced Bantu education, which was inferior to education offered to white people. After the assassination of Verwoerd in 1966, the situation in South Africa began to change. In the 1980s, there was civil unrest and global super powers such as the Soviet Union and Cuba were giving support to the African Nationalist movements. When the Cold War ended, South Africa granted independence to South West Africa (Namibia) and Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990. Suffrage was extended to all peoples in South Africa and the first democratic elections brought about the demise of apartheid in 1994.

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<sup>17</sup> In the 1970s the male: female ratio in Bophuthatswana was .88:1 and in KwaZulu .75:1 (Butler *et al.* 1978:13).

<sup>18</sup> The rand was introduced to replace the South African pound, which had been in use in the Union of South Africa.

### 2.2.3 *Democratic rule in South Africa*

South Africa had been exposed to oppressive Western-centric customs and laws. When the democratically elected government took office in 1994, black people regained their dignity and were free to assert their identity. However, black people began to imitate European practices. In *Song of Lawino*,<sup>19</sup> Ugandan poet Okot P'Bitek (1989:25-41) addresses this trend where he explores dilemmas faced by Africans in newly independent states where they were faced with the quandary of whether to hold on to their old traditions or adopt Eurocentric ideals and values that were introduced during colonisation. Instead of building the new nations on the foundations of African philosophies, the black leadership adopted their former colonial masters' systems. For example, instead of borrowing from traditional African leadership and justice forms, South Africa modelled its parliament after the British parliament and the judicial system followed the English law. Judges continued to wear traditional robes and wigs<sup>20</sup> instead of adopting African traditional dress. Louis Leo Snyder (2009:110) aptly observes that "Africans had won liberation from colonial control, but not necessarily from European civilisation".

In other words, black people attained political independence but not cultural and economic independence. However, there was some notable progress as evidenced by the abolishment of segregation laws and founding of a multiracial society under the new constitution of 1996. The democratic government came up with affirmative action initiatives to redress past imbalances such as the Black Economic Empowerment Programme.

The above sections have established the context of the study to facilitate a better understanding of issues that surround the representation of black African women and ideal images of feminine beauty since it influences how they are produced and interpreted.

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<sup>19</sup> In the poems that are in the form of dialogues between Ocol and his wife Lawino, Okot P'Bitek (1989:25-41) uses the metaphor of a sour relationship between a husband and wife to interrogate the conflict between old traditions and Eurocentric views.

<sup>20</sup> The judges' wigs are believed to "confer status, authority, symbolic anonymity and by implication impartiality at the highest levels of the justice system" (Cuthbertson & De Becker 2014:60). Wearing wigs did not originate in England; the tradition was introduced in the 1600s by Charles II, who borrowed it from France. The wig is a colonial tradition that was inherited together with the British judicial system. Made from straight horsehair, the wigs are available in white and blonde and resemble the texture and colour of the hair of white people. There are no wigs that are kinky and resemble African hair. The wigs are also expensive, and Charles M Yablon (1995) notes that they cost "over a thousand pounds".

Furthermore, giving the historical and political background is important because it sheds light on the environment in which images of black African women were and continue to be created, circulated and consumed. Having given the historical and political context of the study, the next section focuses on dehumanisation of the black body during different historical epochs.

### **2.3 Dehumanisation of black people**

The black body is a politically charged subject and historically it has been produced and constructed as an object of desire and political embodiment of the 'Other'. Images of black women circulating in the media range from the wild, untamed and primitive, to the exotic and beautiful. It is important to factor in the historical context in which the images are produced and published and the context in which they are read. During colonisation and apartheid, the images were produced for a specific target audience (white), which possessed certain cultural capital to read them. When the images are recycled and re-contextualised they lose their original meaning and are assigned new ones.

The representation of black women is often riddled with contradictions. For example, on the one hand, black women were represented as ugly, wild, untamed and primitive yet on the other hand; they were portrayed as exotic, beautiful and desirable. The images were meant for the pleasure of white male gazers. The contradictions surrounding the representation of black women show that the black body is a social, cultural and political construction. As a result, the gendered, classed and raced both literally and figuratively, representation of the black female body serve a specific ideological purpose.

Gabeba Baderoon (2011:214) notes that black bodies in South Africa have been imbued with "unsettling sexualised meaning ... Black female bodies, in particular, have been portrayed through patterns of hypervisibility that have simultaneously subjected women to heightened levels of surveillance". An example of this is Sara Baartman, an enslaved Khoikhoi woman, who was transported to Europe and exhibited for entertainment purposes in the nineteenth century. When she died in 1815 her remains were displayed in the Musee De l'Homme in Paris, France before they were returned to South Africa in 2002 (Gqola 2010). Her features such as big buttocks, big lips, and kinky hair were meant to represent barbarity, being uncultured, and served as a symbol of exotic sexuality.

## Chapter Two: The black body and black hair politics

However, in colonial and apartheid South Africa, although black women were portrayed as primitive and inferior to white people they were also presented as sexually desirable because of their difference. Moreover, black women were described as ugly and repulsive but several white settlers had sexual relations with them. For instance, in his memoir, Afrikaner journalist and author Rian Malan (1990:60) confesses to having a sexual encounter with a black domestic worker. Describing the experience, he says,

I recoiled at the thought of French-kissing her, but I did it anyway, because I was a social democrat ... I came out of that room laughing nonchalantly, but at heart I was stricken with guilt. In my fevered racist imaginings, I was quite sure she had given me the pox ...

If the black female body was considered dangerous and diseased, why did some white men risk being infected by getting involved with these women? The above quote shows that for some white men being intimate with a black woman was a sign of liberation and recognition of cultural diversity. However, viewed from another angle it points to the eroticisation and commodification of the black female body. White men can gain access and exploit the black female body for their own pleasure. In the same vein, hooks (2015:23) points out how in America white boys used sexual engagement with ‘non-white’ girls as a means of dealing with the “Other” and experiencing something exotic. She further argues that “from the standpoint of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy the hope is that desire for the ‘primitive’ or fantasies about the Other can be continually exploited, and that such exploitation will occur in a manner that reinscribes and maintains the status quo” (hooks 2015:22).

In addition to hypersexualisation, the representation of black women is characterised by exoticisation and animalisation. Animalisation serves to create a racial hierarchy comprising superior white people at the top and inferior, bestialised non-white humans at the bottom. The animals, particularly animals such as baboons, monkeys and pigs, and predators serve as placeholders for blackness and black bodies and this figurative animalisation transforms the racialised other into prey that could be ridiculed, tortured and exploited. During both colonial and postcolonial eras, the pervasive connection between animals and blackness manifests in the representation of black models wearing animal prints, photographed with animal-themed props or real animals. In the 1920s, African American dancer Josephine Baker was well-known for her famous banana costume that she wore in the Folies Bergère (St Louis Walk of

fame ...) and a cheetah with which she performed in her shows. Her exotic looks and erotic dance moves (Magee 2012:44), which were inspired by watching kangaroos in the St Louis Zoo when she was young, appealed to French audiences and reviewers described them in animalistic terms such as monkey, kangaroo and panther.

Furthermore, an American study of advertisements in fashion magazines published between 1985 and 1994 found that black models were featured wearing animal prints (Plous & Neptune 1997:627) connoting being wild, primitive, close to nature, not human but animals. A study of the 1996 *Sports Illustrated* issue in South Africa found that animal prints and motifs, especially those from the cat family were used in the animalistic portrayal of black models, while European and Euro-American models were “linked to seemingly more genteel animals such as zebras, penguins, butterflies and elephants” (Magee 2012:40). Using vicious animals is evocative and seems to suggest that black women are hunters or sexual predators. Blackness is tied to some notions of animality such as being primitive, untamed and close to nature.

The colonial and apartheid regimes appropriated symbols that were already in existence but twisted them to serve their own means. They used animal metaphors and symbols in a denigrating manner whereas Africans themselves used them positively; for example, *isilo* is a befitting word to address the king because it evokes images of the powerful lion, the king of the animal kingdom (*inkosi yabaseguswini*) that is respected.

On the other side of animalisation, Africa and its black inhabitants are anthropomorphised and represented as exotic. This anthropomorphisation is achieved through racialisation and feminisation. Western writers and commentators, including Polish-born English novelist Joseph Conrad (1973) perpetuated the stereotypical anthropomorphisation of Africa by referring to her as the “heart of darkness” and “dark continent”. In his response to Conrad’s *Heart of darkness*, Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe (1977) remarks that the novel “projects the image of Africa as “‘the other world’, the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilisation, a place where man’s vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality”. Carol Magee (2012:44) notes that Africa was denigrated and racialised by describing it as ‘dark’. In addition, it was feminised and sexualised through the use of sexually suggestive terms such as “penetrating virgin territory”. Recalling the steamers’ voyage in the Congo, Conrad (1973) remarks that the Europeans felt like “wanderers on a

## Chapter Two: The black body and black hair politics

prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance ... The steamer toils along slowly on the edge of the black and incomprehensible frenzy'. The natives were portrayed as savages.

These perceptions of the black body in the white imagination contributed to segregation policies in apartheid South Africa. The black body has also been categorised and fragmented, and hair that was once regarded as a symbol of black beauty in historical African communities turned into a tool for dehumanising black people during apartheid. During this era in South Africa, hair was a contested terrain and object for oppression. The pencil test was one of the ways used to determine one's racial hierarchy: a pencil was inserted into an individual's hair and if it fell out one was classified as Coloured and if it did not fall, the person was considered Bantu or Black. Interestingly, the term *bantu* can be loosely translated as 'people'. However, on a much deeper level, *bantu* does not just refer to people in general but to black people, and it was used by the apartheid regime in a denigrating way. Owing to negative connotations associated with the term, black people did not want to be referred to as 'bantu' and they rejected labels such as 'bantu education' and 'bantustans' because they saw the word as something that was used to describe them as less than human.

Classifying Coloureds under a separate category from 'bantu' seems to suggest that they were not considered to be 'people', they were 'non-people', that is better than 'bantu' since they were seen as a buffer between black and white people. *Bantu* was a loaded term that became an ideological construct that was used to differentiate and categorise the superior Coloureds from the inferior blacks. Like skin complexion, hair was used as a signifier of race and utilised for racial classification since society was segregated and the different groups, namely Whites, Coloureds, Asians and Blacks were not allowed to mingle. One of the reasons for spatial segregation was that the black body was believed to be dirty and diseased, and this that was referred to as the 'sanitation syndrome' (Swanson 1977:387); hence there was need to allocate different spaces to be inhabited by different races to avoid contamination. The 'sanitation syndrome' was used to advance segregationist ideologies (Swanson 1977:387), and under the apartheid system, black people had to live far away from white people except for a few who worked for white people as domestic helpers. As previously noted, the movement of black people into 'white' areas was restricted through the introduction of pass laws.



## Chapter Two: The black body and black hair politics

Although the pencil test was abolished long ago, preference for long, straight hair is still prevalent today in South Africa, as evidenced by celebrities like Thembi Seete, Kelly Khumalo and Bonang Matheba who have embraced wigs (Nyathaza 2013). Actually, according to Thompson (2009:447), weaves and wigs have become a “normative part of Black beauty”. This could be one of the side effects of biological and cultural racism, which promoted Eurocentric ideals and equated whiteness with power and privilege during apartheid. This study attempts to establish to what extent hypersexualisation, animalisation, exoticisation and anthropomorphisation is reflected in the pages of *True Love*, but particularly on the front covers and advertisements.

The above discussion highlights the dehumanisation of black women through stereotypical representation; it is important to bring to the fore how they have been symbolically annihilated. Rita Barnard (2000:345-362) recounts how images of black people were suppressed during colonisation and apartheid and argues that beauty is political and can be “bent to include or exclude” and standards of beauty are linked to power relations. Furthermore, Barnard (2000:350) notes that under HF Verwoerd’s Nationalist government, beauty was “‘naturally’ the property of whites (and whites only)”, in line with Afrikaner Nationalist ideologies.

The apartheid system dominated black culture and introduced racist systems that subjugated black people (Fanon 1967). For instance, in apartheid South Africa advertising content was aimed at white consumers, hence only a few black people were featured in advertisements. In addition, black people were not allowed to participate in beauty pageants. A black person could not earn the Miss South Africa title because “like the Springbok Rugby symbol, [Miss South Africa] implicitly belonged to white South Africa; but she could reign in a fictive homeland of sorts as ‘Miss South Africa’” (Barnard 2000:351). Notable incidents of discrimination and exclusion of black African women involved insulting and referring to black models with racist terms such as *kaffirs* and an African hairstyle disparaged and described as s\*\*t by white women (Barnard 2000:351). Another example of dehumanisation of black African women involved the dethroning of Nani Mokoena, who won the People’s Miss Johannesburg contest in 1990 (Kraft 1992). Her crown and prizes were given to the first runner-up who was white. The crowning of the first black Miss South Africa, Jacqui Mofokeng in 1993, was met with resentment among white conservative circles (Keller 1993).

It is therefore clear that African beauty was disparaged and images of black beauty suppressed.

#### **2.4 The counter-hegemonic initiatives**

It is worth noting that black people were not just passive victims. Publications such as *Drum* magazine (which was founded in the 1950s) were established to give voice to black people and they carried picture spreads of black people. *Drum* also covered social and political issues that were relevant to the black communities, including the Sharpeville massacre and forced evictions in Sophiatown. Moreover, there were counter-hegemonic movements such as African nationalist movements like the ANC, and the Black Consciousness Movement that sought to decolonise the African mind. Influenced by Paulo Freire's (1984) 'man's inhumanity to man'<sup>21</sup>, the Black Consciousness Movement fought myths and dominant ideologies.

White people popularised certain myths in order to dehumanise and denigrate black people. The black people's history was also distorted and their leaders such as Zulu kings Shaka and Dingane, and Mzilikazi, the founder of the Ndebele nation, were demonised. Some white extremists went so far as to say black people had no history and this was reflected in apartheid era history books that say the history of South Africa begins in 1652 (South Africa 1974:124-125). All these were presented as universal truths.

Under the leadership of Steve Biko, president of South African Student Organisation (SASO),<sup>22</sup> the anti-apartheid movement sought to dispel the myths and decolonise the African mind. The movement that began on university campuses spread to the grassroots in the 1970s and was embraced by workers, black churches, artists and high school students. The ideas from movements in America led by Malcom X and Martin Luther King Junior, and other countries on the African continent that had attained their independence, served to strengthen the fact that Africans could organise themselves and determine their political and cultural identity. The inferiority complex that had plagued the black community began to

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<sup>21</sup> Brazilian scholar Paulo Freire argued that dehumanisation of humans by other humans was a result of an unjust order that engendered violence in the oppressor, which in turn dehumanises the oppressed.

<sup>22</sup> South African Student Organisation (SASO) was a blacks only student organisation that was founded in 1969.

## Chapter Two: The black body and black hair politics

dissipate. Black people in South Africa, who had been intimidated by the banning of liberation movements such as the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress and the imprisonment of leaders in 1960, were strengthened and became agents of change and began to challenge white supremacy. The war was waged on two fronts, psychological and physical.

It was fundamental to liberate the psyche because some black people had come to believe that they were inferior and white people superior. As Fanon (1967) notes, the native had become psychologically incapacitated and was no longer capable of action. The native's life was full of contradictions; although he detested white society, he was also envious of it. Upon realising that his black skin prevented him from ever attaining privilege, he despised his own blackness. On the psychological front, the emphasis was put on conscientising the masses. While the main thrust of the African nationalist movements was on attaining political independence, the Black Consciousness (BC) movement was mainly concerned with decolonising the mind. In a paper delivered in 1971 at a SASO leadership conference in Pietermaritzburg, Biko spelt out what it means to be a real black person. For him real black people are those who "can manage to hold their heads high in defiance rather than willingly surrender their souls to the white man" (Biko 1987:48-49). The BC movement came up with slogans like "Free the Mind! Free the land!" and "Black is Beautiful"; promoted symbols of blackness like natural hairstyles while rejecting everything that symbolised whiteness. Natural hairstyles were encouraged, while skin-lightening products such as Ambi that left black women with "crocodile skins" and hair relaxing chemicals were rejected.

In the turbulent 1980s, Herman Mashaba together with his wife Connie and three business associates founded the first black-owned company manufacturing hair-care and grooming products for black people in South Africa. The company produced products made specifically for African hair. Inspired by John Howard Griffin's novel *Black Like Me*, which chronicles the story of a white man who undergoes treatment to change his skin colour in a bid to understand the black people's experiences in America in the 1950s, the company's first Black Like Me product hit the market in 1985. Its product range has grown to include perm lotions, shampoos and conditioners, moisturisers, and dyes. Specifically designed for African hair, the products contain shea butter, chamomile and jojoba oil to make the hair soft and easy to comb, as well as add body and lustre to the hair (Black Like Me...). The irony is that the company specialises in products for "perms and curls, for short or long hair, a conventional

## Chapter Two: The black body and black hair politics

perm, dry curl or a blow out” (Black Like Me...), which alter the natural texture of afro hair. One wonders whether Mashaba’s initiative provides a counter narrative or if Black Like Me products are any different from other hair straightening creams and lotions that are available on the market. However, it seems to have appealed to the masses during *umzabalazo* (the struggle) and post-apartheid, as the company that was established with a R30,000 loan has grown into a multi-billion-rand business that exports products to several countries in Africa and has become a household name.

The counter-hegemonic movements also sought to fight the education system that dehumanised black people by offering them inferior education. The segregation laws extended to the education sector where white people were given quality education while black people were condemned to Bantu schools that were poorly funded<sup>23</sup> and offered inferior education (Ndlovu 2006). In 1976, the National Party went a step further and scrapped English as a medium of instruction and instead introduced Afrikaans as a language of instruction in a bid to elevate the level of importance of the Afrikaans language. The Nationalist Party wanted Afrikaans to become an official language and enjoy the same status as English. However, most black people viewed Afrikaans as a language of the oppressor since members of the ruling Nationalist Party spoke Afrikaans. In addition, most black students and teachers lacked expertise in the language and the adoption of Afrikaans saw a drop in the pupils’ performance. The South African Students Movement (SASM) organised a march to protest against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in schools.

Several other factors such as Afrikaner nationalist ideology and the broader socio-economic and political issues contributed to dissent that led to the Soweto uprising in 1976. Some of these were the political changes such as the liberation of neighbouring Angola and Mozambique in 1975; the shortage of schools for black children and stripping black people of their citizenship through segregation laws that confined them to their ethnic homelands and Bantu towns. The language policy exacerbated the situation that had been simmering for a long time; it was the tip of the iceberg (Ndlovu 2006). The Soweto uprising was a harbinger of apartheid resistance, which found full expression in the turbulent 1980s, which were characterised by civil unrest and the government had to declare several states of emergency. With growing national and international pressure, apartheid fell in 1994.

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<sup>23</sup> Economic problems and the drop in gold prices impacted on Bantu education as the budget allocated to it was reduced.

Although the Black Consciousness Movement's (BCM) philosophy centred on the emancipation of black people through mobilisation of the masses and decolonisation of black minds, the language adopted by its leaders was gender biased. For example, Steve Biko, the founding father of BCM in South Africa observes "we started forming what is now SASO ... which was firmly based on Black Consciousness, the essence of which was for the black man to elevate his own position by positively looking at those value systems that make him distinctively a man in society" (Schwartz, Wimmer & Wolff 1998:278-281). From the above quote, it is not clear whether he uses the word "man" to refer to all humankind or only to black males. However, in another speech he makes it clear that he is referring to men in particular where he defines Black Consciousness as the "realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their operation – the blackness of their skin – and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them in perpetual servitude (Biko 1987:49). Frantz Fanon also used the same language in his writings; he refers to the native as a 'he'. Black women are excluded yet they played an important role in the fight against apartheid. Black women were active in unions and in the fight against the Pass laws. They were prominent among those who marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria in August 1956. They were actively involved in the Soweto uprising, Crossroads resistance, and many black women died during the Sharpeville massacre. These counter-hegemonic movements were important in reaffirming blackness as humane.

### **2.5 The dawn of a new era**

The end of apartheid rule in 1994 ushered in a new era; all South African citizens were deemed equal. Equality became a key concept and all citizens, regardless of their race or gender, began to enjoy equality as enshrined in the new Constitution (1996). Section 9 of the Bill of Rights states that "the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex ... culture, language and birth".

Anne McClintock (1993:61) notes that "all nations depend on powerful constructions of gender". Like Afrikaner nationalism, which did not encourage active political participation by white women and completely excluded black women, in its formative years African Nationalism was male dominated and "women's political identity was figured as merely supportive and auxiliary" (McClintock 1993:74). However, as the liberation movement evolved women were allowed to participate in politics. Led by the Women's National

## Chapter Two: The black body and black hair politics

Coalition, women from different racial groups participated in the formulation of the Women's Charter for Effective Equity and the making of the constitution. The Constitution drafted under democratic rule contains laws that seek to advance equality and the empowerment of women. With provisions for racial and gender equality enshrined in the constitution, the treatment and images of black people and black women changed.

Eve Bertelsen's (1998:229) study that examines post-apartheid advertisements in magazines targeted at black readers found that half of the advertisements featured black models. Advertisements also featured black entrepreneurs including Dali Tambo and Felicia Mabuza-Suttle. However, although there have been notable changes in terms of ending racial segregation, which resulted in black models being featured in advertisements, black people are still underrepresented in terms of numbers and quality of representation. For example, international clothing brand H&M, which opened branches in Cape Town and Johannesburg in November 2015, only featured white models on its posters. When a blogger raised the issue of lack of black models on the posters on Twitter, H&M's response to the tweet implied that white models portrayed a more "positive image" for the brand while black models did not fit in with the positive image they wanted to promote.<sup>24</sup> Another example that shows the continued dehumanisation of black people in post-apartheid advertising is Woolworths South Africa's in-store display in November 2015 that represented black people in a way that was considered demeaning by tying ropes on black mannequins in a manner that is reminiscent of slavery (Woolworths in a tangle ...). Although black models and mannequins are used in advertising, the quality of representation is still questionable because of the racialised and stereotypical manner in which black people are still portrayed. More importantly, the camera can influence people and create powerful emotional responses.

Research shows that black women are still subjugated in terms of the way they are represented. For instance, Jere-Malanda's study (2008:143) of advertisements published in *True Love* and *Destiny* found that black women were represented in ways that "subjugate them, drawing attention to the dominant discourses that circulate within women's magazines". That study also revealed that the advertisements position women to "utilise the male gaze on themselves in order to police their bodies at all times" (Jere-Malanda 2008:143). Furthermore, Nadia Sanger's (2008) study that focused on the representation of

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<sup>24</sup> An apology was issued following complaints and threats by members of the public to boycott the brand (H&M apologises for racist ...).

## Chapter Two: The black body and black hair politics

black women in white women's magazines found that women's magazines aimed at white readers tend to sexualise black femininities in a manner that is reminiscent of white male colonial obsession with black bodies, which is examined in great detail by Sander L Gilman (1985). Moreover, economic factors still play a major role in the way black women are represented since they determine what constitutes an ideal body and beautiful hair.

### **CONCLUSION**

This chapter has shown how the black body has been and continues to be exploited and policed in South Africa. Historically, black people have been regarded as inferior and less human to rationalise white racist domination; even their history has been conveniently distorted to justify their exploitation. Hair in particular has been one of the components that have been used to dehumanise black people through various social mechanisms, for instance, it has been used and continues to be used to reinforce racial hierarchies. However, some initiatives have sought to liberate black people.

Having examined the perceptions of the black body, the next chapter focuses on the cultural significance and political economy of black hair.

### **CHAPTER THREE: SIGNIFICANCE AND POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BLACK HAIR**

Hair is one of the first attributes to catch the human eye because it reflects perceptions about attractiveness and unattractiveness. Human hair includes eyebrows, eyelashes, nasal hair, pubic hair and scalp/head hair, which has adornment, as well as protective functions such as shielding the head from natural elements. This chapter explores the biology of black hair and its structure, and highlights what makes black hair unique. Moreover, it highlights the cultural and social significance of hair in African societies, and the taboos, beliefs and norms surrounding hair. It further examines the commodification of hair and gives an overview of the hair and beauty industry in South Africa.

Hair defines conceptualisations of race, gender, age and beauty; body hair therefore serves as a boundary marker “between the human body and the furry mammal, between men and women, and between adult and child” (Smelik 2015:246). By removing pubic hair, for example, Anneke Smelik (2015:246) suggests that women go back to the pre-adolescent state, taming their sexuality and rendering their bodies innocent. The norms governing body hair vary according to gender and race. There are different norms for men and women; for example, hair on a woman’s body is regarded to be unsightly while men are not socially expected to remove body hair except to trim their beards. Actually, it is unusual for men to shave their legs and chests, as doing so is believed to undermine their masculinity. The rugged look is favoured and considered macho. However, the advent of the metrosexual male<sup>1</sup> that is championed by men’s magazines puts emphasis on male grooming, and in the present age some men also engage in preening routines and shave their chests, legs, and armpits.

Hair can also serve as a marker of race and class as evident in that there are different rules governing body hair for black and white women. For instance, although endowed with hair, in the Western world “adult women have to pretend to be bald from the forehead down with a skin as smooth as an egg shell” (Smelik 2015:234) because socially, a smooth body is considered a prototype for the acceptable feminine look. In most black communities in South

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<sup>1</sup> The word metrosexual was coined in the 1990s by combining metropolitan and sexual. A metrosexual male is a heterosexual man who is concerned about his outward appearance. Metrosexual men live in urban areas and often use grooming products and wear fashionable clothing.



### Chapter Three: Significance and political economy of black hair

Africa, women are not required to have a hairless body, however, some black women, particularly celebrities, fashion and beauty models, who are featured in the media or take part in catwalk shows, have embraced the hairless body feminine ideal. This white hairless body ideal has spread to other cultures through communication that involves the international flow of people and marketing by means of advertisements for hair removal products and gadgets, and fashion and beauty trends.<sup>2</sup>

Interestingly, removal of body hair is a recent phenomenon, even in the West, particularly America where it began during the First World War (Brumberg 2010:98). While body hair is associated with dirt, sexual desire and animalism, head hair is considered a woman's crowning glory and linked to attractiveness and youthfulness. It therefore follows that hair should appear in selected places and should be well groomed but when removed from the body it becomes abject matter, Smelik (2007:172) suggests that people regard "loose hairs as nasty or dirty". When hair is separated from the body it hovers between being an object and subject, because "once separated from a living entity, it ceases to evolve and grow and can therefore be objectified and added to other materials or turned into something else entirely" (Cuthbertson & De Becker 2014:53). If loose strands of hair are revolting, why do individuals wear wigs,<sup>3</sup> weaves and extensions made from other people's hair? Smelik (2007:172) is quick to explain that scalp hair only becomes abject "when it appears in places where it does not belong, in food, for example. But when hair is shorn off and made into a wig it is no longer nasty or dirty, since the beauty as well as the function of the head hair is maintained".

Drawing on Mary Douglas (2002:36), I argue that like dirt, shorn hair is matter 'out of place'. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter as a result hair needs to be tamed and controlled through cultural interventions and aesthetic conventions. It is worth noting that when viewed within the symbolic system of racism, black hair whether still on the head or cut and discarded is classified in this system as "dirty" or "unclean". In

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<sup>2</sup> With new fashion trends characterised by shorter, sleeveless dresses during the First World War and the advent of bikinis and swimwear that exposes a great deal of flesh in the 1990s, it became necessary to remove body hair such as on the armpits, legs and pubic area. Since some hair removal methods are painful, gadgets such as epilators have been developed to remove body hair, and some like the Braun *Silk-épil* range have sophisticated technology and can be used in the bath and shower to reduce pain.

<sup>3</sup> Through the ages, wigs have been an integral fashion accessory and have been worn by ancient Egyptians, the aristocracy in sixteenth-century Renaissance Europe, men and women of different racial groups. A wig is worn for various reasons; some people wear it to disguise themselves, cover up baldness, others for ease of styling and to change their look.

South Africa, the potency of this symbolism as structural phenomenon is best illustrated by the pencil test and describing Afrocentric hairstyles as ‘untidy’ (see 1.1.1). The discussion below focuses only on human scalp hair, a fibre that helps protect the head from the elements by “functioning as a thermal insulator” (Robbins 1988:2) and also protects the scalp from light radiation and mechanical abrasion.

### 3.1 The morphological structure of hair

Human hair is a complex tissue consisting of several morphological components including proteins, lipids, water and trace elements and pigments (Robbins 1988:39). Hair is a protein filament that grows from follicles around the dermis layer. It is primarily composed of keratin protein,<sup>4</sup> which is also the primary component of finger and toenails. It consists of three parts namely the cuticle, an outer layer, which is composed of five to 10 overlapping layers,<sup>5</sup> and serves to protect the inner structure and give shine to the fibres. The third part is the cortex, a protein-rich structure located in the medulla that consists of 75 per cent of the hair and consists of spindle-shaped cortical cells known as ortho and para cortical cells<sup>6</sup> (Menachem Lewin 2007:334). In human beings, all hair follicles develop during foetal development as early as the third month of human embryogenesis, and no new ones develop after birth.

Hair growth is stimulated by the sebaceous glands, oil-producing glands located in the epidermis layer, nerve endings and blood vessels that nourish cells near the hair bulb. A head of hair is made up of an average of “100,000 to 120,000 individual hairs, with a speed of growth of about 0.35mm/day<sup>7</sup> and a reproductive cycle lasting two to five years” (Valkovic 1988). Hair fibres grow in three stages, namely the anagen stage, which is characterised by growth of hair; the catagen stage, a transition stage that lasts a few weeks. The last stage is telogen also known as the resting period. During the telogen stage, old hair follicles are shed to give room to new hairs that grow beneath them. At any given time, a normal head of hair contains 88 per cent of hairs in the anagen stage, 1 per cent in the catagen and 11 per cent in

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<sup>4</sup> Robbins (1988:39) notes that human hair consists of approximately 65 per cent to 95 per cent proteins depending on its moisture content.

<sup>5</sup> African hair has fewer cuticle layers. It only comprises two layers; hence it is kinky (Robbins 1988:39).

<sup>6</sup> Ortho cortical cells contain lower sulphur content while para cortical cells are smaller in diameter, have smooth and rounded borders and also contain higher sulphur content (Robbins 1988:17).

<sup>7</sup> A 2005 study in the *International Journal of Dermatology* found that hair growth rate differs among different races. African hair grows at a slower pace compared to Caucasian and Asian hair.

telogen phase. Scalp hairs of people who belong to different racial groups differ in terms of length, colour, shape and texture. Researchers in the field of dermatology classify hair into three main groups namely, African, Asian, and European/Caucasian. The section below focuses on African hair and its unique features.

### 3.2 The characteristics of African hair

African hair has specific structural, anatomical and physiological features.<sup>8</sup> It is characterised by tight spring-like coiling of the hair shaft (Khumalo, Doe, Dawber & Ferguson 2000:814). Research shows that African hair shafts are tightly interwoven and exhibit knots, and it tends to form longitudinal fissures and splits along the hair shafts, which make it susceptible to breakage. African hair is tightly coiled and has a flattened cross-sectional appearance that resembles a ribbon, while Caucasian and Asian hair has an oval and circular appearance (Valkovic 1988:5). Owing to its flat cross-section African hair is less lustrous; hence it looks dry and dull compared to other hair types. Furthermore, African hair has fewer hair shafts compared to Caucasian and Asian hair textures; however, since the shafts are intertwined, afro hair “appears and feels denser than straight hair” (Trüeb 2015:42).

Hair colour is determined mostly by pigments, chemical compounds that reflect wavelengths of visible light whereas the texture of the hair is influenced by genes and cortical cells. For example, African hair is curly because it is made up of equal rows of ortho and para cortical cells while Asian and Caucasian hair that is made of paracortical cells is straight, and mixed race wavy hair is made up of paracortical cells and a narrow row of orthocortical cells (Robbins 2002:105). Several terms including ‘woolly’, and *‘kinky’*<sup>9</sup> have been used to describe the curly nature of African hair.

The hair’s physical appearance can be affected by nutritional status, hormonal imbalances and grooming practices, like combing and shampooing and intentional alteration practices such as straightening, using chemical relaxers, heating irons and curlers. Using hot combs damages the hair because on the one hand, combing exerts stress on the hair shafts because

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<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that Africans themselves exhibit different hair textures because age, sex, ethnicity, and environmental factors influence the hair’s morphological structure.

<sup>9</sup> A kink is a “sudden constriction and twisting of the hair shaft, producing an obvious discontinuity in the curvature” (Hardy 1973:7).

the shafts are intertwined; hence a lot of pressure has to be applied to enable the hair to slide along the teeth of the comb. On the other hand, use of excessive heat dries and weakens the fibres, resulting in hair breakage (Khumalo *et al.* 2000:820). Since African hair is curly it tends to get tangled easily and if not detangled carefully it can break, it requires specially-formulated products to reduce knotting and tangling.

Hair care products used to protect the hair or reverse the structural damage include cleansers like shampoo, conditioners, and styling products. Shampoos that contain humectants lock in the moisture while applying oils that contain olive oil, jojoba oil and wheat germ oil moisturise the scalp and “coat the hair, thereby reducing static electric charges between the hairs and allowing for ease of combing and styling” (Bouhanna & Bouhanna 2016:125). After detailing the biology and physical structure of hair, the discussion moves on to the symbolism of African hair.

### **3.3 Cultural and social significance of African hair**

Hair consists of shafts of dead cells that take social meaning and value when worked on or processed by cultural practices (Erasmus 1997:16). This shows that although human hair is a lifeless biological phenomenon, it is not just a part of the human body; it is also a part of an individual’s personality and identity. When hair is politicised it serves to transmit socio-cultural, political, and religious meanings. In many cultures, including African cultures, hair is used to transmit a message of individuality or adherence to a particular group’s customs, traditions and beliefs.

Throughout history, African women’s hairstyles have been used to signify status, spirituality, grief and certain milestones in a woman’s life, hence “grooming, styling, adorning and removing hair were common practices in all societies” (Haas 2008:525). Through the ages, African hairstyles have been depicted in the visual arts such as sculpture, masks, and pottery, and were described at great lengths in the diaries of early European explorers. One eighteenth-century European explorer to West Africa captured the beauty of African hair where he wrote, “the hair is plaited or twisted, and adorn’d with some few trinkets of gold, coral, or glass ... they are very proud of their hair; some wear it in tufts and bunches, and others cut in crosses quite over their heads” (Sieber 1972). African hair also caught the attention of artists from around the globe and was featured in jewellery and coins where black

hair was featured as short and woolly. In the present age, African hair is featured in various forms in the mass media such as magazine covers, advertisements and on television. The aforementioned shows that using visual images to document hairstyles is not a new thing that is done by the mass media. Anitra Nettleton (2014:16) argues that among the Luba in the 1920s and 1930s, women used to get inspiration for their hairstyles from female figures carved on the chiefs' wooden stools. This entailed walking long distances to the chief's kraal to see the hairstyles, commit them to memory and go back home to recreate them on their heads.

The history of adding hair enhancements to African hair can be traced back to ancient Egyptian and Nubian civilisations. In ancient Egypt,<sup>10</sup> people wore their hair in a natural state, however, wigs that were made from human hair, wool, cotton or palm-leaf fibres were introduced around 3000BC. Haas (2008:526) observes that Egyptian art "is the richest source of wigs in history". In view of the above it is worth mentioning that the recent wig and human hair trend is not new after all. Africans wore their hair in various ways and in addition to being decorative, hairstyles had symbolic meanings and served as markers of gender and ethnic identity. Hairstyles also served to distinguish people of different age groups and were used as markers for rites of passage. Moreover, hairstyles were influenced by religious beliefs, social customs, and economic factors.

Hair styling was a specialised skill that was passed down from generation to generation in most African communities. It required patience and endurance as some of the styles were time consuming and in some cases took the whole day or several days to complete. It was common to find an individual sleeping on the hairdresser's lap (Sagay 1983). Some of the elaborate designs required the use of "sisal or clay, the bark of trees or cloth pads, others involve the intricate knitting, braiding and threading of the hair" (Sagay 1983). In African societies, hairdressing was a preserve of women and styling was entrusted in the hands of family and friends because of certain tribal beliefs. For instance, it is taboo to expose one's hair strands to strangers because it was and is still believed in some black communities that an individual could bewitch or cast a spell on someone using their hair (Prince 2009:33). As a result, hair strands are a highly guarded commodity; those that fall to the ground or are caught on the comb while trimming or combing are gathered and disposed of properly in a

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<sup>10</sup> According to Cheikh Anta Diop (2010:45), ancient Egyptians were black. He uses the word 'Negro' to refer to them.

hole or under a rock to hide them. Coupled with the above, as a way to avoid having stray strands of hair flying around, it is taboo to pull out *ufuzo* or *izimvu* (grey hairs). It is believed by Southern African Ngunis<sup>11</sup> that if one does so, they will get more grey hairs. In addition, statements such as that grey hair is associated with wisdom are often bandied around to sweeten the pill. However, when black people moved away from their close-knit communities into urban areas they turned to salons and spas, which were introduced by industrialisation, where strangers style people's hair and they have no control over how their hair is disposed of.<sup>12</sup> In pre-colonial societies women tended to the hairstyling needs; however, in salons, spas and barbershops there are male hairstylists as well.

### 3.3.1 *Hair as an identity marker*

The continent of Africa is home to many ethnic groups, some of whom bear a physical resemblance to each other, particularly the dark-skinned, kinky-haired peoples. The unique hairstyles were one of the ways that were used to identify people from different ethnic groups and geographical locations. However, with the international flow of people and products it is increasingly becoming difficult to ascertain one's ethnicity based on hairstyle. In the present age, ethnic and national identities compete with global identities. In other words, the international flow of people and international communication, which has been accelerated by technological developments, has led to pluralisation and hybridisation of identities. According to Pieterse (1995:49), hybridisation takes place when "the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices recombine with new forms in new practices". This leads to creolisation, whereby new hybrid identities are formed.

These identities<sup>13</sup> can be constructed through commodity consumption and cultural symbols such as hairstyles. Each person can create his or her identity through consuming certain products. Todd (2011:48) puts it more succinctly when he points out that "consumption is intimately tied to the creation and production of a sense of self". However, identity creation is

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<sup>11</sup> Most of the examples are drawn from the Southern African Nguni cultures, particularly Zulu and Ndebele, based on my personal knowledge and experience of these communities.

<sup>12</sup> In salons hair strands are swept and gathered into a covered bin. At some salons when the small bin fills up hair is put in large tie-up bags and thrown into a larger bin outside that is collected by the municipality garbage truck. Some salons have implemented a green policy, which involves handing over the hair they collect to organisations that recycle and make human hair wigs.

<sup>13</sup> This section does not discuss all the theories or aspects of identity, however, the relevant ideas will be explicated in the relevant chapters.

not something an individual does in isolation, rather it is largely influenced by the community; hence Todd (2011:48) adds that “consumption functions as way for the consumer to communicate with society at large where they fit within the social structure”.

Caroline Howarth (2006:20) argues that a person’s identity is formed through emulating or resisting the representations to which they are exposed. For Howarth (2006:8), people learn about the people and world they live in by taking particular ‘presentations’ of that world and reinterpreting them to fit with what they already know, thereby constituting their own realities. Reality is also co-constructed with others and results in the hybridity and multiplicity of representations. Erasmus (1997:16) concurs with Todd (2011) and Howarth (2006) when she argues that hair is “socially constructed, imbued with meaning and with multi identities”. Hair can also be used as a racial marker and as a tool to discriminate against others.

With the world increasingly becoming interconnected, the convergence of people from various cultural backgrounds has resulted in the adaptation and reinvention of social norms as well as the emergence of new practices. Western hairstyles have had an influence on the Africans’ perceptions and ideas about hair; hence it is becoming increasingly difficult to use hairstyles as a marker of ethnic identity because in the global village women from different racial groups, cultural backgrounds and age groups wear similar hairstyles. While braiding with hair extensions was once a preserve of Africans, nowadays Asian and Caucasian women and even men braid their hair. Haas (2008:536) argues that in “modern-day societies tending to democracy and westernisation, individuality, is the prevailing feature of the hairstyle”.

Identities have become fluid and the present age is characterised by glocalisation, which entails reinterpreting elements of global trends to fit in with the local tastes, and vice versa. For example, the development and availability of weaves and wigs on the market has made it possible for people of other racial groups to wear afro hair and in turn for Africans to sport long straight hair. This shows that cultural identities are not fixed; they are constantly negotiated and recreated. In addition to identifying each ethnic group, hairstyles also served to indicate one’s age, social status, marital status, and religion.

### ***3.3.2 Hair as a symbol of social status***

Hairstyles signified the passing of important milestones, and anthropologist Edmund Leach (1958:154) argues that hair fulfils a vital role in the rites of passage when a person transitions from one socio-sexual status to the next stage. For example, among the Nuba of southern Sudan old women shaved their heads to signify that they had passed childbearing age (The Diagram Group 2013:285). Puberty was also marked with new hairstyles; hairstyles for young women and those worn by married women differed.

Married Vambo women from Namibia were set apart by the marriage coiffure, which constituted cow horns that were held in place to the crown of the head by clay. Another distinctive hairstyle was the cleanly shaven heads smeared with a mixture of animal fat and red ochre sported by the Masai women of Kenya (Sagay 1983:30). In South Africa, married Zulu women from Transkei stood out from the crowds with their towering, ochred coiffure made by applying red clay and fat on the hair, then shaving the forehead. The Zulu community members could differentiate teenage girls from betrothed girls because of the different hairstyles they wore.

Hair can be displayed for everyone to see but in some instances is concealed; for example, among the Nguni of Southern Africa, married women wore a head scarf as a sign of respect and symbol of their marital status. Married women cover their hair to control it “partly because it is considered to hold an erotic allure for men” (Nettleton 2014:22). However, over the years, head scarves have become ornamental fashion accessories that are worn by everyone, even young girls, boys, men and people from other racial groups.

### ***3.3.3 Aesthetic and psychological significance***

Physical attractiveness is a valued social asset. Esi Sagay (1983) argues that Africans pay attention to their hair and bodies and often devote a lot of time and effort towards improving their outward appearance. Hairstyling techniques often include braiding, weaving and threading hair into various elaborate patterns and decorating it with accessories. Many Africans are aware of the fact that their hair is delicate, therefore, hairstyling is “as much about care for the hair as about its beauty” (Magnun 2000:126). Accessories such as



headscarves, beads, feathers and sea shells were and are still used to adorn hair. Hairstyles are a form of art and constantly change in line with fashion trends.

Hair was, and still is, considered the crowning glory of a woman and linked to a woman's reproductive potential. Studies using evolutionary psychology as a point of departure reveal that a woman's hair is a signal for mate selection and attraction (Hinsz, Matz & Patience 2001:166-172). This is in line with Charles Darwin's theory of sexual selection<sup>14</sup>, Freudian writings on sexuality and Ronald Fisher's Fisherian runaway hypothesis.<sup>15</sup> Drawing from Freud, Leach (1958:153-154) argues that "head hair is widely used as a ritual symbol with genital and anal connotations"; in other words, it is a "symbolic displacement of the invisible genitals ...". Black women's beauty is associated with hair and among other things good hair is tied to youthfulness and sexual attractiveness while "unkempt hair is seen as a sign of illness or antisocial behaviour" (Haas 2008:536). For Freedman (1986:11), women know that men value a woman's beauty, and in order to look attractive and entice men they put a great deal of effort in grooming themselves. Elaborate patterns were done for special occasions such as weddings and other social gatherings. Aesthetic adornments in the form of accessories such as beads, cowrie shells, and feathers were used to enhance self-image and self-esteem.

### ***3.3.4 Religious significance of African hair***

In most African communities, hair was and is still considered an integral component that is linked to life and death, hence the shaving of hair is one of the important rituals associated with funerals and mourning the dead. Among the Zulus and Ndebeles, close relatives of the deceased are supposed to shave their hair after the funeral to cleanse themselves from the contamination of death (Ritcher 2005). The hair is gathered and burnt together with the deceased's clothes. Furthermore, among some Nguni people a married woman's hair was considered sacred while she mourned her dead husband. Often she did not adorn it and covered it with a black headscarf (Sossou 2002:201-209). In Nigeria, Igbo widows and

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<sup>14</sup> Sexual selection is a theory that was propounded by English naturalist Charles Darwin in *The descent of man* (1871).

<sup>15</sup> Developing on Darwin's sexual selection, in the 1930s English statistician RA Fisher introduced the Fisherian Runaway selection hypothesis that seeks to explain the rapid evolution of specific physical traits, including prominent plumage and elaborate courtship behaviours in male animals of certain species.

widowers shaved their heads four days after the burial of a spouse as a symbol of grief and bereavement (Echema 2010:43-44). Since the shaving of the hair is believed to symbolise death, the hair strands are “ritually burnt or thrown away”. Some Africans still practice this but it is increasingly difficult for others to uphold it, especially working women because they have to look well-groomed at work.

After the introduction of Christianity, many denominations required women to cover their heads in church because this is considered a sign of respect and humility. This section has discussed the social and cultural significance of hair; however, it is worth noting that in terms of value, some aspects of the symbolism of hair have changed over time owing to the social, economic and political changes that have taken place in modern industrialised societies. In South Africa in particular, the policies of colonisation and apartheid seem to have led to the diminishing of some cultural values and practices among black people. In addition, the movement of people from their communities in rural areas to mines, towns and cities in search of work impacted on their beliefs and cultural practices.

### **3.4 The cultural norms, beliefs and taboos associated with African hair**

In African societies, there are certain taboos and beliefs associated with hair; a few of these are mentioned here. These cultural practices are meant to protect a person’s hair throughout their life from conception up to their death. There are social taboos governing grooming practices of black African women, particularly pregnant women; for instance, in some African cultures expecting mothers are not allowed to cut, style or braid someone’s hair as it is believed that the hair would break. Pregnant women should also avoid plaiting their hair as it is believed to “cause knots in the umbilical cord, thus killing the foetus” (Holtz 2008:454). The Tswana believe that plaiting hair during pregnancy is taboo because it causes the umbilical cord to wind itself around the foetus’s neck, and among the Sotho plaiting hair in pregnancy was and is still believed by some to lead to prolonged labour (Ntoane 1988:21). In addition to the above, there are dietary restrictions during pregnancy meant to protect the foetus’s hair. For example, in Zambia expecting mothers are encouraged to avoid eating eggs as they are believed to cause the baby to be born without hair. Holtz (2008:453-454) notes that having “a baby without hair is considered an embarrassment to the woman and her family”. In the Gambia, Fulla women are not allowed to eat the head of a goat during

pregnancy because it is believed to cause a child to be born with hair on its stomach (Pérez & Garcia 2013).

Thanking the hairstylist after a grooming session is considered unlucky among some Nguni groups. In historical African communities, hairstylists were not paid for their services. Among the Ndebeles, for example, after a hair grooming session one would show their appreciation to the hairstylist by saying “*inwele kazibongwa/azibongwa*” or simply “*kazibongwa*” (literally meaning hair should not be thanked implying that one should not pay the stylist for doing her hair). Although this practice has been eroded owing to the introduction of barber shops and hair salons where clients pay for the service, some Ndebeles still keep this tradition alive by uttering “*inwele kazibongwa/azibongwa*” as they hand over the money to the cashier or stylist.

Matsumoto (2000:24) observes that culture is “a dynamic system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups in order to ensure their survival, involving attitudes, values, beliefs, norms and behaviours, shared by a group but harboured differently by each specific unit within the group, communicated across generations, relatively stable but with the potential to change across time”. Since culture is dynamic, some of the cultural norms, beliefs and taboos are still observed and adhered to, while others have been eroded largely because of colonisation that introduced new concepts through education and Western religions such as Christianity. Some of the African practices have been labelled barbaric and backward by the missionaries and have been abandoned in favour of Christian values. Furthermore, being uprooted from their communities, some people are no longer able to perform their customs because of the changed nature of environments in which they lived. Coupled with the changing symbolism and significance, hair has been commodified.

### **3.5 Globalisation and the commodification of hair**

African hair continues to be politicised and, in the age of globalisation, hairstyling and grooming has been commodified. It is worth mentioning that this is not unique to hair; the whole body and body parts have been commodified.<sup>16</sup> People sell, donate or outsource a

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<sup>16</sup> In most countries the body parts business is regulated, however, the black market trade is thriving, particularly on the internet where it is not regulated. In South Africa it is illegal for a living donor to accept a reward. Living donors can donate organs for transplants (Should you have...).

range of body organs, parts and fluids including kidneys, sperm, eggs, breast milk, bone marrow, placenta, and plasma.<sup>17</sup> However, removal of hair is different because it is the most visible to observers, unlike selling or donating a kidney or sperm.

Where black hair is concerned, during the different historical epochs on the one hand, African women have been encouraged to embrace their natural hair while on the other hand, the natural ideal has been represented as inferior. Black people living in South Africa have not been spared from the wave since they are exposed to global cultures through images they consume in both local and international media and the presence of multinational beauty companies in the country. In addition, globalisation is linked to the growth of the hair and beauty market (Geoffrey Jones 2011). These multinationals have introduced a wide range of products and create a consumer market through advertising. Through their products and advertising campaigns, the multinational companies in South Africa have an influence on local cultures and largely determine what is considered to be the aspirational ideal.

Coupled with the above, globalisation is also tied to modernity and the proliferation of celebrity culture. With the new technological developments, it is becoming increasingly easy to access information from other parts of the world. Drawing on Appadurai's notion of globalisation that comprises five-scapes,<sup>18</sup> Projansky (2014:5) notes that the images of celebrities are circulated and the media invites readers to "look at girls" because "girls are objects at which we gaze, whether we want to or not. They are everywhere in our mediascapes". Celebrities have the power to influence the lifestyle trends of readers. The media usually employ the can-do and at-risk dichotomy,<sup>19</sup> and these narratives are circulated simultaneously in order to support each other. The at-risk narrative serves as a warning to women that "failure is an ever-lurking possibility that must be staved off through sustained

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<sup>17</sup> Some people do not sell their own body parts but steal and market other people's. A third group donates body parts as an act of kindness. Some women barter their wombs and serve as surrogate mothers in exchange for money. Some of the body parts such as kidneys and placenta are removed using complicated surgical procedures while hair, sperm and breast milk do not involve painful removal and grow back or are replenished.

<sup>18</sup> For Appadurai (1998), globalisation consists of the ethnoscape, mediascape, technoscape, finanscape and ideoscape. In addition, he argues that "the suffix -scape allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes that characterise international capital as deeply as they do international clothing style" (Appadurai 1998:33).

<sup>19</sup> Anita Harris (2004) observes that the media employs the can-do and at-risk dichotomy. She describes the can-do girl as one that is "confident, resilient, and empowered". while the at-risk girl "lacks self-esteem". Also, according to Harris (2004), the can-do girl is beautiful and fit while the at-risk girl is hypersexualised.

application. The can-do girl must be vigilant, lest she become at risk” (Projansky 2014:4). Celebrities are commodified<sup>20</sup> and readers are encouraged to invest in consumer culture in order to groom the ideal can-do body.

### ***3.5.1 Discourses on black hair***

Issues surrounding black hair styling are invariably political in nature. The significance and meanings attached to black hair change as a result of the social, economic and political factors. As highlighted in previous sections, in historical societies hair symbolised, among other things, one’s social status and religious beliefs. However, that changed during colonial and apartheid eras when it was racialised and came to be associated with discrimination and was regarded as dirty. Nevertheless, current discourses circulating in film, television and online conversations are introducing new perspectives by exploring the intersectionality of age, class, race, and gender and how they interconnect to influence readings of black hair.

In South Africa, black hair care and styling has been traditionally covered in women’s magazines; however, in recent years it has become a national subject matter and has made its way to mainstream media such as the *Pretoria News* (Cupido 2017:9)<sup>21</sup> and television programmes on SABC 3 and etv. The hair debates in South Africa are also influenced by black hair discourses that circulate globally through international media such as film, international events, and online forums. For instance, further afield black hairstyles draw interest among many; for example, Halle Berry’s curly voluminous hairstyle caused a stir at the 2017 Oscar awards and Angolan model Maria Borges received ample coverage in 2015 when she became the first black person to sport a short afro at Victoria’s Secret Fashion Show.<sup>22</sup> Black hair discourses have also made their way to the big screen, for example Chris Rock’s documentary *Good Hair* (2009), which explores black people’s perceptions of good

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<sup>20</sup> Cashmore and Parker (2003:215) define commodification as the “seemingly irresistible process in which everything appears subject to the intensity of modern-day capitalism”. In other words, a celebrity becomes a brand and his/her name and looks such as hairstyle can be used to sell products.

<sup>21</sup> The article published in *Pretoria News* features new trends for ethnic hair, an expert giving tips on things to consider when choosing a hairstyle and tips for maintaining hair and hairstyles at home (Cupido 2017).

<sup>22</sup> Berry was quoted as saying “I have always marched to the beat to my own drum, and I think this red-carpet look encapsulates that,” adding that “the dress is glamorous with a sense of romance that made me feel feminine and fresh. With this look, I celebrate my natural hair by allowing it to be wild and free” (Halle Berry defends...). And Angolan model Maria Borges recalls how she was shocked when she got permission to model with her afro because she did not expect to get approval (France 2015).

hair. The documentary also focuses on chemical relaxers, various styling techniques and chronicles how the interviewees experience their hair.

It is important to examine whether beauty, particularly hair choices, are still imposed on black African women or if they are free to choose what they want. For instance, do black African women maintain their self-identity or conform to the ideals promoted in local and international media? To answer the above question, online content on blogs and social media show that black African women embrace both their natural afro hair as well as trends circulating through online platforms and local and global media. A search on Google for 'black natural hair' yields about 26.6 million hits and a search for #blacknaturalhair produces 35,400 results. The posts mainly consist of hair care tips and product reviews on blogs and websites such as [naturalhair.co.za](http://naturalhair.co.za); fashionable hairstyles on Instagram; and YouTube videos containing tutorials on how to do certain hairstyles. Black African bloggers such as Natural Sisters feature natural afro hair, hybrid Afrocentric hairstyles like faux locks made from Brazilian wool and a twisted wig which allows the wearer to sport the style without sitting for long hours doing micro twists or braids. Evenes Ruth Mafupa (2017) recently remarked on this blog, "I got my hair professionally silk pressed for the first time ever and I enjoyed my straight hair while it lasted".

Another discourse that recurs in many forums is that of healthy hair. MzansiFro blog prides itself as being "passionate about healthy hair and beauty" (MzansiFro...). FroChic describes itself as a blog for "all naturals and healthy hair enthusiasts" and it has a category dedicated to natural hair and also features other fashion and beauty related material such as celebrity interviews. Commenting on the image of an international celebrity who was interviewed and shown with a curly long weave, the writer remarks "I mean, who would've guessed that this hot FHM beauty that's been dominating our TV screens ... for years had a head full of gorgeous naps hidden underneath those weaves" (FHM model, Joelle's...). In these online forums, black women celebrate the beauty of their hair regardless its texture (natural afro, or hair that has been altered through relaxing) and redefine its position. In this regard, social media is used to give black hair in its various forms equal status with other hair types.

Black hair stylisation is complex as it is governed by several factors, including local and global trends, which shape what is considered to be ideal black aesthetics. Some black African women adopt global styles but adapt and reinterpret them to suit local and their own

tastes; this gives rise to hybridisation, which manifests as a new trend known as glocal stylisation (a fusion of global and local trends). I further argue that glocal black stylisation gives black African women an opportunity to self-fashion by choosing, for instance, the hairstyles they want and are comfortable with. It allows them to embrace both local and global glamour, while also adding their own personal touch to the styles they see in the media and on digital platforms. At face value, it seems as if black African women have control over how they maintain and wear their hair. However, it is important to note that information flowing through media and online channels is ideologically laden and perpetuates certain beauty myths. Celebrities, who are often used to promote and endorse the trends, serve as ideological signs that promote capitalist values. Marshall (1997:x) observes that “the celebrity as public individual who participates openly as a marketable commodity serves as a powerful type of legitimation of the political economic model of exchange and value – the basis of capitalism – and extends that model to include the individual.” But the celebrity system is also ideologically porous since counter-values emerge in their sign systems (Redmond 2006:40). Celebrities can also serve as counter-hegemonic symbols in society.

Media reports show that black African women in South Africa have embraced weaves and wigs made from both synthetic materials and human hair from Asia and South America. This has huge implications on the political economy of hair because some of the hair is stolen, while some is bought from Indian temples when pilgrims shave it off. In Venezuela, for example, *piranhas* (gangs of thieves) rob women of their hair at gunpoint and sell it to companies that manufacture human hair and weaves (Piranha’ gangs hack ...). In South Africa, the demand for natural hair extensions has resulted in dreadlock thieves robbing people of their locks and selling them for between R200 and R2,500 depending on the length of the hair (Louw 2013). The business is booming because it takes a long time, around five to ten years to grow natural dreadlocks. The 100 per cent human hair products are very expensive, but black African women are prepared to buy them, as is evident in the big market in South Africa. It is essential to examine why black African women would spend so much money. In addition, it is important to pose the question: does consuming other people’s hair point to black African women’s admission that they are inferior?

Wearing products and accessories made from other people’s hair is not a new thing; it can be traced back to historical societies such as ancient Egypt, and ancient Rome where aristocratic women wore blond wigs made from hair obtained from prisoners of war (Chico 2013:483).

Moreover, it is not unique to black African women, it is prevalent in other cultures; in fifteenth- to sixteenth-century Renaissance Europe, Italians wore wigs and in England Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603), who was naturally blonde owned many wigs and had a preference for red hair wigs (Yarwood 2011:445). Many Hollywood celebrities wear wigs and add human hair extensions to their hair to look good on the red carpet. Debates in South African media such as e.tv's *3<sup>rd</sup> Degree*<sup>23</sup> and SABC 3's *3Talk* have revealed that black African women in South Africa use wigs and weaves for various reasons. These range from wanting to look beautiful to wanting to impress men (*3<sup>rd</sup> Degree* 2012) and personal preference (*Celebs on weaves vs natural hair* 2015). A guest on *3Talk*, a daytime talk show hosted by Noelene Maholwana-Sangqu on SABC 3, said she attracted more attention from men if she had a weave compared to her natural hair (*Celebs on weaves vs natural hair* 2015).

Furthermore, wigs are expensive and can serve as signifiers of the wearer's social class. The type and quality of the wig or weave a person is seen wearing can be used to determine their social status. Peruvian and Brazilian weaves are expensive and women who wear them have a disposable income. However, this is not always a true reflection of one's class as wigs and weaves can be passed down from one person to another. If a weave is carefully removed, it can be re-used several times. A person earning as little as R5,000 per month can save and buy a wig or weave as a one-off investment and the product can last them two to three years. In addition to being status symbols that signify class, extensions, wigs and weaves are also popular among black African women because of their "transformative capacity that allows people to change their appearance in a matter of minutes" (Cuthbertson & De Becker 2014:60). Contrary to belief that black African women wear other people's hair because they feel inferior, wearing weaves and wigs is empowering as it gives them some means to change their appearance.

A guest on the SABC3 show also pointed out that it is not just black women who try to emulate the characteristics of a different race: white people tan their bodies to look darker. During the Victorian era (1837-1901), pale white skin was associated with aristocracy and nobility and most products that were advertised were aimed towards preserving whiteness. White skin was a sign of refinement while tanned skin was associated with lower class manual labourers who worked outdoors in the sun. However, beginning from the Edwardian

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<sup>23</sup> The episode on black women's use of weaves and wigs was aired on e.tv's current affairs programme *3<sup>rd</sup> Degree* in June 2012. The programme was hosted by Deborah Patta.



era (1910-1910) through the First World War, Caucasians began to associate darker skin tones with looking sexy, and this trend was mainly linked to the hypersexualisation of black bodies. By the 1920s and 1930s, many white people in Britain and America were embracing skin tanning, a trend popularised by fashionista Coco Chanel, which was regarded as symbolising having enough money to visit exotic locations (Zoumbarisi 2012:796). Tanning was associated with “health, personal and national strength, female beauty, and female liberation (Zoumbarisi 2012:796).

The above discussion shows that just like black women spend a great deal of money on their hair and often use dangerous chemicals, white women also spend money on tanning products and some expose themselves to harmful UV rays when sunbathing. But systematic racism privileges whiteness. When white people appropriate symbols of black culture such as dark skin and African hairstyles, no one questions it or labels the practice self-hatred. However, when black women wear wigs, weaves or straighten their hair, people including black people themselves, are quick to say black women are dupes who are imitating whiteness.

White women also dye their hair and use hair extensions and wigs. Indians who have a dark skin tone use lightening products to look fair, as is evident in a myriad of fairness products including Fair and Lovely which features Bollywood actor Salman Khan as brand ambassador. White women also alter their looks through plastic surgery and Botox; the practice of black women altering their hair is no different. This shows that hair styling, grooming and the desire to look good are issues that affect women across cultures and racial groups. The beauty practices marginalise and exploit all women as there are financial costs involved or empower them by providing more choices on the market, and this happens within racial and class hierarchies. The next section examines the South African hair and beauty industry.

### **3.6 The hair and beauty industry in South Africa**

It has already been suggested that the media promote certain lifestyles and body image; in order to conform to the ideal, most women worldwide spend a great deal of money on their hair. In light of its multiracial population, the South African hair care market is tailored to cater to the needs of both the African and Caucasian hair types. In addition, the hair care

needs of African hair is more than that required by Caucasian hair (Mordor Intelligence report 2015-2020); there is more variety for black African women ranging from natural to chemical relaxing to locks and braids, which require different products. This raises the question: what are the social, cultural and economic implications for black African women living in South Africa? The past two decades have seen changes in the role of black African women as they earn and spend money. African women participate and contribute to the global economy through buying hair products. F Nyamnjoh, D Durham, and J Fokwang (2002:102) note that the consumption of hair products such as shampoos and conditioners, straighteners and dyes, curlers and blow-driers create “new spaces in which [black] women make themselves neither according to conservative local structures nor in the exact image of the West”.

With the growth of the black middle class and increased spending power, there is a rise in the demand for skin care and hair care products (Euromonitor report 2015). To fulfil these requirements, the May 2015 Euromonitor report shows that multinational beauty companies are setting up businesses in South Africa and increasing the visibility of their products through massive advertising campaigns in print, digital and electronic media, celebrity endorsements and product placements.

Kobena Mercer (1994:103) notes that “hair functions as a key ethnic signifier because, compared with bodily shape or facial features, it can be changed more easily by cultural practices such as straightening”. The habit of black women engaging in hair-altering practices has seen an increase in the production and marketing of hair products aimed at black hair. Africa in general, and South Africa in particular, is fast becoming a hub for hair and beauty brands. Africa is under the spotlight and the Euromonitor report shows that international brands such as Unilever South Africa, Procter & Gamble, Avon Justine, Colgate-Palmolive and L’Oréal South Africa lead in the beauty and personal category and are responding to the needs of ethnic<sup>24</sup> consumers, and are rapidly expanding their product portfolios to cater to the needs of this audience.

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<sup>24</sup> It is commendable that manufacturers and retailers acknowledge that African hair is unique and provide products and accessories to meet its grooming and styling needs. However, labelling afro hair ethnic is problematic particularly in a predominantly black society because it seems to suggest that African hair is unconventional compared to other hair textures that are considered mainstream. In some shops like Clicks (<https://clicks.co.za/beauty/ethnic-haircare/c/OH20148>) afro hair products are

### Chapter Three: Significance and political economy of black hair

Niche international brands have also set up shop in South Africa. Instead of catering to the specific needs of ethnic hair, they are selling products that are suitable for all hair types, using natural ingredients. Lush, a leading brand headquartered in the UK manufactures products for all hair types using natural ingredients such as fresh fruit and vegetables, flowers, herbal infusions, and essential oils. The product line includes conditioners, shampoo bars, shampoo, hair treatments, styling and henna for colouring. The Body Shop online classifies hair products under the following categories: brushes and combs, conditioner, shampoo, styling and treatment. All its products including volumising shampoos and conditioners that moisturise and give shine to the hair, contain no silicones, parabens and colourants, which are harsh and damaging to the hair. Lush and The Body Shop products are slightly expensive because they are made of natural ingredients such as honey, henna, coffee, sea salts and seaweeds. In April 2016, a 55g shampoo bar cost R115, a 20g hot oil treatment had a price tag of R125 and a 325g caca rouge henna colour cost R225 at Lush (Lush fresh handmade cosmetics...).

Although international brands dominate, home-grown start-ups are making their mark. Some of these companies such as Black Like Me were founded during the turbulent 1980s as a means to decolonise the African mind. The majority democratic era has created an enabling environment for local companies to thrive. Duelle, a company that was established in 2004, and prides itself in marketing products “specifically designed and formulated to treat ethnic hair” (Welcome to Duelle ...) provides in-salon and homecare hair products such as low lye relaxers, hair and scalp conditioners, and styling gels and sprays. The images on the website feature two women with relaxed hair. One has short relaxed hair that has been set using rollers while the other woman has long, straight bangs.

Amka Products, another South African company that was established in the 1950s in Pretoria and has since grown into a leading manufacturer and distributor of hair care, personal care and home care products, has four manufacturing plants, 400 products and 20 leading brands that are sold in 35 African countries. Its portfolio includes Stylin’ Dredz, a product range enriched with tea tree and proteins that help create and maintain natural dreadlocks (Stylin’ Dredz...); Sofn’free’s cortical relaxer regular and neutralising shampoo that is suited for soft to medium hair. The crème is enriched with vitamin E to nourish and condition hair thereby

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classified under Ethnic Haircare category and are displayed on separate counters from products for other hair types.

reducing irritation to the scalp. The Sofn'free range also boasts products that add shine to the hair and these come in serum, oil and lotion formulations and contain olive oil to condition the hair and scalp. Go Black permanent hair dye and Creme colour shampoo offers 100 per cent black hair coverage.

The Euromonitor report shows that despite economic and household financial pressures, beauty and personal care saw double-digit current value growth in 2014 (Euromonitor report 2015). Hair care, colour cosmetics and skin care are amongst the leading categories. Furthermore, Euromonitor reported that in 2012, South Africa and Nigeria were the largest personal care and beauty markets in Africa, valued at \$3.4 billion and \$2 billion, respectively (Euromonitor report 2015). The report further showed that the beauty market in Africa is expected to double over the next decade, with a projected annual growth rate of 5 to 10 per cent in the sales of beauty and personal care products.<sup>25</sup>

### ***3.6.1 Black hair care products in South Africa***

The beauty industry is a billion-dollar trade, and in order to create a market for the surplus goods, brands create an artificial demand by propagating the “beauty myth” (Wolf 2002). Media outlets that survive on revenue from advertisers tend to publish content that is most likely to sell the magazine. For example, *True Love* does not feature images of ‘ordinary’ black South African women, instead it publishes pictures of celebrities who are successful, beautiful or involved in a scandal because it is believed that celebrities sell. The images on the covers promote a certain lifestyle, which can be attained through consumption of products. Positioning readers to look to the market to satisfy their needs promotes consumerism, thereby creating a market for advertisers. Since the media serves a dual product market, its main purpose is to provide a platform for advertisers to access readers

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<sup>25</sup> It is forecast that the increase in the beauty market will be fuelled by drivers such as population growth, which is expected to reach 1.2 billion by 2017. The sales of beauty care products are likely to be stimulated by the young population as 60 per cent of Africans are under 25 years. Another driver for the growth in the beauty market is the growing middle class. According to the African Development Bank, the middle class comprises “anyone who spends between \$2 and \$20 a day in purchasing power parity terms”. The Bank estimates that more than 34 per cent of Africans (more than 300 million people) fit this description and will grow to 42 per cent (more than 1 billion people) in 2060. An increase in urbanisation in Africa (the urban population is expected to exceed 500 million individuals by 2016), also represents a positive trend for the beauty and personal care market, since urban consumers are wealthier.

(Albarran, Sylvia & Chan-Olmsted 2006:184). For instance, each issue of *True Love* contains an average of 25 advertisements (see Chapter Four for full analysis and discussion).

French theorist Jean Baudrillard (1998) argues that needs are created through advertising. Furthermore, for him demands are created by media and advertising through desire. Advertising creates a myth of happiness and positions consumers to look to the market for satisfaction through consumption of products. However, the products consumed by an individual can never satisfy them because they are “sham objects, or characteristic signs of happiness” (Baudrillard (1998:31). It is not possible to satisfy the desires because new ones are constantly being created. Rex Butler (1999:50) observes that “consumption is not about matching a pre-existing desire to a particular set of objects. Rather ... consumption is not possible without a certain excess of desire over the object; or if desire is satisfied by the object, there is always another or an extra desire produced by this”.

In line with the ever-changing desires and pursuit for happiness in products, the black hair care market is expected to grow in both the dry and wet hair categories because black women like to change their look regularly and often opt for different hairstyles. For instance, one can go from braids to short relaxed hair and after a few weeks sew on a long curly weave. However, consumers are also discerning and during these tough economic times, they are looking for products that are affordable and offer value-for-money. From 2009 to 2010, chemical hair relaxing and African hair styling were the most popular services accounting for almost 80 per cent of salon business (The Professional Hair Care Market South Africa 2010), but now consumers are moving away from relaxers, which have been linked to hair breakage, hair fall and damage to the scalp, and there is a growing demand for dry hair.<sup>26</sup> The weak rand has resulted in a high demand for multifunctional products that provide added-value and added benefits. According to the *Supermarket & Retailer* September 2015 report, people need products made from “ingredients which address specific hair concerns and are solution-oriented” (*Supermarket & Retailer* 2015:40). Products that claim to offer moisturisation, hair thickening, scalp health and colour management are expected to be continually introduced to the market to meet the needs of consumers (*Supermarket & Retailer* 2015:40).

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<sup>26</sup> Dry hair is a term used to refer to dry hair products like braids, hair extensions, hairpieces, weaves and wigs. On the other hand, wet hair refers to relaxers, shampoos, and conditioners.

### 3.6.2 *Marketing initiatives*

To increase product awareness and improve their appeal, brands choose brand ambassadors that consumers will identify with. They normally select famous people like celebrities, sports personalities and successful entrepreneurs. South African television presenter Nomhle Thema<sup>27</sup> served as Dark and Lovely's global brand ambassador from 2009 to the beginning of 2011, while DJ and television presenter Bonang Matheba was the face of Prima Donna by Diva Divine (a brand that specialises in wigs, weaves and hair extensions).

Another way of promoting products and brands that has been adopted is placing beauty staff in-store to assist consumers select products that suit their needs. Customer loyalty programmes<sup>28</sup> are incorporated to improve store loyalty. Stores that run loyalty programmes stock a comprehensive range of brands to give consumers a wide selection. Social media marketing through beauty blogs reviewing, or advising against harmful products containing sulphates, parabens and more, are highly popular, and influence the sales of products.

### 3.6.3 *Distribution channels*

The products are distributed through various channels including direct selling, supermarkets, hypermarkets, salons, pharmacies, specialty stores, and e-Commerce. *The Supermarket & Retailer* September 2015 report shows that supermarkets are increasing their market share in the health and beauty sector "to help drive footfall". With the growing demands of life, South African black consumers do not have the time to go to beauty specialty stores; rather they prefer the convenience of buying products in supermarkets. To meet these needs, supermarkets and hypermarkets such as Pick n Pay, Checkers, Game, and Makro have expanded their personal care departments and stock a wide range of hair products. Some of the popular brands on their shelves are Revlon, Dark & Lovely, Dove, and L'Oreal.

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<sup>27</sup> Nomhle Thema became the first African woman to represent Dark and Lovely internationally. She replaced American musician Kelly Rowland, and another American socialite Bria Murphy (comedian Eddie Murphy's daughter) took over from her as the face of the brand.

<sup>28</sup> A customer loyalty programme is a rewards programme offered by a business to its customers meant to encourage them to shop and use its services. Members earn points when they make purchases. In South Africa, banks and retail outlets have customer loyalty programmes. Clicks (Clubcard), Dis-Chem and Pick n Pay (Smart Shopper) run successful loyalty programmes.

## Chapter Three: Significance and political economy of black hair

Salons also serve as distribution outlets as they stock a wide range of products. Consumers get to enjoy in-salon professional services as well as buy products to take along for home care. Moreover, hairdressers<sup>29</sup> also serve as brand ambassadors as they inform their clients about new products and advise them on which products best suit their hair needs.

With the growing allure of e-Commerce and the need to cater to consumers who prefer to shop in the comfort of their homes or offices, many hair products are available online. Zando.co.za has a wide range of hair care products that suit all hair types. The online store stocks cleansing products like shampoos and conditioners, styling products such as creams and sprays, flat irons, accessories like wigs, wefts and hair extensions. Leading brands available at Zando are L'Oreal and Kardashian Beauty. Herbal shampoos and conditioners by African Extracts Rooibos are available at [www.beautylink.co.za](http://www.beautylink.co.za). Products enriched with rooibos extract, tea tree oil, which has anti-fungal and anti-bacterial properties, and wheat germ oil, leaves hair shiny, strong and healthy. Beaucience Botanical Nourishing Conditioner and shampoo (AbsoluteSkin ...) that contain soya bean oil that moisturises, nourishes and strengthens the hair, and a hydrolysed protein from the seeds of quinoa, which coats and forms a protective layer around the hair and protects it from environmental elements, also locks in moisture and prevents hair from drying. The products are paraben free, toxin free and synthetic oil free.

### CONCLUSION

Hair on its own is a lifeless strand that straddles two spaces as it is located both inside (the follicle) and outside (shaft) the body. Owing to its inbetweenness, it is considered an abject object (Smelik 2015:238-239). Psychologically, hair is considered dirty; however, when viewed through social, cultural and political lenses it takes on new meanings. Hair can serve as a marker of one's identity by defining race, class, gender, age and religious beliefs.

Since hair holds so much power, society has prescribed norms and taboos that govern it and these are not static but change with the times as society evolves. The social and cultural norms as well as the symbolic significance of black hair have been explored in this chapter, taking into cognisance the segregation practices that had and continue to have an impact on

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<sup>29</sup> Most salons keep copies of magazines for clients to flip through. The stylists also read the magazines to get information on the latest trends.

### Chapter Three: Significance and political economy of black hair

the politics of African hair in South Africa. Hairstyling, which was once a social practice that provided a platform for black African women to bond, has been commercialised and opened up avenues for exploitation by corporations. Hairstyling and grooming has been stripped of its intimacy, instead hair has been commodified and this has given rise to a thriving hair and beauty market in South Africa. I argue that the commodification of hair is a boon and bane as it has resulted in both empowerment and exploitation of black African women.

Having explicated the cultural significance of black hair, the next chapter focuses on cultural studies and how it influences magazine culture and representation, and further explores *True Love* and factors that influence the content, choice of images and advertisements that are published in the magazine.



## CHAPTER FOUR: MAGAZINE CULTURE AND REPRESENTATION

Magazines play an important role in people's lives as they cater to a wide range of readership in terms of race, gender, age, and class. Magazines ranging from consumer, trade and various interest publications appeal to a diverse audience and serve many purposes, from informing to entertaining and educating, depending on the type of the publication.

The preceding chapters have given context to the study and discussed the politics of black hair. This chapter explores *True Love*, particularly examining the factors that influence choice of content and images that go on the cover, and the companies that advertise in the magazine. It further gives the history of *True Love* because it is important to contextualise and detail the historical factors that played, and continue to play, an important role in shaping the magazine and the way it is read by black African women. This chapter also gives an overview of cultural studies, tracing it back to the Birmingham School and how it spread across the globe. Additionally, this chapter examines the role of a magazine in society, particularly exploring it as a site of representations of race, gender, and class and identity formation. First, the following section examines the magazine as a medium of communication and explicates the genre under which *True Love* falls.

### 4.1 What is a magazine?

The word 'magazine' originally meant 'store house' or 'repository' that is, a place where commodities and products were stored (Beetham 1996:19; Garvey 1996:3); the French word for shop, *magasin*, illustrates this (Garvey 1996:3). Ralph E Hanson (2016:[sp]) defines a magazine as a "periodical that contains articles of lasting interest". Magazines, which have been described as commodities and provide entry into a 'world of commodities' (Beetham 1996:8), can be classified based on frequency of distribution, target audience, and type of specialisation.

A magazine is a publication that is targeted at a specific audience and normally generates revenue from advertising, subscriptions and newsstand sales. Another characteristic of magazines is that they rely on a dominance of the visual (McRobbie 1976:65); hence they are 'glossy and colourful' (Bignell 2002:64) and make use of photography and attractive layout (McCracken 1993:5; Mort 1996:23). *True Love* magazine falls under the consumer magazine

category and under the subcategory of women's magazine.<sup>1</sup> *True Love*, which covers fashion, beauty, celebrity news, and well-being, is targeted primarily at black African women who fall under the LSM 8-10 (see 4.1.2). In the next section, I give a historical overview of the magazine, to lay the foundation that the analysis of the texts in the following chapters will build on.

#### 4.1.1 *History of True Love magazine*

*True Love* was originally launched in 1972 by Jim Bailey<sup>2</sup> as a magazine for black men, targeted mainly at migrant workers. Established as a sister publication to *Drum*, it was set up to cater to the growing numbers of black men in urban areas. My analysis of the earlier issues showed that during its infancy, the magazine was pictorially driven since most black people possessed rudimentary levels of literacy. It also featured sex stories, mainly scandals and infidelity, which made its name seem ironic. As women began reading the magazine and their numbers increased, sex content was decreased. Another reason for toning down the content was the tightening of the censorship laws. The changes in editorial focus coupled with “bad budgeting and low productivity” led to a drop in the circulation figures and this resulted in *True Love* and *Drum* being sold to Nasionale Pers<sup>3</sup> (National Press) in 1984 (Verster 2016:24). Following the acquisition, the magazine was revamped and launched as a women's magazine and its name changed to *True Love & Family* and Pearl Luthuli-Mashabela<sup>4</sup> was

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<sup>1</sup> The women's magazine genre was established in the 1800s in America to cater to women since they did not work and enjoyed leisure time, which they used to read magazines. The first women's magazines such as *Godey's Lady's Book* and *Ringwood's Afro-American Journal of Fashion* focused on fashion, home decor, and food. As the genre grew it spread to other parts of the world and included service magazines such as *Good Housekeeping*, which mainly “dealt with a concern for the home, family, and quality of life from a traditional woman's perspective” (Hanson 2006:[sp]). The genre has since grown to include fashion, beauty and lifestyle magazines.

<sup>2</sup> From its inception, *True Love* has been owned and run by ‘white’ capital. The magazine was founded by a white person and its first editor was a white male (Barney Cohen). When *True Love* was bought by Nasionale Pers, black female editors were put in charge; however, ownership still remains in the hands of white people. Interestingly, other women's magazines were also run by men. For instance, *Die Huisgenoot* was edited by a man; *Sarie Marais*, the first Afrikaans women's magazine, which was launched in 1949, also had a male editor from its inception up to 1996; and although *Fair Lady* was edited by Jane Raphaely, the magazine's editor-in-chief in the 1960s was a man called Fred le Roux.

<sup>3</sup> Nasionale Pers is an Afrikaans publishing house that was founded in 1915 and is based in Cape Town. It was established in Stellenbosch almost at the same time as the National Party, and some of its publications' editors were National Party supporters. The company changed its name to Naspers in 1998. Media24, publishers of *True Love*, is part of the Naspers group.

<sup>4</sup> Pearl Luthuli-Mashabela became the first black female magazine editor in South Africa. Other *True Love* editors are Bessie Tugwana and Dorah Sithole, who were co-editors from 1987-1995, Sithole

appointed editor. During this period, there were several women's magazines for white women including, *Sarie* and *Fair Lady*, and *True Love & Family* became the first publication for black African women.<sup>5</sup>

The prevailing economic, socio-cultural and political climate impacted on the growth and development of the women's magazine genre in South Africa. In the late 1970s to the 1980s, many black African women were forced to move to urban areas in search for jobs, and this led to the acceleration of black urbanisation. With a significant number of black African women joining the labour force and earning their own income, their circumstances and role in society changed, and this in turn influenced the growth of popular culture products targeted at them. Black African women had disposable income and publishers and advertisers sought to tap into this market. Furthermore, in African cultures, young women learnt about gender roles from older women in the family and from the community. However, migrating to urban centres removed women from their social structures and in their new environment they needed something to fill that gap. The magazines targeted at black African women were established to fill the void and play the role that was formerly fulfilled by aunts, grandmothers, and mothers in the rural set up. In other words, women's magazines such as *True Love & Family* became the new agents of socialisation, giving women advice on child rearing, recipes and relationships.

The economic and political dynamics in South Africa also influenced the publication of *True Love & Family*. Although Nasionale Pers was a supporter of the National Party (NP), it published a magazine for black people. On the one hand, this could be seen as a commercial move meant to make money from black people by publishing content that appealed to their community. On the other hand, the move to establish a magazine for black people could be viewed as a perpetuation of apartheid policies, which promoted racial segregation and separate development. The establishment of so-called Bantu press was in line with other separatist initiatives such as Bantu education, and Bantustans that were meant to ensure that

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was re-called to become editor again from 2008-2010; Khanyi Dhlomo-Mkhize (1995-2003); Busisiwe Mahlaba (2004-2007); Sbu Mpungose (2010-2011), Lerato Tshabalala (2011-2014) and the present editor, Dudu Mvimbi-Leshabane who was appointed in 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Prior to the launch of *True Love*, magazines for black people such as *Drum* and *Bona* were targeted mainly at black men. Launched in 1984, this first magazine targeted at black women was called *True Love & Family* and its tagline was "For the Woman who loves life". A year after the launch of *True Love & Family*, Argus Group responded by launching *Thandi*.

blacks and whites led separate lives physically, socially, intellectually, economically, and politically.

*True Love & Family* magazine, like other black press in the turbulent late 1970s and 1980s, was opposed to apartheid policies. Like its sister magazine *Drum*, *True Love & Family* articulated the aspirations, fears and plight of black people under apartheid rule. The magazine contained “political features which focused on the empowerment of the masses” (Verster 2016:25), and covered some landmark historical events that were of interest to the black community. However, a cursory content analysis of the past issues I conducted revealed that the black editors such as Luthuli-Mashabela, Bessie Tugwana and Dorah Sithole, who ran it in the 1980s and early 1990s, were not consistent as they neither covered hard-core political issues nor openly criticised the regime. This could be attributed to the fact that the editorial policy of the publication was shaped by its white owners who were pro-reform, while at the same time interested in keeping the NP in power. As a result, to avoid going against white business interests, an analysis of the issues published during this era reveals that the inclusion of anti-apartheid articles was minimal or glossed over without in-depth analysis. On the socio-cultural front, unlike its predecessor *True Love* that was aimed at male migrant workers in mines, *True Love & Family* shied away from racy content. Overall, *True Love & Family* tried to strike a balance between serving the business interests of its white owners and giving coverage to pertinent issues that affected the black (female) community.

In the post-apartheid era, towards the end of Sithole and Tugwana’s editorship, *True Love & Family* began tackling issues that affected the black community in the new South Africa. There was a radical shift from focusing on the collective to the individual. The content, which included health, parenting, finance and self-improvement, began speaking to an individual as the central figure. Writer and archivist, Francois Verster (2016:25) notes that “relationship articles, especially, were written in a way that recognised the independent status that many Black women were enjoying at the time”.

## Chapter Four: Magazine culture and representation

In 1995, the magazine underwent transformation under the leadership of Khanyi Dhlomo-Mkhize.<sup>6</sup> To make it more appealing to young black African women, the layout was changed, and ‘& Family’ was dropped from the title and the quality of printing paper changed to gloss. The tag line was changed to “all a woman needs”, and the magazine contained advice and stories that inspired young black African women. Dhlomo-Mkhize, a model and television presenter, was respected in the black community and was a role model for many young women. Under her leadership, *True Love* became a guide, the “black book for black South African women” (*True Love* editorial team ... 2016).

In 2004, as the country celebrated the first decade of democratic rule, more magazines targeted at black African women were launched,<sup>7</sup> and *True Love* began to compete with them for advertising share. Faced with competition, *True Love* established brand extensions to tap into niche and regional markets, beginning with *True Love Bride* in 2004 and regional publications like *True Love East Africa* and *True Love West Africa*<sup>8</sup> in 2005 (Odhlambo & Onyango 2010). As more black African women became empowered financially, the focus shifted to promoting consumer culture. To cater to their dreams, which included moving up the social ladder, the magazine sought to broaden its appeal by focusing on the younger audience and this was reflected in its content, which covered more fashion and beauty news. This set the template for *True Love* as it is today.

The above discussion shows that the magazine that began life in 1972 has changed dramatically over the past 45 years. It has shifted in emphasis under different editors and has developed into a multi-platform brand that has a website, Twitter account, Instagram and Facebook page. Under the current editorship of Dudu Mvimbi Leshabane, who took the reins in 2014, it prides itself as “the iconic South African fashion, beauty and lifestyle magazine for black women. It is an indispensable accessory that inspires, entertains and advises modern African women” (Media24, *True Love* ...). Its editorial manifesto is geared towards fostering positive living among ‘modern’ black South African women. There are many magazines with

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<sup>6</sup> Khanyi Dhlomo-Mkhize was at the magazine’s helm for eight years and during her tenure the circulation figures doubled. In 2001, Dhlomo-Mkhize was awarded the AdVantage Magazine Editor of the Year award and *True Love* also received the Consumer Magazine of the Year by AdVantage in the same year (Khanyi Dhlomo ... 2011).

<sup>7</sup> These include *Real* and *Move* both published by Media24 and international magazines such as *O, The Oprah magazine*.

<sup>8</sup> The East Africa edition folded in April 2010 when publisher Media24 pulled out of Kenya (Odhlambo & Onyango 2010).

a significant number of readers who are black such as *Drum*, *Bona*, and *Glamour South Africa*.<sup>9</sup>

In view of the above, what makes *True Love* stand out from competitors? While black magazines used to compete with black magazines, now they have to compete with media targeted at white audiences, especially fashion and beauty publications such as *Glamour South Africa*, *Cosmopolitan South Africa*, *Marie Claire South Africa*, *Elle South Africa* and their international editions. The titles that were once considered white media and featured white celebrities only are putting black women<sup>10</sup> on their covers to attract black audiences. *Bona* is a competitor because its readers belong to the LSM 7-10 (*Bona* media kit ...), which is almost similar to *True Love*'s LSM 8-10. However, *Bona* is not the biggest competitor for readership because its content is slightly different. It tends to focus on the family and gives advice on taking care of small babies, while *True Love* covers the school-going age group and provides expert tips on helping children ease anxiety during exams, and tackles difficult topics such as sex talk. In addition, *Bona* is printed on lower quality paper whereas *True Love* is printed on glossy paper.

The other competitors are *Destiny*,<sup>11</sup> a publication that initially focused on high-end black African women, who could afford expensive products, but has since changed strategy and turned the magazine into a lifestyle brand, *Grazia*, a weekly magazine that mainly covers fashion and beauty, and *Woman and Home* magazine. The biggest competitor, according to the *True Love* team, is social media because it is quicker. They lament that social media is “killing us you have to be ten times [as] creative because celebrities are also publishing their own stories. It can be a single tweet but at the end of the day everyone would have seen it and the story falls flat” (*True Love* editorial team 2016).

Be that as it may, the main strength of *True Love* is that it is “a legendary, trusted brand that is read by generations ... That’s the one friend we trust” (*True Love* editorial team 2016). The

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<sup>9</sup> The readership of *Glamour South Africa* consists of 54 per cent young black women and 65 per cent black people (Media pack *Glamour* 2016 ...).

<sup>10</sup> The black celebrities such as Boity and Pearl Thusi featured on *True Love* covers are also used on *Marie Claire* and *Elle* covers.

<sup>11</sup> *Destiny* describes itself as a “high-end business and lifestyle publication for ambitious, stylish and intellectually curious women who are either actively engaged in business, or aspire to be so” (*Destiny* 2016 Media kit ...). Its readership comprises business women aged between 25 and 55 years who are affluent, stylish and fall under the LSM 8-10.

team attribute running a publication successfully to understanding the market and the audience and maintaining loyal readers as the magazine evolves and changes strategies because “these are the mothers who say to their daughters buy *True Love* to get information and the daughter will grow one day and be a mother to another daughter and say I got my advice from *True Love*” (*True Love* editorial team 2016). Moreover, featuring only black South African women on its covers<sup>12</sup> gives the publication an edge over its competitors that use black and white women, as well as international celebrities. By consistently using images of black local celebrities, people know what to expect every month and this has strengthened *True Love*'s brand identity.

Another core strength is that the magazine is run by a black editorial team. Although *True Love* is run by a black editorial team, it is owned by Media24, which is a part of multinational conglomerate Naspers and owners, board members and management control the shape the policy and influence the general direction of the publication. The parent company Media24, which has its head office in Cape Town, is one of the leading publishing houses in South Africa with a presence in digital media and services, newspapers, magazines, ecommerce, book publishing, print and distribution (About Media24 ...). There are only a few black people in management and who sit on the company's board.<sup>13</sup> With media still dominated by white interests in ownership and control, a brief content analysis I conducted reveals that the coverage of issues that are relevant to the black majority in *True Love* are still articulated through a white lens. The next section presents *True Love*'s target audience and geographic reach.

### **4.1.2 Target audience and geographic reach**

The readership of a magazine and audience members for advertising are defined by the ‘graphics’ such as demographics, geographics and psychographics. On the one hand, demographics are “measurable characteristics like age, income, sex and marital status”, while geographics “involve measurements of where people live” (Hanson 2014:274). On the other

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<sup>12</sup> *True Love* magazine features black South African women on its covers. There are a few exceptions such as the September 2015 cover, which features a man and a woman.

<sup>13</sup> The Media24 executive management and board comprise 10 members each. There are two black people on the executive management team, and only one black person, who sits on the board (Media24...).

hand, psychographics are a combination of demographics and psychological traits such as attitudes and interests.

According to the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) AMPS 2015 ([Jul14-Jun15]) report the target audience for *True Love* is predominantly black African women aged between 18 and 50, but there is a small fraction of Coloureds, Indians and whites as well as men who read the magazine. The magazine's readership consists of the older generation who grew up reading the magazine, as well as a crop of new readers comprising the millennials.<sup>14</sup> People who attend readers' events are "older and they are the loyal readers of *True Love*. The millennials care about the magazine but they do not want to spend money on the magazine, they read it online" (*True Love* editorial team 2016). The older readers who buy the magazine focus more on parenting, home decor, food and budgeting, while the younger audience is mainly interested in fashion, beauty and celebrities because they want to "see trends, what celebrities are wearing and doing with their hair" (*True Love* editorial team 2016).

From the content that is published, one can infer that *True Love* is targeted at black African women from diverse backgrounds, as it chronicles the experiences of housewives, professional women, married and single women, and single mothers. The above is confirmed by the (SAARF) Living Standards Measure (LSM) report, which shows that *True Love* readers come from varied backgrounds in terms of geographical location (metropolitan cities, villages and rural areas), education level, income levels, and age groups. The team describes a *True Love* reader as

a black woman that is working, a go getter, or someone that is aspiring or studying towards a certain career, someone who knows where she wants to be, someone who likes to take care of herself and her family, looks after her finances, ... married, if they are single and wants to be in a relationship or are in a relationship. It's really that wide (*True Love* marketing team 2016).

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<sup>14</sup> Generational scholars Neil Howe and William Strauss (2000:4) describe millennials as people "born in or after 1982"; in 2012 they revised their description to people born between 1982 and 2004.



Surprisingly, the above assertion does not make reference to the unemployed readers who constitute 28 per cent of *True Love* readership.<sup>15</sup> In the metros and towns, the magazine is read by black African women who live in different parts of the city. It “caters for that Soweto woman with a big house in Soweto but can’t afford rates in Sandton. We cater for both Soweto and Sandton”<sup>16</sup> (*True Love* editorial team 2016). In other words, the magazine caters for black African women who live in suburbs (Sandton) and in the townships (Soweto). This point is important as it alludes to the class positions of people who live in different geographic areas. It would be foolhardy to generalise and say people who live in townships belong to the lower economic class and those who live in the suburbs belong to a higher class. It is much more complicated; the area where someone lives does not necessarily tell the whole story about who they are. Soweto is a big township and is home to both the rich, who have huge double-storey houses and the poor who live in tin shacks, while Sandton, an affluent suburb is inhabited by both the ‘high heeled’ and working-class people.<sup>17</sup>

In view of the above, the Sandton reader targeted by *True Love* may not necessarily be the same as the one earmarked by *Destiny*. As mentioned previously, the Soweto segment catered to by *Bona* may be different to *True Love*’s target market. However, there could be some overlap in the sense that some readers may subscribe to various magazines. This point can be illustrated using LSM data: the bulk of *True Love* and *Destiny* readers belong to the same 8-10 LSM, hence women in this category are the target market for both magazines.

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<sup>15</sup> The 2015 AMPS report shows that 33 per cent of *True Love* readers work full-time, 7 per cent work part-time and 7 per cent are self-employed, and the remainder are either unemployed (28 per cent), students (14 per cent), retired (6 per cent) or housewives (5 per cent).

<sup>16</sup> Both located in the City of Johannesburg, Soweto (the largest black township in South Africa) and Sandton (an economic and fashion hub that is also notable for its sprawling residential homes) are used to refer to townships and suburbs, respectively. They are also used to show the dichotomy between rich and poor.

<sup>17</sup> The working-class people mainly comprise expatriates from the African continent and black South Africans from other provinces who migrate to Gauteng in search of greener pastures. The Statistics South Africa report shows that “Gauteng and Western Cape have the highest number of persons who move into these two provinces” (Statistics South Africa ... 2016:28). Among the people who migrate, professionals who have good jobs and can afford to pay rent or buy property in the suburb, tend to look for accommodation in suburbs rather than townships. More importantly they feel safer living in the suburbs than in the townships.

Furthermore, the team responsible for putting the magazine together believes that *True Love* readers are prudent; they are not the type who will “shop for furniture at Bakos Brothers<sup>18</sup> but will buy a cheaper version of the sofa elsewhere not because they can’t afford it but because they’re more cautious about their spending” (*True Love* editorial team 2016). This may apply to some, but does not necessarily hold true for every *True Love* reader. Actually, the team seems to contradict itself because in the same breath they point out that some readers are not that financially practical; they get into debt, “but who cares they want to put on a face” (*True Love* editorial team 2016). This resonates with stories that are told about black people who spend more than they earn and end up applying for loans that they struggle to repay. Living beyond one’s means is a serious social and economic problem; it is downplayed but debt is a serious national problem.<sup>19</sup> Expanding on the thread of spending habits with the team, the reader also comes across as enterprising. The editorial team state that “black women are often underestimated; if they want something they devise some means of achieving it. For example, if they want expensive furniture they can start a *stokvel*”.<sup>20</sup>

Since the average personal income of a *True Love* reader is R7,603 per month some readers cannot afford the glamorous lifestyle promoted by the magazine; hence it can be said to be in the business of selling dreams and its message is aspirational. Although some of the black African women cannot afford certain things such as sending their children to private schools, the editorial team believes it is what the readers aspire to do and they work towards attaining it. An observation by the design team paints an evocative picture of the role of *True Love* in shaping the reader’s aspirations:

even if her child is not at private school that’s what she aspires to. We can’t say *umntwana wosisi weTrue Love ufunda elokshini* because then *abantu abangeke beben* ambition to work harder, you have to work towards something (*True Love* design team 2016).

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<sup>18</sup> Bakos Brothers make high quality hand-crafted furniture that comes with a hefty price tag. On their website they say, “our sofas aren’t just places to sit. They’re places to be seen” (Bakos Brothers Sofas ...).

<sup>19</sup> The National Credit Regulator’s report for the first quarter of 2016 shows that many South Africans are in debt, with nearly 24 million credit active, and out of this number ten million are in arrears on their accounts or are struggling to pay their monthly debt repayments (Makhafola 2016).

<sup>20</sup> A *stokvel* is a term used to refer to a practice where a certain number of people get together and every month contribute a certain amount and give it to one person as a lump sum.

Loosely translated, the quote means if the magazine tells people that the child of a *True Love* reader attends a school in the township, people will not have ambitions and will not work hard. The above observations are important as they give an insight into the diversity of *True Love* readership. Even the team that produces the magazine finds it hard to nail down who the reader really is in terms of her spending habits. The focus group interviews later in this study will shed light on the interests, concerns, aspirations and spending habits of *True Love* readers. It will be interesting to see whether the team's perceptions correspond with the readers' reality on the ground.

In terms of geographic reach, *True Love* covers a broad area locally. It is available in all the nine provinces in South Africa. The magazine is available online on the website, Facebook and Instagram and accessible to regional and international audiences. The paid circulation figures are dropping and it is increasingly becoming hard to reach the 50,000 mark per month. The latest paid circulation figures stand at 45,289 for April-June 2016. The decline in circulation figures may be an indication that many people are accessing the content online for free and are no longer buying the magazine. The magazine has a presence online, and readers are active on Facebook and Twitter. In September 2016, the magazine got 200,000 page views on its website (Media24 *True Love* magazine statistics ...).

Cross promotion in sister publications is the main culprit for declining circulation figures. For instance, before *True Love* hits the shelves readers already have access to the stories online because journalists from other publications within the Media24 stable receive advance copies and when they do, they read and publish content on their websites and social media. This has far reaching consequences because they get unique views, which in turn attract advertisers, and *True Love*, where the content originated gets nothing except for the by-line credit at the end of the story (*True Love* editorial team 2016). To survive in this cut-throat business, media personnel have to be shrewd and come up with innovative strategies. One of these involves the type of content which is featured in the magazine, the subject of the next section.

### **4.1.3 True Love magazine content**

Still running under the tagline "all a woman needs" that was adopted in 1995, *True Love* magazine covers a wide range of topics such as fashion, beauty, health, fitness, parenting, relationships, financial advice, home decor, food, reviews, events, horoscope and celebrity

news. The tagline captures the essence of what the magazine stands for because the content is all encompassing, it ranges from investigative pieces to different aspects of lifestyle and advice. In addition, the whole magazine except for one page “Man oh man” is dedicated to issues affecting women. The ‘Man oh man’ single page is about men, but the target audience is women, it is an “eye candy piece featuring men readers like” (*True Love* editorial team 2016).

An analysis of the content published in the back issues and 12 copies of *True Love* sampled for this study<sup>21</sup> found that the largest number of pages is devoted to fashion and beauty. This is followed by celebrity stories, health and well-being. The glossy magazine is visually driven and uses many photographs to appeal to readers. The copy and images in the magazine give an insight on how the targeted readers are believed to spend their time. The fashion and beauty spreads, which are positioned at the front of the magazine, feature women wearing diverse styles of clothing and make-up suitable for different activities such as sports, outdoor activities, work and special occasions. The fashion and beauty pages feature international celebrities and white models from the ramp showcasing the looks that will be trending at that particular time of the year. This has a bearing on the type of hair and hairstyles that are featured in *True Love*. As a result, although the magazine features different hair types it tends to lean more towards long straight or curly hair because these are the trends that feature prominently on the ramp. Moreover, most black international celebrities such as Beyoncé are often featured with long hair.

Staff members take references<sup>22</sup> mainly from international magazines to editorial meetings because these publications “are always a season ahead. They do all the research ... and from that we can see what works and what doesn’t” (*True Love* fashion and beauty team 2016). The references are used for coming up with story ideas and to get inspiration and concepts for fashion and beauty photo shoots. In most cases the concepts are replicated in terms of looks, mood, lighting, and props. By doing this, the magazine exposes black African women to international trends and pushes Western-centric ideals and consumption patterns. Since the

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<sup>21</sup> To get an insight into the content that is published in *True Love*, I accessed past issues at the National Library of South Africa. I randomly selected some copies and flipped through the copies. Additionally, I did an in-depth analysis of the 12 issues under study. Therefore, I make some generalisations in this study from this snapshot overview.

<sup>22</sup> These are tear sheets, screen grabs or PDFs of pages from other publications that *True Love* staff take to their editorial meetings.

## Chapter Four: Magazine culture and representation

Western or Eurocentric notions of beauty are different from the Afrocentric ones, the impact of repeating the looks and trends that are featured in international magazines is explored at a later stage in focus group interviews.

The products on the inside fashion spreads are affordable, but on the covers expensive clothing items can be used because the cover has to look glamorous (*True Love* editorial team 2016). Exercising caution in the selection of products may be an indication that the magazine does not want to alienate most of its readers who cannot afford overly priced items. The cover is an exception and features products that are out of reach and are therefore aspirational for many readers because the way it looks is dictated by market forces since it has to compete with other publications on the newsstand.

The magazine sections are full of inspirational ideas drawn from both international and local circuits, expert advice, product and service guides. The food section, which is at the back, features recipes for elegant dinners, as well as fast meals. Celebrity news is featured because advertisers want to see celebrities in the magazine (*True Love* editorial team 2016); as a result, celebrity stories that are likely to inspire young black African women to do better are given coverage. Other issues such as financial and relationship advice, business news, health, fitness, sex and diet stories are included but these are ancillary<sup>23</sup> to the magazine's main purpose of documenting fashion and beauty trends for the South African black communities.

In a nutshell, *True Love* presents compelling snapshots of the black communities as it describes the experiences of women from various backgrounds. The editorial team posit that the stories are chosen based on “who we are as a black nation, we come up with stories that are inspired by our background” (*True Love* editorial team 2016). It is worth mentioning that some of the articles draw from the actual experiences of black African women who are grappling with divorce, single motherhood, marital life, illness, body image issues, and so on. In some cases, staff writers and contributors include their real-life experiences or include first account stories of black African women narrating their experiences. There is a focus on issues affecting black families and this is tied in with the editorial calendar; for example, in October coverage is given to breast cancer and lupus and how these impact on the lives of black African women. To stay ahead of competition, the team anticipates what other media

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<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, the cover lines are drawn mainly from the diet and sex stories.

## Chapter Four: Magazine culture and representation

will be doing and then tackle the topics from a different angle. There is a special emphasis on success, career development and the need to do better. In terms of promoting black identity, the coverage of the issues is not nostalgic because “we are not saying do as your mother did but learn from it and do better while embracing other cultures and trends” (*True Love* editorial team 2016).

The editor’s letter uses an informal, friendly tone to give instructions on how to read the magazine with phrases such as “the article on page --” (*True Love* November 2015:18, *True Love* December 2015:12). The tone is conspiratorial and familiar, and informal devices such as “Hello Friends” salutation, “PS: Join me for a magical ...” (*True Love* August 2015:14) are used to give the impression that the editor knows every reader and they can join her for a social event as friends would. This ‘friendship’ transcends the editor-reader relationship to pals who can socialise outside the magazine world. To add to the friendly style, the editor’s picture is also given and this gives the impression that readers know her and they are on friendly terms. She has also given only her first name as if to suggest she is on first name basis with the readers. This resonates with Rosalind Gill’s (2007) observation that women’s magazines use a friendly tone.

Drawing on post-colonial theorists such as Fanon (1967), who advocated Africans to tell their own stories, it is commendable that most of the articles about and for black African women are written by black African women.<sup>24</sup> However, the black journalists and contributors have their own vested interests and agendas that they advance, which may be different from those of the readers. Furthermore, the journalists use international magazines to model a canon of a beautiful black woman. Propagating the Eurocentric ideal as the best poses some problems as it seems to suggest that the relationship between Eurocentric and Afrocentric standards is marked by superiority-inferiority complexes. It appears to imply that the Western standards are superior, as a result qualify to be used to tell the stories of and about inferior Africans.

This dominance-subordination discourse could be construed as the act of a black man (*True Love* journalists) wanting to be white (Fanon 1967:11) or to disappear (Fanon 1967:xviii). Do these black journalists mimic international magazines and produce content that approximates Western standards because they “want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their

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<sup>24</sup> It is worth noting that some of the content is produced in the West. This point is discussed in 4.1.4 regarding the ratio of local to foreign content.

thought, the equal value of their intellect”)? However, mimicry can be subversive; using the above example for instance, if *True Love* closely resembles international magazines in terms of content and design, the boundary between the two becomes blurred. Blurring the dichotomy between the superior and inferior undermines the power previously held by the superior international publications and can undermine the power of the standards that are perceived dominant standards. Although the practice seems to be leaning towards homogenisation, there is also a tendency towards cultural heterogenisation and glocalisation.

Furthermore, the global exists alongside the local, for instance, *True Love* staff does not copy everything from international magazines but only take those elements they think are relevant for their readers and localise the content (see 4.1.4). This resonates with Homi Bhabha’s (2004:123) observation that the act of imitating results in something that is “almost the same but not quite”. Additionally, there are many factors that shape and determine the content that is published in a magazine. This brings us to the next section, which discusses factors that influence choice of the content that is published in *True Love* magazine.

### **4.1.4 Factors that influence choice of content**

A magazine is a commodity just like a pair of shoes or a tube of lipstick. Like other commodities, a magazine is a cultural product that should meet certain ideological and financial concerns. In addition, a magazine, just like any form of media, serves a dual product market, that is, it sells content to audiences and at the same time sells audiences to advertisers. It therefore follows that a magazine should satisfy both the readers and advertisers by offering an enjoyable experience to the former and lucrative business opportunities and advantages to the latter group.

Drawing on media framing theory,<sup>25</sup> I argue that the choice of content is largely dependent on social, cultural, economic and political factors as well as the specific agendas that the magazine promotes. For example, as mentioned previously, the magazine endeavours to deliver aspirational messages to black African women. Furthermore, several people within and outside the newsroom influence the content that is published, how much space is

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<sup>25</sup> Framing is a concept that was introduced by Erving Goffman (1974) to refer to principles of organisation that govern social events (Zhou 2008:118). Framing refers to how stories are reported, how certain aspects are given prominence, some masked and others excluded.

allocated to it and how it is presented. To appeal to a wider audience, *True Love* features local and foreign content: local content constitutes 70 per cent while foreign content comprises 30 per cent (*True Love* editorial team 2016). Some of the content is a mixture and it can be described as a hybrid, which entails using a picture of an international celebrity such as Rihanna and copy that is generated locally. Moreover, most beauty and fashion products that are available in South Africa are manufactured by international companies whose brand ambassadors are mostly celebrities from the West. These brand ambassadors are featured in fashion and beauty pages to showcase the trends and a local expert gives readers tips on how they can replicate the look.

Most of the stories are produced in-house, but in areas where the magazine staff lack expertise such as health, diet, fitness and sex stories, syndicated copy<sup>26</sup> is used (*True Love* editorial team 2016). Another reason for using syndicated material is that most research studies are done in the West and the stories come packaged with expert insights. In some instances, syndicated material is used owing to time constraints and because it is cheaper compared to commissioning a local expert to write the story<sup>27</sup> (*True Love* editorial team 2016). Most foreign content, including international celebrity stories, is bought from Pan Media and pictures from Corbis, Gallo Images and Getty Images, as is evident in the gutter credits. Foreign content is localised by giving input from South African experts to give it local relevance. Some stories, such as those focusing on infidelity and married men fathering children out of wedlock (“He made the other woman pregnant: Will you accept his love child?”, Figure 9) resonate with the experiences of black African women living in South Africa, but others maintain their Western angle and advocate practices that may be viewed as taboo in a patriarchal black South African society. A case in point is the relationship and sex stories that encourage women to date younger men (Figure 7), a trend popularised by celebrities based in the West like Madonna and Jennifer Lopez; and those that persuade

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<sup>26</sup> *True Love* does not have a subscription with syndication networks. The editorial team looks for relevant content and buys on an ad hoc basis. In some cases, the agencies send the editorial team stories and they select material that they want to use and then pay for it (*True Love* editorial team 2016).

<sup>27</sup> In some cases, local experts or freelancers are commissioned to write stories on specialised subjects. Some freelancers also pitch their own story ideas to the editors if the idea is good they are given the green light to write the story and payment terms are discussed. A story bought from syndication costs about R2,500 because it has been used in other publications, while commissioning an expert to produce one costs around R4,000 (*True Love* editorial team 2016).



women to take charge of their sex life by promoting solo sex (Figure 3) and upping their sex game (Figure 8).

The issues covered in media are governed by the editorial policy and should also have the power to generate revenue from advertising. Since the magazine is dependent on advertising revenue, the advertisers influence content by suggesting which stories can be published and which ones should be avoided. The coverage of celebrity news in *True Love* is a good example of editorial giving in to the demands of advertisers, who have a preference for celebrity stories (*True Love* editorial team 2016). The influence of advertisers is not always blatant; in some cases, it is subtle, for instance, to appeal to readers there has to be synergy between advertising and editorial content. This results in editorial self-censoring themselves and publishing content that will attract advertisers to place advertisements in the magazine.

Another strategy that has been adopted by *True Love* is placing advertisements next to related stories or images as is the case with the Dark and Lovely advertisement that is positioned opposite a story on celebrity hair (*True Love* June 2015:40-41). The women on the advertisement and celebrity story images all sport the long bob hairstyle. Another example is advertisements for Frika braids and weave that are placed opposite celebrity stories<sup>28</sup> (*True Love* December 2015:50-55). However, maintaining synergy between editorial and advertising content is a challenge to achieve all the time. For instance, a recipe and picture of a rich stew or decadent chocolate dessert may be placed on the facing page of an advertisement for weight loss pills.

Advertisements add value to the editorial content; however, too many advertisements may disrupt the flow of editorial content. Coupled with this, some advertisements are sent to the magazine with a brief from advertisers requesting prime positions, for example, inside the front and back covers, and the page opposite the editor's letter. Some advertisers pay premium prices<sup>29</sup> for their advertisements to be placed in special positions including specific

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<sup>28</sup> The Frika advertisements are positioned near stories and images of local celebrities Khanyi Mbau and Candice Pillay, who are wearing weaves, and international star Rita Ora shown with blonde bangs.

<sup>29</sup> The prices of different sizes of advertisements are listed on the rate card, which is made available at the beginning of a financial year. A rate card is a document that contains the prices and sizes of advertising space, specifications and deadlines for booking space and submission of artwork. The 2016 *True Love* rate card shows that a full colour DPS cost R107,389, a full-page colour advertisement cost R53,703, half-page colour (R40,280) while one third colour cost R37,588). Prime

sections in the magazine or adjacent to a related story. This may entail adjusting editorial content<sup>30</sup> to accommodate advertisements booked under premium loading.

In addition to advertisers, the expectations of the target audience play a key role in determining the content that is published. *True Love* readers can access content through a wide range of platforms and devices. The digital platforms are seen to be bridging the gap between the younger market and older readers, but care must be taken to produce content that is suitable for online platforms. The material from print has to be repurposed to fit into digital platform formats. As previously noted, the kind of woman that *True Love* seeks to appeal to is aged between 18 and 50. She is “working or studying towards a career, takes care of herself, looks after finance, wants to grow, studying part-time, married or single and wants to be in a relationship ...” (*True Love* marketing team 2016). To appeal to a diverse readership is a boon and a bane. On the one hand, by attracting readers from different walks of life *True Love* also attracts many advertisers. On the other hand, it is a big challenge for the magazine because it has to produce content that caters to everyone. However, the team believes that although black African women come from different backgrounds there are certain experiences that bind them together such as “falling in love, having children, we go through the same things as women that’s the beauty about us is that we share our stories and in that way we build each other” (*True Love* marketing team 2016).

The magazine owners shape the editorial policy, which in turn influences content that is published. In other words, the publication’s political and ideological identity influences the content that is produced and distributed. As previously noted, since its inception, *True Love* has been owned by white people, and the parent company Media24 operates within an oligopolistic market structure that is mainly concerned with profit maximisation.

The shelf life and frequency of publication influences the type of content that is published. For example, as a monthly magazine *True Love* publishes exclusive content or looks for a different angle in the treatment of stories that are published in daily newspaper, blogs and

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positions attract high prices, Inside front cover DPS (R123,497), Second DPS (118, 127), Inside back cover (R59,064), Outside back cover (R67,121), the first 30 percent of the magazine (67,121) and first 50 percent of the magazine (R61,748). Prime positions such as inside and outside back cover advertisements usually feature lifestyle products such as perfumes or fashion, or accessories such as watches and jewellery.

<sup>30</sup> This could range from cutting to reducing the length of the story to create space for the advertisement to swapping stories and taking out a whole feature and replacing it with a shorter one.

other online platforms. In some cases, to avoid being scooped by weeklies, the magazine breaks the story in its sister publications such as the *Daily Sun* and follows it up with in-depth coverage in *True Love*. The magazine publishes content that can be read at a leisurely pace and re-read several times and kept for future reference, for example, the recipes. The whole magazine or clippings of certain sections can be kept or passed on to friends and family. Having looked at the content and factors that influence what is published by the magazine, the focus turns to advertisers and the kind of advertisements featured in *True Love*.

### ***4.1.5 Major advertisers and types of advertisements carried by the magazine***

The major sources of revenue for *True Love* are subscriptions or cover charges and advertising. During the period covered by this study, the magazine cost R28.50 and went up to R29.50; as a result, the bulk of income for running the magazine comes from advertising. Drawing on the American Marketing Association, the term ‘advertising’ is used to describe “the placement of announcements and persuasive messages in time or space purchased in any of the mass media ... to inform and/or persuade members of a particular target market or audience about their products, services, organisations, or ideas” (American Marketing Association ...). In *True Love*, this type of communication constitutes a significant portion of the magazine; advertising comprises 30 to 40 per cent while editorial content constitutes 60 to 70 per cent (*True Love* design team 2016).

The advertising business involves four interlinked groups: the first is the client, which can be an individual or company that wants to promote a product or service. Second is the advertising agency, which is responsible for creating the advertisement and looking for platforms to promote it. Third is the medium that carries the advertisement, such as a magazine, radio, television or internet. It is up to the client and agency to choose a platform that best suits its needs.<sup>31</sup> Companies prefer to advertise in magazines because they offer high quality and have a longer shelf life compared to broadcast media and newspapers. Last is the audience, the group that the client wants to influence through the message of the advertisement.

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<sup>31</sup> Media 24 has a Consumer Insight Division that carries out audience research and advises agencies on which publication to place advertisements from the brands they represent.

## Chapter Four: Magazine culture and representation

The major companies that advertise in *True Love* include any brand or company that “wants to speak to black women” (*True Love* marketing team 2016). These range from beauty brands (Garnier, Revlon, Nivea, and Estee Lauder) to hair products (Dark and Lovely, Soft and Free), financial products, motoring, food (such as Tiger Brands products like Tastic Rice and Nola Oil), and clothing (including H&M and Mango).

Most companies, particularly hair brands, normally promote and increase awareness of new products. In some instances, they promote products that are already in the market to appeal to the target audience to use them. The advertisements also give readers information on the product, its benefits, and where it can be purchased. The brand’s contact details such as telephone number, Twitter handle, Facebook account and website are included in most advertisements (*True Love* May 2016:37, 51). Most of the advertisements in *True Love* do not include the prices of the products, however a few do, such as MRP stores (*True Love*, December 2015:8-9), Shoprite (*True Love*, December 2015:155), Ackermans (*True Love*, May 2016:9-12) and Clicks (*True Love*, February 2016:93). Advertising brands also include sachets of product samples for readers to test the contents. Several strategies are used to market the products and these include advertorials, booklets, gatefold advertisements, special operations such as inserts and advertisements published on special paper. Other advertising strategies involve promotions including “Buy three products and get the cheapest for free” (*True Love*, March 2016:89), and competitions where readers enter and stand a chance to win something (*True Love*, March 2016:49).

The book size is determined at the beginning of the year by taking into consideration the editorial calendar based on what will be happening each month. For instance, the book size is big from October to December because of the festive season, while in January when things are slow in terms of advertising, the size of the magazine becomes smaller.

Some advertisers who are targeting the younger market advertise mainly online. The digital platform offers immediate results and since many stories are uploaded each day there is a great deal of space for advertisers. In addition to stiff competition from digital networks, *True Love* has to fight with other print magazines that are targeting the same market. Since *True Love* is targeted at a diverse readership and covers a wide range of subjects it faces competition from many magazines. On the fashion front, in terms of advertising share, it competes with the local and international versions of *Marie Claire* and *Glamour*; for the

beauty segment the major rival is *Cosmopolitan*, while *Bona* is a contender in the market share for black African women (*True Love* marketing team 2016).

#### **4.1.6 True Love magazine design and the choice of covers**

The purpose of the magazine cover is to “persuade people that the media text they are thinking of consuming will be worth the investment of time, energy, and money they must make in order to experience it” (Peterson 2005:135). To appeal to readers, covers use certain stylistic devices such as colour, fonts, and catchy cover lines. The design team describes a *True Love* reader as a modern woman who is “career driven, independent, trendy, fashion forward, takes care of herself, always up-to-date, has a kid or two who are at a private school, aspirational, spends but is wise, educated and budgets” (*True Love* design team 2016). To appeal to this kind of reader the team regularly freshens up the template to stay current. The changes are not drastic, but they are meant to refresh the magazine to “keep it fresh on the shelves” (*True Love* design team 2016) and make it stand out. The reasoning behind this is that since black African women change their look regularly they want to see that reflected in the design of their magazine.

In addition, the magazine team endeavours to adapt in line with international trends and standards that are promoted at Design Indabas and Design Awards. This is achieved through mimicking global trends and looking for inspiration from some of the top magazines in the world, namely *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Vogue*, *The Edit*, and *Porter* (*True Love* design team 2016). Like its content, the design of the magazine is influenced by runway fashion trends. The international magazines feature trends from the runway, and since *True Love* draws inspiration from them by default it looks like them. However, the only difference is that *True Love* does not feature “international celebrities and white people [on the covers]. We take our people [models and actresses] and make them look international. We push the envelope” (*True Love* design team 2016). The local competitor in terms of design is *Destiny* and the resemblance can be attributed to the fact that *Destiny* editor Khanyi Dhlomo is a former editor of *True Love*.

The design of the *True Love* masthead is modern. It features a bold red colour and remains red throughout, with white being an exception.<sup>32</sup> The inside pages use only black because colour is introduced through advertisements and pictures. Using too much colour made it look busy, hence black was chosen to give the publication a more mature look (*True Love* design team 2016). The masthead uses a font in a large point size and capital letters for emphasis. The name of the magazine is loaded with meaning and serves as the main identifier of brand identity. Read together with the title of the magazine, the red colour connotes passion and love.

The cover lines use both upper and stylish lower case fonts conveying sophistication. One of the fonts used for the cover lines is Didot, which is mainly used in fashion spreads and fashion advertising because its fine, delicate lines make it stand out. Didot looks feminine but packs a very strong punch in terms of visibility. Another font that is used is Notera, and its purpose is to tone down serious fonts.<sup>33</sup> The white colour is used on most cover lines and this connotes purity, sensuality and a dainty feminine touch. The gender stereotypes used, including fonts and colours, address the reader as a feminine subject. The bar code occupies the bottom right or left side of the cover depending on the positioning of the celebrity's photograph. On some issues, the date of publication and the cover price occupy the top right position below the masthead, while on others the issue date sits on the left side below the masthead. The overall design of the magazine can be described as "classy, elegant. *True Love* is the Mercedes-Benz of magazines"<sup>34</sup> (*True Love* design team 2016).

### 4.1.7 Purpose of the cover

The purpose of the magazine cover is to sell the content and promote the brand image. The role of *True Love* is to "sell dreams"; hence the magazine features glamorous celebrities. The

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<sup>32</sup> The colour of the masthead used to change depending on the background and colour of clothes worn by the celebrity. However, following research and realising that some brands such as BMW do not change the colour of the logo depending on the colour of the car the magazine decided to stick with red. Different shades of red can be used to match the background colour (*True Love* design team 2016). White is the only exception and during the period of study it was used only once in the May 2016 issue (Figure 12: Connie Ferguson, cover of *True Love*, May 2016).

<sup>33</sup> An example where Notera font is used to tone down and break the seriousness of Didot is Figure 10. Manaka is written in Notera font while Didot font upper case is used for RANAKA (Manaka Ranaka, cover of *True Love*, March 2016).

<sup>34</sup> To decode the design parlance, in normal terms it means that *True Love* is synonymous with luxury and other brand attributes associated with Mercedes-Benz, such as excellent design, prestige, variety and class.

## Chapter Four: Magazine culture and representation

photographs of black African women used on the covers of *True Love* magazine are visuals that preserve history and promote the brand image. Ellen McCracken (1993:15) concurs and posits that the cover presents “an image that the magazine wishes to promote about itself – an identity that will cause it to be recognised, differentiated from its competitors, purchased, read, or at least leafed through”. This helps the publication to guide its readers into the “consumerist ideology that permeates the magazine as a whole” (McCracken 1993:15).

George Lois, *Esquire's* designer in the 1960s, notes that a good magazine cover “surprises, even shocks and connects in a nanosecond” (Hanson 2014:102). In view of the importance that is accorded this magazine component, at *True Love* the editor is in charge of what or rather who goes on the cover. The editor is responsible for selecting the celebrity to be featured, providing the brief to the fashion and beauty desk regarding the trends to be depicted and attends all cover shoots in the studio or on-location. She also writes the cover lines. The fact that the images document trends shows that *True Love* covers serve social and cultural functions; in a way they can be viewed as a “visual history book ... providing singular images that can represent a mood or a movement” (Abrahamson & Prior-Miller 2015:382).

*True Love* cover stars are chosen mainly from television because it appeals to everyone (*True Love* design team 2016). Celebrities are also believed to sell because they lead “fabulous lives and people like to know about them and be inspired by them”; in addition, *True Love* features celebrities on the covers to take advantage of the combined brand leverage to sell the magazines (*True Love* fashion and beauty team 2016). The subject for the cover is usually a celebrity who is coming from a bad situation and has overcome and rebuilt or is in the process of rebuilding her life. During the 12 months examined for this study, the magazine featured recovering drug addicts (Figures 5 and 7), and women dealing with break-ups from loved ones (Figures 2, 10 and 11).

*True Love* strives to present a positive image on its covers; as a result, it does not “portray someone in a negative light. The person should not be ugly, they should always look good” (*True Love* fashion and beauty desk ... 2016). The above assertions are problematic because they presuppose that black female readers watch soap operas and are preoccupied with the lives of the celebrities, yet there are some who do not, but buy the magazine for different

reasons. In addition, the terms ‘ugly’ and ‘look good’ present some problems because they are subjective. This further begs the question who defines what is ugly and what looks good? *True Love* staff seems to believe that beautiful women with ‘normal’ body weight, flawless skin and perfect hair constitute what looks good. As a result, celebrities who do not meet these standards are ‘assisted’ to attain the ideal look through digitally altering the images. Several complaints have been brought against *True Love*; for example, in 2009 the magazine issued a public apology after airbrushing Lebo Mashile’s picture and removing her curves (Scheppers 2009). Her image was altered to give her a slimmer, svelte look. Furthermore, Khanyi Mbau, who openly confesses to having had cosmetic surgery and Botox was offended by the December 2015 issue, which made her resemble “Angelina Jolie’s character in *Maleficent*”. She was quoted as saying, “I looked like an alien on that cover, it was ugly”.<sup>35</sup> The most recent incident involved the June 2016 cover featuring television personality Lerato Kganyago. Her picture was photoshopped to remove cellulite and blemishes; when she complained on social media *True Love* responded by publishing the before and after pictures on its website with #JudgeForYourself.

Such incidents of body shaming and featuring an ideal that is near impossible to attain on the covers play on the women’s insecurities about their outward appearance. McCracken (1993:20) agrees and notes that “most covers try to create an idealised reader-image of the group advertisers seek to reach”. Also noteworthy is that although the images of these sexy, glamorous celebrities are featured in a woman’s magazine the targeted viewer seems to be male. McCracken (1993:20) suggests that “there is often an implied male presence, communicated through the woman’s facial expression, make-up, body pose and clothing, as well as through the camera angle, lighting and colour”. This kind of representation reinforces the gender stereotypes, that is, portraying women as objects of male desire. The viewers, in this case female readers, are called upon to emulate the woman on the cover in order to look appealing to men.

In addition to their looks, the celebrities chosen for the covers are normally topical. David Abrahamson and Marcia R Prior-Miller (2015:381) agree and posit that a magazine cover serves as “a piece of content itself ... the magazine cover stops time, reminds readers of

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<sup>35</sup> Khanyi Mbau’s statement shows that people’s perceptions of what is ugly and looks good differ. *True Love* team altered her image to make it ‘look good’ but when she saw it she thought it was ‘ugly’. The readers may have had different interpretations of the cover.



influential moments in history and acts as a barometer for what is important in the world”. Although *True Love* features celebrities on its covers, it differentiates itself from entertainment magazines by recording products, trends and documenting stories about the live and legacy of prominent celebrities at that particular moment in time.<sup>36</sup> However, despite efforts to try and differentiate itself, with many publications in South Africa there is tight competition for celebrities who are cover material.<sup>37</sup> There is a constant struggle to get the few that are available as every publication endeavours to stay on top of the game by booking the celebrity who is trending first. In some cases, the PR manager books the celebrity for cover shoots with different magazine and when this happens, the publication that hits the shelves first wins and the others have no choice but to drop the covers at the eleventh hour. Being a monthly presents some challenges because as Katharine Seelye (2006) observes, monthly magazines struggle “against hot-selling, celebrity-crazed weeklies and the Internet to maintain their traditional roles as guideposts in an aspirational society and as glossy vehicles for advertisers”. *True Love* has suffered such setbacks and the team had to change the cover and drop stories.

The major challenge is that the team works three months ahead and many things can change between deciding on the cover celebrity, scheduling a photo shoot and conducting an interview for the cover story and the time the magazine finally goes to print and becomes available on the newsstands. A team member recounts a case where they had to drop the cover celebrity and cover story because another publication had featured the same celebrity on its cover and the story that was supposed to be an exclusive leaked and broke in social media. She explains, “there is nothing like going to the shops and seeing your cover and another cover with the same person on it. It does affect *ama* sales a lot. ... Other magazines come out around the 15<sup>th</sup> and we only come out around the twenty-something and you find that you’re the one who comes out last and people have already seen that person” (*True Love* editorial staff 2016). Moreover, since the cover charges are different when two magazines

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<sup>36</sup> *True Love* covers are oriented towards people and trends. The covers are conceptualised and shot well in advance, in some cases three months before the publication date. Therefore, this means that the celebrity has to be carefully chosen to ensure that by the time the magazine reaches the newsstands she will still be trending.

<sup>37</sup> This is subjective because what may be considered to be cover-worthy by the editors could be different from what readers consider cover material. Also, the notion of ‘cover-worthy’ is something that has been created and perpetuated by the media. The magazines compete for both famous and infamous celebrities because they sell.

happen to feature the same celebrity on the covers, it is likely that people would buy the cheaper publication.

The cover helps draw readers into the magazine, it is therefore important to understand the target market and what it considers to be appealing covers. Since the cover sets the tone for the trends it is fundamental to listen to the readers' feedback, which comes in the form of tweets, letters to the editor, Facebook comments and survey research that the company conducts. *True Love* style is sexy but not raunchy as the magazine strives to accommodate and cater to the tastes of both the older and younger readers by featuring the kind of woman readers want to be in the future (*True Love* editorial team 2016). To this end, the magazine strikes a balance between mature and young celebrities. Mature celebrities tend to sell more copies compared to their counterparts who are too young. When a well-established young celebrity is featured on the cover, the team tries to balance with cover lines to appeal to older women. For example, on the Pearl Thusi cover they included cover lines about motherhood (*True Love* editorial team 2016). Most of the cover lines are drawn from articles focusing on beauty, fashion, diet and sex stories (see 7.1.13). The next section focuses on what goes on behind the scenes in the making of the cover from coming up with a concept, to scouting for venue up to the time the cover image is laid out on the page.

### ***4.1.8 The making of the cover***

A great deal of work goes into the making of the cover and many people are involved in the process. A freelance photographer is responsible for shooting all *True Love* cover images, except for those that are shot abroad.<sup>38</sup> Using a freelancer presents some challenges because he is also involved in other clients' work; as a result, the team has to work around the photographer's busy schedule. In addition, the scheduling for photo shoots is influenced by the availability of the celebrities and venue in the case of on-location shoots.

One photograph from the shoot is used on the cover and the other ones are used inside on the cover story. The image that goes on the cover is chosen by the editor in consultation with the art director. This image is an important marketing tool, hence choosing who and what to

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<sup>38</sup> The October 2016 cover featuring Mbali Mlotshwa was shot in Los Angeles. When a South African celebrity is based abroad or visiting for a long period of time, the magazine makes arrangements with a partner organisation that provides celebrity news to do the photo shoot and *True Loves* sends a brief.

## Chapter Four: Magazine culture and representation

feature and how to present it is important because the single image and cover lines set the philosophy and brand essence of the magazine. *True Love* features only photographs of black female celebrities because research shows that photographs offer more accuracy and realism compared to renditions of the subject in the form of illustrations, paintings and other artistic forms (Freeland 2007:95-109). The positioning of the image and text is crucial. In *True Love* the images are centrally located and the celebrities serve as the main attraction on the cover.

The clothes and accessories worn by the celebrities are sourced from different shops and brands. The fashion desk chooses the clothes and accessories; however, celebrities are allowed to bring their own accessories such as earrings and bracelets. The clothes selection does not just involve trawling the malls; it begins with googling the celebrity and checking out social media platforms to become familiar with their fashion taste. Next is a thorough analysis of the celebrity's body shape, complexion and personality. All these factors are taken into consideration when choosing the clothes (*True Love* Fashion desk ... 2016). In some cases, fashion designers are commissioned to design clothes specifically for the photo shoot. For instance, for the January 2016 cover shoot, designers were asked to design clothes specifically for Bassie Kumalo (*True Love*, January 2016:40).

The celebrities have their hair done before the photo shoot<sup>39</sup> and the stylist on-site only does the touch ups. This arrangement gives the celebrities power to choose the hairstyles they want and the magazine does not have total control of how the celebrity looks. The look of the celebrity as a brand is jointly created by the celebrity herself together with her publicist and hairstylist. During the 12 months of study, celebrities had the following hair types: wigs (Figures 1 and 3), weaves (Figures 6, 7, and 11), own hair and hair extensions (Figures 4, 8, 9, and 12), and afro (Figures 2 and 10) and in Figure 5 it is unclear. The above dynamics show that although the magazine uses real people, it still represents a mediated version of the world. *True Love* mediates the images of black African women to its readers. The mediation process is influenced by social, economic and political factors "weighing on those who have to make decisions in the mediation process" (Bennett *et al.* 2005:74).

The editorial team may be influenced by their own personal beliefs and values in choosing the celebrity and trends to put on the cover, and the photographer may use a certain lens and

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<sup>39</sup> Previously, the magazine used to pay, but owing to budget constraints the celebrities now pay their own hairstyling bills.

lighting in composing the photograph. In addition, a designer can crop the image to give it the best fit on the cover and ensure that the cover lines sit well on and around it. An image may also be altered to sharpen it or airbrushed to conceal the subject's "imperfections" such as wrinkles or cellulite. As a result, every image on the cover is a product of many decisions pertaining to how reality should be represented and re-represented. Since there are many versions of reality, the above examples show that reality that is finally represented on the covers is influenced by several factors, which include technical issues, editorial policy and personal preferences. In this regard, it is vital to draw on cultural studies theorists and examine how myths are created and circulated in *True Love* texts. The section below traces the development and spread of cultural studies and explores the theorists' views as they provide tools that are employed in the subsequent visual semiotic analysis in Chapters Six and Seven.

### 4.2 Cultural studies

Cultural studies in the African context, is relevant to a study of *True Love* magazine covers and advertisements because it is concerned about power and ideology. Cultural Studies is mainly concerned about meaning, how it is created, reflected, mediated and reinforced through the media and other cultural practices. Since human experience is more visual or visualised than ever before, this research is located in cultural studies in its analysis of the visual and textual aspects of the advertisements and covers published in *True Love* magazine. As previously noted, the front-page covers and advertisements are considered to be cultural artefacts and their visual and verbal texts are used to transmit meaning, which is mediated through social connotations. Trevor Millum (1975:11) argues that advertising "expresses a wider social and cultural world than can be accounted for in terms of specific messages about specific products".

It is worth noting that cultural studies is a contested terrain, both in terms of its definition and origins; cultural studies is difficult to define because it is an interdisciplinary approach that draws from various disciplines, including sociology, literature, and anthropology. Some theorists, such as Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula A Treichler (1992:4) have argued that it is a "transdisciplinary, and sometimes counter-disciplinary field". Coupled with the above, the term "cultural studies" means different things to different people. In addition, the definition is likely to change as the field continues to evolve. As a result, Grossberg,

## Chapter Four: Magazine culture and representation

Nelson and Treichler (1992:2) suggest that “it is probably impossible to agree on any essential definition or unique narrative of cultural studies ... Its methodology, ambiguous from the beginning, could best be seen as bricolage”. Be that as it may, as broad as it is, cultural studies is not just anything. It is a field of study that is fundamentally concerned with the politics of power, in all its forms although its main thrust is mainly concerned with the analysis of urbanised cultures. Cultural studies explores urbanised consciousness against the backdrop of culture as part of everyday life (During 2005:1). However, culture is also difficult to define as it is broad and includes cultural texts like magazines and cultural practices. Cultural studies therefore focuses on activities people engage in as they go about their everyday lives, such as shopping and grooming.

Some cultural studies theorists, particularly those who subscribe to the Eurocentric view believe that it emerged in the mid-1950s with the groundbreaking works of Richard Hoggart (1957) and Raymond Williams (1958), while others such as Handel Kashope Wright (1996:355) argue that it began in various parts of the world including Culturology in Russia in the 1920s, and the Negritude Movement in France, francophone Africa, and the French West Indies in the 1930s. In the 1960s, it was institutionalised at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS). Wright (1996:355) argues that cultural studies that began in Britain and other centres, was an “unsatisfactory precursor of the praxis of cultural studies [proper] developed at Kamiriithu, Kenya”. Probably the BCCCS, which was established later than the Russian Culturology and Kenyan initiative, is credited because the term ‘cultural studies’ was coined there.

Following the institutionalisation of cultural studies in Britain, the discipline spread to other parts of the world including America and Australia and broadened its scope to focus on popular culture (During 2005:25-26). As it spread globally, cultural studies began focusing on different aspects and areas of study in different places while moving away from the ones that were tackled by BCCCS. For example, in America it focused on postcolonial critiques of representation of “non-Westerners”, the subaltern and hybridity, while in Britain it was mainly concerned with politics of representation, ethnography of audiences, and the culture of its nation state (During 2005:23-25). Angela McRobbie (in Grossberg *et al.* 1992:724) observes that the greater degree of cultural studies’ openness represents a departure from the rigidity of the field’s original theoretical approaches. As it grew and spread to other European centres, cultural studies also developed concepts and methods for analysing both visual and

verbal texts. This shows that cultural studies is a multifaceted approach; hence, Stuart Hall (1990:11), one of the key figures, notes that “Cultural Studies is not one thing. It has never been one thing”.

Some of the Western cultural studies paradigms do not apply to the African context because they arose in specific geographic regions under certain historical and political climate (Tomaselli & Wright 2011:3); hence this research also draws from African Cultural Studies. Keyan Tomaselli and Handel Kashope Wright (2011) argue that African cultural studies that is relevant to the African context is informed by African philosophies and indigenous frames of references. South African cultural studies in particular focuses on identity issues such as race, gender, and class in the post-apartheid era. This study borrows tools from both British cultural studies and African cultural studies theorists to examine how cultural products such as race, class, and gender promote ideology.

### ***4.2.1 British cultural studies***

British cultural studies took root after the Second World War as a way of rethinking Marxism, which was no longer applicable to the British and European situation. Marxism considered culture to be superstructural,<sup>40</sup> and focused on the political economy yet this definition of culture was no longer valid in view of what was happening in Britain and in its colonies.<sup>41</sup> However, it is worth noting that British cultural studies scholars did not abandon Marxism completely, they drew on Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci’s notion of hegemony.<sup>42</sup>

Early British cultural studies scholars focused on the relationship between culture and communication and how meanings were constructed and transformed over time. Hall (1980:64) identifies the two paradigms within cultural studies, namely the culturalist and

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<sup>40</sup> The superstructural approach interpreted culture to mean high culture, which encompasses “highbrow literature, art, music, and theatre” (Seidman 2004:135) and excluded popular culture, which includes mass media like magazines, newspapers, and television.

<sup>41</sup> Britain was riddled with social upheaval and political crisis and its colonies in the Caribbean and in Africa were fighting for their independence and raising issues of national and cultural identity (Seidman 2004:135).

<sup>42</sup> Hegemony refers to a process whereby the ruling or dominant classes presenting their world view and ideals in a way that it comes to be accepted by the subordinate classes as “common sense”. In this view culture becomes a products of struggle wherein the different classes struggle to advance their own ideas and present them as the acceptable ideal.

structuralist positions. He notes that the culturalist paradigm can be described without making reference to the term ideology, while structuralism is grounded on ideology.

For the Birmingham School theorists, culture was neither high-brow nor only ideologically laden. They advocated for the inclusion of popular culture in the study of culture. One of the founding fathers of British Cultural Studies,<sup>43</sup> Raymond Williams (2001:58), defined culture as the “organisation of production, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions which express or govern social relationships, the characteristic forms through which members of the society communicate”. The above definition suggests that cultural studies is all inclusive; hence it borrows theories and methodologies from other disciplines, as noted above.

British cultural studies was mainly concerned with meaning and used methods such as semiotics and reception analysis to determine how texts are read, meanings assigned, and how audiences consume them. Infusing insights from Birmingham School Cultural studies, this visual semiotic analysis of *True Love* magazine covers and advertisements explores culture as a site of both domination and resistance. The cultural studies approach acknowledges that “meanings of media texts are not fixed or univocal” (Seidman 2004:137). Stuart Hall (1980) expanded on this notion in his decoding/encoding thesis, which discusses how messages are produced, circulated and consumed. The theory includes preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings. Preferred or dominant/hegemonic reading relies on ‘common-sense’ or ‘taken-for-grantedness’ and the receiver reads the message in line with the dominant cultural order (Hall 1980:134) and interprets the message from the perspective of the dominant code and accepts the sender’s intended meaning. Negotiated reading occurs when the reader questions the dominant codes and brings prior knowledge and is influenced by social, cultural and educational background in making sense of the message. Hall (1980:137) argues that negotiated reading “accords the privileged position to the dominant definitions of events while reserving a right to make a more negotiated application to ‘local conditions’” by introducing elements of own interpretations. Last, in oppositional/counter hegemonic reading the receiver completely opposes the dominant code because it is not relevant to their situation or it has nothing to do with their background. These meanings assigned to texts through these three readings are open to transformation and show that media

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<sup>43</sup> Raymond Williams and Hoggart are credited for being the founders of British Cultural Studies.

texts do not only promote certain ideologies but also serve as sites of ideological struggle. Hall suggested that “ordinary individuals are not passively controlled by the media but actively interpret media texts and sometimes in ways that are at odds with the intended meaning of their producers” (Seidman 2004:137).

### ***4.2.2 African and South African cultural studies***

For Handel Kashope Wright (2003), African cultural studies is an African-centred discourse and praxis that incorporates written, oral, and performance forms, and overtly addresses political and socio-cultural issues. This field of inquiry was developed by researchers on the continent and researchers of African origin living in diaspora. Leading African cultural studies scholars include Ntongela Masilela (South African writing in diaspora), Keyan Tomaselli (South African based in his native country) and Handel Kashope Wright (Sierra Leonean educated and working abroad). African cultural studies is concerned with identity issues; however, unlike the West that is concerned with racial issues, Africans give importance to ethnic ties. Tomaselli and Kashope Wright (2011:5) argue that “black people in ‘predominantly black’ countries in Africa do not self-identify as black but rather become black or are assigned blackness as an identity marker in the West”. The origin of racial categories is rooted in the construction of the epistemology of western superiority.

Racial categories can be traced back to the fifteenth century, a period when the Spanish and Portuguese established supremacy in the Americas. It was during the voyages of discovery and subsequent colonisation that “the superiority of the Westerners/Europeans over non-Europeans in terms of a racial narrative of superior/inferior peoples was constructed” (Grosfoguel 2002:210). Most Africans, particularly the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa, value and consider ethnicity and their relationship with the ancestors as critical markers of identity. As highlighted in the previous chapter, in historical African societies hairstyles were markers of ethnic identity. In South Africa for example, Africans were assigned blackness during colonisation and apartheid where blackness was used as a binary opposition for whiteness. Race became a social construct that was used to include and exclude, particularly the less powerful groups. It became one of the most powerful tools that was used to conquer people in colonies by rendering the ‘Other’ inferior and powerless.



## Chapter Four: Magazine culture and representation

Expanding on the thread of excluding other groups, unlike British cultural studies that was male-dominated in its early stages, African cultural studies mainly comprised women. Wright (1996:356) notes that two-thirds of Kimiriithu members were women. In addition, while British cultural studies tended to be academic in scope, African cultural studies was founded on the premise of performativity. Moreover, British cultural studies has elite roots in the sense that it originated at and was mainly associated with academic institutions, while African cultural studies was grounded on the grassroots.

As noted above, cultural studies continues to develop along regional lines and can further be narrowed to national level. Sarah Nuttall (2006:263) argues that South African cultural studies developed “under the rubric of inclusiveness, reflecting an agenda to incorporate that which has been marginalised”. However, even at national level there are different kinds of cultural studies. In South Africa, cultural studies as expounded by Masilela (1988) includes nativisation, which involves decolonisation, de-Europeanisation and Africanisation; derivative cultural studies entails taking tenets of British cultural studies and applying them to the South African context.

In the post-apartheid era, South African cultural studies has failed to incorporate African philosophies such as *ubuntu*<sup>44</sup> into the study of media representations of black African women. My study advocates the incorporation of this important aspect. Drawing on Tomaselli and Wright (2011:3), this study employs both nativist and derivative cultural studies to examine the relationship between communication and culture. It poses the following questions: are communication and culture separable, or is communication always dependent on the culture that frames it? Catherine Warren (2003:221) adds that the “mass media exists to make money, but also to make meaning”. Therefore, Cultural studies, particularly semiotic and representation theory, is employed to provide a framework for analysing the representation of black African women in *True Love*. The representations construct and promote myths and ideologies, which in turn reinforce certain feminine identities. African and South African cultural studies are relevant to this study because they

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<sup>44</sup> *Ubuntu* is a Nguni term derived from *umuntu/abantu* (a person/people) and it is used to refer to an African philosophy that promotes humane behaviour and acts of kindness towards other people. *Ubuntu*, which is derived from the proverb “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” (a person is a person because of other people) promotes interconnectedness and peaceful co-existence, while discouraging a self-serving attitude.

play an important role in conscientising the masses.<sup>45</sup> This point is discussed in detail in the following section which examines the role of magazines in society.

### 4.3 Cultural studies and the role of magazines in society

The preceding section has traced the history of cultural studies, with a focus on the academic world. The ensuing discussion shifts the focus to how it has been applied to magazines. This section discusses the function of magazines in society, including the role of magazines as vehicles for selling consumer products and serving as agents of socialisation.

#### 4.3.1 *Magazines as socialising agents*

People, but women in particular, are constantly bombarded with media messages on billboards, on the internet, and in media such as television, newspapers and magazines, blatantly telling them who they ought to be and how they should look. This study therefore examines the role of women's magazines, like *True Love*, in the construction of cultural identities. It is worth noting that photographs of black African women featured on the covers and advertisements are not mere pictures representing some external world. Graham Clarke (1997:27-28) argues that "the photograph both mirrors and creates a discourse with the world, and is never a neutral representation". It therefore follows that the images of black African women serve a purpose.

The advertisements and images on the front covers of women's magazines such as *True Love*, intentionally or not, promote certain opinions and beliefs about acceptable feminine ideals

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<sup>45</sup> For instance, South African cultural studies played a key role in the fight against apartheid through the establishment of cultural studies journals that waged war from an intellectual point of view. Some of the key issues addressed by South African cultural studies are: in response to the Soweto Uprising of 1976, students and academics founded the Centre for Communication, Media and Society (renamed Contemporary Cultural Studies Unit in 1985) in 1976 at the University of Kwazulu-Natal to "develop strategies of cultural resistance through media and culture" (University of Kwazulu-Natal ...). The aim of the Centre, which was modelled after the Birmingham Centre, was to "teach critical media and cultural studies and to actively contribute to political change from inside the anti-apartheid coalition then known as the Mass Democratic Movement" (University of Kwazulu-Natal ...). In 1989, the Unit was renamed as the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies (CCMS). Another initiative was the establishment of academic journals that brought anti-apartheid themes to the fore. The 1980s saw the founding of *Critical Arts: a Journal of Media Studies* at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. The journal focused on arts, media and communication in a Third World context (Tomaselli 1980). It was later moved to the University of Rhodes's Centre for Cultural and Media Studies and renamed *Critical Arts: a Journal for Cultural Studies* in 1992.

## Chapter Four: Magazine culture and representation

and behaviours. These images play a major role in socialising women and girls because a magazine's role is to mould readers and create aspirational needs. Angela McRobbie (1991:82) observes that magazines such as *Jackie* seek to “win and shape the consent of the readers to a particular set of values”. McRobbie (1991) notes that such texts seek to define for young girls how they should live their lives through the use of four codes namely, romance, the domestic and personal life, fashion and beauty, and pop music.

The content analysis of *Jackie*, a magazine aimed at pre-teen girls, revealed that it contained highly ideological messages, particularly patriarchal ideology. In other words, magazines for women and young girls position readers in such a way that they aspire to resemble, for example, the images featured on the covers and advertisements. Barthes (1977:36) aptly observes that a visual image is not innocent because “the viewer of the image receives at one and the same time the perceptual message and the cultural message”. However, in her later works that include *More!*, McRobbie (1996) argues that audiences are not passive, complete victims of ideological influences but that they read the messages in a critical fashion. Joke Hermes (1995:5) concurs and her study found that readers of women's magazines do not engage with content in a passive fashion; rather she believes that readers “are producers of meaning rather than the cultural dupes of the media institutions”. Drawing on Hermes (1995), this study employs focus group interviews to examine the meanings that readers construct from the visual texts and further uses visual semiotic analysis to explore the preferred or dominant meanings that the advertisers and editorial team want readers to receive.

In addition, according to Hall (1995a:15), representation implies the active work of making things mean. In keeping with Hall's (1995a) line of thought, David Croteau and William Hoynes (2002:168) posit that the media do not merely reflect the world; on the contrary, they re-represent it and engage in practices that define reality. Griselda Pollock (1994:14) contributes to the debate by pointing out that representation is a “social relation enacted and performed via specific appeals to vision, specific managements of imaginary spaces and bodies for a gaze”. Accordingly, representation gives a selective view, which normally reflects the dominant social and cultural views. The images of black African women do not merely represent femininity; they also serve to form conceptions of femininity in a subtle manner.

## Chapter Four: Magazine culture and representation

Constant exposure to certain images may result in internalisation of ideals and an individual adopting the ideas and beliefs promoted in the media as their own. For instance, Anthony Fung's (2002:328) study that explores how women's cultural consumption creates, constructs and circulates women's identities by analysing letters to the editor of a women's magazine in Hong Kong found that female readers identified "imaginary communities" through reading the magazine. Moreover, using textual analysis of the letters and in-depth interviews with readers and editors revealed that women modelled the behaviours and styles of the communities as a way of sustaining their relationship with them. The study also showed that Chinese women identified with idealised community-constructed beauty and sought to consume products in order to attain the beauty ideal (Fung 2002:328).

It is therefore worth examining the power dynamics between the media and consuming audience in order to determine to what extent the images on the front covers and hair advertisements wield power over *True Love* readers. The images promote messages about identity and acceptable forms of self-expression, gender, sexuality, and lifestyle. However, black African women also have their own set of beliefs and opinions, as Hall (2003) notes that readers bring in their cultural capital and use it to decode and assign meanings to media messages. Black African women may employ Hall's (1995a) preferred or oppositional readings<sup>46</sup> when assigning meanings to texts. John Fiske (1991:58-59) argues that people use different tactics including what he calls "guerrilla tactics" to reinterpret media texts in accordance with their preferred reading to make sense of the world around them. Furthermore, the media are not the only agents of socialisation; there are other sources including the family, the church, and colleagues at work.

Furthermore, David Gauntlett (2008) notes that "the media's suggestions may be seductive, but can never simply overpower contrary feelings in the audience". For example, more black African women in South Africa are moving towards natural hairstyles and avoiding the use of hair relaxers, as evidenced by the growing number of celebrities who are featured with braids and short hair on magazine covers and on television programmes. A good example is SABC 2 prime time soap opera *Muvhango*, which features women with natural afro hair. However, most women sporting afro hair are represented in gender stereotypical roles such as wives and mothers, for instance Chief Azwindini Mukhwevo's wives, while women with relaxed

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<sup>46</sup> Stuart Hall's concept on how messages are produced, circulated and consumed was discussed above.

long hair are shown in the workplace, for example Thandaza who is CEO of MMC company and Thuli. Drawing on cultural studies scholars such as Hall (2003) and Fiske (1991), this study therefore examines how black African women living in South Africa who come from different cultural backgrounds might interpret and make sense of the representations of African women on the front covers and advertisements in *True Love* magazine.

### ***4.3.2 Magazines and construction of identity***

As one of the widely read magazines in South Africa, *True Love* may play a fundamental role in the process of identity construction. Identity formation is based on perceptions of self in relation to the 'other'. The magazines play an important role in serving as mediator in the process of identity formation. In representing race and gender, the magazine can be seen as having 'referent power', which "refers to the attraction or prestige of the sender, such that the receiver identifies with the person and is willingly influenced, for affective reasons" (McQuail 2010:470) and performing a 'bardic function' in society (Fiske & Hartley 1978:85-86). In other words, like a bard, a magazine is the central storyteller that plays a fundamental role by articulating the main concerns of society. It mediates and reflects back to the community what it likes to think about. However, it is important to note that the role of a magazine cannot be limited to a mirror that reflects what is happening in society. The role of a magazine in society is multi-faceted, it also provides a window to the outside world, sets the agenda, validates certain views, and shapes people's perceptions of the ideal. This shows that magazines play an active role in identity formation by continuously producing and reproducing certain messages that are passed off as common sense and natural.

Stuart Hall (1995b:19) suggests that the media "construct for us a definition of what race is, what meaning the imagery of race carries, and what the 'problem of race' is understood to be. They help to classify the world in terms of the categories of race". African cultural studies theorists add that the media also construct ethnic identities. However, the boundaries have further blurred owing to the acceleration of globalisation and international communication, which has resulted in the increased flow of information, goods and people across the world. It is important to note that people from different cultures have always shared information and ideas and traded in goods and services by means of travel, trade, war and colonialism (Thussu 1996:xv). There has always been exchange of information and ideas and movement of people across the world, the main difference is that in the present age the pace has gathered speed.

The flow of information and ideas used to flow mainly from the West to the rest of the world. With post-colonialism and the development of new technologies, the flow of ideas is becoming more complex and multi-dimensional. In addition, ethnic boundaries are no longer confined to the physical and geographical, but extend further to include the economic, social and cultural. Leroy Vail (1989:3) posits that ethnic consciousness is a construct of the twentieth century that serves ideological purposes. It is not an “anachronistic cultural artifact from the past” but a notion that is often evoked to promote certain interests. The boundaries have become more porous; they can be easily crossed back and forth, and redrawn. Moreover, new fashion and beauty trends originate in different parts of the world and are transported to various places through the media.

The technological developments and new media platforms have resulted in the increase in the flow of images of black African women across the globe. The images of black African women featured on advertisements and front covers of *True Love* are available on the magazine’s website and Facebook page and can be accessed by both local and global audiences. The above discussion shows that although locally owned and produced in South Africa, *True Love* also forms part of a wider network of media that circulate ideas about African beauty in a global commercial cult.

### **4.3.3 *Magazines as vehicles for selling consumer culture***

Closely linked with identity construction, magazines promote consumerism by encouraging readers to look to the market for satisfaction and happiness. Identity is intricately linked to the consumption of commodities. Consumption is naturalised and presented as the normal way to engage with the world and construct self-identity. Readers tend to purchase products that are mediated through editorial content such as front page covers, fashion and beauty spreads, and advertisements because they are drawn to and feel affinity to the style and brand image. Hence, visual communication and aestheticisation are important in promoting consumption. People buy products mainly to communicate their identity rather than for their utility. Furthermore, magazine’s themselves are commodities, which offer readers a “world of commodities” (Beetham 1996:8). Magazines construct readers as consumers. A consumerist society is characterised by the production of goods that are “targeted at consumption, leisure and services and where there is the increasing salience of the production of symbolic goods, images and information” (Featherstone 1991:21).

## Chapter Four: Magazine culture and representation

Consumption processes are shaped by various factors including socio-cultural dynamics that influence how consumerism is mediated. The visual images published in *True Love* magazine are aspirational and associate consumerism with development and leading a better life. This is achieved through aestheticisation of commodities and their environment, for instance packaging and product design (Slater 1997:31).

### CONCLUSION

This chapter has highlighted how *True Love* was established as a magazine for male migrant workers in mines and hostels during apartheid and how it has transformed over the years. It has examined the content published to establish the tone of the magazine and contextualise advertising content, which is explored in detail in the next three chapters. Moreover, this chapter has shown how the interests of the owners shape the editorial policy. Twenty-three years after the commencement of black majority rule at the time of writing, *True Love* continues to sell itself as a platform for black African women, which airs the values, tastes and aspirations of readers.

The points raised in this chapter bring to fore the issues surrounding the description of a *True Love* reader. Probably the best way is to explore the profile of the intended target audience as perceived by the team that produces *True Love* versus the real readers of the magazine. It is worth examining whether the perceptions of the *True Love* team match the reality regarding the values, tastes and readers' aspirations. This is important because the perceptions shape both advertising and editorial texts that are published in the magazine. Can the team claim to speak expertly about the dreams of black African women? Is it really true that *True Love* readers are fashion forward or that they like to see celebrities on the covers because that is who they want to be in the future? These are fundamental questions, but there are no straightforward answers to address them; however, the focus group interviews may provide some insights. But even then, each black woman has her own unique experiences and it may be problematic to generalise and treat them as a homogeneous group.

Another important issue that emerged was that the magazine uses design templates, references and syndicated content from international publications based in the West. South African experts are interviewed and their input incorporated to give a local angle. Although the content and trends are localised taking local dynamics such as climate, complexion and

## Chapter Four: Magazine culture and representation

body shape of black African women into consideration, the standards that are used are Eurocentric. In other words, content is repurposed to fit into a Western mould. This has serious implications on the role of *True Love* in socialising young black African women. In the next chapter, I employ quantitative content analysis to establish the type of hair and hairstyles that feature prominently in *True Love*. Thereafter, in Chapters Six and Seven, I analyse the texts using visual semiotic analysis and explore the myths and ideologies that are constructed and circulated, then in the eighth chapter, using a questionnaire and focus group interviews I examine to what extent the texts in *True Love* influence black African women's self-esteem and hairstyling practices.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: APPLICATION TO *TRUE LOVE*: QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS**

The previous chapter provided a detailed overview of *True Love* magazine and cultural studies; now the focus shifts to practical application, that is, analysing cultural texts published in the magazine using visual quantitative content analysis. While most research projects in this field usually employ qualitative methods in analysing visual data, drawing on cultural studies, this study combines both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyse existing images that have already been produced within the institutions of culture (see visual semiotic analysis and focus group interviews in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight respectively). On the one hand, analysing images using visual quantitative content analysis and visual semiotic analysis is unobtrusive and non-reactive because these methods do not involve direct contact with research participants as they mainly analyse data from material that already exists such as media publications, film, television programmes and interview transcripts. Robert Philip Weber (1990:10) argues that when conducting quantitative content analysis there is “little danger that the act of measurement itself will act as a force for change that confounds the data”. On the other hand, focus group interview is a reactive technique for studying social phenomena since this data collection method involves interacting with respondents (see Chapter Eight).

The results from the data collected using the three methods will be presented separately and triangulation will occur where relevant. Using mixed methods and synthesising the results enriches the study as it facilitates the answering of the research questions from different perspectives (Grbich 2013:27). I would like to highlight that the sections below provide a brief explanation and the findings of the quantitative content analysis of the covers and advertisements; the myths and ideologies entrenched in these texts are examined in Chapter Seven (see 7.2).

### **5.1 Quantitative content analysis**

Drawing on Michael Emmison and Philip Smith (2000:1), who argue that visual information can be readily quantified using visual content analysis, this study uses quantitative content analysis to analyse data from a sample of 12 covers and 29 hair advertisements featured in 12

issues of *True Love* magazine published between June 2015 and May 2016. I employ this method because it provides statistical information (Wigston 2009:9) that I can use to make inferences about *True Love* and its readership. For Alan Bryman (2001:177), content analysis is “an approach to the analysis of documents and texts (which may be printed or visual) that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories in a systematic and replicable manner”. Gillian Rose (2011:87), who has written extensively on visual communication and visual culture, contributes that content analysis involves counting the frequency of visual elements and thereafter analysing the frequencies. The three scholars generally agree that quantitative content analysis is concerned with categorising and counting phenomena, then interpreting the figures to determine their meaning and implications. Rose (2011:101) sums it up succinctly when she writes that content analysis is “not simply a quantitative method; clearly every stage of content analysis, from formulating the research question to developing coding categories ... entails decisions about meaning and significance”.

Following from the above, first, I coded visual representations of women and hair on the covers and advertisements and turned it from images into numbers. Klaus Krippendorff (2004) notes that content analysis is a systematic and replicable technique for organising data into categories. I clearly defined the categories to avoid ambiguity and to ensure that the coding process can be replicable. To come up with the categories, I studied the content noting down the main themes; thereafter sub-categories were developed under each main category.

In this study, the following coding categories and sub-categories for visual quantitative content analysis of the representation of hair in *True Love* have been employed:

➤ **Hair type**

- natural
- naturally styled (which includes braids, dreadlocks and cornrows)
- straight
- curled/wavy
- other

➤ **Length of hair**

- short
- medium
- long

- very long
- other
- **Colour of hair**
  - black
  - red
  - brown
  - other
- **Type of hair products**
  - (dry hair including wigs, weaves, braids and dreads)
  - hair colourants (dyes)
  - hair relaxers
  - hair styling (wax, gel, spray)
  - hair cleansers (shampoos)
  - hair nourishers (conditioners, hair food, moisturisers, creams)
  - hair protection and treatments (anti-itch, anti-dandruff)
  - lustre/shine enhancers
  - other.

The values under each category or variable are mutually exclusive and exhaustive; the category 'Other' has been included to ensure that all the content is coded.

The issue of inter-coder reliability did not arise in this study because only one person was responsible for coding the data. To ensure intra-coder reliability, variables and values were clearly defined and the set criteria applied consistently. I conducted a pilot study wherein half of the covers and advertisements were classified into relevant categories and two weeks later the procedure was repeated. The few inconsistencies that arose were resolved by providing precise operational definition of terms, for example, specifying what constitutes short hair, medium length and long hair.

Using content analysis for this descriptive and exploratory study makes it possible, for example, to identify the hairstyles featured on the advertisements and covers of *True Love* magazine. In addition, the number of women shown with each hairstyle can be counted to establish which hair type features prominently and which is left out. Quantitative content

analysis only focuses on the visual images, but does not interrogate the production and reception processes, and cannot be used to establish causal relationships between variables (Wigston 2009:33). Using the above as an example, quantitative content analysis cannot provide answers to questions such as, why does *True Love* feature certain hairstyles and what effect does featuring such hairstyles have on black female readers? To answer the ‘why?’ and ‘what?’ questions, I can only make inferences. However, it is important to note that the inferences I make about what *True Love* intends to communicate to its readers and to what extent these visual texts affect readers will be based on my own interpretations, which are informed by my background and interpretations of the text. Those inferences may be invalid and not necessarily reflect the way readers assign meanings to texts (see 4.2.1).

Coupled with the above, the coding process is based on my interpretations; as a result, the categories and classification of units of analysis are influenced by my cultural background and worldview. Moreover, quantitative content analysis cannot uncover the myths and ideologies that are promoted by the texts. As a result, the myths and ideologies are explored in the next chapter. To overcome some of these limitations, this study also employs visual semiotic analysis and focus group interviews to supplement quantitative content analysis. Quantitative content analysis is flexible and can be used in conjunction with other methods. The section below gives information on the sampling procedure, the units of analysis and how the categories and sub-categories were established.

### ***5.1.1 A quantitative content analysis of covers and advertisements***

As already stated, 12 covers and 29 advertisements were analysed. The units of analysis are the products, the representations of black African women and depictions of black hair. A total of 63 hair advertisements (Table 9) were featured in the 12 issues of *True Love* published between June 2015 and May 2016. This grand total comprises all hair-related advertisements including advertorials, competitions for stylists, competitions for readers, advertisements with images featuring black African women, white women, and girls below the age of 18, full-page, half-page vertical, one-third vertical and repeat/recurring advertisements. December had the most number of hair advertisements, probably because of the festive season, a time when people attend social gatherings and want to look good (Table 9). When selecting a sample, advertorials, advertisements that were not product- or service-related, for instance, competitions for stylists were not included. Advertorials were left out of the sample because

although they are a form of marketing, they tend to mimic the editorial in terms of content and design.

The criteria for inclusion were that an advertisement should feature at least one black female model aged 18 and above on the main image or on product packaging; as a result, hair advertisements featuring girls below the age of 18, white women or products only were not included in the sample. Recurring advertisements appearing in magazine issues were only sampled once. Twenty-nine advertisements (Table 10) that met the criteria were analysed using quantitative content analysis. The sample comprises two double page spread (DPS), 22 full-page, four half-page vertical and one one-third vertical advertisements. The visual and verbal texts in these advertisements are clearly visible and easy to read.

After familiarising myself with the text, the main categories and subcategories were delineated. Each woman featured on the cover and on each advertisement was coded with reference to several variables including age, profession, body type, poses, type of clothing texture, colour and length of hair. The variables that were analysed on both the covers and advertisements were age, type, length and colour of hair while profession, body type, poses and type of clothing were only limited to the covers because they were not visible on the advertisements. A further two variables, namely types of products and dry hair products were only applicable to the advertisements.

It is important to note that some advertisements featured more than one black woman, and in such cases the representation of each woman was coded as a separate unit of analysis, for instance, Figure 13 features two black African women, one as main image and another on the product packaging. The women in Figure 13 were assigned letters of the alphabet and coded as Figure 13a and Figure 13b; as a result, the frequency of women represented on the advertisements is 46. A detailed analysis and the sub-categories developed under each broad category are discussed below.

Some features such as body size, type of clothing and length of hair are subjective and were influenced by my background and beliefs. For example, the images I coded under long hair may be classified under the short hair category by a western-centric perspective because the perceptions of hair length vary according to one's cultural background. Operational definitions have been given to specify content that should be coded under each sub-category.

On the other hand, classifying units under themes such as age of women on the covers and hair colour was straightforward because the real ages of the women were used and the colours are clearly visible. However, I am aware that photographs convey mediated reality because some of the images are digitally altered (see 4.1.7). The sections below provide the findings of a quantitative content analysis of the covers and advertisements.

### ***5.1.2 Age of the women featured on covers and advertisements***

Determining the age of the women on the covers and advertisements by simply looking at the images was difficult. However, since the women on the covers are well-known celebrities their real age was used. Five subcategories were established under this category. These are: Under 19, 20-30, 31-40, 41-50, and Over 50. Unlike the covers where the real ages of the celebrities were used, for the advertisements it was not easy to establish the exact ages of the models, hence the three sub-categories delineated under the age variable are meant to capture the perceived age of the women. They are Young adults (18-35), Mature, middle-aged (36-50), and Old (51-plus).

I established that of the 12 women featured on the covers, seven (58 per cent<sup>1</sup>) were aged between 20 and 30 years, three (25 per cent) fell under the 31-40 age bracket, two (17 per cent) belonged to the 41-50 age bracket, while there were none in the Under 19 and Over 50 categories (Table 1 and Figure 42). Most women featured on the covers were young, mainly below the age of 30, although the readership age of *True Love* spans from 15 to 50-plus. The majority of *True Love* readers are in their late twenties to early thirties; the 25-34 age bracket constitutes 32 per cent, followed by the 35-49 age group at 28 per cent, the 15-24 age group sits at third position with 21 per cent, while the 50-plus group constitutes 19 per cent (South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) AMPS 2015 [Jul14-Jun15]).

The data from a quantitative content analysis of the advertisements also revealed that black African women portrayed in advertisements looked young. Despite having a 19 per cent readership base of women over the age of 50, no old women were featured at all in the advertisements (Table 16). Only 24 per cent were middle-aged, and at 76 per cent young adults constituted the majority of women featured in the advertisements (Figure 55). Since

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<sup>1</sup> The percentages have been rounded off to one decimal place and therefore some of the figures do not add up to 100 per cent.

the magazine's readership age comprises mainly those aged between 24-34 (32 per cent), and 35-49 (28 per cent) (South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) AMPS 2015 [Jul14-Jun15]), the models featured in advertisements tended to be within those age brackets.

Although the magazine's average readership age is 36, women below the age of 30 (on the covers) and 35 (on the advertisements) featured predominantly because youth is generally associated with good health and attractiveness. Both the covers and advertisements present a youthful, wrinkle-free<sup>2</sup> ideal and employ binary oppositions by portraying youthfulness as beautiful, and by implication its opposite ageing as ugly. This may lead to negative body image among those who cannot attain the ideal.

As mentioned previously, the image on the cover helps sell the magazine and promote brand identity. The choice of a candidate to put on the cover depends on the person and what she stands for. In addition to the beautiful face and body, the woman on the cover should match the magazine's values and ethos. *True Love* probably featured more young women in the 20-30 age group on the covers for aspirational purposes. The women in this age group not only look attractive, but they have also achieved many things in their lives and careers, and readers may aspire to be like them. The young, attractive, successful women are likely to appeal to the magazine's readership, which comprises black African women who belong to the LSM 8-10 and have an average monthly household income of R16,348 (South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) AMPS 2015 [Jul14-Jun15]). This can also explain the absence of women in their late teenage years because they may have not achieved much in life yet and could just be starting off in their careers; therefore, they do not qualify to serve as aspirational role models for this magazine's readers. The absence of older women on the covers could be explained by the fact that all the women featured on the covers are from the entertainment industry where the shelf life of women is short because they are judged by their looks, not necessarily talent (Seagrove 2011). As women get older they cease to get leading roles in film and television programmes, while women in their twenties and early thirties are considered to be in their prime.

It is worth noting that *True Love* may not necessarily be opposed to featuring older women, but tries not to feature women who *look* old. This is substantiated by the fact that the women

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<sup>2</sup> In magazine shoots, signs of ageing are normally masked with make-up or airbrushed using desktop publishing packages such as Photoshop.

in the 41-50 age bracket (Figures 8 and 12), who were featured do not look their age, they look much younger. In South African Nguni cultures ageing was a valued asset as old age was associated with wisdom and old people were accorded respect in society. However, since culture is dynamic, trends are changing and the ageing body is increasingly relegated to the periphery. Advertising in particular, flooding the market with anti-ageing products, has further fuelled the fear of ageing. Ageing is represented as something that an individual has control over. The myth promoted by the visual images is that a person can choose to remain young through the use of products claiming to delay, reverse or reduce the signs of ageing or 'let herself go' by not purchasing the products. Turning back the clock is possible courtesy of the products, and in the same vein an individual now has the power to choose the type of hair they have. This is the subject of the next section.

### ***5.1.3 Type of hair featured on covers and advertisements***

To determine the hair type of the women on the covers and advertisements, the following subcategories were delineated: Natural (afro/coarse), Straight, Curled/wavy, Naturally styled (plaited, braided, dreadlocks and cornrows), and Other. I found that different hair textures were featured. On the covers, straight hair accounted for 33 per cent; natural and curly/wavy category represented 25 per cent each and naturally styled constituted 17 per cent; none was classified under Other (Figure 47).

The same trend was observed in advertisements where there were more images featuring women with straight hair (19) compared to those with natural hair (four) (Table 13). At 41 per cent, straight hair dominated, but it is not the only option offered, as evident in a significant number of curled/wavy hair (28 per cent), naturally styled (20 per cent), natural (nine per cent) and other (two per cent) (Figure 52).

The images of women with natural hair were fewer compared to women with straight and curly hair (Table 6), yet black hair is naturally coiled, and bone straight hair is normally achieved through applying a relaxer, sewing on a weave or wearing a wig with straight hair. These results resonate with findings from studies that have shown that black women have a preference for altered hair. One such study is Masina's (2010) South African research, which found that "relaxed hair dominated the representations, appearing on nearly all of the pages reserved for hair products". Findings of some studies conducted in the West show that black



women alter their natural hair because of self-hatred (Banks 2000). Banks (2000:43-44) notes that hair altering techniques such as relaxing or straightening are indicative of “a hatred of black physical features and an emulation of white physical characteristics”. The focus group interviews in this study explore this argument and find out if this assertion holds true in the South African context. In most cases straightening hair using chemicals or hot irons or hot stones also increases its length. Since these two normally go hand in hand, the following part focuses on hair length featured in *True Love*.

#### ***5.1.4 Length of hair featured on covers and advertisements***

Under length of hair, the subcategories constructed were Short (close crop), Medium (ear length), Long (chin length), Very long (shoulder to waist length), and Other (length of hair not visible). It was assumed that owing to their historical past, black *True Love* readers living in South Africa will have a preference for straight hair and often resort to hair altering practices to achieve that look. It was expected that long hair would be the dominant category. The results of this study confirm this assumption as six (50 per cent) out of the 12 women featured on the covers had long hair, three (25 per cent) were classified under Other as the length of their hair could not be ascertained because of the nature of their hairstyles; two (17 per cent) had short hair and one (8 per cent) had medium length hair (Table 7, Figure 48).

In the advertisements, more women were shown with long hair compared to those featured with short hair; out of 46 women, 21 had very long hair, 13 had long hair and five had medium length hair (Table 15). Despite the fact that natural black hair is typically short, the Very long hair category featured prominently and contributed 46 per cent, followed by long hair at 28 per cent, with medium length hair constituting 11 per cent (Figure 54). The Other category contributed nine per cent, while only six per cent (three) of the women had short hair (Figure 54).

As indicated earlier, black hair is naturally short and is considered even shorter when compared to Caucasian and Asian hair. The strong focus on long hair is consistent with the assumption that black African women are obsessed with long hair and hair altering techniques such as using relaxers to straighten and lengthen hair, using dry hair enhancement products such as hairpieces, braids and weaves, as well as wearing wigs. The images of black African women with long hair may be internalised by *True Love* readers and society at large

and influence perceptions of what constitutes beautiful ideal hair. I will return to this issue in Chapter Eight when I examine the influence *True Love* texts have on the focus group interview respondents.

Since hair is a symbol of identity, wearing long hair influences black African women's notions of self-identity. Identity, like culture, is not fixed but ever changing owing to many things, including new influences in society. As mentioned above under hair type, with the availability of hair enhancement products it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine one's race based on hair. In view of South Africa's past, preference for long hair is believed to be rooted in white supremacy. However, it is necessary to highlight that in historical African societies, black women used accessories such as goat hair, bark of trees and sisal to lengthen their hair (Sagay 1983). This suggests that black women have always had a preference for long hair and lengthening their hair is not necessarily only associated with approximating the white ideal. In addition to type and length, hair colour is another visible attribute that stands out and draws the viewer's attention. The focus turns to hair colours that were depicted on the covers and advertisements.

#### ***5.1.5 Colour of hair featured on covers and advertisements***

After familiarising myself with the data, the subcategories Black, Red, Brown, and Other were established and images coded under each. On the covers, black hair constituted 75 per cent while Red, Brown and Other each accounted for 8.3 per cent (Figure 49). One out of 12 (Table 8) was classified under the Other category because the hair is duo tone with black at the top and brown ends.

In terms of the advertisements, black hair featured prominently, accounting for 35 out of 46 or 76 per cent (Table 14). It was followed by red with only six (13 per cent) women shown with red hair, three (seven per cent) classified under Other and two (four per cent) women with brown hair (Figure 53). There is a heavy presence of red hair colour in different shades. There were six advertisements for red dye, two for brown and only one for black. The dyes are from brands such as Inecto (Figures 19, 20, 24, 32, 35, 37), Dark and Lovely (Figure 36) and Caivil (Figures 14, 17).

The fact that black hair featured prominently is not surprising since black people's hair is typically black in colour, although there are some people with naturally brownish hair. However, having said that, the presence of other colours shows that perceptions of beauty differ in South Africa even among members of the black communities. In most black communities, generally a full head of black hair is considered to be sexually alluring and a sign of good health. Grey hair (*ufuzo* in Zulu and Ndebele) is believed to be associated with wisdom but owing to mixing with people from other racial groups it is no longer considered a desirable characteristic in women; as a result, many people use dye to conceal it. Market research shows that in recent years there has been a huge demand for hair colourants in South Africa (Supermarket & Retailer 2015:40); however, this should not be taken to mean that people in South Africa began dyeing their hair recently. Far from it, oral lore and data documented by researchers like Sagay (1983) show that in historical societies Africans dyed their hair using ochre and pigments from plants. Having looked at various hair variables the focus shifts to representations of the women on *True Love* covers.

#### **5.1.6 Profession of the women featured on covers**

The data was coded under the six sub-categories, namely Homemaker, Politician, Entertainer (film, music, radio and television personalities), Sport personality, and Other (women who hold more than one job in different industries, for instance entertainer, author and business woman). The findings revealed that entertainment was the dominant industry. Out of the 12 women featured, eight (67 per cent) were entertainers, four (33 per cent) were classified under the Other category, but there were no homemakers, politicians or sports personalities (Table 2; Figure 43). The data analysis further revealed that all the women in the Other category were also entertainers. In addition to primarily being entertainers, the four women were also involved in secondary activities such as running a business (Figures 1, 8 and 12) and writing (Figure 2).

It is particularly striking that all the women featured on the covers are from the entertainment industry, especially soap opera actresses. The actresses on the covers are also associated with the roles they play in the soap operas. One of the theories of media and society states that the media reflect reality in society (Curran & Gurevitch 2005; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler 2012); hence the reality that *True Love* seems to reflect suggests that black African women are one-dimensional people whose sole role is to entertain South African society. But this does not

correspond with reality because black African women have a presence in different fields and industries.<sup>3</sup> There are similarities between my study and Bertelsen's (1998) research conducted during the first decade of majority rule in South Africa. Her study of advertisements published in magazines for black people found that the 'ordinary' jobs were absent in advertising content. Instead the advertisements featured a "very skewed picture of the labour market, exclusively represented by glamorous models and executive or entrepreneurial types" (Bertelsen 1998:231). Interestingly, 19 years after Bertelsen's study, this trend is still found in *True Love*.

*True Love*, like other media that is influenced by market forces, appears to advance capitalist interests by promoting certain representations while excluding alternative and counter-hegemonic views. This raises the question: who does *True Love* represent? Who is given a voice? The magazine features glamorous celebrities who live in urban centres. The rural women are missing probably because they are not the magazine's primary readers. The AMPS figures show that the bulk of *True Love* readers live in metro areas (59 per cent), cities and large towns (6 per cent), while only 14 per cent and 11 per cent reside in settlements or rural areas, and small towns/villages, respectively (South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) AMPS 2015 [Jul14-Jun15]). The urban poor are also missing from the covers, probably owing to the fact that images of poverty and suffering are not common on magazine covers unless it is a 'rags to riches' story or an account with a 'fall from grace' angle because although fans like to see celebrities succeed, they also like reading about their failures (Epstein 2007:362).

The reason for choosing actresses and excluding other professions and classes of women may be linked to the proliferation of celebrity culture as *True Love* team believes that celebrities appeal to audiences and help sell magazines. The celebrities are drawn from primetime soap operas,<sup>4</sup> music industry, radio and television. This contradicts *True Love*'s vision because the

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<sup>3</sup> A number of South African women are well established in several industries such as business, for instance Sibongile Sambo, founder and managing director of SRS Aviation, the first black female-owned aviation company in South Africa (Top African [Female] Business Leaders ...). Other influential black women include Nonkuleleko Nyembezi-Heita, who was named Forbes's 97<sup>th</sup> most powerful woman in the world (2011) and is chief executive officer and board member of mining company IchorCoal's (Ichorcoal Mining the Future ...), and Bridgette Radebe, founder, executive chairperson and CEO of Mmakau Mining (Pty) Ltd (International Women's forum ...).

<sup>4</sup> Four out of 12 women featured were from SABC 1 prime time soap opera *Generations: The Legacy*, which has high audience ratings. The Broadcast Research Council's Primetime TV Viewing

magazine claims to “push readers to where they want to be, challenging and helping them to take the next big steps to get there, changing lives from ordinary to extraordinary” (Media24, *True Love* ...). But the images on the covers offer a limited range of role models for black African women. Not all black African women are interested in show business, some need mentors from politics, business, sport and science, among other fields. By failing to feature women from different industries, the magazine does not fulfil its mandate in society of being “an indispensable accessory that inspires, entertains and advises modern African women” (Media24, *True Love*).

Although this variable was not coded for the advertisements, I observed that none of the women were depicted in business attire, but all were shown in casual attire as if to suggest that black African women do not work but indulge in leisure pursuits (for a detailed discussion see 7.2.4). The next point is the body size of black African women featured on the covers. This variable was only analysed on the covers since most advertisements showed the women’s upper bodies and it was difficult to determine the person’s size where the bust, waist and hip were not shown.

### ***5.1.7 The body size of the women featured on covers***

The size chart for women in South African (Imagemakers Corporate Wear) was used to furnish the categories for this study. Four categories, namely, Small (Size 32, bust 85-88cm, hip 92-95cm), Medium (Size 34-36, bust 89-98cm, hip 95-105cm), Big (from Size 38, bust from 99-103cm, hip from 106-110cm) and Other (where the woman’s body is not clearly visible to ascertain her size) were delineated and the data coded. The coding was guided by the visual examination of the women’s sizes. Observable physical characteristics such as hip and bust size were used to determine each woman’s perceived dress or body size. For the body size of women featured on the covers it was found that there were two small women, ten medium size and no big black African women and no women classified under Other

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Ratings Figures show that in Week 21, May 2015, *Generations: The Legacy* (SABC 1) was the most viewed soap opera with 5,300,000 viewers followed by *Uzalo* (SABC 1) with 4,961,000; *Skeem Saam* (SABC 1) with 4,944,000; *Muvhango* (SABC 2) with 4,167,000 and *Scandal!* (e.tv) with 3,167,000 viewers. During Week 52 in January 2016 before the ratings agency closed owing to a levy that was imposed, *Generations: The Legacy* occupied second position in the ratings with 4,919,000. It was overtaken by *Uzalo*, which jumped to 6,584,000 viewers (TV SA TAMS coverage ...).

(Table 3). The findings revealed that at 83 per cent medium size women featured predominantly on the covers (Figure 44).

The absence of big women and the inclusion of only two small women show that body politics governs what is considered desirable. While in Western cultures the thin ideal is promoted,<sup>5</sup> in some African cultures, particularly in historical Nguni societies, social status and sexual attractiveness was attached to the fuller voluptuous female body. In some black South African communities, especially in rural areas, this belief still persists and a heavy-set body type is associated with wealth, good health, fertility and dignity. However, in metropolitan cities perceptions are different because people are exposed to media messages and Western ideals that associate a fuller female body with not being able to control one's body and tend to judge harshly and punish women who are considered to have 'let their bodies go'. Bordo (1993:94), who is based in the West, asserts that "the size and shape of the body has come to operate as a marker of personal, internal order (or disorder) – as a symbol for the state of the soul".

In this study, the medium body size featured prominently probably because, as Susan Brownmiller (1984:50) notes, "despite genetic variation, rarely is more than one type of female physique given sexual adulation in a given age". Presenting only one body type as the ideal pits woman against woman, and since the ideal can change any time, women never feel secure in their bodies. By mainly featuring the medium body size, *True Love* staff believe celebrating thinness or obesity may send a wrong message to readers and society at large by promoting unhealthy lifestyles.

Featuring black African women with medium size bodies is a positive development because the media often goes to extremes by representing either heavy-set or thin, starving women and rarely medium size black African women. *True Love* covers highlight the 'invisible middle' that is often neglected.

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<sup>5</sup> In Western culture, the thin ideal is still promoted by the media and on the catwalk, however, the trends are changing because sexual attractiveness is culture specific and evolves with time. Following Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty in 2005, some magazines are featuring plus-size models and at times ordinary people on the covers and advertisements. Some brands have been vocal against featuring thin models on the catwalk and in advertisements. For example, Omega watches pulled out from advertising in British *Vogue* in 1996 after the magazine featured photos of slim model Trish Goff (Leland, Miller & Hall 1996), and the Fashion Week Show in Madrid in 2007 banned models with low body mass index from participating (Hellmich 2006).

### 5.1.8 *Poses of the women featured on covers*

To examine the poses of women on the covers, the following categories were defined: Sexualised (open legs, lascivious poses), Submissive (passive, bent posture, licensed withdrawal evident in feminine touch such as placing hand near or on mouth, placing hand or both hands on waist, and blank gaze), Sexualised and submissive (images showing both), Dominant (active, standing upright, looking at camera), and Neutral (not showing any of the above). The findings revealed that sexualised and passive poses featured prominently, comprising 50 per cent, followed by submissive, sexualised and neutral poses, each contributing 16.7 per cent (Figure 45). There were no women featured in dominant poses.

Most women are shown with bent postures or tilting their heads, and these poses signify being submissive and distanced. While the physical codes such as tilting or canting the head can be read as a “submissive gesture, an appeal for protection, and a form of ingratiation or appeasement achieved by reducing one’s overall height”, it can also be linked to flirting and can be used as a seduction tool (Costa, Menzani & Bitti 2001:64). This example shows that visual signs carry different meanings and can mean different things to different people and in different contexts. Conversely, someone who is alert is believed to stand upright. In a patriarchal society like South Africa, featuring women in active, upright positions could be seen as challenging the status quo and black masculinity. This reinforces the notion that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (de Beauvoir 1973:301). It therefore follows that the idealised images of sexualised and submissive poses are shaped by male fantasies and promote patriarchal ideology. Moreover, in this sense, *True Love* magazine could be seen as perpetuating some stereotypes that were prevalent during colonisation, such as the hypersexualisation of black African women. For example, six out of 12 women are featured in sexualised poses and attire (Table 4), a trend that is reminiscent of images of hypersexualised black African women meant for the pleasure of white male audiences during colonisation.

These results are similar to Sanger’s (2007:277) findings, although her study focussed on images of black women in women’s magazines targeted at white women. My study suggests that black African women are still represented as exotic and erotic in a magazine targeted at a predominantly black readership. Representing black African women as sex objects perpetuates racist and sexist assumptions about black womanhood. Women are objectified

and exploited since the gender identities are represented in terms of domination and subordination through the male gaze. However, it is worth noting that in some cases women self-objectify themselves for specific reasons (for a detailed discussion see 7.2.5).

Women are also featured in playful poses with ‘cute’ arm and leg poses (Figures 3, 5, 6, 9 and 10), reinforcing the notion that women exhibit child-like behaviour. Kimiko Akita (2005:46) observes that “discourses of cuteness carry gendered messages mediated through artifacts such as food, facial expression, clothing, and objects”. The poses are sexually alluring, nonetheless they are demeaning and degrading to the status of women in society because they portray women as submissive and subservient to men. For hooks (1981:60), the crisis of “Black womanhood can only be addressed by the development of resistance struggles that emphasise the importance of decolonising our minds, developing critical consciousness”. The irony is that black African women are depicted as playful children on the one hand, and provocateurs on the other hand. After looking at the poses the discussion moves forward and explores the type of clothes worn by the celebrities on the covers.

### ***5.1.9 Type of clothing worn by the women featured on covers***

The subcategories that were constructed under this main category are: Clothed (wearing clothes that adequately cover the body, particularly the cleavage and thighs), Scantily dressed (provocatively clad, wearing revealing clothes that leave breasts, buttocks and thighs exposed), and Other (wearing clothes that are neither conservative nor provocative).

This study found that the women were featured wearing different types of clothing. Out of the 12 sampled, five (41.7 per cent) were shown clothed, while another five (41.7 per cent) were scantily dressed and two (16.7 per cent) fell under the Other category as they were neither conservatively nor provocatively dressed (Table 5, Figure 46). Clothing is viewed as a language that communicates information about its wearer and can be viewed and interpreted differently by individuals depending on their cultural capital. Moreover, the type of clothing should be examined in the context of the occasion for which it is worn, for example swim wear for going to the beach and a gown worn for a special occasion in the evening. Although the woman in Figure 5 is coded under scantily dressed, she cannot be said to be scantily dressed per se because she is wearing a swimsuit, a type of clothing that is suitable and acceptable for beach wear. This type of clothing is also suitable for a magazine cover of an



issue published during summer when it is hot in South Africa and readers are likely to go swimming.

Wearing revealing clothes that leave certain parts of the body, including breasts, buttocks and thighs exposed, is not something new. In some historical Nguni societies in South Africa, black African women wore animal skin clothing that left most parts of the body, including breasts and buttocks, uncovered. Women from ethnic groups such as the Ndebele, Tswana, and Zulus wore *imisisi* (short skirts made from animal skin). Even in the present age, some black African women still wear that kind of clothing on cultural occasions such as Heritage Day and Zulu Reed Dance. However, despite this, some black people judge those wearing Western-style clothing which exposes a lot of flesh harshly, as illustrated by incidents where black African women and girls wearing mini-skirts have been humiliated or sexually abused.<sup>6</sup>

Commenting on the different tastes and worldviews that influence interpretations of what constitutes normal, conservative and provocative clothing, Millum (1975:64) notes that some people view a naked body or scantily clothed body as signifying “immorality, sexual licence, and decadence while another [group] views it as symbolising freedom, self-knowledge and progress”. Pink (2007:82) concurs where she observes that “visual images are made meaningful by the subjective gaze of the viewer, and that each individual produces these photographic meanings by relating the image to his or her existing personal experience, knowledge and wider cultural discourses”. Wearing revealing clothes could be viewed as some form of narcissism and self-exhibitionism. The following sections focus on variables related to products that were analysed in advertisements only because the products are not shown on the covers. One can only make inferences relating to products used to style hair on the covers, but in the advertisements the products themselves are shown.

#### ***5.1.10 Types of products featured on advertisements***

To establish the types of hair products that are prevalent in *True Love* magazine advertisements, nine product categories were drawn: Dry hair (wigs, weaves, hair pieces, hair extensions); Hair colourants (dyes); Hair relaxers; Hair styling products (wax, gel, spray),

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<sup>6</sup> In 2012, taxi drivers in Johannesburg humiliated a girl who was wearing a mini-skirt. Some men groped her while others took pictures of her thighs. Another incident took place in 2008 when a woman was sexually molested for wearing a mini-skirt (Molatlhwa 2012).

hair cleansers (shampoos), Hair nourishers (conditioners, hair food, moisturisers, creams, lotions, and sprays); Protection and treatments (anti-itch, anti-dandruff, serums); Lustre or shine-enhancers, and Other. Where a product range with different items was featured, each product was considered as a unit of analysis and assigned a letter of the alphabet, then coded independently. For example, there are four products in Figure 14, and these were coded as Figure 14a, Figure 14b, Figure 14c and Figure 14d. The products that claimed to serve more than one purpose, for example a 4-in-1 product (Figure 16), and others that did not fit in any of the above categories were placed under the “Other” category.

The findings showed that in the relevant 12 months, the most prevalent type of products featured in *True Love* magazine were the nourishing products. Twenty out of a total of 75 products were categorised under Nourishers (Table 11), translating to 27 per cent (Figure 50). The magazine also carried a significant number of colourants (16 per cent), relaxers (15 per cent) and protection and treatment products (13 per cent), dry hair and lustre/shine enhancing products (nine per cent each), cleansers (five per cent), and hairstyling products (three per cent). The Other category, consisting of a multi-purpose product and a hair softener, accounted for only three per cent (Figure 50).

Drawing on marketing theory, I argue that brands manufacture and market products that are in line with people’s self-concept (de Mooij 2010) and needs. I further argue that advertising creates needs and demand for the products, and to meet the demand, brands in turn manufacture more products; therefore, the number of advertisements in each category is a reflection of the demand for those particular products. Sean Jacobs (2003) suggests that the price structure and advertising in South African mainstream print media is targeted at the lucrative elite market, but my findings show that the products advertised in *True Love* are aimed at a diverse range of black African women. The prevalence of nourishing and hair protection and treatment products suggests that the magazine is a commercial pipeline that convinces women to keep their hair healthy by purchasing these products. The focus group interviews later in this study explore whether black *True Love* readers buy the products they see in the advertisements.

Most of the products featured are tailored specifically towards black African women’s needs and there are only a few geared towards women of all races (Figure 27) and men (Figures 22 and 25). While *True Love* readership is mainly female (73 per cent), the magazine boasts 27

per cent male readership. Moreover, the magazine readership is 95 per cent black, three per cent coloured, and one per cent each Indian and white. Probably the products for different hair types and for men are targeted at these minority readers (South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) AMPS 2015 [Jul14-Jun15]). The magazine tries to strike a balance between featuring products that address black African women's unique and specific needs, while also catering to the needs of readers in the minority groups. On some products it is clearly stated that they are made specifically for African hair (Figures 21, 28), while on others the hair type is not specified (Figure 16).

#### ***5.1.11 Dry hair products featured on advertisements***

Another variable that was analysed was dry hair products. This category was further broken down into four sub-categories: Braids/dreads, Wigs, Weaves, and Other. Although there were many products for styling and caring for braids/dreads, wigs and weaves there were only seven dry hair advertisements that appeared during this study (Table 12). Out of the seven, there were five (71 per cent) advertisements for weaves and two (29 per cent) for braids/dreads, and no wigs (Figure 51). The weaves featured were of different lengths, textures and colours.

The visual texts bring to the fore the dynamic interrelations between natural, naturalised, Afrocentric and Westerncentric/Eurocentric in relation to black hairstyling. They represent the straddling of cultures in that they showcase the images of black celebrities wearing wigs and weaves that resemble the Eurocentric long, straight hair ideal while in some the women are depicted with long braids. The blending of Western and African aesthetics produces a new form of hybrid black stylisation that transcends cultural and geographic borders. From the above observation, I therefore argue that the hairstyles depicted that use dry hair products are cultural hybrids.

The small number of hair enhancement products is surprising because debates surrounding dry hair made from synthetic and human hair have become mainstream, and reports show that more black African women in South Africa prefer to use dry hair to change their look compared to using relaxers which contain harmful chemicals (The Professional Hair Care Market South Africa 2010). The fact that only a few dry hair products were advertised may be connected to the stigma associated with 'adding hair' and wearing products made from

other people's hair. Another possible reason could be that although some black celebrities and ordinary women have come out and confessed to wearing wigs and weaves, black women have a desire to look authentic. Hair enhancement products such as hairpieces and weaves are often sewn on or glued to the hair in such a way that they pass off as an individual's real hair. The inferences I make here are tested for validity during the focus group discussions (see Chapter Eight). American feminist hooks (2015:71) points out that "since the hair is produced as commodity and purchased, it affirms contemporary notions of female beauty and desirability as that which can be acquired". Having analysed all the variables, the following section summarises the key findings and observations.

## **5.2 Discussion of findings from the quantitative content analysis of covers and advertisements**

The women on the covers and advertisements are different in terms of physical appearance (small and medium built), hair (different hair textures, lengths and colours), age (young adults, and mature) and clothing (clothed and scantily dressed) they are shown wearing. This confirms the assumption that the visual images in *True Love* construct and promote multiple black feminine identities. However, upon closer examination there is something that binds them together, that is, they all look glamorous. The covers and advertisements are aspirational: they feature young, beautiful, physically fit, glamorous women dressed for special occasions. The women featured are looking at the readers, inviting them to join in and embrace the lifestyle. Viewed this way, the visual images create needs and desire for certain products. In addition, the covers and advertisements generate emotional value for the readers and have communicative power as they inform the viewer about the connection between the women and the products and the benefits that accrue from their consumption. Sut Jhally (1990:12) concurs and suggests that goods are communicators and satisfiers. Notable is the absence of the poor, elderly, disabled and big women, a phenomenon known as 'absent presence' (Barthes 1977). On the flip side of 'absent presence' is 'present absence', which refers to empty or stereotypical representations. For instance, *True Love* features black African women, but represents them in a stereotypical manner as passive objects.

At this stage of the analysis, it appears that the magazine uses stereotypes because they are shorthand forms that allow readers of the text to immediately know what they are "being given since they only need the 'gist'" (Bennett *et al.* 2005:82). Stereotypes are ideological

tools that are used to express beliefs about groups by other groups; hence Bennett *et al.* (2005:81) note that “as any ideological effect, the repetition of stereotypes and the absence of plausible alternatives means that the values wrapped up in the stereotype come to appear as ‘common sense’”. The main stereotypes that are employed are woman as sex object, or woman as passive or submissive. However, Tessa Perkins (1997:75) points out that stereotypes are not always negative and further argues that contradictory stereotypes can be used to represent the same group. Contradictory stereotypes used to represent black African women involve featuring them as caring and nurturing mothers, and sex objects at the same time (this point is discussed further under semiotic analysis in Chapter Seven).

The findings from the quantitative content analysis of the advertisements revealed that the magazine carried a wide range of products. Hair nourishing products featured prominently. Different hair textures, hair colours and hair lengths were featured. Many hair advertisements were geared towards the festive season, from October to December. Most of the women had long (neck-length and longer), straight, black hair. Curly/wavy hair also featured more frequently than short coarse hair, signifying the prevalence of the so-called white ideal compared to African standards of beauty. Be that as it may, the advertisements showcased a wide spectrum of representations of black beauty based on the determinant of hair. There are different images of black feminine beauty owing to the fact that the magazine is targeted at different kinds of readers in terms of demographics. In addition, there is no typical black woman; under the umbrella of black African women sits individuals with different style tastes, beliefs, motivations, and aspirations. Advertisements in the same magazine are targeted at these diverse individuals and each is likely to appeal more to a certain demographic than to others; for instance, advertisements for hair relaxers will appeal to women who like straight, smooth hair while advertisements for moulding wax gel are likely to appeal to those who prefer styling their hair into dreadlocks.

It is important to note that the findings of this quantitative content analysis cannot be generalised to all women’s magazines because the sample was drawn only from *True Love*. Furthermore, the conclusions drawn only apply to *True Love* within the sampled period. In other words, the results provide a snapshot of the hairstyles and identities of black African women in *True Love* during the period of study. Furthermore, the investigation continues in the following three chapters, after which more definitive conclusions may be drawn.

## CONCLUSION

While the quantitative content analysis has provided statistical analysis, it is important to highlight that this method cannot analyse individual images, but it is useful in quantifying manifest content that is grouped into distinct categories. It quantifies visual representations such as the number of women featured with long hair on the covers and advertisements but does not explain the ‘why’ part, for example, why *True Love* features women with long hair on its covers. Furthermore, it is important to note that the data analysis and findings may have been influenced by the researcher’s biases that are informed by cultural background. For instance, what is considered to be very long hair in the African context may be classified under medium length hair by a researcher from another culture. Furthermore, body weight issues are viewed differently by people from different cultures.

To gain more insight into the representations, it is therefore essential to combine quantitative content analysis with other methods such as visual semiotic analysis and focus group interviews. The following two chapters focus on visual semiotic analysis. Chapter Six presents the findings of a semiotic analysis of the advertisements and Chapter Seven focuses on the covers, and subsequently investigates the mythic and ideological discourses found on both the covers and advertisements.

## **CHAPTER SIX: APPLICATION TO *TRUE LOVE*: VISUAL SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE ADVERTISEMENTS**

The previous chapter provided a quantitative content analysis; although this does not analyse individual images, it is useful for quantifying manifest content that is grouped into distinct categories. To gain more insight into the representations, it is therefore important to combine quantitative content analysis with other methods such as visual semiotic analysis and focus group interviews. The sections below focus on semiotic analysis of the 29 advertisements, and the subsequent chapter presents the findings from an analysis of the 12 covers. After that, Chapter Eight uses a pre-group questionnaire and focus group interviews to explore the perceptions of 30 black African women.

### **6.1 Semiotic analysis**

It is important to analyse and interpret the visual codes used on the covers and in advertisements because visual communication has become a fundamental aspect of our lives. Each image is analysed using Barthes's three levels of signification, which entail identifying signifiers and signifieds at the first level of signification, which is known as denotation. The literal or obvious meaning of the signs is identified. The focus is on what one sees in the picture including the age of model, body size (slim, fat), facial expression (smiling, neutral, sad), pose (touching body part, for example face, hand on waist or hips), dress code (beach, business, casual attire); passive or active. Where there are two or more models, the relationship to each other is examined.

When analysing texts using semiotic analysis nothing is a given, hence it is important not to take anything for granted; even familiar things should be viewed in a way that makes them look out of the ordinary (Lacey 1998:56). This brings us to the second level of signification, where the connotative meaning is identified. According to Hall (1973:226), denotation is precise, literal, unambiguous, while connotation is more open-ended, and it is at this level where myth and ideology reside. In addition, elements including the gaze offered or denied; colour; subjectivity, which relates to involvement or detachment; social distance which entails framing (close-up, medium shot or long shot) and composition (the way elements are structured), lighting and angle from which the image is shot, drawn from the grammar of

visual design proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), are employed to analyse images and how they communicate meaning.

Furthermore, the visual images are analysed in conjunction with verbal signs, that is, cover lines that accompany the cover image (see 7.1.13), and text on the advertisements. It is important to analyse verbal texts in order to clarify the meaning of images. Cover lines and text on advertisements set up the implicit cultural or cognitive frame within which the viewers make sense of what they see. Drawing on Kress (2010), Gillian Rose (2013:16) observes that “text is a necessary requirement for framing, provisionally, the fluidity of meaning in the communicative context provided by contemporary, convergent visual culture”. Susan Sontag (2004:9) argues that visual images such as photographs “wait to be explained or falsified by their captions”. Barthes (1977) adds that the meaning of the image can be read in relation to and is dependent on the accompanying verbal text like a caption, headline or cover line. For Barthes (1977), images are polysemic signifiers; he further argues that the verbal text anchors the visual image. Barthes (1977:39) notes that “in every society various techniques are developed intended to fix the floating chain of signifieds in such a way as to counter the terror of uncertain signs; the linguistic message is one of these techniques”.

Using Barthes (1977) as a point of departure, a visual semiotic analysis of the advertisements follows. In this chapter and in the first section of Chapter Seven, I present mainly the first level interpretation and meaning of each advertisement and cover and thereafter expose the myths and ideologies in terms of thematic clusters.

## **6.2 Perceptions of the black body and advertising for the ‘African market’**

From a historical perspective, images of black African women were rarely featured in advertisements during colonial and apartheid eras in South Africa. Although black people comprised the majority of the population in South Africa, they were rendered invisible. Owing to the draconian laws that led to impoverishment, many black people did not have much disposable income; advertisers did not target them, and saw no need to include them in advertisements. However, after the Second World War, encouraged by the post-war boom the cosmetics manufacturing industry grew rapidly. To find a market for their products, brands turned their focus on the ‘African market’. During this period, the aim of the advertisements for grooming products was to introduce the filthy ‘savages’ to cleanliness products.



Cleanliness was a concern as some white settlers in southern Africa<sup>1</sup> observed that the native inhabitants exercised primitive hygiene practices, and it was the white man's duty to teach them modern ways of hygiene. This seems to suggest that racial superiority and class position were intricately connected to cleanliness. Even in diaspora in places such as Brazil the black body was associated with dirt and bad odour as a result "soap and cleansing rituals became central to the demarcation of body boundaries and the policing of social hierarchies" (Pinho 2006:271). The racialised conceptions of cleanliness were problematic because some white people did not understand the black body. In the white imaginary the black skin was associated with dirt, not natural skin tone, as George Wyndham Hamilton Knight-Bruce pointed out that he believed the proper colour of the natives was not black, "but dark brown; yet they are so covered with streaks of something or another; that black is the general impression," adding that "the superior ones are lighter" (Fripp & Hiller 1949:80).

From the white perspective, advertising was viewed as one of the important vehicles for civilising the 'natives'. One of the major aims of this civilising mission was to promote Eurocentric standards and encourage black people to adopt them (McClintock 1995:208).<sup>2</sup> The advertisements were tailored in such a way that they created new needs among black people, and solutions were offered in the form of Western-centric products. This was meant to promote Western products as superior and in turn advance white supremacy. For example, the verbal text in the 1940s RMM's Atlas Soap advertisement read, "nature's greatest gift is perhaps water – and one of civilisation's greatest gifts – SOAP..." (*Bantu Mirror* 1946:8).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, a Lever Brothers' Lifebuoy advertisement in a 1950s issue of *Drum* invites the reader to use Lifebuoy because successful men used it (Jere 2014) and the Lux soap was promoted as "the simple secret of beauty" and a product that had the power to keep the "skin clear and fresh" (*Bantu Mirror* 1950). The advertisements applied binary oppositions by implying that black people who did not use these soaps were ugly, unsuccessful and their skin

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<sup>1</sup> Most nineteenth-century white explorers, missionaries, farmers and other settlers lived in and travelled to different parts of southern Africa. For example, missionaries such as John Moffat served in South Africa, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Bechuanaland (Botswana), and George Wyndham Hamilton Knight-Bruce was an Anglican Bishop in Bloemfontein, South Africa and later moved to Rhodesia where he became the inaugural Bishop of Mashonaland.

<sup>2</sup> In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock (1995:208) talks about how soap entered the realm of Victorian fetishism and how it took "its privileged place not only as the fundamental form of a new industrial economy but also as the fundamental form of a new cultural system for representing social value". For McClintock (1995:209), soap advertising was also used to "mediate the Victorian poetics of racial hygiene and imperial progress".

<sup>3</sup> The *Bantu Mirror* was an English newspaper that was distributed in Bulawayo, Rhodesia's second largest city.

smelly and full of blemishes. While the Lifebuoy advertisement in *Drum* used a black male model (Jere 2014), the Lux advertisements in the *Bantu Mirror* mostly used images of white models to promote modernity and civilise black women (Burke 1996).

Since some products promoted ideals that were against African cultures and black people's lived realities, they were rejected by the African market. Owing to this, advertisers conducted research studies to understand the black people's needs and advertising campaigns were revised to incorporate aspects that appealed to African tastes and catered to their unique needs. In the 1960s, there was competition from local companies such as Black Like Me that were producing products for black people. The proliferation of products aimed specifically at black people and the employment of black executives to sell products to other black people saw the introduction of a few black people in the advertisements.

After the democratic elections in 1994, with the growth in the black middle class, black people constituted a lucrative market for advertisers. Advertising campaigns were reconceptualised and black African women began to feature prominently in advertisements, particularly in publications targeted at black readership. The aim was to get rid of apartheid discourses and steer advertising towards ideals that promoted equality and involve black people in the economy. The advertisements published in magazines targeted at black people such as *Thandi* and *True Love* featured beauty products, clothing and household goods, which were aimed at women although the magazines were also read by a significant number of black men (Bertelsen 1998:230). On the other hand, *Tribute* and *Ebony* emulated 'white' magazines and included advertisements for banking products and luxury items such as cars (Bertelsen 1998:230), and these seem to promote upward mobility among black people. Most of the advertisements in 'black' magazines drew codes from the gains accrued from the struggle which were summed up by the catchphrase for the ANC's campaign in the 1994 elections "a better life for all. Working together for jobs, peace, and freedom". Black women and African symbols were featured in advertisements and the names of struggle icons such as Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo as well as words like "freedom" and "empowerment" were incorporated into advertisement content. However, these terms were given new meanings as they were used in relation to consumption of goods. The message promoted was that they had freedom to purchase goods and empower themselves (Bertelsen 1998:239).

Since advertisements circulate commodities and cultural practices that are likely to change over time, my analysis of black African women representations in *True Love* focuses on the period between June 2015 and May 2016. It also examines the experiences of black African women who are included in the advertisements. The codes and signifiers that I engage with are used 23 years after the inception of democratic rule at the time of writing. A visual semiotic analysis of the advertisements, which seeks to uncover the aspirations that are promoted, follows below.

### **6.3 Semiotic analysis of the advertisements**

Using hair advertisements, a form of advertisement that uses images of women as the focal point, this study explores how *True Love* circulates knowledge about black African women. Does the magazine use race and gender to reinforce gender stereotypes or does it introduce new images of black African women? The codes, themes, and techniques that are employed in the 29 advertisements to sell the products are discussed in the sections that follow below. These include African heritage, nature, benefits to the consumer, fantasy, and appeal factor. Some are positive elements that give rise to contentment, while others are negative and are likely to lead to low self-esteem. First, I focus on African heritage.

#### **6.3.1 *Invoking African heritage***

African heritage is promoted in the advertisements through the inclusion of African and Afrocentric hairstyles, highlighting black pride. In the Dark and Lovely advertisement for a relaxer (Figure 13), the use of a woman with dark skin tone with the verbal text “I am dark and Lovely” on a purple background at the bottom of the page signifies black pride. It shows that black African women who use Dark and Lovely are proud of their heritage. Blackness and black pride are also highlighted and affirmed by the phrase “I am dark and Lovely” (Figure 18) in another Dark and Lovely advertisement featuring a woman with a lighter skin tone.

While the written text promotes black beauty, the visual text seems to promote the Eurocentric standard of long, straight hair and light skin tone. Preference for straight hair and light skin tone are vestiges of the colonial past that was marked by racial discrimination based on one’s physical appearance, particularly skin colour and hair texture. During

apartheid rule in South Africa, the racial hierarchy placed whiteness and Eurocentric ideals on top and blackness at the bottom. African culture, beliefs and black people's physical features were disparaged and natural afro hair used as a tool to discriminate against black people; it was even referred to as kinky, a term that has sexual connotations. As a result, black people, particularly women, internalised the white beauty ideals. Even more than two decades after the inception of democratic rule, those standards of beauty are still perpetuated in the media and are ingrained in people's psyche. Using Eurocentric beauty ideals to promote a product that claims to promote black pride points to contradictory messages that seem to run through *True Love*. Furthermore, the phrase "I am Dark and Lovely" can be interpreted to mean "I am the product" or "I am the commodity" and relates to the objectification of black African women (see 7.2.5).

An advertisement for Jabu Stone Natural Hair Care (Figure 25) featuring three women and a man also perpetuates concepts of African heritage. The hairstyles people are shown wearing include dreadlocks, afro and cornrows; these are more than just hairstyles, they serve as an expression of black cultural identity. The products advertised show that hair manufacturers are cognisant of the fact that black hair is fragile; as a result, great care should be taken to maintain it in a healthy state. The image of the woman with afro resembles barbershop signs, which consisted of strong lines shaping the faces and defining feature, "especially the sharp edges of hairlines and hair tops" (Nettleton & Middleton 2014:47).

Black pride is also evident in the inclusion of Afrocentric hairstyles and accessories such as dreadlocks, cornrows and braids. Figure 26 showcases braiding, one of the few hairstyles that allow black African women to wear long, flowing hair without altering it through use of chemical relaxers. In this advertisement for Sta-Sof-Fro Braids (Figure 26), the braids covering part of the woman's face and right shoulder have been styled into a zig-zag pattern resembling a snake. The snake is often used metaphorically in relation to the body in Ndebele and Zulu cultures, for example, the metaphor of shedding one's skin like a snake, and the word *inyoka* (snake) used to describe the snaking braided pattern or the width of the braids and *izinyoka* (snakes) used to refer to the ancestors. Interestingly, as previously suggested, hair also has religious significance in African cultures including some Nigerian and southern African communities.

Braids, one of the symbols of blackness, are associated with glamour in Figure 26, “just be ... glam”. Before analysing this advertisement it is helpful to explore the concept of ‘glamour’ briefly. Although in some instances the word ‘glamour’ has been used interchangeably with ‘beauty’, the two share some similarities but also differ. Glamour involves enticement and some form of social display (Gundle & Castelli 2006:16). In addition glamour is constructed as a gendered and racialised phenomena: it is often presented as feminine and white. This system of “visual enchantment” (Gundle & Castelli 2006:86), which often subsumes sophistication and sexual allure (Dyhouse 2010:1), promotes consumerism in order to maintain capitalist hegemony. However, viewed from another perspective, glamour is not only a creation of the racist, capitalist and patriarchal ideologies that promote the sexualisation and objectification of women. Notions of glamour change during different periods, and in the present age glamour seems to be synonymous with celebrities, especially white female Hollywood celebrities. However, there are other ‘centres’ of glamour such as Parisian glamour, hip hop glamour and Oriental glamour, which is often presented as exotic, but the dominant one seems to be Hollywood ‘white’ glamour. Glamour is also linked to social class and status: the ‘haves’ are considered to be glamorous because glamour has a “material dimension” (Gundle & Castelli 2006:6) as the rich can afford to buy the products.

Having said the above, it is worth noting that glamour means different things to different people as it is shaped by the social, cultural and economic environment. Drawing on feminist perspectives, Dyhouse (2010:3) suggests that glamour can represent “defiance rather than compliance” and can be used as an empowering tool by black African women that equips them to resist gendered and racist hegemony. As a result, some black African women adopt and adapt global trends to create their unique brand of glamour. Some also wear styles to promote ‘Afrocentric/African’ glamour. Black African women arguably use products to achieve the glamorous look not only to look good for men, but also for their own benefit.

Returning to the advertisement in Figure 26, braiding is considered a part of African heritage, nonetheless it is fundamental to highlight that identities emerge from certain histories but they are always incomplete; hence black African women are continuously negotiating with new worlds. Identities are constructed and achieved through the consumption of consumer products and emerge relationally as black African women interact with people from other cultures and genders. Cultural cross-pollination results in hybridisation and glocalisation; for example, this hairstyle uses hair extensions to create a ‘naturalised’ African hairstyle.

In Figure 33, the verbal text implores the consumer to “Reclaim your roots”. The term ‘roots’ carries double meaning as it refers to the hair roots and an individual’s culture or place of origin. If ‘roots’ is taken to mean culture, it is interesting that Eurocentric relaxed, straight hair is used to demonstrate the efficacy of the product. Using braided hair would have served the purpose of promoting both the African cultural tradition and the benefits of the oil. The ‘before’ image shows a receding hairline, a problem that affects many black African women owing to the strain caused by relaxing, braiding and sewing on weaves. Although they cause damage to the hair, chemical relaxers, braiding and weaving are presented as necessary evils that women have to endure. The myth perpetuated is that with the Fusion oil it is possible to restore what has been lost. In other words, women can continue relaxing, braiding and weaving their hair as long as they use the oil to reverse the damage.

Another myth perpetuated under African heritage is a sense of belonging. This advertisement (Figure 28) uses collective appeal<sup>4</sup> and emphasises in-group benefits. The product is made by experts in African hair for Africans. It further claims to be home-grown because it is “created in Africa for the specific needs of our hair”. Drawing on Geert Hofstede’s (1983) classification, collectivistic cultural patterns are predominantly found in South Africa. However, the broad categorisation does not take note of the cultural differences that exist within a nation owing to the class differences, influence from other cultures, and the fact that culture is dynamic. Therefore, it is not surprising that within the period of study there are some advertisements that employed individualistic appeal such as “For me only the best” in Figures 38 and 39. Women are represented as atomised consumers who fight against their hair imperfections and also compete with other women. In Figure 37, the woman uses the Black Velvet hair dye and steals the show. This seems to be a departure from the communal spirit and shared consciousness, the pillars that democracy was built on in South Africa. Promoting the notion of atomised individuals reflects a new cultural shift and present realities that black African women contend with in a competitive, fast-paced world. Moving from African heritage, the following section explores nature.

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<sup>4</sup> Individualism versus collectivism forms a part of Geert Hofstede’s (1983) four dimensions of national culture. The individualistic-collectivism dimension refers to the relationship between the individual and fellow members of the society. In individualistic societies “ties between individuals are very loose. Everybody is supposed to look after his or her own self-interest and maybe the interest of his or her immediate family” whereas in collectivist societies “ties between individuals are very tight ... Everybody is supposed to look after the interest of his or her in-group ...” (Hofstede 1983:78).

### ***6.3.2 Incorporating nature and the natural***

First, nature is used to connote different things and to sell products, primarily because it is promoted as beneficial and unspoilt. Some advertisements draw on these attributes of nature and advocate it as the ‘opposite’ of science and technology, which actually go into making the hair products that are sold as ‘natural’. Drawing on the beneficial and therapeutic qualities of nature in Figure 17a, the Caivil Oil Moisturiser that contains Tea Tree oil is portrayed as soothing. Some natural ingredients are given prominence or special mention to substantiate the quality of the products (Figures 13, 21, 23, 25, 27, 33 and 40). There is an emphasis on natural ingredients and a clear distancing from the use of harmful chemicals such as in Figure 40, which categorically states that the relaxer does not contain lye, a harsh substance that can burn the skin and scalp. Moreover, words and metaphors drawn from nature are incorporated into the names of products such as argan oil made from kernels of the argan tree from Morocco (Figure 23); they are also used to describe the qualities of products such as “silky straight” (Figure 13), “silky-soft” (Figure 15) and “naturally soft” (Figure 39)”. The colours and patterns used in product packaging, background and borders of some advertisements are inspired by the natural environment. For instance, the decorative border in Figure 38 features so-called ‘African motifs’.

Furthermore, nature is incorporated in the names of hairstyles. In African culture, verbal and image metaphors drawn from the plant and animal kingdom are often used to describe human hair. Plants have lent their names to hairstyles, the most popular one being cornrows, a style involving plaiting hair strands close to the scalp leaving small gaps of visible scalp in-between; the end product resembles rows of corn interspersed by soil in the field. It is believed that the hairstyle originated in Africa and in the Caribbean (Sherrow 2006:97). Different names including ‘track braids’, and ‘cane rows’ are used to describe this type of braiding hair close to the scalp. In Trinidad the style is called ‘cane rows’ because black slaves worked in sugar cane plantations. Interestingly, the term ‘corn’ is American, whereas in South Africa the word ‘maize’ is widely used. It is possible that the hairstyle was named cornrows by African American slaves, who worked in fields, to “keep their traditions alive and for practical reasons” (Sherrow 2006:97). The hairstyle that originated in Africa became widely known globally during the 1960s when both male and female African American celebrities began wearing the style to assert their cultural heritage. The above points to the complexities of Transatlantic influences on black stylisation in that the hairstyle was

transported from Africa to the Caribbean and America during colonisation and slavery, and later became a global phenomenon when it was popularised by hip hop artists, sports personalities and runway models.

The connotations associated with a cornfield are transferred on to human hair. In the image, the models are juxtaposed against an earthy background, which resembles the soil, promoting stereotypes of essentialist images of Africa. This reinforces the idea that Africa is close to nature because it is believed to be unspoilt. Stereotypes, which presume that there are hairstyles that are quintessentially African and that black people have a cultural essence as blacks, are problematic. While it is true that dreadlocks and cornrows are a part of African heritage, some members of the black community may not agree that these hairstyles form their identity as black people. Having advertisements showing natural and naturalised hairstyles possibly promotes black pride and cultural identity, however, the advertisement seems to suggest that the hairstyles are reserved for black people and other racial groups cannot access them. In a globalised world people from different cultural backgrounds interact and exchange ideas and aesthetic conventions. For example, white celebrities such as Justin Bieber, Paris Hilton, Gwen Stefani and Chris Jenner, to name a few, have experimented with cornrows.

In some advertisements, nature is associated with the 'true' self. The Jabu Stone advertisement encourages consumers to "keep it natural" (Figure 25). By utilising the phrase "Keep it natural", the advertisement calls attention to authenticity of the Afrocentric hairstyles and products on offer. In addition, the verbal text shows that there is an intimate link between the black body and nature. The black body, particularly the woman's, is often associated with nature as illustrated by the term 'Mother Nature' which personifies nature and compares it to a mother owing to its nurturing attributes. Like a mother, nature sustains life. To heighten this, images of ingredients that are beneficial to the hair such as wheat, melon, and the green leaf are shown to signify and evoke nature. The prominent use of green connotes natural and eco-friendly, and can also symbolise abundance. The products are presented as natural, made from natural ingredients.

On the advertisement for the Sofn'free hair range (Figure 15), it is clearly mentioned that the hair shown is the "Models Natural Hair". The brand has seen the need to specify that the model's natural hair has been used because there have been claims that some companies have



used weaves and wigs in advertisements for hair relaxers. The above statement is used to give the brand and products credibility. The verbal text “Models Natural Hair” also raises the question ‘what constitutes natural black hair? It seems as if for Sofn’free afro hair in both its unaltered natural state as well as afro hair that has been altered through the use of relaxers is considered to be natural black hair. Interestingly, the ‘natural’ is achieved and maintained through the use of products. Figure 39 illustrates this point because the Sta-Sof-Fro Blow Out Relaxer is used to maintain the “curls and waves naturally soft”. In addition to nature, some advertisements use the code of the benefit to the consumer to make the products appealing.

### ***6.3.3 Benefits that accrue to the consumer***

In some advertisements, the myth that is promoted is that products provide benefits to the consumer, such as emotional benefits and rational rewards. The examples of emotional rewards employed include satisfaction or contentment, pleasure, social acceptance or approval, confidence and success. The kind of lifestyle promoted by the hairstyles is glamorous. Berger (1972:132) concurs and argues that “publicity can never really afford to be about the product or opportunity it is proposing to the buyer who is not yet enjoying it. Publicity is never a celebration of a pleasure-in-itself. Publicity is always about the future buyer”. The Inecto hair colour advertisements (Figures 32, 35 and 37) try to convince the reader that changing her hair colour will bring her popularity. In these advertisements there is an implied relationship between a hairstyle and desirability, pleasure, and having fun. This ties in with Karl Marx’s (1967:225) theory of reification<sup>5</sup> and notion of commodity fetishism, which “metamorphoses the social, economic character impressed on things in the process of social production into a natural character stemming from the material nature of those things”. It can therefore be argued that the advertisements offer an individual “an image of himself made glamorous by the product or opportunity it is trying to sell. The image then makes him envious of himself as he might be” (Berger 1972:144). Hairstyles are also associated with more practical benefits.

The rational appeal of the products includes practical aspects like healing properties (anti-itch spray in Figure 22), repairing damage (Figures 23 and 33), and nourishment (Figures 26, 27 and 38). The products claim to repair damage and restore hair to health. A subtext in these

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<sup>5</sup> Reification describes social consciousness wherein human relations are based on commodities. To acquire value, commodities acquire social form (Marx 1976:72).

advertisements is the appeals to fear and shame. The advertisements for lustre and shine enhancers (Figures 15a, 21e, 23d, 23g, 26c, 40e and 41e) are good examples that use fear, embarrassment and rejection. The subtle message being communicated is that not using these products can be detrimental, as it would have an impact on one's physical appearance. People who use the products are rewarded and can see the difference; for example, in Figure 33, the before and after pictures are displayed to show the changes after a week and how the user regained her hairline after 12 weeks. The advertisement shows how one woman overcame her imperfection and suggests that the solution comes from using the products.

The advertisement for Revlon Realistic Hair Range (Figure 41) employs social acceptance appeal to lure readers to buy the products. Looking beautiful is believed to earn an individual social acceptance. Even in Greek mythology, beauty was a highly valued asset. Legend has it that at a wedding the muses sang “only that which is beautiful is loved, that which is not beautiful is not loved” (Eco 2004:37). In Figure 41, a desirable woman is presented as slim, has a youthful appearance, flawless radiant skin, and healthy hair. The products are fetishised and loaded with meaning. In addition to offering solutions to hair problems, they strip the black woman of her identity and she assumes the desirable attributes associated with the product range. The impression created is that the woman on the image does not possess beauty prior to using the product. It seems beauty is bestowed upon her by Revlon products. Women who do not fit into this ideal have problems, and should use the advertised products to rid themselves of the imperfections. The advertisement applies binary opposites and capitalises on women's fears to sell the products. The phrase “discover beauty” implies that relaxed hair is beautiful and the opposite holds true, that is, natural afro hair is ugly. Therefore, the text implies that black African women should alter their hair to become beautiful and in turn gain social acceptance. Using the image of an elegant woman sitting on a swing promotes escapism, leisure and consumerism. It creates a mental image of luxury and transports the viewer to an exotic location where she can enjoy an affluent life.

The above shows that black hair is a site of negotiation and intense political dialogue. The black body, particularly hair, seems to be policed and controlled through the incorporation of class, gender and race dynamics. For instance, the practice of relaxing hair points to the erasure of black hair in the quest for ‘beautiful hair’. Hair relaxers are linked to the capitalist agenda, which advances the notion that beauty can be self-created and is not an attribute that a person is born with; hence it can be discovered through the use of products. Relaxed hair is

represented as normal and this encourages the consumption of hair relaxing products, even though they have been scientifically proven to be harmful.

Product use is believed to result in physical changes. The products have the power to transform and the outcome of their use is visible; for example, after using the hair dye the model on the product packaging has plum-coloured short hair that covers her forehead (Figure 17). This advertisement claims that using the product can transform the consumer and give her a new identity. The plum colour signifies vanity, she is not afraid to experiment and do something daring. She makes a bold statement with her sassy plum curls. The transformation is not only outward but there are other gains associated with product use such as boosting self-esteem and gaining a new attitude. For example, in Figure 19 the consumer is called upon to “Be bold, bright and deliciously sexy”, and the cranberry hair colour claims to possess the magic to transform the user by giving her a “berrylicious attitude”.

The products are depicted as having the ability to help a person transform and improve her look. In the advertisements all the women are well-groomed and wearing fine clothes. The Inecto (Figures 19, 20, 24, 32, 35, and 37), Sta-sof-Fro (Figure 26) and Revlon (Figure 41) advertisements show images of women dressed for special occasions. Connotatively, the evening dresses worn by the women signify class and elegance. Noteworthy is the fact that in the advertisements where clothing is visible, all the women are wearing Western-style clothes. Only one image (Figure 31) in an advertisement by Frika, a home-grown company, features a woman wearing a string top with embroidery design with Afrocentric motifs in front. This can be explained by the fact that international brands use standardised advertising campaigns to ensure that the images of women appeal to a global market. Moreover, Western-style clothing was probably chosen because it is worn in most parts of the world and co-exists with national and regional attire. Although the inhabitants of southern Africa have their distinctive traditional attire, Pan-African dress codes differ from one country to another as a result, like English, Eurocentric-style clothing is used in advertisements. Furthermore, Karen Tranberg Hansen (2000:253) notes that black people in sub-Saharan Africa have been wearing Western clothing, which was introduced by colonisation, for such a long time that they have adopted it as their own. However, this does not mean that black people passively imitate white people; they are selective and sensitive to the cultural specifications that regulate the dress code. Hansen’s (2000:253) Zambian study revealed that women are

required to cover their private parts, and the length and tightness of clothes should adhere to societal standards.

An advertisement for Jabu Stone Natural Hair Care (Figure 25) features three women wearing earrings and make-up, and one of them is pouting. The women are represented as beings who are preoccupied with improving their physical appearance, notwithstanding the fact that some of the grooming methods are painful and cause damage to the hair. For example, relaxing hair and braiding are painful and damaging to the hair particularly in people with sensitive scalp, yet these routines are presented as fun and pleasurable. The pain and the danger of being burnt by the harmful relaxers is erased, it is either missing or alluded to in a veiled manner in advertisements for relaxers. For example, in Figure 18 there is a half-hearted mention of “optimum scalp comfort”. The danger of using relaxers and braiding are only magnified in protection and treatment products, which alert the consumer to the dangers and prescribe how the problem can be fixed (Figures 23 and 33). In addition, achieving the look that is touted as desirable entails spending a lot of money; however, all this is missing from the advertisements. Instead, grooming and consumption are portrayed as a natural characteristic of black womanhood. However, it is not only women who groom themselves, men are also concerned with their looks. The advent of the metrosexual male who uses grooming products and men’s grooming products industry is growing. The products advertised are for both men and women; they use the same products to achieve similar hairstyles and to care for their hair.

Variety or choice is another code used to illustrate benefits to consumers. A striking example of providing choice for readers is Figure 34 that advertises Frika products. The woman in the advertisement has hair extensions and the wispy spirals add volume and give texture to her hair. A visual hierarchy is established to guide the reader’s eye. The image of the woman is large and placed on top where the eye is likely to focus on first and then move to the scooter, and finally to the box with ribbon and products. The emphasis is on the model’s hair. The advertisement uses a readers’ competition or promotion as a marketing strategy to entice readers. This advertisement serves to remind consumers about the Frika dry hair product range and is meant to keep them interested in the products. The way the text is phrased in a way that entices readers to enter the competition. A reader who buys two styles of Frika products stands a chance to win a scooter or hamper.

To promote the myth of freedom of choice, the consumer is presented with different types of products. Figures 14, 21, 23 and 40 showcase product ranges. The verbal and visual texts seem to suggest that identity can be bought and an individual can create multiple identities through the consumption of products. The reader is defined as a consumer with the power to forge her individual identity in a world full of commodities. Moreover, scarcity appeal is used in the promotion on Figure 34 as there are only two scooters and 80 hampers up for grabs. There is limited time to participate as the competition runs from 1 November 2015 to 10 March 2016. By stipulating the timeframe for the competition, this advertisement encourages consumers to take action. The detailed instructions on how to enter the competition are given at the top, and at the bottom readers are referred to the brand's website to access more information on the rules.

Closely related to freedom of choice is value for money. The advertisements that illustrate value for money are Figure 40 "mix & match, 3 for 1", Figure 23 "strengthen while you straighten", and Figure 16 "4 in 1 Solution". The Sta-Sof-Fro Wigs & Weaves products (Figure 38) claim to work on both weaves and wigs, and interestingly the reader is not shown which model is wearing a weave and which has a wig. Probably there is no need to identify which one is which because most weaves and wigs look similar. Important information about the products is given and putting "Non-greasy" in a bubble highlights the major quality and benefit of the products: good price, social status, luxury, and being influential.

#### **6.3.4 *Enticing with the quality bait***

Although product quality falls under rational benefits to consumers, I have put it under its own sub-heading to highlight its importance since the Advertising Standards Authority of South Africa (ASA) requires that quality claims should be validated. To improve the acceptance of products, companies use branding, science, expert opinion, demonstration and testimonials to appeal to consumers. In the sampled advertisements, all the companies included their names and logos in the advertisements. Most of the names and logos are positioned at the top of the page and are displayed prominently. These create brand awareness and reinforce the brand's attributes and reputation.

The 4 in 1 Hair Solution (Figure 16) claims to strengthen hair, replace moisture and condition, promote healthy shine, help with hair and scalp dryness and encourages hair

growth. To substantiate claims, the advertisement contains a list of key ingredients including olive, arnica and rosemary oils as per ASA stipulations, which state that an advertisement cannot make certain claims, for example that a product has multiple functions unless it can be scientifically substantiated (Appendix D – Advertising of cosmetics ...). New technologies are mentioned to add weight to quality claims.

To endorse the quality of products the advertisement use expert opinion. The Sofn'free HairXperts (Figure 15) features a cut out picture of a male expert below the brand name. He is wearing black pants, a white T-shirt, a jacket and glasses. The expert, whose name is given below as Isaac Letele, is carrying a hair dryer in his right hand. This advertisement uses expert advice to substantiate the claim that the products give “silky-soft, super-straight hair”. Letele, a celebrity stylist gives professional advice in the form of tips on how best to use the product range.

Another example is the advertisement for the Dark and Lovely Fat Protein Bodifying Relaxer (Figure 18). A woman with straight, neck-length hair is depicted on the advertisement. The close-up shot shows the woman looking at the camera and smiling with her lips closed. Instead of bangs in front, her pageboy<sup>6</sup> hairstyle is straightened to perfection. On this double spread advertisement (DPS), part of the stylist's body and a hand rolling hair into place are shown. The stylist seems to be a man because the rolled up sleeve reveals muscular biceps and hairy arms.

The subtle message conveyed in these advertisements is that women do not have information about their hairstyling needs and therefore need external expert help. The black female readers of the magazine are disempowered and denied voice through “an unequal distribution of narrative resources” (Couldry 2010:9). Denying them agency is a “deep form of oppression” (Couldry 2010:9) because it leads to what WEB Du Bois (1903) referred to as double consciousness in his book *The souls of black folk*. The readers are forced to see themselves through the eyes of others (Du Bois 1903) – in this advertisement, through the gaze of male experts and on the other hand, strive to attain their own self-consciousness. Owing to genderised subjugation, some black African women are likely to experience double

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<sup>6</sup> A pageboy is a hairstyle that is similar to a long bob. In the 1950s, shoulder length hair used to be rolled under the ends; however, over the years it has evolved and can be styled on hair that reaches just below the ear.

consciousness, a sensation that gives rise to a feeling of two-ness, which is characterised by conflicting ideas and ideals regarding what constitutes femininity. As a result, some black African women are constantly striving to merge the two selves and assert their identity.

The choice of the gender of the experts seems to suggest that men know about women's problems and bodies better than the women themselves do. Speaking for others has been found to be problematic in many discourses. The advertisement introduces the element of power dynamics since it is the dominant male who is knowledgeable and the submissive woman who is ignorant and merely decorative. Linda Alcoff (1991:29) concurs where she posits that this practice of speaking for others is "born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as the one who more correctly understands the truth about another's situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise". Furthermore, for Alcoff (1991:29), speaking for others has a negative effect as it leads to "erasure and reinscription of sexual, national and other kinds of hierarchies". The dominant man disempowers and controls the subordinate woman and this reinforces patriarchal ideology. However, on the other hand, the use of an expert can be viewed as empowering because his advice equips women with knowledge, which is linked to power.

Another code that is employed to demonstrate the quality of the products is testimonials. In the advertisement for Caivil Luxurious hair range (Figure 17), the hair of the woman on the main image has been given a trendy twist of a classic bob, resulting in a glamorous look. Her finger is positioned over her eyebrow as if she is in deep thought or concentrating on something. This posture can also be read as a salute, a sign drawn from the armed forces, signifying that she is impressed with the products and is expressing her admiration for them. Extending on the salute military metaphor, the salute is a sign of victory; through use of the products she has won the battle with her hair and testifies that "Now my hair is healthier and easier to manage". The model's first-person testimony serves to reinforce the notion that African hair needs taming.<sup>7</sup> To reinforce the stereotype of essentialist Africa, the woman on the main image is wearing an animal print. This kind of representation is reminiscent of the animalisation of black people during colonial and apartheid times. Black women were often

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<sup>7</sup> The notion that black hair needs to be tamed runs through both advertising and editorial content of many lifestyle magazines. In March 2017, *Fairlady*, a publication aimed at contemporary South African women, featured an article on growing afro with the stand first (a paragraph that summarises the article placed between the headline and the beginning of the story): "Still fighting to tame your hair's natural texture? It's time to ditch the relaxer and go back to your roots" (Clifton 2017:80).

exoticised, and this trend persists as the woman is positioned as a predator, wild, and untamed. From the above discussion it emerges that some of the benefits that the products claim to provide are genuine, while some are exaggerated, and others do not exist at all but are mere marketing gimmicks. This then brings me to the notion of fantasy that I discuss in the following paragraphs.

### **6.3.5 *The magnetic allure of fantasy and escapism***

One of the major advertising appeals that were identified in many advertisements is fantasy. The code of fantasy is employed to disengage consumers from real world issues and connect them with pleasurable things that provide escapism, enhance their mood, and make them feel special and appreciated.

Some advertisements such as the advertisement for MPL Olive Oil Hair Oil (Figure 16) featuring a woman with a 1970s Afro style invoke fantasy by using stylistic devices such as a caricature-like image instead of the picture of a real woman. Probably the reason for adopting this style is that using a human model is expensive and time-consuming. An advertisement that is 100 per cent computer generated costs less and does not take as much time compared to scheduling a photo shoot with a model, and then designing the advertisement.

Another reason could be that this type of advertisements blurs the dichotomy between reality and fantasy. Using a cartoon-like character allows creative directors to experiment and introduce elements of fantasy. A caricature drawing allows the creative team to blow things out of proportion, something that may be difficult to execute when using a human model. For instance, in this image the woman is shown with very big hair with curls. Moreover, she is wearing a lot of make-up, including glitter on her eyelids, lipstick and false eyelashes, and accessories such as earrings, bangles and bracelets and a chunky necklace. She has a deformed bee-stung pout and this is in line with Emmison and Smith's (2000:63) observation that "advertising images are purposeful creations and that they invariably carry much that is distorted". The bold voluminous look could not have worked this well on a real model; however, the cartoon-like character provides a perfect canvas for escapist beauty and pleasure. Interestingly, there also seems to be some kind of balance because although this look has elements of fantasy, it is still accessible. The advertisement suggests that the look is within reach, courtesy of the MPL product.



Some advertisements promote fantasy by invoking royalty. The verbal text in Figure 28, “For royal smoothness and majestic shine” promotes the myth that black African women are African queens and princesses who are entitled to have the best. The fantasy theme is also evident in “For me, only the best” (Figures 26, 38 and 39) where it extends to individuality. The text makes the reader or consumer feel special because it talks to them directly as if the product was made specifically for them. These advertisements employ the individualistic advertising appeal by prioritising the self over the collective.

Pushing the notion of individuality further, in the advertisement for Sta-Sof-Fro Wigs & Weaves on Figure 38 there is a ribbon behind the products and this connotes that these products are a gift to the consumer. This “tickle advertisement” interpellates the consumer through appealing to emotion by using a mode of address meant to make readers feel special. The verbal text “For me, only the best” puts emphasis on personal benefits and invokes the consumer as an atomised individual. Promoting individualism is opposed to South Africa’s collectivist culture. Moreover, the content uses comparative advertising techniques, although it does not go to the extent of targeting specific products by name. The comparison is achieved implicitly through use of the term “best”, which in turn accords the reader high social status because she consumes quality products. The graphics are visually appealing, bright light and rays are used to create atmosphere and magic. The words “Wigs & weaves” are raised, giving an embossed texture.

The code of fantasy also extends to social and racial difference. A good example is the medium shot featuring two women from different ethnic groups, one black and the other one white (Figure 27). This advertisement for Dove Advanced Hair Series, was the only hair advertisement in the 12 issues that featured a black and white woman. In the advertisement, both women have long curled hair, are wearing white clothes, have parted lips, and are gazing at the camera. White clothes signify purity and the colour of a dove, the brand’s symbol. The blobs of the gold oil are spread around the products. The gold colour signifies that the oil is precious like the precious metal gold. It is not specified which hair type the product range is suitable for. The Dove Advanced Hair Series advertisement seems to suggest a one size fits all solution, yet black and white hairs are totally different in terms of morphological structure. Owing to these differences, specific products should be tailored to each hair type.

This advertisement draws on the post-apartheid South Africa Rainbow nation metaphor and features a black and white woman together as equals. By featuring women from different racial groups, the advertisers are subtly communicating that the products are suitable for different hair types. This gives the impression that in the rainbow nation black and white people co-exist peacefully, use the same products, and are equals. It is worth posing the question: can the rainbow nation fantasies be attained or endlessly deferred? Berger (1972:146) sums it up succinctly where he asserts that,

publicity speaks in the future tense and yet the achievement of this future is endlessly deferred. How then does publicity remain credible – or credible enough to exert the influence it does? It remains credible because the truthfulness of publicity is judged, not by the real fulfilment of its promises, but by the relevance of its fantasies to those of the spectator-buyer. Its essential application is not to reality but to daydreams.

In the South African context, there is no straightforward answer to the above question, but suffice to say there is more than what meets the eye at a glance. An in-depth examination of the image in Figure 27 has to interrogate the gender, race and class discourses. DeFrascisco and Palczewski (2007:14) concur when they argue that race, ethnicity and gender intersect. This is of paramount importance in South Africa because of the country's colonial history and apartheid legacy where different races were segregated, and black people were discriminated against because of their skin colour. Black people were constructed as the "Other" because whiteness is the "norm to which all other racial identities are compared" (DeFrascisco & Palczewski 2007:15). Black African women were oppressed by both racism and sexism as they were represented as inferior to both black African men and white women.

True to Berger's (1972:146) observations, a closer look at the advertisement for Dove Advanced Hair Series shows that even in the post-1994 era, racialised stereotypes are still used to privilege idealised white femininity as the standard. Signifiers such as dainty, fragile, light skin and long hair are used to represent ideal femininity. The black woman in the image has a light skin tone, long hair and physical features that resemble the white ideal of thin lips and pointed nose. The white ideal has been internalised and is still considered superior to the black African standards of beauty, as evident in the fact that in South Africa 'yellow bones'<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Yellow bone is a term used to refer to black persons with light skin tone. In some circles, it is believed that yellow bones are more attractive than their dark skinned 'chocolate' counterparts. There

are considered to be more beautiful than their darker skinned counterparts. My focus now shifts to the subject dealing with codes that are used in advertisements to increase the appeal factor.

### **6.3.6 *Using the appeal factor as a draw card***

Several codes including sex and exotic appeal, using celebrity icons, use of colour and positioning of the advertisement are employed to help increase the appeal factor of the products and the lifestyles they promote. The advertisement for Stylin' Dredz (Figure 22) uses an image of a man and woman. They both have dreadlocks, they are standing facing each other with foreheads touching and the woman's hand is resting on her partner's shoulder. They are looking into each other's eyes and smiling. The image uses sex appeal to sell the hair products although public displays on intimacy are not encouraged in some black South African communities. Couples who openly touch or kiss in public are considered to be wild and disrespectful in some black communities in South Africa. Sex appeal is also introduced through use of body parts such as thighs (Figures 19, 20 and 41) and cleavage (Figure 26).

The allure of the exotic cannot be denied. Hair enhancements like weaves (Advertisement for Frika Hotex 18" Weave in Figure 31), which are available in different lengths, textures and types ranging from straight, wavy to curly are used to change an individual's look. These products appeal to many people because they come from distant locations such as Brazil, Peru and India. Some people tend to exoticise and attach value to products that are sourced from far-flung areas because they are different and unusual. People appropriate beauty ideals and products from other cultures and use them in the local context; however; although some weaves are made from Brazilian and Peruvian hair, wearing them does not mean that a black person becomes Peruvian or Brazilian because identity is not only linked to hair, but also to other physical features. They still remain black but these products may 'give them status'. Possessing an expensive wig is perceived as a status symbol, it signifies class. To paraphrase George Orwell, all weaves are equal but some weaves are more equal than others because the worth of the weave is determined by its type and price. Weaves made from Brazilian and

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is even a Yellow Bone Factory in Sandton, Johannesburg that is frequented by people seeking to change their skin tone.

Peruvian hair cost more and are more valued compared to those made from other hair types and synthetic materials.

To increase the appeal factor, the advertisement for Frika Hotex 18” Weave (Figure 31) is placed on the same spread as a story about a Hollywood celebrity, namely Rita Ora. Celebrity endorsement is a popular marketing strategy that is used by many brands, but during the period of study it was used only in Figure 31. While *True Love* featured celebrities on the 12 covers, the advertisements published during the same period featured ‘ordinary’ women. Using the images of ‘ordinary’ women as opposed to celebrities to address problems that affect many black African women is likely to give credibility to advertisements because readers can relate to them. However, it is important to note that the women used in advertisements are not really ‘ordinary’ because many considerations in terms of what the models wear, make-up, hairstyling, poses, setting, type of camera used, and shot angle, are taken into account before and during the photo shoot. In addition, at the design and production stages, the image goes through many filters that can alter it.

Another technique employed is spreading the advertisement over two pages to give more room for the brand to interact with readers (Figures 18 and 19). Moreover, having a dedicated DPS increases the impact and appeal since there are no distractions from editorial or another advertisement on a facing page. Product appeal is also promoted through use of the code of setting. In those advertisements where setting can be determined, both rural and urban environments or landscapes are depicted. Examples of urban settings include Figure 18 showing a woman on a hairdresser’s chair; Figure 32 a woman walking on the cobbled pavement. These advertisements promote modern city life. The rural or countryside features in Figure 22; however, it is not the typical rural setting that was shown during the apartheid era, which mainly depicted wildlife, ‘natives’ wearing traditional dress and vast expanses of untamed ‘virgin’ land. Some of the settings, especially in images shot indoors are neutral, they could be any place. Moreover, it is not clear whether the locations shown are local or international. Using plain background and neutral settings may be a deliberate move to make the advertisements universally appealing since the same campaigns are used in different countries. In addition to the above, fancy, fun, unique and unusual product names such as “Cranberry cocktail”, “Sunkissed blonde” are used (Figures 19, 20, 24, 32 and 37). Using such names is likely to be likable, easy to recall and may influence purchase decisions.

The code of colour is another important element that is used to signify various things and to entice the reader or viewer of an advertisement. People's perceptions about the product can be based on colour and packaging; therefore, it is important to get this element right. In Figure 18, the colour is used in an interesting way to establish visual links in this advertisement. For instance, the colour of the woman's eye shadow and dress match the colour on the product packaging. The new product being advertised is hailed as the 1<sup>st</sup>. The words "first" and "new" are highlighted by use of background colour, which also matches the colour on the product packaging. The product claims to straighten hair and make it "richer and fuller".

The advertisement for Sta-Sof-Fro Braids (Figure 26) also uses colour to create the mood and feeling about the product. The advertisement depicts a woman with red lips, chandelier earrings, braids (twist), plum and black strands interwoven. The braids that are braided loosely to the side are complemented by her strapless, white embellished dress. The model looks young, and bare shoulders show off her flawless skin. The woman's dress, hair and skin signify important messages about her life. The evening dress and matching chandelier earrings connote glamour and a special occasion. The image is shot from straight angle and the model is looking straight at the camera or viewer. The colour of the other components in the advertisement echoes the colour of the braids. For example, the background colour resembles the colour of the braids, product bottles, and headline. The use of colour in this way establishes a visual link and serves to enhance the visibility of the products. The twinkle lights illuminate the word "Glam" and enhance the celebratory mood.

Colour is also used as a visual code to signify various things such as Africanness and femininity. The colour perceptions are based on cultural background, personal preferences and context. In many advertisements, colours such as purple, green, light blue, orange, plum, mustard and grey are used as a backdrop. Most of the women are shown wearing bright colours, and only a few are wearing dark colours like black. In those images where women are wearing dark colours, a vibrant contrasting background is used to create a stark visual contrast (Figures 15, 30) and light (Figures 37 and 41). For maximum impact the colours have to match the brand's personality. A brand like Inecto uses bold colours (Figures 19, 24 and 35) to signify daring and trendy, while MPL and Jabu Stone use orange and earthy colours to connote Africa (Figures 16 and 25). The browns (Figures 32 and 36) connote

warmth while black (Figures 15, 30, 37 and 41) signifies timeless elegance, and a red dress against a purple background (Figure 13) creates a sophisticated feminine look.

### ***6.3.7 Discussion of findings from visual semiotic analysis of advertisements***

All the advertisements feature one or more people and the product that is advertised. Regarding the level of involvement, which relates to the product-related role played by the women in advertisements, it was observed that none of the women were featured using, holding or interacting with the products. The women serve the purpose of endorsers (Figure 17), and most of them are cast in a symbolic role.

In some advertisements, an image of a woman or a woman's body part also features on the product packaging. All the models look young and have flawless skin. In images with more than one person, in most cases black female models were featured together (Figures 28, 38) and in two instances with men (Figures 22, 25). Notably, white people are absent on *True Love* hair advertisements, with the exception of the Dove advertisement where a black model is shown with a white model (Figure 27). Interestingly, white people and white women in particular are shown in other advertisements, for instance advertisements for fragrances, make-up and clothing. The absence of white women in hair advertisements demonstrates that black hair care needs are unique in relation to white people's.

On the advertisements, there is no noticeable interaction between the female models, however, there is interaction between the male and female model. A visual semiotic analysis revealed the gender and racial dynamics of the involvement of male and female as well as black and white models. Almost all the advertisements except for Figure 41 did not show the whole body of the women, but rather represented certain parts through the use of head, bust and medium shots. The focus is on body parts including chest, cleavage, crotch, legs and buttocks, reinforcing patriarchal ideology and the notion that women are sex objects.

A striking observation was that although targeted at and read mainly by black African women in South Africa, none of the advertisements uses an indigenous language spoken in the country. Interestingly, the South African constitution lists 11 languages as the country's official languages, but only English is used in the advertisements. I am aware that *True Love* is an English language publication; however, I still feel including some verbal text such as

headlines, and tag lines in the target readers' mother tongue might have been beneficial in getting the message across and making the advertisements easier to read and understand, especially considering the education level of its readership. Probably over-reliance on English could be owing to the fact that most of the hair companies that advertised during the 12 months covered by this study are international brands such as Dark and Lovely, whose parent company is L'Oréal, which is based in France; Dove, a part of Unilever; Caivil by Marico an Indian company with operations in Africa, Asia and the Middle East; and Revlon, a New York-based multinational. Local brands, which included Jabu Stone and AfriTrue are smaller and accounted for a few advertisements. Most international companies tend to standardise their advertising campaigns, a move that is meant to cut production costs; hence their advertisements are universal and do not incorporate local languages. International companies do not localise advertisements as this has cost implications.

Most of the advertisements are positioned on the page on the right hand side. The size and positioning of the advertisements influence recall. The larger the advert, the more likely a reader is to take notice. Most of the advertisements are bleed advertisements. The use of colour, stylish graphics, sex and social acceptance appeal leave an impression and spur readers into action. In addition, premium loading such as first quarter of the magazine command attention.

Advertisements use compositional axes to convey meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996). The images can be read through vertical and horizontal axes; the former offers new information on the left and data already known to the viewer on the right. On the other hand, on the upper section the horizontal axes give the ideal, which consists of the dream and aspiration, and the real in the lower section gives facts. However, the semiotic analysis of the images revealed that this convention is not followed in all cases.

*True Love* advertisements use verbal text in conjunction with images of women and products to entice consumers to buy the products. This is a powerful combination because images of a person or people in an advertisement create "pictures in our heads" (Rose 2000:6), while product images and the logo promote brand awareness. On most of the images the eye is first drawn to the woman or women. This is in line with Millum's (1975:54) observation that

when looking at an advertisement,<sup>9</sup> the tendency is to focus on the “human aspect of the advertisement: the actors”. According to Millum (1975:54), “the expression and pose of the actor will convey one level of meaning, and almost as important will be the hair, the clothes and accessories”. The age of the woman, her pose and facial expression carry meaning. A facial expression like a smile showing teeth, or smiling without revealing teeth (Figures 13, 15, 18, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33, 34, 36, 39 and 41) may signify that the women are happy and satisfied with the results. The pose of the woman shown walking in Figure 32 connotes agility and freedom of movement. The visual and verbal texts are created and read within a specific culture and context, therefore it is important to examine how cultural factors shape the advertisement content.

Advertising is a vehicle for transmitting and reflecting the values of a culture. Millum (1975:54) notes that advertisements are the “products of one culture and are read and understood within that culture”. The way the advertisements are designed and content packaged should be in line with what is considered to be culturally acceptable to make them appealing and minimise chances of rejection. Advertisements use aesthetic and stylistic devices such as colour, fonts and graphics to catch the reader’s attention. The tone of the advertisements is important as it gives an insight into what the culture holds as ideal and what readers value. Most of the advertisements do not have prices. The advertisements use a soft-sell approach and put emphasis on enticing the consumers by appealing to their emotions and promoting the brand name. In addition, the advertisements use positive, action words, war metaphors, scientific facts and expert opinion, to convey the power of the products. The magazine is targeted at LSM 8-10 who have an average personal income of R7,603 per month. Probably leaving out the prices is a marketing tool that is meant to ensure that it does not become an integral part in the decision-making process. If the price is not given women are likely to make the decision based on whether they need the product or not, rather than on how much it costs. Once a decision to purchase has been made chances are that the purchase will be made, even if the product costs a lot of money.

A visual semiotic analysis of *True Love* has revealed that the magazine employs techniques from “reason advertisements” and “tickle advertisements”. The tickle effect is achieved through use of evocative visual images and humorous linguistic text such as “deliciously

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<sup>9</sup> The same concept can also be applied to the front-page covers.



sexy” and “berrylicious attitude” (Figure 19) that appeal to emotion and mood. Reason advertisements emphasise the quality of the product, have sufficient informational cues and lists or includes visuals of ingredients to provide motivation to purchase the products (Figures 13 and 25). The tickle-reason hybrid approach is evident in “sassy cranberry” (Figure 19), which combines humour with facts.

## CONCLUSION

The above analysis has given insight into what constitutes ideal hair and black feminine beauty on *True Love* hair advertisements. Media messages such as advertisements that are presented to readers can construct their attitudes and shape their notions of the ideal standards. The advertisements are believed to shed light on the mind-set of the magazine’s targeted readers because advertisers use readership demographics such as monthly household income, age, gender and so on to develop concepts for the advertisements that appeal to the values of the readers. To create advertisements that have an impact on readers, brands should be cognisant of the societal traditions and beliefs. The readers’ information can be obtained from *True Love*’s media kit and on AMPS reports.

In the next chapter I continue the visual semiotic analysis, focusing particularly on the cover images and written text and the stereotypes, myths and ideologies that are perpetuated in *True Love*.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: APPLICATION TO *TRUE LOVE*: VISUAL SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE COVERS**

The preceding chapter provided a visual semiotic analysis of the advertisements; this chapter analyses the 12 covers using the same method. As in the previous chapter, I begin with the first level analysis of each cover, focusing mainly on the visual image and the main cover line, and after that I examine the themes found on the cover lines. Afterwards I focus on the myths and ideologies that are entrenched in both the covers and advertisements. I adopted this approach to avoid repetition since the themes found on the cover lines are similar, and there is an overlap of myths created and promoted by the covers and advertisements.

### **7.1 Semiotic analysis of the covers**

Based on the premise that magazine covers are laden with cultural values, this study uses *True Love* covers as a lens to gain insight into the beliefs and values of the black female community in South Africa who read this magazine. In addition, the cover acts as a semiotic system that helps establish the frame for interacting with the content, and sets the tone of the entire magazine (McCracken 1993:37). The images of celebrities on the covers are iconic signs that signify by resemblance and are used to serve as role models for black African women. The texts are analysed by means of visual semiotics, taking note of the signs and what they signify. Major themes that emerge are beauty, sexuality, independence, and success.

7.1.1 *Phuti Khomo, True Love magazine, June 2015*



South African actress, television personality, model and businesswoman, Phuti Khomo, is sporting free-flowing hair with soft cascading curls partially concealing her face. The curls give the illusion of texture to her hairstyle. Her head is tilted to the side, a pose that is usually associated with submission. It seems as if her hairstyle is easy to do and can be achieved without use of any styling products. However, upon closer examination it is apparent that it has been done by a professional stylist and may take an effort to replicate, especially the following morning when the hair stylist is not present. The one-day style is worth the money if done for a special occasion.

The 30-year-old former Miss SA Teen 2002 is wearing earthy tones that complement her complexion. The muted colours are associated with femininity. Leaning back with her hands in the pockets of a long grey trench coat, she is showing off her thigh. The main headline is white and the sub-title is italicised, making it stand out and contrast sharply with the colour of her clothing. The positioning of the cover line also invites the reader to focus on the thigh. The reader's eye focuses on the exposed thigh and travels up to where the coat ends. Her coat seems to be blown backwards by a gust of wind, suggesting that the image was shot outdoors. However, a closer look reveals that her hair is not tousled, therefore, the photograph may

have been shot in the studio with a wind machine blowing air towards her lower body, or the coat could have been intentionally pulled back by the model or the stylists to reveal flawless skin. Her perfect skin is exposed as if to suggest to the reader that she has successfully beaten cellulite, which is a subject of one of the cover lines.

The trench coat is suitable for the winter season; however, she is not wearing any clothes underneath, and her pose creates the impression that she is possibly not even wearing any undergarments. The trench coat fastened by a single button and loosely-tied belt connote seduction, and read together with the cover line at the bottom on the left hand side seems to tell the viewer that she is irresistible and her look can work like magic and awaken desire even “when he can’t get it up”. The expensive Burberry trench coat signifies luxury and the message communicated by the image is that owning it gives one high social status. Since most *True Love* readers earn an average personal monthly income of R7,603, they cannot afford to splurge on a coat with a R20,000 price tag, the advertisement seems to be targeted at the upwardly mobile group. Featuring expensive products works like a two-edged sword, it can lead to exasperation and bitterness among those who cannot afford them, while empowering those who can afford them because they can buy the products and ‘improve’ themselves. In addition, since the cover images are aspirational, they can motivate people to work hard and improve themselves. Interestingly one of the cover lines promotes “fun ways to rock a suit”, yet the celebrity on the cover is wearing a trench coat. This shows that the magazine features several fashion and beauty trends in one issue so it can appeal to its diverse readership that has varied fashion tastes (see 7.1.13 on how cover lines complement or contradict each other or the visual image on the cover).

The woman on the cover is depicted as a seductress, and her image is meant to tease and provoke desire. Female readers are meant to desire to be like her, while male readers desire to be with her. Wearing a gown or coat with sexy lingerie underneath is often used by women as a seduction tool. The woman can remove the button and belt in an instant to reveal sexy lingerie underneath. The coat gives the woman power and control of her body. She seems to be in charge because she can control how much to reveal and for how long. However, she may not have the power the viewer is made to believe she has because there is a lot of styling, and many people including the *True Love* editorial team and photographers give their input on the poses, and can influence how much flesh the celebrity reveals. The influence is exerted in a subtle way such that the celebrity may not even realise how much flesh she is exposing.

Also many shots are taken and the image that goes on the cover is selected by the editor in consultation with the designer and it may not be the most flattering of the lot. The star is featured in connection with her role<sup>1</sup> in the SABC 2 soap opera *Muvhango*. There is a play on her role as fashion designer in the soap and her fashion sense. The two black buttons positioned on top of her breasts seem as if they are nipples. The folded sleeves connote casual attire and that she is relaxed.

The main cover line refers to men who are “stealing and taking over *Muvhango*”, hinting at the battle of the sexes. The verbal text addresses an important concern of gender politics, which also features in Figures 2 and 9. However, overall these women’s personal narratives seem to be depoliticised as they gloss over gender dynamics and other institutional powers that are oppressive to black African women. A look at the other cover lines shows that this is a themed issue and the focus is on men. The verbal text on top of the masthead explains that it is a ‘his’ and ‘hers’ issue with the subheading “celebrate the men in your life”. Since this magazine issue was published in June when Father’s Day is celebrated in South Africa, it seems as if the “men in your life” alludes to fathers, grandfathers and other father figures. However, a glance at the other cover lines suggests that it is a reference to male romantic partners. It is therefore ironic that readers are called upon to celebrate men in their lives, yet the men are supposedly stealing the show. Another article gives tips for spotting a liar: “how to tell if he’s a liar”.

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<sup>1</sup> Phuti Khomo plays fashion designer Carole Chabeli in SABC 2’s *Muvhango*.

7.1.2 *Bonnie Mbuli, True Love, July 2015*



Actress and author Bonnie Mbuli is featured with short afro hair. Inspired by the military, her German cut has a parting slightly to the side, which adds drama to an otherwise ordinary hairstyle. The hairstyle, which seems to be low maintenance, gives the 36-year-old a youthful, tomboy look. This suggests that aesthetics are grounded on ideologies of subjectivity. Cutting hair to mark a momentous occasion in one's life is a common practice, and in Mbuli's case it could signify the death of the old and that she is ready to start a new life following her divorce. She is wearing a white leather jacket, black shorts and accessories and the ensemble gives her a sexy look. For a woman her age the choice of clothing is rather daring, however, she seems to be on the road to reinventing herself and she has managed to pull off the monochrome look.

The verbal text makes use of capitals, italics and colours to capture the reader's attention. The white colour used to write her name matches her jacket and the magenta for the surname is drawn from the masthead. This type of framing is referred to as colour 'rhyme' by Theo van Leeuwen (2005:9). To create a link between the visual and verbal text, the words are placed on top of the image. On this cover and the other 11 covers, there is no distinct image and

cover line space. Since there is a great deal of text on the cover, colour ‘rhyme’ is used to connect the photograph and cover lines.

The woman is shown standing with her legs crossed. She is smiling with her mouth open, revealing a row of white teeth. She is given strong verbal power that challenges male authority. However, the sub-title “Happily divorced and taking back her life” is rather unusual because divorce is associated with loss and pain. The implication is that she was not happy in her marriage now she is free to do what she wants. Moreover, it is notable that one of the cover lines encourages the reader to “fight to keep your man”, yet Bonnie is said to be happy following a divorce from actor Sisanda Henna in 2013. Bonnie, who is a Xhosa and was married to Henna, a Xhosa man courted controversy after her divorce when she took to Twitter to talk about her unhappy marriage. She apportioned most of the blame to Xhosa culture, which she compared to the film *12 years a slave*. She tweeted: “I love ma Xhosa ppl but Twelve years a slave aint got nothin on ya'll !!!” (I love ma Xhosa ... 2014) and “If u wanna cook, clean and make tea like a crazy person, marry into a Xhosa family#yipIsaidIt” (If u wanna ... 2014). For readers who possess this prior knowledge, it is therefore not surprising that she is “happily divorced” because she was stuck in an unhappy marriage.

Bonnie Mbuli is represented as a strong, confident woman who takes everything in her stride. Bonnie’s fans would recall how she struggled with and conquered clinical depression, an experience she shares in her memoir *Eyebags & Dimples*. This image introduces a religious discourse, Christianity in particular. The fact that she states “no one is going to dictate Christianity to me” gives the impression that issues surrounding religion were among the main problems that contributed towards the breakdown of their marriage.

7.1.3 *Denise Zimba, True Love, August 2015*



The *Generations: The Legacy* actress Denise Zimba showcases a vibrant red colour, signifying that she is young, daring, and not afraid to experiment. The colour gives the 26-year-old star a juvenile, whimsical and fun look. Her side-swept bangs are falling on her forehead and covering part of her left eye; a hairstyle that covers one eye is considered seductive and creates “the desire in man to uncover and to see the eye” (Millum 1975:58). The fiery hair suggests that she is carefree. Complementing the hue with matching lipstick gives a dramatic look and the vibrant shade suits her skin tone. This could be her natural hair that has been relaxed and dyed red, or it could be a weave that has been sewn on or she could be wearing a wig. Her look resembles the Western feminine ideal of a delicate, sensual appearance. Since the *True Love* team draws inspiration for the cover looks from international magazines and fashion shows, it is possible that Zimba’s style may have been inspired by Western celebrities such as Lady Gaga and Rihanna, who are well known for wearing dramatic hairstyles. Therefore, I describe Zimba’s look as glocal in nature in that it uses ideas drawn from the global circuit to style a local celebrity. In other words, the image of Zimba on the cover showcases a new glocalised form of black stylisation and celebrity glamour. The image reinforces consumerism by promoting the use of dyes that are available



on the market ranging from permanent to temporary dyes, which allow women to change their look.

The soap opera starlet who plays Mary in *Generations: The Legacy* is dreaming big and has her eyes set on Hollywood. The image promotes freedom to experiment and aiming higher. The cover image creates a mental picture of Hollywood glamour and aspirational values. This may inspire a desire to travel and see the world. Denise, who normally posts images and videos on Instagram wearing skimpy, revealing clothing,<sup>2</sup> is shown wearing a denim shirt and jeans, and rings and earrings. Presenting a different image of the celebrity on the cover may attract the readers' attention because they are used to viewing images of her with minimal clothing. The denim shirt is tucked in and sleeves rolled up for a casual look. A radical departure could be too much for readers to take in, hence the image combines the unusual with the familiar; the top buttons are undone to reveal a black bra and cleavage. Revealing a little bit of the décolletage signifies a subtle form of seduction.

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<sup>2</sup> One of the most daring was a video of herself twerking while wearing underwear in a hotel bathroom in Durban in 2016.

7.1.4 *Nomzamo and Maps, True Love, September 2015*



This is one of the few *True Love* covers to feature a couple, namely Nomzamo and Nay Maps, but they are a couple in the reel, not real world. They co-starred in the South African film *Tell Me Sweet Something* that was released in September 2015. The image and cover lines are a reference to the film story line, as well as their real-life romantic relationship. Out of a sample of 12, it is the only cover with the picture of a man and woman. The visual image promotes heterosexual romance. Unlike in a demand image where an individual looks at the camera or viewer, in this photograph both celebrities are not focusing on the camera. Although the woman is looking in the direction of the camera, her eyes are half closed and she seems to be preoccupied and enjoying the attention she is getting from her male companion. This type of image is known as ‘offer image’ where the viewer is the “subject of the look, and the represented participant is the object of the viewer’s dispassionate scrutiny” (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996:124). The viewers take on the role of onlookers and observe from afar since no response is required from them.

The gender power dynamics are explored by drawing on Goffman’s (1976) relative size and function ranking. The man is active; he is caressing and kissing the woman who seems to be a passive recipient. The image positions women as objects of male desire by drawing on

traditional discourses of passive female and active male. The man is presented as an actor and the woman as a responsive object to be acted on. The man is touching her thigh and buttocks while she is snuggling up to him. Her parted legs seem to suggest that she is sexually available. These rituals of display are used by romantic partners to show affection for each other, and these visual cues signify intimacy.

The 25-year-old Nomzamo is shown with an up-do featuring different hair textures. She is wearing a white shirt and accessories while Maps is wearing black pants and glasses. Accessories such as sunglasses are used to make a fashion statement and for status, for example, branded sunglasses. A man can be featured without a shirt but a topless woman on the cover would cause public outcry in this magazine (otherwise it is perceived as soft porn). The white shirt she is wearing looks masculine, suggesting that she is probably wearing Maps' shirt with nothing underneath. The image creates a mental picture of the morning after an intimate night. Wearing a man's over-sized shirt with underwear or nothing underneath is cute and sexy as it covers the subject, but also leaves a lot for the imagination to run wild. In addition, a button down shirt is easy to remove should there be need to repeat the previous night's adventures. The practice of wearing a man's shirt signifies some form of bonding, and this normally happens during the early days of dating when a woman does not have any clothes at her partner's place. Viewed in another way, giving her his shirt signifies that he is a chivalrous gentleman. In Western culture, and this practice has spread to other parts of the world, a 'gentleman' gives the 'lady' his jacket if she is feeling cold. The subtle message behind men divesting themselves of their clothing and giving it to their women is that men are meant to protect women. In this case, he could be doing it for selfish reasons; he does not want other men to ogle his woman. He is marking his territory, as it were, and showing that he owns her.

Maps has a toned body as is evident in his six-pack (toned, well-shaped abdominal muscles). "He's hot, smart and caring", all a woman needs just as the tag line reads. The cover line: "Who wouldn't want him?", read together with their body language becomes sexually suggestive. It connotes that he is desirable sexually and she is lucky to have him. The text also alludes to active sex life and sexual satisfaction both physically because "he's hot" and psychologically since he is "caring". Physical attraction is represented as a necessary ingredient for sex appeal. Their pose, particularly their heads that are resting on the masthead signifies that they are the paragon of true love, a notion that is strengthened by the roles they

reprise in the film. It is important to note that both the visual and verbal text assume that readers possess prior knowledge about the couple, their relationship and their roles in the film.

### 7.1.5 Kelly Khumalo, *True Love*, October 2015



Musician and actress Kelly Khumalo's long hair is parted in the middle. The 31-year-old's high-contrasting ombré starts with her natural black hue at the roots and finishes with a golden brown tinge at the ends. This colour combination adds drama and elegance to her look. Her gradated curly waves frame her face and are slightly pulled over her right shoulder to show off her tattoo and jewellery, a choker and earrings. The ombré trend, which was popularised by Hollywood celebrities such as Halle Berry, is still trending since it is suitable for all occasions and seasons. This style shows that local black celebrities draw trends from celebrities based in the West, especially African-American women. To a certain, extent, it can be said that local stylisation is influenced by global black celebrity glamour. While a Western celebrity like Halle Berry normally highlights her short hair, Khumalo is depicted with long, curly hair. Halle Berry's global ombré trend has been reinterpreted to give Khumalo unique glocal glamour. However, the flow of the influence is not one-sided; it is two-way as African-American celebrities such as Lauryn Hill have been seen sporting braids

and cornrows, which are popular in Africa. The “bling” connotes luxury, and the tattoo<sup>3</sup> is a form of self-expression.

The purple and white swimming costume catches the eye of the reader. The two-tone swimsuit with a sweetheart neckline is girly and gives her a sensuous, feminine look. The irony is that she does not look like someone who is ready to go for a swim. There seems to be no awareness about how processed black hair like Khumalo’s behaves when immersed in water. The hairstyle she is wearing would be damaged the minute she immerses her head in water. Wearing a swim cap may protect the hair to some extent; however, it cannot keep the hair completely dry during swimming. The traditional Eurocentric feminine attributes such as long hair, sexy swimwear, and visible cleavage are present on the cover. The clothes she is wearing draw attention to her body, her light skin tone and her curves.

The cover lines refer to the night her former boyfriend South African national soccer team goalkeeper Senzo Meyiwa was killed on 26 October 2014. As in the above cover featuring Nomzamo and Maps, it is assumed that readers are aware of what has been and is happening in her life. She is featured in swimwear talking about Senzo’s brutal murder a year later. The timing is important because in some Nguni cultures such as among the Zulus and Ndebeles a widow mourns her dead partner for a year and after this period she can return to normal public life. If the magazine had featured a mourning woman in a swimsuit before the elapse of the mourning period, it may have been considered disrespectful. By waiting for a year and featuring Kelly on the cover at an appropriate time, *True Love* is sending a signal that the magazine is attuned to cultural sensitivities. However, this respect for culture seems to be offset by the type of clothes she is wearing. On the one hand, the magazine staff want to portray the image of a sexy celebrity while on the other hand, they are trying to show cultural sensitivity. Balancing the two appears to be a challenge, hence the contradiction.

Using the image of a woman who has “picked herself up” and emerged victorious from a difficult situation is in line with the brand’s ethos. The image is meant to show other women that through will power it is possible to rise above challenges. This cover highlights issues

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<sup>3</sup> Through the ages in many cultures, the body has been used as a platform for cultural identity and self-expression. Body art has been a common practice in many cultures. There are dangers associated with tattoos if they are not done by qualified people and at licensed establishments. However, now there are temporary tattoos that people stick on and are non-toxic.

black African women are thought to struggle with, such as drug addiction. However, she does not look like a recovering drug addict; she is depicted as young and beautiful.

### 7.1.6 *Thando, True Love, November 2015*



Thando’s straight hair frames her face. The 25-year old actress, DJ and radio and television presenter, who became the first face of Nivea South Africa, plays Nolwazi on SABC 1’s soap opera *Generations: The Legacy*. She is featured in the holiday issue wearing shorts and a jacket. She is sporting a bob that is short on one side and slightly longer on the other. Instead of sectioning her hair in the middle, it has been parted at an angle to create an asymmetrical bob that gives a unique look. She has light skin tone that is colloquially known as “yellow bone”.

The cover lines referring to “simple tricks for great skin & hair” and dieting to “look good naked” complement Thando’s image, which shows flawless skin, groomed hair and beautiful body. Thando is represented as the embodiment of the good attributes that are listed. The message being advanced is that to look good, the viewer must embrace the skin, hair and dieting tricks. Like the previous cover featuring Kelly Khumalo (Figure 5), this image

promotes the myth that to be considered beautiful one has to have straight hair and light skin tone.

The two men in her life that the cover line refers to are not specified; they could be love interests or family members. It is presented as a given because it is “something the viewer already knows, as a familiar and agreed-upon point of departure for the message” (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996:184). It is assumed that readers possess prior knowledge and those who follow her life know that it is a reference to her brother who was shot during a robbery and her father who committed suicide when she was 13.

The cover lines play on words as she “opens up” both literally and metaphorically. She is standing with her legs apart and opens her heart and talks about losing loved ones. In most cultures black clothes are associated with mourning and sombre moments. However; that is counterbalanced by the type of clothing she is wearing and the fact that she lost her loved ones some years ago since the mourning period is one year. Her head is tilted to the side and this connotes vulnerability. Her name ‘Thando’, which means ‘love’ is put in a white frame to give it prominence. Only her first name is given, and this could be owing to the fact that *Generations* is a popular programme and it is therefore assumed that readers know her surname. The tone of the magazine is informal and introduces a sense of familiarity as if to suggest that readers know the celebrity on the cover and are on first name basis with her. Commenting on this trend, Joseph Epstein (2005:13) notes that “the greatest celebrities are those who do not even require their full names to be mentioned”.



7.1.7 *Khanyi Mbau, True Love, December 2015*



Actress, television host and radio personality Khanyi Mbau's hair is parted in the middle to give balance or symmetry. The hair is combed back and all the strands are in place, none is falling on her face. The face-framing tresses create a perfect symmetry and elongate her face. A blusher accentuates her cheekbones. The 30-year-old Mbau is depicted with a light skin tone; she has openly confessed to taking some substances to change her skin colour. In January 2016, she told the *Real Goboza* host Phat Joe that she takes "something called Glutathione IV. Because they boost energy, they boost your immune system and they have a plus they make you yellow ..." (Khanyi Mbau: I did it ...). The mesh knee-length boots complement the designs on the black and white dress. The black and white colours could signify timeless appeal as they can be worn any time of the year. The monochrome colours make her appear elegant.

The verbal text, which refers to kicking addiction, shows that although she is immaculate physically she has some flaws. The language used is informal yet powerful. A metaphor drawn from fighting is used, and 'kicking addiction' gives a mental image of someone who has to work hard and use her energy to get rid of the bad habit. Readers like stories that involve an element of scandal and fall from grace. Epstein (2007:362) observes that on the



one hand, fans like to see celebrities succeed while on the other hand, they see them as “frail, ready at all times to crash and burn”.

### 7.1.8 *Bassie Kumalo, True Love, January 2016*



Former beauty queen and businesswoman Bassie Kumalo has an edgy hairstyle, an up-do that ends with a coiled high bun. Her trademark bun, which could have been made by braiding her natural hair or extensions if her hair is short, adds height and makes her look taller. This intricate design worn by the 41-year-old is suitable for special occasions. It shows off her face contours and works well with the large hoop earrings and black dress, giving her a fashion-forward look. The style looks durable.

The real name of the celebrity on the cover is Basetsana, however, the short form Bassie is used to refer to her. The use of a nickname suggests that readers are ‘pals’ with her and can use her pet name to address her. Such devices make celebrities appear accessible to readers. Using such devices gives the impression that the celebrity is on a friendly basis with the readers, making it easier for them to identify with and trust the celebrity on the cover. The kind of friendship that readers engage in with celebrities is not real, but is known as a parasocial relationship. This type of friendship is often one-sided and based on attributes such

as physical attractiveness, personality, success and perceived commonalities between the reader and the celebrity (Hoorn & Konijn 2003:250-268; Hoffner 1996). If readers establish a parasocial relationship and trust the celebrity as a friend they are likely to be influenced by the image and emulate copy the hairstyle, clothing or make-up trends. This influence of celebrity culture on black African women is discussed in a following section (see 8.3.9).

During apartheid, Bassie Kumalo won the Miss Soweto and Miss Black South Africa titles in 1990. She won the Miss South Africa title in 1994 and became Miss World 1994 first runner-up. The cover line tells her story and conveys her dreams, which involve changing the lives of other women. She has a ring and this signifies that she is married.<sup>4</sup> The implicit meaning is that her social status as a married woman enables her to speak authoritatively and to lend her star power to causes that help other women.

She is involved in philanthropy work; she co-founded the Romeo and Basetsana Kumalo Family Foundation with her husband, and in 2009 they received the Inyathelo Philanthropy Merit Award. Giving back to the community has become an integral part of celebrity culture. It is an important aspect of the celebrity's image branding because they want to convey the message that they are selfless and contribute to make the world a better place. This is also heightened by her clothes and facial expression. She is showing much less flesh compared to the women on the other covers (Figures 1, 2, 5, 6, 9 and 11). She also has a serious look on her face signifying that she is capable of contributing positively to society. Featuring a beautiful, successful woman can help open black African women's minds to alternative possibilities.

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<sup>4</sup> Bassie is married to Romeo Kumalo, a DJ, presenter, and former Vodacom executive.

7.1.9 *Pearl Thusi, True Love, February 2016*



Actress, radio and television presenter Pearl Thusi is shown with a goddess twist. This goddess-inspired style requires pulling hair into a mohawk and pinning a smooth hair extension that has been twisted into a rope on top of that. The braided up-do can be heavy to wear, hence it is important to use light-weight extensions and to only cover a portion of the head with the braids. It can work on either short or long hair, afro or chemically straightened hair. The hair visible on the sides seems to be slick, suggesting that it has been chemically altered. The protective hairstyle looks durable. The trendy hairstyle with a coiled halo crowns her head frames her face. Thusi's hairstyle is an example of hybridisation, wherein hair extensions are sewn to her own hair. Drawing on Chris Barker I argue that the more recent acceleration of globalisation "particularly of electronic communications, have enabled increased cultural juxtapositioning, meeting and mixing" (Baker 2004: 76). The message that is conveyed here is that *True Love* celebrates natural, naturalised African hairstyles and modern influences.

Thusi, 27, is coloured but self-identifies as black, "[a]s black people, we're conditioned to think there's something wrong with us" (*True Love* February 2016:54). She says while growing up she hated her hair because "it made me different from other kids and drew unwanted attention. Now people appreciate it because it's unique ..." (*True Love* February

2016:54). She is featured wearing a bustier top, skirt, earrings and rings. Her creative hairstyle is unique and goes well with her outfit; together they constitute a distinctive signature look that cannot be ‘pulled off by anyone’.

This image presents another face of black African women by introducing the single mother. Implied binary oppositions of marriage and single motherhood are inferred in the verbal text. As a mother, Thusi cannot express her sexuality freely and enjoy one-night stands and casual encounters with men because she has to protect her son. Black African women are generally positioned as maternal. She is prepared to sacrifice her happiness in order to protect her son. Nonetheless, Thusi is still depicted in a flirtatious pose. She is slightly touching her lips with her fingers and her hand is resting on her derriere in a suggestive manner. “Her new man” suggests that she had another or others before him. Promiscuity and casual relationships are frowned upon because they expose children to social problems, while heteronormative coupledness is encouraged. There is emphasis on creating a safe environment for the child. Read together, the verbal and visual texts seem to suggest that Thusi operates within the framework of accepted gender roles of being a loving and caring mother, but is also showing other women that one can be a good mother and sexy at the same time.

7.1.10 *Manaka Ranaka, True Love, March 2016*



Actress Manaka Ranaka, who plays Lucy in *Generations: The Legacy* is wearing short hair with soft curls. The afro and afro-centric hairstyles are meant to create a feeling of nostalgia about the past. They may be viewed by some people as an authentic African hairstyle compared to red straight hair (Figure 3). Her gaze can be described as demand, whereby the subject is looking at the camera and commands a response from the reader (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:122); it calls upon the viewer to react. A demand image of a celebrity with natural afro hair can serve as a reference point for black African women and encourage them to emulate her. It can make women feel more comfortable to wear their afro hair with pride. The women on the covers serve as role models to readers, and having role models that promote and affirm blackness can have a positive effect on black African women and South African society at large.

Ranaka seems to be wearing minimal make up, yet a number of products may have been skilfully applied. This could be a marketing gimmick meant to sell products to the modern woman by portraying them as almost invisible, and giving a natural look. The image encourages consumption by presenting the products as invisible. The 36-year-old actress, who also acted in *Isidingo*, is featured wearing a one-shoulder red dress, earrings and

bangles. The dress flatters her figure and the red colour symbolises blood, danger, and passion. The red dress and red lipstick signify seduction; however, the frills on the dress tone down the sexy predatory associations and give her a regal look.

### 7.1.11 *Boity*, *True Love*, April 2016



While Denise Zimba (Figure 3) went for the bright look, actress and television presenter Boity, 25, opted to explore her dark side. She is referred to with her professional name Boity but her full name is Boitumelo Thulo. The name used on the cover is the one that most readers are likely to identify with. Her hair is partly falling on to the face and covering part of the right eye and eyebrow. The waves give her a boho-chic look. The chocolate shade of her hair is complemented by the toffee colour of her jumpsuit, eye makeup, lipstick, and skin tone. The plunging neckline ensures the choker sits well on her neck. The design of the jumpsuit accentuates her figure. Her hand is stretched out to reveal a tattoo on her arm, which is clearly visible but not jarring; the design is intricate and not juvenile, showing that she has class.

She seems to be nonchalant about the plunging neckline that exposes her breasts and this suggests that she is sassy. She is depicted as flirtatious and not afraid to use her 'assets' to enchant the viewer. The word 'juicy' on the cover line is loaded with meaning. In addition to



details about the break up with South African musician Cassper Nyovest, it could be a reference to her exposed breasts and her private life as a trained *sangoma* (traditional healer).

**7.1.12 Connie Ferguson, True Love, May 2016**



Actress Connie Ferguson, who plays Karabo Moroka in *Generations: The Legacy* has her hair gathered up and tied into a high, tight ponytail. The jet black, shiny hair fastened at the top and flying to the side gives her height. Sweeping the ponytail to the front of the head is unusual because the ponytail is always to the back. The ponytail is stylish yet easy to style. The name of this hairstyle is derived from the animal kingdom - animals or animal body parts, including ponytail and pigtails, have been used to describe hair. The cultural connotations symbolised by a ponytail (beauty) are transferred on to human hair and the metaphor creates a mental image of a thick, voluminous, flawless mane.

The 45-year-old Ferguson, who has been with *Generations* for around 15 years, is doing something unconventional by showing that a ponytail is a versatile hairstyle and her 'flying' hair signify movement and fluidity, as in her pose. This reinforces the notion that she is on the move, she is leaving *Generations*. There is an element of freedom and being carefree. The hair is gleaming; it could be a hairpiece tied to her ponytail, or her natural relaxed hair that

has been sprayed to give it lustre, or it could be a weave. The signifier golden embellishments that add pizzazz to her white dress connote opulence and glamour.

The visual semiotic analysis of the covers has examined the hairstyles worn by the celebrities and revealed what they signify. I give a brief analysis of the findings before moving on to explore the mythic and ideological meanings found on *True Love* covers and advertisements.

### ***7.1.13 Discussion of findings from semiotic analysis of covers***

The twelve women featured on the covers have different skin tones ranging from dark to medium and light complexion, and their body sizes vary, with medium featuring prominently. These career women are financially stable. The images of the women are placed at the centre of the page because the centre is important and considered the nucleus, while the margin plays an ancillary role.

This layout is in line with Hanson's (2014:101) observation that the characteristics of a successful magazine cover include a recognisable subject on the photograph, something worthy of notice on the picture and there has to be "room for the magazine's name and a few lines of type". Like other women's magazines, *True Love* covers follow this format by using the image of one model in conjunction with many cover lines. The main cover line gives more information about the subject featured while the other ones give readers a glimpse of what is contained on the inside pages. Some cover lines use pull quotes from the stories (Figures 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9) to catch the reader's attention. In addition, the cover lines also use buzz words such as "must-read", "revealed", "exclusive" (Figures 2, 4 and 8), and some also guide readers by giving page numbers where the story can be found (Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,7 and 10).

These cover lines are drawn mainly from beauty, fashion, diet and sex stories. The covers contain body-oriented cover lines that focus mainly on transforming physical appearance through losing weight, and using products to conceal imperfections. The recurrent message promoted by these cover lines is how black African women should look like and their main focus is on instant gratification rather than long-term benefits. The cover lines tend to highlight quick easy fixes such as "Crash diets actually work: we reveal how" (Figure 9); "New diet: drink wine lose kilos" and "Beat cellulite now!" (Figure 1). These tactics are used



because such information is believed to grab the reader's attention, but on the inside pages in-depth balanced coverage giving both sides of the story with expert opinions is usually presented.

The cover lines utilise the myth that the female body is riddled with problems. Every body part including skin, hair and tummy seems to have problems. The woman is stripped of self-confidence as she cannot control her body on her own. Playing on the fears and low self-esteem, the magazine prescribes solutions in the form of expert tips and products. The positioning of the cover lines on the cover may put pressure on readers and trick them into believing that if they change their appearance and obtain the ideal body type they can get what they want. Moreover, the verbal text suggests that the burden of maintaining a successful relationship falls squarely on the shoulders of black African women. For instance, when read together, the cover lines in Figure 2 seem to signify that readers should fight to keep their men by burning belly fat, having good skin, and trying sex moves that men love. These messages apply binary oppositions, that is, women who have flabby tummies, bad skin and are not willing to experiment with sex moves will lose their men. In this way, the blame for not living a happy fulfilled life is placed on the women. Some cover lines are overt, they clearly point a finger at women by exclaiming "You are the reason your man cheats" and then go on to prescribe a solution: "Take charge: up your sex game" and "Make money, lose weight, take risks and achieve more greatness" (Figure 8).

Another thread that runs through the cover lines is what black women should look for, and this includes success and happiness. Success is not only measured in monetary value, but being fit, healthy, happy and looking glamorous are also touted as the other important measures of success. The dominant representation of happiness is promoted through different things including being in a romantic relationship, being single and independent and having good sex.<sup>5</sup> Eleven out of 12 covers had the word 'sex' on one or more cover lines. This is consistent with findings from other researchers who have analysed cover lines and found that sex sells magazines. For example, Peter Carlson (1997) found that in the US, "sex is a perennial feature of magazine cover lines, of course, but the true masters of this genre

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<sup>5</sup> This seems to be a contradiction in terms, but then again *True Love* readership is diverse, there are those who are married, divorced, single mothers, and single women who are searching for love. To cater to these different groups, there are cover lines giving information on solo sex (Figure 3), hot sex (Figure 6), tips on spotting a liar (Figure 1), and new sex positions for the new season (Figure 4).

understand that good sex isn't good enough and neither is better sex – magazine cover line sex must be the best sex". Although sexism still persists in some black communities, the cover lines suggest that black women have control over their bodies. The cover lines promote different, and often contradictory, notions of sex, including the politics of marital sex, the politics of one night stands, the politics of orgasm, the politics of heterosexuality, as well as the politics of solo sex. There seems to be no evidence of policing of sexuality; on the contrary, women are encouraged to explore their sexual agency and their behaviour is not interpreted as unusual or vulgar. This is a form of radical black female subjectivity.

According to Hanson (2014:117), cover lines are "teaser headlines used to shock, intrigue or titillate potential buyers". To increase the appeal factor of the cover lines, numbers are often used because they connote "value and imply that a great deal of good material is to be found inside the magazine" (Hanson 2014:117). Cover lines that incorporated numbers during the period of study included "100 women who inspire us" (Figure 3), "148 pages of fashion, beauty and advice to get ahead" (Figure 9), and "50 pages of fashion & beauty: All your winter must-haves" (Figure 12). In addition, a reader's eye is likely to be drawn to numbers written in large fonts because they stand out on the newsstand or shelf.

Additionally, the fonts used are stylish and some of them are playful. Three colours are used for the cover lines, namely red, black and white. In all the covers the masthead falls behind the celebrity's head giving the magazine a sophisticated look. This is also an indication that the magazine considers itself popular and well-established enough for readers to identify the brand even with a few letters not visible. The readers can identify the magazine from the font and colour.

*True Love* cover lines are carefully crafted; they are concise and can be described as works of art that carry "tons of wisdom in a few well-chosen words" (Carlson 1997). On some covers, the cover lines complement each other as seen in Figure 5 where one refers to obesity ("Reality: Obesity is killing women) and another is about a detox diet ("Drop two sizes in just three days: Detox diet inside) to help women lose weight. In Figure 3, a cover line refers to how a narcissist operates and it warns, "He'll charm & then dump you", and another one seems to suggest a solution for those women who suddenly find themselves alone, in the form of "Solo sex time to explore".

However, in some issues the cover lines give conflicting messages. A good example of contradictory messages is the fashion and beauty trends promoted on the cover lines that differ from those advanced by the cover image. For instance, while Connie Ferguson (Figure 12) is showcasing a short-sleeved summer dress, a cover line makes reference to “all your winter must-haves”, and Phuti Khomo (Figure 1) is wearing a trench coat, yet one of the cover lines makes reference to “Fun ways to rock a suit”. In addition, some of the ideals promoted by the celebrity’s hair type and hairstyle are in conflict with those endorsed by some cover lines, for instance, in Figure 7, Khanyi Mbau’s image seems to suggest that long hair is the acceptable standard of beauty, yet there is also a cover line “Easy and fun ways to fake short hair”, which advances that short hair is beautiful. Furthermore, in Figure 8, Bassie Kumalo is shown with jet-black hair, while one of the cover lines suggests that grey hair is good (“Beauty trends: How to rock grey hair & perfect your instagram face”). Manaka Ranaka’s image promotes short hair and trendy evening wear, while a cover line endorses weave curls and granny chic (Figure 10). Moreover, on the cover featuring Boity wearing a racy jumpsuit (Figure 11), the afro sits alongside blonde wavy curls and “Beatniks, Geek glasses, Head-to-toe Denim”, and in Figure 12 trending hair consists of “Shaggy cut, cornrows and more styles ...”. These contradictory messages may leave readers confused regarding the acceptable ideal hair type and desirable beauty and fashion trends for black African women. Upon close examination, these contradictions show that *True Love* promotes and embraces different trends and hairstyles. Being cognisant of its diverse readership, the magazine presents readers with multiple hairstyles “to try now”.

In addition to the cover lines, other devices that are employed on the covers are cropping, focus, and lighting. The viewer is not shown the women’s feet as the medium shot images are cropped just a little above or below the knee to focus the reader’s attention on the upper body, particularly the face, cleavage and hair. The objectification of the women through fragmentation of their bodies seems to suggest that what is important about a woman lies between her knees and head. Without their feet, these women have no freedom of movement. Most of the celebrities in the photographs appear facing the camera and these photographs can be described as ‘demand’ images because “participant’s gaze (and the gesture, of present) demands something from the viewer, demands that the viewer enter into some kind of imaginary relation with him or her” (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996:120). The mode of address employed is mainly male gaze, although the images of women are targeted at other women. John Berger (1972:47) argues that “men look at women. Women watch themselves being

looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves”. As a result, the magazine features images of certain kinds of women such as young, glamorous celebrities. The subtle message behind the predominance of certain kinds of glamorous young women is to persuade women to look younger. This is problematic because the magazine seems to address a single class, the rich, young urban dwellers and leaves out other social sub-groups such as rural women and the urban poor who cannot afford to buy products that have the power to transform their look and lifestyle. The myths and ideologies that are promoted by the images are discussed in detail in the following section.

## **7.2 Stereotypes, myths and ideologies promoted on *True Love* covers and advertisements**

As mentioned previously, according to Barthes (1973), myth and ideology reside at the second level of signification. The second level of signification or connotation is concerned about what the visual or linguistic text evokes. The text can evoke different meanings to different people, depending on their cultural or educational background. Assigning meaning at connotation level is largely dependent on the historical issues associated with the visual or verbal sign, and is also context specific. However, Barthes (1973) is aware that the denotative code is not neutral. Although it seems to be fixed and untouched by ideology, it is still largely influenced by the context. Hall (1980:133) concurs and asserts that both denotative and connotative signs are ideological, the only difference being that the former have fixed ideological meaning which becomes naturalised, while the latter are ideologically laden. Hall (1980:133) therefore argues that “the terms denotation and connotation, then are merely useful analytic tools for distinguishing, in particular context, between the presence or absence of ideology in language but the different levels at which ideologies and discourses intersect”.

One of the characteristics that define myths is that these ideological tools come into being, alter, collapse and in some instances disappear completely. From the above, it is apparent that myths are not fixed, but they exist within a specific historical period or context, and their main function is to naturalise things. Barthes (1977:45) observes that a myth “does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them ... it purifies and makes them innocent, gives them a natural and eternal justification”. Naturalising things ensures that they

come to be regarded as commonsensical and no one bothers to question them, hence the status quo is maintained. Put in another way, myth reinforces and maintains ideology.

What then is ideology? Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels define ideology as a “system of false ideas, representing the false consciousness of a social class, in particular of the ruling class, the bourgeoisie” (Nöth 1995:377). Barthes (1964:49) seems to agree with Marx and Engels that ideology is a negative element that serves the interests of the powerful groups in society, hence, it should be exposed for what it is. Furthermore, he posits that the “common domain of the signifieds of connotation is that of ideology, which cannot but be single for a given society and history, no matter what signifiers of connotation it may use” (Barthes 1964:49). The above views are problematic as they presuppose that each class possesses a single true ideology, yet ideology is shaped by the cultural and social processes (Hall 1995:88), and people within the same class may interpret texts differently depending on their personal circumstances.

The portrayals of black African women in *True Love* privilege certain myths and ideologies while excluding others. The main myths and ideologies identified on the covers and advertisements include the beauty myth, the myth of happiness and commercialised feminine beauty, success and glamour, heterosexual romance, dominance and subordination discourse, patriarchal and capitalist ideology, and the objectification of black African women. Each of these is discussed in the following sub-sections.

My data analysis from the 12 issues revealed that different visual codes are used to represent black femininity. Celebrities depicted on the covers with less clothing such as Kelly Khumalo (Figure 5) have curvy, toned bodies. The celebrities on the heavier side, such as Manaka Ranaka (Figure 10) and Bassie (Figure 8), are shown wearing conservative clothes. Certain identities are foregrounded and given prominence, while others are less visible or totally missing. The idealised images of black femininity, which seem to be based mainly on youth, medium-sized body, appearing sensuous, alluring, sexy, and glamorous are portrayed in *True Love*. In addition, the black celebrities are represented in a classed, gendered and racialised stereotypical manner. Based on the axes of gender and sexuality, the texts promote certain notions of black female subjectivity and present black African women in limited roles as married, single, mothers, nurturers, and dumped by a romantic partner. The black female body is represented as a site of pleasure that desires and is desirable. On the one hand, some

visual and textual signs promote the stereotype of the over-sexed black African woman who is desirable to men, while on the other hand, on cover lines promoting solo sex, they are depicted as having sexual agency. While some covers and advertisements seem to promote sexualised gender norms, drawing on black feminism I argue in some texts show that black African women are reclaiming their bodies and asserting their status as subjects rather than just objects for male desire. The contradictory messages on the covers and advertisements point towards the fluidity of black feminine identities.

Cultural products such as magazine covers and advertisements reinforce traditional gender roles by presenting how women are expected to behave in society. Christina N Baker's (2005) American study revealed that ideal women were presented as physically attractive, submissive and sexually appealing to men. The women on the covers and advertisements serve as role models to readers, and having role models that promote or affirm blackness can have a positive effect on black African women and South African society at large. Some South African studies have shown that in print and electronic media advertisements, black African women appear mainly in domestic settings as wives and mothers, and are mainly shown caring for others and doing domestic chores (Luyt 2011; Masina 2010; Maake 2006). However, my study found that most of the images are set against a flat background that does not show any setting, except for Figure 20 where there are people in the background and a pole in front of the woman. The pole, which could be holding a microphone or a stripper pole that is normally found in strip clubs and the verbal text "take to the stage", suggests that the woman is an entertainer. The verbal text "Live a colourful life" refers to the colour of the dye, but when read together with the model's clothes and pose it signifies adult entertainment offered by women in clubs. The advertisement uses sexual innuendo and feminine allure to sell products.

The covers and advertisements send out mixed and at times contradictory messages to readers. On the one hand, there are covers and advertisements that purport to reinforce African pride (Figures 2, 10, 28) and promote natural and naturally styled hairstyles, while others perpetuate the "white" beauty standards of long, straight hair. On the one hand, some advertisements advance the notion that afro hair is only beautiful when it is closer to the white ideal, which is achieved through altering it using relaxers (Figure 40). On the other hand, others seem to suggest that black African women relax their hair to ensure "combing manageability" (Figure 39) and to make it "easier to manage ... for the woman who's busy

with life” (Figure 17). The covers and advertisements represent black African women as beings who are concerned with their outward appearance; the next section examines the beauty myth to try to uncover the reasons behind this concern.

### 7.2.1 *The beauty myth*

The women on the covers and advertisements are depicted as young and beautiful and this points to the societal perceptions about physical appearance. These images of beautiful bodies are meant to delight the viewers’ senses (Eco 2004:41) and draw their attention. Advertisements in general create dissatisfaction with one’s current status or appearance and the desire to consume products in order to improve. *True Love* magazine advertisements and covers appear to aim to improve and upgrade the black body, particularly hair. However, it is important to highlight that in some texts the focus is on both physical and inner beauty. Physical appearance includes the physique, skin tone, type of clothing, hair and make-up (see 5.3.2). Beauty is also associated with other values, such as having a good heart (Figure 8), status, success, and happiness (see 6.3.6). Since the magazine publishes aspirational messages, its objective is to inspire black African women to look like the celebrities on the covers and women in hair advertisements, as well as to emulate their good deeds.

In most societies, including black communities, in terms of outer beauty men and women are treated differently, and Rita Freedman (1986:9) further notes that although people tend to judge each other based on physical appearance, the practice is more intensive when evaluating women. Since beauty is a valuable social asset, women are forced to adhere to certain standards because those who do not may be deemed less feminine. Freedman (1986:110) agrees where she argues that women acknowledge this practice and obey the rules to avoid being labelled social misfits. The veracity of Freedman’s statement, which she made more than 30 years ago, was tested in focus group interviews, and the results revealed that it still holds. My study found that black African women who do not conform to societal standards are judged harshly and wearing certain hairstyles impacts on their career prospects and chances of finding a romantic partner.

Beauty is a powerful tool that can be used to give women social status or help them progress in their careers because “looks do count, in love and in work” (Freedman 1986:230) (see 8.3.5 and 8.3.6). Although beauty is a powerful tool, Freedman (1986:110) suggests that it

“never fully normalises females and only confirms that they need remodelling”. On the physical level, the covers and advertisements use proportion to express beauty. The women’s bodies are presented as being in proportion and there is harmony between the hairstyle, clothes, accessories and skin tone. Some of the hairstyles are symmetrical (Figure 7, 28, 31, 38 and 41), but there are exceptions where asymmetrical styles are deliberately introduced to add drama (Figure 6, 18 and 19). Freedman’s (1986:110) assertion seems to suggest that the pursuit of physical attractiveness is oppressive to women as it is dictated by societal views, which are mainly influenced by a patriarchal ideology. Adding to the debate, Naomi Wolf (2002:12) argues that the beauty myth “keeps male dominance intact because it assigns value to women according to a culturally imposed physical standard”. Closely linked with the above is that the beauty myth naturalises the objectification of women and promotes the consumption of products. For instance, presenting healthy, well-groomed hair as the ideal standard and featuring natural afro alongside other hair textures and hairstyles such as relaxed hair, weaves and wigs subtly encourages readers to purchase the products needed to achieve the looks. Moreover, both of these are coded as ‘natural’.

However, consumption of products by black African women cannot only be linked to capitalist and patriarchal ideology, I argue that it is also empowering. Black African women consume products for their own personal reasons, as Freedman (1986:111) contends that “a healthy sense of narcissism fosters positive body images that are generated from within rather than dictated from without”. It is worth noting that black hair is one of the defining characteristics that set Africans apart from Caucasians and other racial groups. Since African hair represents blackness, it is possible that black African women invest in products to make their hair look beautiful. Moreover, black women are not mere consumers of hair products, they are also the producers.<sup>6</sup> Scholars offer different views relating to the reasons as to why women groom themselves and always want to look good. Some have blamed patriarchal ideology while others attribute it to the power that women have over their bodies. From the above contributions it is clear that a woman’s physical appearance matters and various meanings can be made based on one’s outward look. This point is elaborated further in the section that follows.

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<sup>6</sup> South African beauty and hair brands such as Oamobu Naturals (<https://oamobu.co.za>), LithaFlora African Botanicals (<http://lithaflora.com>), and Nubian Nature (Pty) Ltd (<http://www.nubiannature.co.za>) were founded by black women.



### ***7.2.2 Physical appearance and the communicative power of products***

All the women on the covers and advertisements are featured with well-groomed healthy hair. The signifiers of hair and make-up are used together to connote different things. For instance, the eye-catching make-up and Westerncentric hairstyles such as long weaves connote modernity, while minimal make-up and afro hair signify natural beauty (Figures 2 and 10). However, it is important that even the looks that are promoted as natural are created using many products, which are skilfully applied to make the women appear natural. Furthermore, hairstyles are used in conjunction with certain type of clothing, pose, facial expression, make up and accessories to create a certain look and impression. In addition, the products featured such as hair extensions and hair colour carry meaning and can be used to signify one's social class and fashion taste. The up-do and black dress signify a classy look (Figure 8), while a combination of shorts and camisole with a trendy hairstyle suggest sexy, sassy and flamboyant (Figure 9), and the fiery red hair and denim connote a sophisticated, cool look (Figure 3).

Notably, the women are all able-bodied and fit. The toned body is connoted through the signifiers of the model's body size and verbal text offering quick-fix weight loss solutions, and dieting to maintain the ideal body characterised by a flat tummy (Figure 2, 6, 7 and 12). Sensuality is promoted through flawless skin, which is achieved through application of make-up or airbrushing to conceal imperfections. Another signifier that is used to signify physical appearance is clothing. The swimsuit in Figure 5 signifies chic, poolside or seaside glamour, whereas items of clothing in Figures 8, 10 and 12 are indicative of a style that is associated with evening wear. The clothing that is perceived as conservative connotes elegance and grace (Figures 8, 10, and 12). The women on the covers and advertisements are portrayed as glamorous cosmopolitan women who keep abreast with fashion and beauty trends. The verbal texts, which serve a relay function, connote that a woman can become beautiful through her efforts.

The above examples show that the sign systems/syntagms on the covers and advertisements carry certain meanings. However, it is worth noting that the relationship between the signifier and signified is arbitrary and largely dependent on convention. In addition, meanings are polysemic (Hall 1980), and depend on whether readers employ dominant, negotiated or oppositional readings. For example, while one can read signs in Figure 9 to signify sexy and

flamboyant, the same sign system can be interpreted by another reader to connote that the woman on the cover has loose morals. The different interpretations may be attributed to the readers' cultural backgrounds, religious beliefs, and level of education.

Closely related to the above, visual signs can be misleading and difficult to interpret. For example, Figure 11 features a woman with long, brown, wavy hair whereas as previously noted, research shows that black people's hair is typically black in colour, curly and short. Since there are no naturally brunette black people it becomes obvious that the hairstyle has been achieved through 'artificial' means. In relation to black people, long, brown, wavy hair is normally achieved through applying a relaxer, dying hair brown and using rollers or tongs to introduce soft curls. Alternatively, an individual can sew on a weave or wear a wig with long brown hair. It is difficult to establish the exact hair type; however, it is clear that it is not natural afro hair but has been chemically altered or hair accessories have been used.

Ostentatious accessories are often used to connote glamour. However, on the covers and advertisements hair embellishments and accessories such as beads, hair pins and head bands are missing from the hairstyles. Only Connie Ferguson's ponytail is held in place by a scrunch (Figure 12), but the accessory is black and is hardly visible since it is the same colour as her hair. This is noticeably different from historical hairstyling practices of black women, who tended to incorporate embellishments to their hairstyles. Probably what is featured on the covers of *True Love* shows a trend towards minimalism where 'less is considered to be more'.

There are both low and high maintenance hairstyles in the covers and advertisements. There is no evidence of seasonal trends. Some of the hairstyles are both functional and attractive as they can be worn while working without the hair flying all over the place. Some hairstyles are protective. Most of the hairstyles featured are suitable for different occasions and can go well with casual and formal attire. They can be worn during the day at the office and transition well when 'one lets her hair down' after working hours. Braids, weaves and hair extensions give black African women more styling options and an opportunity to experiment with different hairstyles, hair lengths, textures and colours. It is also important to note that hair serves many purposes such as signifying one's social status, sexuality and class. In the next section, I establish what hair can tell the viewer about black African women, particularly their sexuality.

### 7.2.3 *Naturalisation of heterosexual romance*

The images on the covers and advertisements promote heterosexual romance and women of other sexual orientations are not featured. Black sexuality is equated to heterosexual romance and femininity to sensuality. Most of the hairstyles featured on the covers and advertisements are feminine and give women a sensual look, as opposed to a tomboy appearance (Figure 2), which could be misconstrued as promoting same-sex relationships or homosexuality. The absence of lesbian femininities in *True Love* could be a reflection of societal norms governing love, sex and femininity because homosexuality is something that is not desirable in the black community in South Africa. Heterosexual romance promotes male dominance (Rudman & Glick 2008:204), while lesbian relationships are taboo because they are believed to threaten heteronormativity and to some extent black masculinity. Theresa Carilli and Jane Campbell's (2005:36) notion of intimate danger explains how lesbian relationships threaten black masculinity and male fantasies. Carilli and Campbell (2005:36) note that the "behaviour that validates the worldview of one group's existence ultimately threatens the other group". To save face, some black men resort to corrective rape.<sup>7</sup> This practice is prevalent and as a result lesbians still live in fear and hide their sexual orientation for fear of discrimination, harassment and stigmatisation, although Section 9 of the South African Constitution states that an individual should not be discriminated against because of their sexual orientation (South African Constitution).

Two types of heterosexual relations are presented on the covers. The first is rooted in coupledness, and the other one is influenced by post-feminism and is female-centred, promoting the discourse of powerful, liberated women who have sexual agency. On the one hand, coupledness is represented as natural and rooted in marriage and commitment (Figure 4). On the other hand, female-centred heterosexuality gives women freedom to have sexual relations with men without commitment, and also values female independence (Figures 2 and 9). However, although women seem to have power and freedom, discourses on the covers still equate and define black womanhood in terms of monogamous relationships.

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<sup>7</sup> The Institute for Security Studies (2011 Classifying 'Corrective Rape' ...) defines corrective rape as "an act of non-consensual sex, directed towards lesbian women or gay men by persons of the opposite sex with the aim of either punishing them or 'curing' and 'correcting' their sexual orientation" and for Nkane (2011 Protest against "corrective rape") corrective rape refers to a practice where men, particularly black men rape black lesbians in order to 'turn them straight', or to 'cure' them of their sexual orientation. Several lesbians, including high-profile people like Banyana-Banyana soccer player Eudy Simelane have been raped or raped and murdered because of their sexual orientation.

An exploration of the female gender roles and sexuality shows that a black woman's body is represented as a desiring and desirable body, as evidenced by the parted legs (Figures 4 and 6) and parted or semi-parted lips (Figure 5). On the one hand, the parted legs and parted lips signify that she is sexually available and serve as an invitation to men (she desires), while on the other hand, they make the woman look appealing to men (she is desirable). Black African women are portrayed as sex objects but also nurturing; for example, Pearl Thusi (Figure 9) is shown wearing racy, sexy clothing for her "new man" while purporting to be a nurturing mother to her son. This seems to be a departure from feminist theory which "erects a false dichotomy: either a woman is valued for her human capital (her brains, education, work experience, and dedication to her career) or she is valued for her erotic capital (her beauty, elegant figure, dress style, sexuality, grace and charm). Women with brains and beauty are not allowed to use both" (Hakim 2010:13). By representing Pearl Thusi as a superwoman who can balance a successful career with a romantic relationship and child rearing duties, it further challenges certain gender-biased social practices that expect women to live and behave a certain way, for example, to be nurturers and caregivers. Some aspects of representation that depict nurturing as a natural aspect of black femininity resonate with findings from Sanger's (2007) study, which revealed that women were shown as nurturers and mothers in magazines targeted at white women. However, my study also found that black womanhood is not only confined to nurturing, but encompasses many other characteristics. The theme of presenting the many faces of black African women is discussed further in the next section that focuses on the portrayal of women in dominant and subordinate roles.

#### ***7.2.4 The discourse of dominance and subordination***

Contradictory stereotypical representations of black African women are employed because on the one hand, they are presented as submissive, while on the other hand, they are portrayed as successful, and their success is defined in terms of wealth in the cover lines or alluded to through the celebrity's star power.<sup>8</sup> They are also depicted as dominant, strong single mothers (Figures 2 and 9). Furthermore, the images employ a double bind wherein conflicting or contradictory messages are reflected in representations of women's roles and identities. For

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<sup>8</sup> According to the Ulmer scale developed by journalist James Ulmer (1997) celebrities can be classified into A+, A, B, B+, C and D lists based on their earnings. A-list is the highest and D-list the lowest rank on the scale.

example, the independence-dependence double-bind messages are evident where women's identities are defined independently of others or through their relationships with others.

The semiotic analysis of the covers found that, as is the case with other women's magazines, *True Love* featured mostly images of women on the covers. Only one image featured a woman with a man, as if to suggest that women are independent. In most images women were featured alone, unencumbered by children, husbands and family members. Additionally, the women are represented as independent, hardworking and no longer domesticated. This seems to be a radical departure from what used to happen in historical societies where a woman was identified through a male relative as a wife or daughter and their place was believed to be in the home. Moreover, during colonial and apartheid eras black African women occupied the lowest tier in the hierarchies of gender and race. *True Love* reflect some strides that have been taken towards the emancipation of women more than two decades after the first democratic elections, because the way black African women are represented on the covers sheds light on their material position in society, as well as their economic, political and social standing. In the democratic South African society, 30.8 per cent of black African women have joined the workforce and have become successful in their own right.<sup>9</sup>

However, despite their independence, the verbal texts which anchor the images show that women are still defined through their relationship with others, particularly a male figure. The cover lines make reference to children (Figure 9) and men in their lives including ex-husbands, ex-boyfriends and family members (Figures 2, 6, 10 and 11). The women are empowered and have successful careers, but the cover lines seem to suggest that their lives are incomplete without a man. This resonates with Mgcineni Pro'Sobopha's (2005:118) observation that "women have always been visible as objects ... and rarely have they been acknowledged as subjects of cultural production in their own right".

The advertisements seem to reflect a trend that is totally different from the one that emerges from the covers, as most women are depicted dressed for special occasions, particularly evening wear (Figures 13, 15, 19, 20, 24, 26, 32, 35, 37 and 41), ready to go out or they are

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<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that although 30.8 per cent of black women are employed, overall this population is disadvantaged in terms of race and gender. First, the employment rate for black men at 42.8 per cent is higher than that of black women. Also, the employment rate among coloured women stands at 43.2 per cent, Indian women at 40.2, and 56 per cent of white women are employed (Statistics South Africa 2013:26).

already outside the home. Notable is the fact that all the women in the advertisements are shown wearing leisure clothes, none of them is featured in formal or work attire, as if to suggest that women do not work but are concerned with grooming themselves and having fun. In some images (Figure 19 and 41) women are infantilised to ensure that they do not pose a threat to male authority. For instance, black African women are represented as childish and playful as evident in words and decor, including “come out and play” (Figure 19), and a woman shown sitting on a swing chair (Figure 41). Women are represented as consumers of products and consumption is associated with beauty and success (“make a grand entrance” in Figure 35 and “steal the show” in Figure 37). There is an element of sexism in this kind of representation.

Closely linked to the above is the success/failure double bind messages, which are reflected in the representations of women who are successful in relationships (Figure 4) and those who get out of abusive situations or relationships that are not going anywhere (Figures 10 and 11). Women who get out of abusive relationships are portrayed as self-respecting and empowered because they can take a stand and free themselves. Alongside this discourse of empowerment is another one where women need men in their lives (Figure 9). The above examples show that *True Love* represents multiple and at times contradictory discourses of femininity and black African women’s sexual agency. These findings are in line with results from Panteá Farvid and Braun’s (2006) research, which revealed that women’s magazines targeted at teenagers contained multiple, competing, and contradictory constructions of masculine and feminine sexualities. Building on the representations of feminine identities, the following section examines the objectification of black African women.

### ***7.2.5 Patriarchal ideology and the objectification of black African women***

Some of the covers and advertisements discussed in this study promote patriarchal ideology and sexism by presenting black African women as objects. However, it is worth noting that the other visual texts straddle the line as they represent women as both the consumers and the consumed. The women consume products and transform their appearance, and thereafter display their bodies for the viewer’s consumption.

Nonetheless, I argue that the body language comprising signifiers of sexualised poses, and provocative, revealing clothing showing skin and cleavage signifies that the black African

women are portrayed as sex objects, sexualised and objectified. The advertisements for Inecto hair colour are good examples of images that perpetuate the objectification of women by depicting only the women's lower bodies on the main images. For instance, in Figure 37 a woman wearing a flowing black dress is shown ascending some elegant stairs. Although the advertisement is for a hair dye, the woman's head is not shown in the picture. Henri Lefebvre (1991:405), suggests that "the whole of social space proceeds from the body" and in this image the woman's body occupies almost half of the page. The fragmented body is an essential element of postmodernity and a common device used in capitalism, which turns an individual into a fragment of himself or herself (Marx 1976:482). The verbal text "steals the show with black velvet" may be read as a reference to the black dress, until the viewer's eyes fall on the product image at the bottom right corner. Featuring a disembodied faceless body deprives the woman of her individuality and identity because facial expressions give a person individuality and personality. On the other end of the spectrum, the fragmentation of the female body also creates an air of mystery, and possibly helps readers identify with her as she does not have a specific identity.

The image of the woman on the product packaging, which shows her jet-black shoulder-length straight hair, is much smaller in size. It seems as if the head on the product has been cut off from the main image. This advertisement uses floating, disembodied heads and this is reminiscent of the barbershop signs such as Salon de Gods Time (Unknown Artist, Double-sided barber sign ...). The woman in the main image in Figure 37 is wearing black high-heeled shoes and the focus is on her long legs and thigh. The black background adds an air of mystery and glamour. Figures 19, 20 and 32 also focus on the women's legs. Inecto uses images of black African women with long, thin legs, a feature that is considered beautiful in most Western cultures.<sup>10</sup> In some Nguni cultures in South Africa, a beautiful woman is one who has some 'flesh'. Read in another way, these images could be interpreted as using the discourse of playfulness and empowerment. The women are dressed the way they are for themselves, for their own pleasure and not to please men. By using black velvet, she can "steal the show". Consumption is associated with popularity, success and happiness.

Second wave feminists argue that by portraying women in sexualised and submissive poses, women's magazines perpetuate patriarchal ideology. Under the clasp of patriarchal ideology

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<sup>10</sup> Western media often praises catwalk models and celebrities for their never-ending legs.

unequal power relations exist with men occupying dominant positions, while women are subordinate; as a result, sexual objectification becomes exploitative in nature. Brian McNair (2013:96) observes that “where men rule the roost ... women are the subordinate sellers in such a market, reduced to the value they can extract from the sexualised display of their bodies”. Therefore, in such scenarios, objectification becomes a survival strategy.

However, on the other hand, it is important to point out that women are not powerless beings. Black African women are given voice to articulate issues on the covers (Figures 1, 2, 4, 7, 8 and 9). In these cover lines, the celebrities challenge masculine superiority and feminine inferiority. The texts challenge patriarchal ideology and notions of objectification either by the male gaze or through self-objectification. Drawing on black feminism, I argue that these portrayals are not mere instances of male domination, but can rather be read as sites of inventive struggle. The black African women on the covers and advertisements are not passive, subordinate objects but presented as active desiring subjects with agency. They represent a different kind of sexuality and are using their bodies for personal gain. The celebrities in seductive poses display their sensual beauty, which is presented as irresistible to the viewer. In this sense, I argue that they are like sirens (from Greek mythology), who lured sailors to their death). Their enchanting sexuality is fatally treacherous, and they pose a threat to male dominance.

Moreover, I do not view the portrayal of women in women’s magazines simply as objectification, but rather as subjectivising since they are “women-centred texts which provide resources for women’s playful self-expression and utopian fantasies” (Currie 1999:53). Drawing on this line of thought, displays of the women’s bodies can be seen as empowering and liberating. Rosalind Gill (2009:97) points out that “increasingly, young women are presented not as sex objects but as active, desiring sexual subjects, who seem to participate enthusiastically in practices and forms of self-representation that earlier generations of feminists regarded as connected to subordination”. Based on the findings thus far of a quantitative analysis and semiotic analysis, I agree with Gill, and one can argue that black African women on the visual texts seem to be consciously using their sex appeal to empower themselves.

Furthermore, although the *True Love* fashion and beauty team is responsible for selecting clothes and styling the shoot in terms of directing poses and facial expression, the celebrities



on the covers have some level of control over how they pose and the image they portray to viewers. Post-feminism therefore asserts that “being looked at, appraised and objectified” is not an “unwelcome imposition of a predatory male gaze” (McNair 2013:96). Rather, McNair (2013:96) proposes that it is a “choice freely entered into, made by empowered women reaping the benefits of the cultural space won for them by their feminist sisters, mothers and grandmothers from the late 1960s onwards”. The above suggests that the women depicted on the images are shrewd and they willingly use their erotic capital (Hakim 2011) or sexuality (Paglia 1992) to get what they want. Having explored how patriarchy impacts on the representation of women, the focus shifts to consumerism and how it employs the myth of happiness to entrench itself.

### **7.2.6 *Happiness associated with consumerism***

Most of the women on the covers and advertisements are featured smiling or with their lips parted, revealing their teeth. Smiling could signify an emotional response such as happiness. This begs the question: are these black African women happy? My analysis suggests that black African women show their bodies on the covers and advertisements without shame, as is evident in the expression on their faces. Most of them are smiling and this may suggest that they are enjoying what they are doing. However, this notion can be contested as some people (especially women) have been socialised to pretend and smile just for the sake of it, even if they are not enjoying the task at hand. Moreover, most of the celebrities on the covers are actresses; the smile could be a superficial act and not necessarily a signifier of their inward feelings.

The smile could signify that if readers buy the products and look like the women on the covers they too will be happy. The covers and advertisements promote consumerism by perpetuating an ideal that can be attained through the consumption of relaxers, wigs, weaves and braids, which can be used to lengthen black African women’s hair. In other words, the myth promoted by the covers and advertisements is that through consumption of products, black African women can attain the ideal feminine beauty represented in the magazine. The smile serves as a subtle way of promoting consumerism and encouraging readers to look to the market for happiness. This approach is likely to have more impact because the covers and advertisements use iconic signs, “which work by their similarity to the real objects they

represent” to represent the world (Bennett, Slater & Wall 2005:74). Using the images of local celebrities on the covers increases the appeal factor and promotes aspirational values.

On the other end of the spectrum, Hodge and Kress (2005:297) suggest that smiling connotes submission and being ready to please, and parted lips signify sexual arousal while narrowed eyes show sexual interest. None of the women on the covers and advertisements is shown pouting, a pose commonly associated with looking sexually appealing.

In view of the above, one can pose the question: for whom does the woman groom? According to the Freudian theory it is to attract men, but Murray Wax (1957:588) argues that “a woman dresses and grooms herself in anticipation of a social situation”. This shows that women groom themselves for social reasons, not necessarily for sexuality. Following from the above, the myth of happiness is tied to freedom to choose. Black African women are presented with a wide variety of products and different hairstyles to choose from. This resonates with findings from Bertelsen’s (1998:239-241) study which revealed that in the 1990s, advertisements borrowed terms such as freedom from the political discourse and reinterpreted it to mean freedom to choose from an array of products. The myth of freedom is still used in *True Love* advertisements, although the word ‘freedom’ is not explicitly stated as it was in the 1990s. It is alluded to in the verbal text, for example “mix and match” (Figure 40). However, it is important to note that black African women are not totally free to choose, they make their choices within certain cultural and economic boundaries; for instance, the unavailability of financial resources may impede an individual from purchasing certain products. It is therefore apparent that *True Love* advertisements sell aspirations and desires, and employ myth and ideology to persuade reader buy-in.

Commercialised feminine beauty is associated with happiness; as a result, all the women are represented as active consumers. Advertising propagates the myth that buying material products can solve non-material problems. The way the covers and advertisements are designed is visually appealing. To promote the myth that happiness comes from consumption, the women are shown endorsing products such as hair extensions, hair colour, wigs and weaves, cosmetics, and clothing. The fact that these products are endorsed by black African women for black readers creates a sense of identity and belonging, thereby enticing readers to make a purchase. All the women are shown wearing make-up. Some have subtle make-up to promote “less is more” and the au naturel look, while others are wearing heavy make-up, which subscribes to the “bold is better” approach. In both instances, make-up is used to

conceal flaws, thereby encouraging readers to look to the market in order to look good and be satisfied.

However, looking to the market for happiness and satisfaction is problematic because an individual is constantly exposed to new products, which create new desires; hence one cannot achieve a state of total satisfaction. Consumer culture promotes the notion that faster is better and that waiting is a waste of time, and by so doing creates impatience among consumers. Advertisers then take advantage of the consumers' impatience to sell their products that promise instant gratification. Moreover, relentlessly seeking instant gratification from the market instead of waiting for delayed gratification can be detrimental as it may lead to frustration if the products do not provide quick solutions to meet their cravings. This may lead to feelings of disappointment towards the purchase. Jhally (1990:16) argues that gratification can be realised from non-durable goods such as food because they are "both pleasure intensive and – because the proof disappears in the eating they are also disappointment-resistant". More importantly, consumer culture and its accompanying need for instant gratification is opposed to ideals endorsed by some African cultures, which consider patience to be a virtue. The value assigned to things and experiences is proportionate to the amount of time that was invested towards achieving them. Ultimately, consumer culture only distracts people from reality through employing myths that naturalise and present things as universal truths. As a result, although advertisers seek to exploit consumers through hegemonic messages, the consumers do not perceive themselves as being exploited, they actually believe that it is done for their own benefit.

## **CONCLUSION**

The visual semiotic analysis in this and the previous chapter has provided descriptive insights and interpretations to give a better understanding of how and why black African women are represented in certain ways. In conclusion, it is worthwhile to state that the analysis of the hair advertisements has shown that in addition to containing vital information about the products, they also give insight into the images of black femininity. The covers and advertisements represent discourses of femininity by promoting certain myths and ideologies that advance what is considered ideal and desirable in the black communities in South Africa.

## Chapter Seven: Application to *True Love*: Visual semiotic analysis of the covers

From the above observations, I conclude that *True Love* represents some of the different faces of black African women. It depicts a superwoman who can juggle a successful career, romantic relationship and family life. She is presented as a postmodern woman who is no longer confined to the home, but has her own disposable income. She also combines her physical beauty with brains and inner beauty, and is also the kind of woman who shows off her sexuality.

Thus far I have presented my own analysis; in the following chapter, I employ a questionnaire and focus group interviews and present the perceptions and interpretations of the selected 30 black African women aged between 18 and 45.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: FINDINGS FROM PRE-GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS**

The two previous chapters examined the codes used to represent black African women in *True Love* covers and hair advertisements. The visual semiotic analysis has shown that *True Love* constructs and circulates certain benchmarks and discourses of black femininity for its readers. Although the covers and advertisements use iconic signs, my analysis has confirmed that images are “never transparent windows into the world. They interpret the world; they display it in very particular ways; they represent it” (Rose 2011:2). This endorses the assumption that images on the covers and advertisements serve as signs that signify something and usually promote certain stereotypes, myths, ideologies, and societal values.

In this chapter, the focus group interviews examine how readers consume the images and forge their identities and how the representations impact on their lives. I begin with a discussion of the pre-group questionnaire, detailing how the respondents were selected and giving a summary of the respondents’ demographics. Thereafter, I give an overview of focus group interviews, including its strengths and limitations. The second section, which forms the bulk of this chapter, presents the findings and discussion of the pre-group questionnaire and focus group interviews.

### **8.1 Pre-group questionnaire**

The pre-group questionnaire (Figure 56), consisting of open-ended questions, was developed to capture data. The next step taken was devising a strategy for selecting respondents and distributing the questionnaires. Before discussing how respondents were selected it is important to justify why this measuring instrument was employed. First, using open-ended questions enriches the research as it enables respondents to articulate their views in their own words. Drawing on Trudie du Plooy (2003:134), who argues that complex and double-barrelled questions impact negatively on reliability, the questions were carefully phrased to avoid ambiguity. In addition to capturing the respondent’s demographics and giving an insight into their attitudes towards black hair, the pre-group questionnaire results were helpful in preparing the interview guide (Figure 57), as well as screening and selecting respondents for focus group interviews.

The major advantage of using a self-administered questionnaire as a measuring instrument was that all the respondents received the same questions, and since the questionnaire was hand-delivered it was possible for the respondents to seek clarification where necessary. Direct contact with the respondents may result in interviewer bias, but in my study it was mitigated by the fact that most respondents did not fill in the questionnaire in front of me. Since they were at work, many women scanned through the questionnaire, asked questions, and then set the document aside to fill in later. The next section gives details on how the respondents were selected.

### ***8.1.1 Selecting respondents***

To qualify for the study, a respondent had to be an African woman, who reads *True Love* magazine and is aged between 18 and 45 years. In addition, respondents had to be employed and have a disposable income, live in the city where she has access to a wide range of products, and should have been reading *True Love* magazine for at least two years.

The pre-group questionnaires were distributed to 30 black African women aged between 18 and 45 at their workplaces in Pretoria. The workplace was chosen to ensure that the respondents selected met the criteria set out above (that they should be employed women earning an income) and to facilitate the scheduling of focus group interviews for the next phase of the research. The respondents were selected using snowball sampling, a non-probability method of choosing participants. First, it is important to underline that when using snowball sampling one cannot make inferences or generalisations from the sample to the population. Second, although there are 2.2 million readers of *True Love* (AMPS 2015 ([Jul14-Jun15])), it is not easy to locate them. The Media24 circulation department has a list of the magazine's subscribers, but their details are not available in the public domain; hence, snowball sampling was employed in this exploratory study to gain access to the population. Notwithstanding the fact that readers interact on online platforms and some meet at events organised by *True Love*, the magazine's readership comprises mostly isolated individuals who barely know each other.

Caution was exercised since the non-probability sampling technique has some limitations, such as bias, because the respondents are not randomly selected but are dependent on the recommendations of the informants, who are most likely to suggest people within their own

circle such as family, friends and colleagues. The above factors may affect the composition of the sample and there is a high chance of ending up with a homogenous sample, for instance, a group of friends or people of the same age group. To ensure an inclusive sample and reduce bias, the first informants were carefully identified taking their demographics into consideration. They were then asked to recommend other women who read *True Love*.

Thirty black African women who responded had both similar and unique traits in terms of age, industry they worked in, level of education and area in which they lived. Using informants was helpful in getting information-rich participants and achieving the required sample size, particularly because the potential respondents tended to trust me since the recommendations were made by people they knew. Furthermore, the response was mainly positive because the questionnaires were hand-delivered to the respondents. Meeting the potential participants face-to-face enabled me, in addition to the letter of invitation, to explain in detail the purpose of the research before handing out the questionnaires. Those who declined to participate for several reasons were not given the questionnaire, and I proceeded to approach more people until the desired sample size was met. The respondents who agreed to participate were given the questionnaire and consent form, which addressed the ethical concerns such as assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.

### ***8.1.2 The respondents' demographics***

All the respondents selected work in Pretoria and most of them are South African nationals<sup>1</sup> from different ethnic groups and speak the following languages: Afrikaans (1); Xitsonga (1); isiSwati (1); isiNdebele (1); SeSotho (1); South Sotho (2); isiXhosa (3); Tshivenda (3); isiZulu (4); Sepedi (5); SeTswana (6), and two Shona-speaking Zimbabweans. The mean age of the participants is 29.<sup>2</sup> The sample comprises 13 women from Johannesburg with most residing in Midrand, and 17 respondents live in Pretoria mainly in Centurion.<sup>3</sup> The women

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<sup>1</sup> The expatriates, who were approached, stated that they were not comfortable in taking part in the research because they did not want people to know their countries of origin. They pointed out that only their employers knew where they come from and did not feel comfortable sharing that information with strangers because they feared victimisation following several incidents of xenophobic attacks in South Africa since 2008.

<sup>2</sup> As per calculations the mean age was 28.6666 and has been rounded off to 29.

<sup>3</sup> Midrand and Centurion are former "white" areas located between Johannesburg and Pretoria. Black people who live in these border towns are mostly young, with the majority of older people living in the townships.

live in both suburbs (Midrand, Centurion, and Hatfield) and townships (Tembisa, Ga-Rankuwa, and Mamelodi). In terms of qualifications, the sample consists of women who only had basic education and those who pursued tertiary education and obtained certificates, diplomas, bachelor's and postgraduate degrees. The lowest level of education attained was Grade 11 and the highest was a master's degree. The respondents work in various industries, including IT, oil and gas, health, and the financial sector, and occupy positions as cleaners, front desk personnel, personal assistants, managers, entrepreneurs, lawyers, and pharmacists; the majority earn R5,000 to R9,999 per month.<sup>4</sup>

Out of these 30 women, 18 respondents, who met the criteria, were selected for focus group interviews. However, selecting the sample for focus groups was a challenge because identifying the women who met the criteria was complicated by the respondents' answers; for example, some did not answer question 8, yet the response was key in selecting the sample. Moreover, there were inconsistencies in the answers; for instance, a 27-year-old Tswana who works in the financial industry said that she does not read *True Love* under question 8 but under question 10 wrote that "I don't read it at times, I just page through unless the stories are interesting", and in questions 20 and 21 said she loves fashion featured on the covers and that she gets inspiration from the looks. Furthermore, some respondents said they did not or had stopped reading *True Love*, but the other responses they gave indicated that they were familiar with its content and some had simply moved from print to online platforms. They were chosen for the focus group interviews because they did meet the criteria. The results of the survey questionnaire were used to develop discussion topics and themes that were explored in detail during focus group discussions. In a way the pre-group questionnaire functioned as pilot work.

## 8.2 Focus group interviews

Using focus group interviews, this section focuses on the way the 18 selected black African women read and interpreted the visual images. Furthermore, it seeks to establish whether

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<sup>4</sup> Twenty-six out of 30 respondents ticked the income box while four left it blank. Of these three (11 per cent) earn R1,000-4,000; nine (35 per cent) receive R5,000-9,000; six (23 per cent) get R10,000-14,000; two (8 per cent) earn R15,000-19,000; and six (23 per cent) receive more than R20,000 a month. This is in line with South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) AMPS 2015 ([Jul14-Jun15]) report which show that the bulk of *True Love* readers belong to the 8-10 LSM with an average personal monthly income of R7,603.



covers and advertisements influence black African women's hairstyling practices, perceptions and sense of self. Several scholars have tried to explain what focus group interviews involve. The definitions that have been offered include Powell and Single's (1996:499) "a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research". For Bridget Turner Kelly (2003:50), focus group interviews are "designated to elicit perceptions, information, attitudes and ideas from a group in which each participant possesses experience with the phenomena under study". However, these two explanations could be a reference to any group interviews not focus groups per se. DL Morgan (1997:12) seems to capture the key element of focus group interviews where he describes the method as interaction among group members who are guided by the researcher; 'interaction' is the operative word.

The 18 respondents who met the criteria were chosen. Each of the three focus groups comprised six respondents. The sample consisted of black African women working in different industries, individuals with different skills occupying different positions within their respective companies. It is worth noting that recruiting people for focus groups was challenging at first as it was difficult to get six people together at a venue and time that was suitable for all of them, particularly because there were no financial rewards. However, with a lot of persuasion, the women agreed to participate and forego their lunch. Additionally, the topic under discussion proved to be of interest and served as a draw card because they felt it was close to their heart and they wanted their voices to be heard and to make their experiences as black African women visible.

The focus group interviews were held during lunch hour at coffee shops in Centurion.<sup>5</sup> Focus group X was conducted on November 11, 2016 between 1 and 2pm (Figure 58); Focus group Y on November 10, 2016 between 12 noon and 1pm (Figure 59), and focus group Z on November 9, 2016 between 1 and 2pm (Figure 60). The venues and time slots chosen were accessible and convenient for the respondents. Even though all the necessary measures were put in place, there were two last-minute cancellations owing to work commitments since the interviews were conducted during the week days.

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<sup>5</sup> Initially the discussions were supposed to be held at the University of Pretoria, Hatfield campus on a Saturday but the venue and date was changed owing to the #feesmustfall disturbances that resulted in restricted access to the University.

## Chapter Eight: Findings from pre-group questionnaire and focus group interviews

Each focus group interview session began with the screening of the 12 magazine covers and 29 hair advertisements and asking each respondent to write down words and thoughts that came to mind as she viewed the images. I chose to adopt this approach because visual communication has become an important and integral part of our daily lives; consequently, many people including consumers and marketing executives are communicating visually. Print and electronic media use visuals to attract audiences to buy their publications, visit their websites, and businesses use visuals to help sell their products. For these reasons, presenting a slide show of visual images was helpful because images are very powerful and the human brain tends to process them faster than when viewing words (Kenney 2009:178). According to Keith Kenney (2009:178), it is believed that this skill came about because “to survive in prehistoric times, humans had to immediately react by fighting or fleeing”, therefore humans developed the ability to rapidly sort visual information and to register its emotional significance. Also visual images, unlike words, are crafted in such a way that they condition consumers to associate certain products with specific emotional responses, which often operate largely at a subconscious level. Anna Bagnoli (2009:548) concurs and adds that conducting interviews-with-images can invoke more emotional, more affective, and deep discussions.

In addition, Kenney (2009:178) notes that visual images such as pictures tend to stimulate cognitive and emotional responses that closely resemble those stirred by the actual object. Looking at the images of women on the covers and advertisements draws the viewer closer to the subject that is represented. Like art, visual images make it possible for individuals to empathise by enabling them to “step into the shoes of others and to experience vicariously what we have not experienced directly” (Eisner 2002:10).

Asking respondents to write the words, phrases and statements on pieces of paper and asking them to read out as the discussion progressed helped capture “untainted opinions”, that is the views each individual had before the discussion began. This exercise served as an ice breaker and in addition, the images on the screen helped aid recall and to keep the respondents focused on the task at hand throughout the discussion as they kept referring to them. In accordance with the rules governing conducting focus group interviews, each session has to be moderated by a moderator to facilitate the smooth flow of interactions and exchanges among group members.

I served as moderator and gave participants a platform to express their views, only interrupting to probe or guide the discussion whenever it seemed to veer off course. Ethical considerations were adhered to by treating respondents fairly. Additionally, the purpose of the research was explained and I reiterated that participation was voluntary and respondents were free to withdraw at any stage of the research without any negative consequences. To ensure confidentiality,<sup>6</sup> code names comprising letters of the alphabet were assigned at the beginning of each gathering. To identify the individuals' voices, each respondent was assigned a code and at the beginning of the session introduced herself using her real name as well as the code name.

Moderating the sessions also entailed setting the ground rules by explaining that there were no "wrong" or "correct" answers. Moreover, it involved ensuring that respondents did not speak at the same time; no one dominated others as well as gently nudging the quiet members to share their opinion. This was done in a tactful and respectful manner to encourage participation by all members while not offending anyone. Respondents were asked to explain certain terms and concepts for the benefit of the multicultural group.

### ***8.2.1 The benefits and limitations of using focus group interviews***

In this study, one of the key elements that set focus group interviews, apart from other research methods such as pre-group questionnaires and quantitative content analysis, was that different perspectives on the topic were gleaned from the data collected. The individual's opinions, as well as the views of the group as a collective, emerged during interactions as the meanings were negotiated and renegotiated during the discussions. An interesting observation was that people who were complete strangers or barely knew each other were brought together to constitute a focus group. Moreover, I was also a stranger to the respondents but we managed to talk to each other and open up about black hair issues.

At the beginning of each session I used an icebreaker in the form of a slide show to help the respondents relax and get to know each other. After the icebreaker and a few questions that I

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<sup>6</sup> However, I am aware that maintaining complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in a focus group setting because it involves a lot of people. While in my transcripts and report I use code names to protect the respondents' identities I cannot guarantee that "other focus group members will not make public the statements others made inside the focus group session" (Carey & Asbury 2016:11).

asked, the respondents began addressing each other directly, posing questions to each other, agreeing or disagreeing with each other. The respondents' behaviour can be best explained using Georg Simmel's notion of stranger.<sup>7</sup> Simmel (1950:404) observes that a stranger "often receives the most surprising openness – confidences which sometimes have the character of a confessional and which would be carefully withheld from a more closely related person". However, in some cases the first impressions strangers have of each other may cause them to contribute less.

While questionnaires were valuable in obtaining data from a larger sample, it was not possible to capture the feelings and emotions. Combining them with focus group interviews was advantageous because this method allowed for the collection of in-depth responses and captured in detail what respondents thought and how they felt. This method was helpful in uncovering feelings and the unique terminology black African women use to talk about their hair. Using focus group interviews was ideal in observing group interactions such as how respondents reacted to points raised by other group members. For instance, some respondents raised points that had not occurred to others and this presented an opportunity for debate. The respondents agreed on certain issues and also disagreed on others, and were vocal in defending their position. Kelly (2003:50) notes that the group dynamics set focus group apart from other methods such as in-depth interviews and questionnaires because "rather than simply having a discussion between an interviewer and interviewee, focus groups often involve disagreement and discussion among participants". Focus group interviews ensure the co-construction of meaning as opposed to the imposition of meaning by the researcher. The questionnaire contained a limited set of questions that I developed based on the research questions and what I thought was important. In other words, a questionnaire is based on the researcher's assumptions and interpretations; however, in focus groups interviews, the respondents also play a key role in determining what is important.

Be that as it may, caution should be taken when using focus group interviews because this method has some shortcomings; for instance, the group dynamics influence the discussion both positively and negatively. Since the group members were meeting for the first time, the

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<sup>7</sup> For Georg Simmel (1950), all human relations are organised around the phenomenon of the stranger. For him a stranger is an individual who has not belonged to a group from the beginning. He further argues that "to be a stranger is naturally a very positive relation; it is a specific form of interaction" (Wolff 1950).

impressions they had of each other were probably formed on the basis of information based on physical appearance, which can be used to judge one's status though at times there is no correlation between appearance and status (see 8.3.8). Other indicators that could have been used to form impressions are line of work, position in the company and the company a respondent worked for. The first impressions had an impact on how the discussions progressed. On the one hand, in certain instances some individuals tended to censor themselves or became cautious about what they said in the presence of others, as evident in the following utterances, "I don't want you to know what I do ..." (Figure 58), "I can't say those people ..." (Figure 60) and "I know this sounds unprofessional ..." (Figure 58).

In exploring the concept of impression management to try to understand human interactions, Erving Goffman (1959:1) notes that when "an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him ... They will be interested in his [*sic*] general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his attitude toward them, his competence, his trustworthiness, etc". The information gained aids individuals in their interactions. They use the information to adjust their behaviour in line with their impressions and perceptions of other group members, in line with their own interests and beliefs, or in relation to their personal circumstances. They engage in what Goffman (1959) calls front- and back-stage impression management to present what they think would be a favourable image to others. As a result, people behave in a certain way in certain environments under certain circumstances. The way the respondents perceived each other and the researcher may have influenced the group interactions. It may lead to conformity whereby respondents agree with the opinion expressed by the majority. It is important to highlight that even while filling in the self-administered questionnaire, respondents were not necessarily expressing their individual views because they formed their opinions within a specific culture.

Related to the above, another aspect worth exploring is the researcher-respondent dynamics, which can function like a double-edged sword. On the one hand, based on the impressions made, the respondents may withhold information or say things they think the researcher wants to hear. On the other hand, if good rapport is established between the two parties, the respondents tend to relax and give their insights. In my case, as a black woman I blended in and there were no discernible obvious fears, tensions or suspicions towards me as a researcher and moderator. Although I had interacted with the respondents only a couple of times they did not view me as an "outsider"; instead I was treated as *usisi* (sister) and this was

manifest in the terms they used such as “*thina*” (us), “our hair”; and “those people” when referring to white people. I believe my race, gender and age made the respondents relax and open up about their hair experiences as black African women.<sup>8</sup>

Coupled with being regarded as “one of them”, I believe giving respondents an opportunity to play a leading role in the discussion gave them the impression that they were empowered and did not feel threatened by my presence since my role as a moderator entailed providing minimal guidance. Allowing them to take the initiative could have made them seem like experts making an important contribution to a research project addressing a pertinent issue that has been debated in many fora in the South African community. Commenting on power dynamics, Martha Ann Carey and Jo-Ellen Asbury (2016:12) agree that focus groups “reduce power imbalances between researcher and participant, thereby empowering them and facilitating research with them rather than on them”.

Other factors such as the composition of the group and the personalities and language used had an impact on the discussions. The three focus groups comprised individuals with different personalities; some respondents employed humour and did not shy away from poking fun at themselves, while some were reserved. Another factor that impacted on interaction and the level of participation among group members was the respondents’ different backgrounds and level of education. The diversity within the group had both positive and negative aspects in that the data gathered was rich. On the downside, since the focus group discussions were conducted in English, those who were eloquent expressed their views clearly while those who were not proficient in English tended to say less. Moreover, focus group interviews do not occur naturally, they are directed by an interview guide.

The sessions were audio recorded and transcribed soon after the discussions.<sup>9</sup> Recording is beneficial because it prevents the setbacks of selective recall. The focus group interview transcripts were helpful during data analysis because it is faster to read and re-read several times and to skip to the desired portion of the data than in an audio recording. In addition to

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<sup>8</sup> As a black woman myself, in my interactions with other black women I have observed that most black women living in urban areas tend to speak freely and give honest opinions about their hair amongst ourselves. As black women we even open up to strangers we meet at the salon, supermarket aisles, taxis and coffee shops as long as they are black, but shy away or become defensive in the presence of people who belong to other racial groups.

<sup>9</sup> Transcribing and doing preliminary analysis to identify the broad themes while it was still fresh on my mind enabled me to capture the tone, emotions, and meaning.

the recording, I discreetly took down some notes, noting non-verbal cues during the session. The problems encountered were that there was no projector and big screen to show the images, so a laptop was used and it was difficult for all the respondents to see the images at the same time. Moreover, the weather conditions made it difficult to see the images clearly and I had to adjust the brightness of the screen; as a result, it took longer to view the slide show. On top of that, the interviews were conducted in coffee shops in the outdoor seating area during lunch hour and there were a lot of distractions such as noise of passing cars, waiters taking and delivering food orders, and people speaking on the phone. Nonetheless, the recording equipment was of good quality and filtered out the unwanted noise and all the voice recordings were clear. The data collected was transcribed and then analysed to identify the themes that emerged. The section and sub-sections below discuss the findings.

### **8.3 Findings from pre-group questionnaire and focus group interviews**

A thematic content analysis was used to interpret data from the pre-group questionnaires and focus group interviews. Drawing on Johnny Saldaña (2009:139), who defines a theme as “a phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is about and/or what it means”, and Gery Ryan and H Russell Bernard (2003:87) who argue that “themes come in all shapes and sizes”, I used the interview guide in the coding process. However, it is important to point out that although I used the interview guide during focus group interviews, the order of the questions was not strictly followed. During the discussions the respondents tended to revert to topics that had been discussed earlier, and in some cases they introduced an issue that was covered in later questions. Accordingly, during a review of the transcripts I identified similar themes from various points in the discussion and grouped them together.

Since text is open to many interpretations, different coders can identify different themes and Greg Guest, Kathleen M MacQueen and Emily E Namey (2012) note that the reader’s experience influences their perception. This brings us to the issue of the researcher effect on the data. There is a danger of the researcher conflating what people said with his/her interpretation of what they said. Being aware that my cultural background, level of education, beliefs and worldview could influence the data, I followed Guest *et al.*’s (2012) advice and coded each set of transcribed focus group interview data two times after an interval of a week between the sessions.

The broad themes that I identified during my analysis of the data collected from questionnaires and focus group transcripts are the delineation of what constitutes African hair and hairstyles, motivations for reading *True Love*, the nature of the influence of covers and advertisements on the respondents, alternative sources of influence, hair and hairstyle preferences, notions about good and bad hair, hair and identity politics, attitudes towards hair enhancement and alteration, and black hair care financial implications. The sections below discuss these themes more fully.

It is important to note that during data analysis both group and individual views were noted. In addition, the individual views were compared with the group views to determine if there were similarities and differences. In some cases, the respondents were of one accord and in others they expressed divergent views. The data collected from the questionnaire had to be cleaned first before analysis began. For example, noting the variations in the spellings of the names of the hairstyles and then identifying how often each hairstyle was mentioned. For things such as money spent on hair per month that are not culturally well-defined, people listed different figures; I noted the price range that was frequently mentioned.

### ***8.3.1 Descriptions of African hair and hairstyles***

To determine to what extent *True Love* texts shaped the selected black African women's perceptions and attitudes, it is important to begin by examining how they defined African hair and hairstyles. In addition, it is necessary to explore their notions of good and bad hair. From the data collected, it emerged that there are various categories and classifications of African hair. The definitions offered were diverse and can be organised into broad themes such as natural, texture, strength, styling, and hair alteration. However, these categories are not mutually exclusive, as a result there is overlap; one definition or description of African hair can fit under more than one theme. The descriptions that incorporated the natural theme were "natural unprocessed hair", "natural, God given", "hair that naturally grows on African ladies [sic] without the use of chemicals", and "natural hair without extension, without any chemical" and "hair that is of African origin, it may be in its natural form, locked [dreads] or even straightened with relaxers or hot irons".

In terms of texture, it was described as "coarse and nappy", "kinky hair that has to be relaxed to be easily combed", "rough hair, which is naturally hard", "ethnic hair, coarse [sic] and



freezy [*sic*]”. Those who focussed on hair alteration described it as “hair that is not treated by any chemicals in order to straighten it”, and “strong hair whether treated, plaited or combed”. It was also described as strong; however, it is worth noting that none of the respondents described and categorised African hair in terms of length and colour.

The above explanations show how difficult it is to come to an agreement regarding a single definition of African hair. For some it is hair that a black person is born with when it is in its natural unaltered state, while others believe any hair that grows on a black person’s scalp whether natural afro, natural hair that is braided or locked without extensions, or chemically relaxed qualifies to be classified under African hair.<sup>10</sup> Regarding what it is not, there was consensus that hair enhancements such as extensions, weaves and wigs do not constitute African hair because they do not grow on the scalp but are added to or worn on top of the hair. These were referred to as fake hair as the following quotation shows: “it’s [African hair] about being true or rather it’s having true identity, being a real African and not conforming to the new life of having fake hair”. Noteworthy is that the respondents did not problematise the term ‘African’; they seemed to take for granted that African refers to a black person. Other descriptions of black hair such as the one that made reference to locks introduced the element of styling.

The African hairstyles that were frequently mentioned are dreadlocks, braids, brush cut, braided hair with wool, plaiting, plaited natural hair, cornrows, free hand, needle hairstyle, Afros, Bantu knots, Benny and Betty hairstyle, relaxed or straightened hair, and perm. The person who wrote down “relaxed/straightened hair, perm” added “... LOL”. Adding an emoticon LOL is loaded with meaning. It could be the respondent’s humorous way of questioning straightened hair as an African hairstyle. After establishing black African women’s definitions of African hair and hairstyles, their favourite and least favourite hairstyles were explored and the findings are discussed under 8.3.5 and 8.3.6. Meanwhile, the next section uncovers their motivations for reading *True Love*.

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<sup>10</sup> My definition of African hair in Chapter Five corresponds to the latter view. When devising categories for types of hair featured on the covers and advertisements, I sub-divided African hair into natural and naturally styled (see 5.1.3).

### 8.3.2 *Reasons for reading True Love*

To establish the extent to which *True Love* messages influenced the respondents, drawing on Blumler and Katz's (1974) uses and gratifications theory, I tried to ascertain why they read the magazine. I also sought to establish which sections appealed to them, and the amount of time they spent reading the magazine. Pre-group questionnaire and focus group interview findings revealed that the motivations for reading *True Love* were different for the 30 black African women sampled. The reasons that were mentioned are to get advice on various matters including skin care, health and career; for entertainment; to see beauty and fashion trends; to read inspirational stories about other women; to read recipes, and the astrology page. Moreover, most respondents pointed out that they read *True Love* because it is one of the few magazines that showcase black African women's beauty. A few respondents stated that they did not have any specific reasons; they read the magazine because they grew up reading it, it was read by their grandmothers and mothers before them and the tradition has been passed down from one generation to the next. For others, the main incentive for buying and reading *True Love* was the prospect of receiving freebies such as free samples of lotion sachets and mini flacons of fragrances. These findings corroborate that readers have agency, they are selective and active in the way they use the magazine.

Respondents also noted that they read *True Love* because they believed that it was a valuable source of information, hence they devote some time to reading it. Some respondents reported reading the magazine for up to three hours in one sitting and paying more attention to fitness, health, food and columns that give women advice on how to take care of themselves. They confided that they immediately put the things they read about into practice (Figure 60). Some, like respondent O, look at what is on the cover first and buy the magazine if they find things that interest them. Other respondents divulged that they scan through the magazine and on weekends when they have free time re-read the material again. For some, the decision to purchase and read the magazine rests on the celebrity featured on the cover. For instance, respondent P said she always buys the magazine if her role models Bassie and Connie Ferguson are featured.

They read the advertisements because of the information they offer; however, respondents were aware that in some cases advertising content exaggerates things; hence they do not believe everything they see – as respondent P jokingly pointed out that “if it's too good to be

true then it's not true". The visual aesthetics also draw readers in as Q stated that "it depends on how they're advertising because I'm a person who believes in seeing. ... if it's just an advert I'm not going to look at it I won't even give it time ... It has to look pretty for me to actually give it my full attention" (Figure 60). Again, the above shows that readers select messages that are beneficial to them. Moreover, the selection depends on several factors such as informational needs and visual appeal. Having ascertained the reasons for reading the magazine the focus turns to the extent of the influence.

### ***8.3.3 To what extent do the covers and advertisements influence black African women?***

Visual texts such as the covers and advertisements are instrumental in constructing identity for consumers. This view holds true to some extent; however, it seems to suggest that readers are passive and that the flow of meaning is unidirectional, that is, it flows from media messages to the reader. The findings from my study refute the notion of the passive audience and are aligned to approaches which acknowledge that readers actively engage with the texts.

Paraphrasing Aristotle, Alberto Manguel (2000:6) argues that "for the thinking soul, images take the place of direct perceptions; and when the soul asserts or denies that these images are good or bad, it either avoids or pursues them". Results from my study are in agreement with this assertion as they revealed that the texts produced a reaction and impacted on the respondents' lives. They either agreed or disagreed with the messages. The responses were either positive or negative, depending on the way the women read, interpreted and constructed meanings from the covers and advertisements. The effect the texts had largely depended on what Mitchell (1994:420) describes as "who or what represents what to whom with what, and where and why?" Some women read the messages in accordance with the dominant code, which was in line with the dominant ideological assumptions, while others chose to interpret the messages using the negotiated code. The third group employed oppositional reading and did not subscribe to the ideals that were promoted by the images.

Moreover, my study draws on categories delineated by Anne Peirson-Smith (2000:133), namely, acceptors, hedgers and rejecters<sup>11</sup> to determine the nature of the influence of the

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<sup>11</sup> Drawing on Peirson-Smith (2000:133), acceptors refers to the respondents who responded positively to the covers and advertisements. Their positive response was evident in that they embraced the celebrities as their role models and identified with the trends and advertised products. The black

texts. For some who were affected, the effect of media messages was immediate; for instance, some woman saw products and bought them immediately or saw a hairstyle on the covers or advertisements and copied it. The images also had long-term effects (Potter 2005:234), such as being continuously exposed to long, straight hair ideal and eventually internalising and believing that colonisation and apartheid rule did not perpetuate this Westerncentric ideal.

Survey and focus group interview findings show that the covers and advertisements influenced some black African women's hair care and styling decisions. A few respondents who accepted the messages said they used *True Love* magazine to get information on haircuts, and were inspired by the stylish and trendy hairstyles they saw on the advertisements and covers. Respondent I was impressed by Pearl Thusi's "beautiful hairstyle" and it made her desire to have an Afro. Her statement "I just had to note down the beautiful cover by Pearl, I think they styled her afro very well" (Figure 58) is remarkable because she did not say "she styled her Afro" but "they styled her Afro". It points to the fact that Pearl Thusi has money and can afford to engage a stylist to do her hair, and could also be an indication that some black African women are aware that a lot of work goes into preparing the celebrities for the cover shoot. This sentiment was echoed in focus group Y, where respondents indicated that the covers and advertisements showcased "prepared hair, stylish, even natural hair is styled or prepared" (Figure 59). Still on the influence of texts, a 27-year-old HR intern who lives in Roodepoort wrote, "I got inspiration for my haircut from Bonnie or rather Pearl because that's where I saw it and liked it". This relates to the influence of celebrity culture on black African women. The above examples illustrate that some women used celebrities as yardsticks of beauty and tended to emulate their looks. However, a few others resisted the allure of celebrities (see 8.3.9).

Additionally, some women used advertisements to find information on hair care products. Follow-up actions included purchasing the products and looking for more information on the brand or product. For example, after reading about products in the advertisements, a 23-year-old front desk administrator said she does research, then compares the new product attributes

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women who did not directly identify with what was represented on the texts are described as hedgers. The hedgers' responses were influenced by their personal circumstances, cultural and economic factors. For example, the affordability of a product affected the way respondents related to it. Finally, the term rejecters is used to refer to respondents who refused to accept the text because it was not culturally acceptable or it was not relevant to their situation. These three categories are similar to Hall's three positions that audiences adopt when reading text, namely, dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional position.

with those of the one she is already using. A 37-year-old entrepreneur acknowledged that she buys what she sees in the magazine and indicated, “if *uyayifuna* (you want it) you wanna go out and do research on it or buy if it’s something you buy off the shelf or whatever”. Some buy the products because of brand loyalty; for instance, a 30-year-old South Sotho HR manager who has long dreadlocks only trusts Jabu Stone products, and a 31-year-old South Sotho cleaner said she buys Easy Waves products that she saw “through advertisement and initially fell in love with it”. These examples prove that the covers and advertisement are key influencers of readers’ attitudes and choices. However, as shown above, these media texts do not solely dictate what black African women should buy because they engage in negotiated reading and combine what they see in the texts with their prior knowledge and research. Therefore, these black African women are not sponges that just absorb, they are pro-active and take the initiative in getting more information about the advertised products and buy only those that they want.

Some women took the position of a hedger. They drew inspiration and only took what was relevant to them, like the 22-year-old call centre employee who noted that she gets ideas from the looks she sees on the covers, “depending on my relation to them. I cannot copy something that is not me”. The respondents are also selective; for example, a 28-year-old Xhosa who lives in Hatfield, Pretoria buys “only those [products] which will grow and strengthen my hair”.

Some respondents totally rejected the messages and their reasons for rejection were numerous. An HR manager who has long dreadlocks said, “from the pictures that we saw of females on those covers none of them really affect my private space that much” (Figure 60) because they had hairstyles that did not appeal to her. Some respondents felt that the covers and advertisements had a bad influence on black African women because the images featured create the impression that a “woman’s beauty is putting on extensions/weaves”. The same opinion was expressed by a Sotho personal assistant who declared that she felt sad because the covers and advertisements “portrayed beauty as having long hair”. Furthermore, some respondents felt that *True Love* featured more celebrities than real women; as a result, they did not take inspiration from cover images since they did not ‘speak’ to them.

The black African women’s priorities had an effect on how they read and responded to the covers and advertisements. Respondent C from focus group Y said, “... when I see [hair]

adverts I don't run for them but if I see adverts for cars (arching eyebrow). ... Hair and adverts don't mean much to me" (Figure 59). In a way, readers like Respondent C felt alienated from the text because it was not relevant to them; hence they did not pay attention to it.

Other rejecters indicated that they did not buy the products, citing several reasons. A 30-year-old health care professional highlighted that she prefers to use natural moisturisers like olive and coconut oil instead of commercially advertised products since "they often contain ingredients that are not good". As a health care professional, she possesses prior knowledge that is different from a cleaner or HR manager, consequently she took this critical oppositional stand and rejected the texts. Other respondents, including a 30-year-old Pedi administrator indicated that they did not buy the products advertised in *True Love*, instead they use recipes passed down by older members of the family. This point shows that in addition to the media there are other sources of information such as the family and friends. Delving deeper, using products that have been passed down from generation to generation proves that the Western scientific formulations that are promoted in the advertised products exist alongside and compete with indigenous knowledge systems. It further shows that some black African women are still 'in touch with their roots' and grounded on tradition and not swayed by what they see in the media.

From the above discussion, I conclude that the influence the covers and advertisements had varied owing to the divergence in interpretations and readings of the same texts. These differences came to light because black African women have wide-ranging interests and possess diverse prior knowledge, and the way women read the texts was determined by their personal circumstances and social and cultural background. Some texts resonated with the lived experiences of black African women, while others were irrelevant to their own lived realities. The respondents revealed that in addition to media texts, there were other factors that exerted influence on the hair and hairstyles they wore. This point is covered in the following section.

#### **8.3.4 Other sources of influence**

The responses from the earlier section gave an indication that although *True Love* texts had an influence on black African women's lives, there were other sources of information and

ideas. To substantiate this point, results from pre-group questionnaire and focus group interviews revealed that a few respondents got new hairstyle ideas from other women they interacted with. This resonates with Hlonipha Mokoena's (2017:138)<sup>12</sup> observation that there is limited information about hair available to black women, and as a result they "often construct their hair rules and regimen based on what they see other black women do or what their hair stylists recommend". However, my study showed that this influence from family, friends and acquaintances was downplayed as the majority of the respondents pointed out that other people did not influence their hairstyling routine because they do not have the same tastes. Remarkably, in focus group Y more weight was given to the individual's agency. The majority view was that the hairstyle an individual chose to wear was influenced by her own taste, comfort and convenience.

Overall, the findings seemed to suggest that hairstyling is a matter of personal choice; for example, a 31-year-old Setswana respondent chose to keep short hair because she was tired of relaxing, while respondent O opted for dreadlocks as she was weary of the frequent visits to the salon to relax or braid her hair, and respondent E decided to relax her hair to make combing easier since she has a sensitive scalp. Although respondents said black African women were free to do what they wanted to their hair, it also came to light that they were not totally free because hairstyling decisions are not made in a vacuum as there are certain constraints that may restrict the choices at one's disposal. For instance, Mokoena (2017:137-138) notes that some black women are "forced by circumstances to wear wigs, weaves, or relaxed hair". It is essential to reiterate that the decisions are generated within a specific social, cultural, religious, economic and political environment.

This brings to the fore the issue of policing black hair in various arenas. For instance, there are rules governing conduct and outward appearance in various spheres of a person's life including the workplace. Respondents in focus group X (Figure 58) and focus group Y (Figure 59) noted that while there is a code of conduct and dress code in most companies (both public and private), there is no set policy pertaining to hair in general and hair regulations for black African women in particular. They pointed that as far as they knew in

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<sup>12</sup> The page numbers of Hlonipha Mokoena's article are correct at the time of going to press. However, the page numbers in *Image & Text*, which is still in production process may change.

South Africa, all hair types and hairstyles were accepted in the workplace.<sup>13</sup> This seems to suggest that an individual is free to wear whatever hair type and hairstyle she wants. However, upon probing it surfaced that this ‘free for all’ comes with the caveat, ‘as long as the hair is professional, neat and presentable’. Also, reality on the ground shows that it is not that simplistic because there are constraints, which are examined below.

First, societal attitudes and perceptions impact on black African women’s hair care and styling practices. They are shaped by and also shape media content, in the end it becomes a vicious cycle. In focus group X, all the respondents declared that they have not had any personal experiences of being discriminated because of the texture of their hair or their hairstyle, but cited the case of model and television personality Claire Mawisa they saw on *Real Talk with Anele* hosted by Anele Ndoda on SABC3 and the Pretoria Girls High School saga as examples. They recounted how Claire opened up about how her dreadlocks impacted on her career development. Respondent K stressed, “she lost so many opportunities because of her hair. It was ... no it’s [dreadlocks] dirty we’re not going to feature her because her hair is dirty regardless of how she looks. She’s beautiful” (Figure 58). Surprisingly, Claire burst on to the limelight in 1994 at the age of 14 when she was featured on the cover of *Cosmopolitan*. This shows that even after the inception of democratic rule, black hair was still considered to be dirty.<sup>14</sup> Probably the effects of hegemonic discourses that circulated during apartheid rule still had a strong hold on people’s perceptions.

However, 22 years later history repeated itself, this time rearing its ugly head at Pretoria Girls High School where Afrocentric hairstyles were considered undesirable and black girls were told to do something about their ‘untidy’ hair. In addition, even some of the focus group respondents pointed out they did not like dreadlocks because they are “mostly dirty and associated with weed [marijuana]”. These examples show that in South Africa, black hair has been and continues to be regarded as dirty by some members of the community. The

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<sup>13</sup> There are a few exceptions, such as the army and navy, which have regulations for females and males. In the South African navy, the rules stipulate that “hair may be coloured or tinted provided that it tones in with the members’ natural hair colour and complexion”, and “an extreme hairstyle (examples on the left) that does not complement the uniform, are not allowed”. The example on the left features Bantu knots (South African Navy...).

<sup>14</sup> There are discursive patterns that constantly cast the black body as the ‘other’ and black women as an ‘out-group’. This ‘otherness’ is expressed in terms such as ‘dirty’, ‘unclean’, ‘untidy’, ‘not neat’, and their binary oppositions ‘clean’, ‘neat’, ‘professional’ and ‘presentable’ that were used throughout the discussions in reference to the black body in general and hair in particular.



denigration of the black body persists because society holds certain views regarding how black people should look and behave. One respondent explained,

you know we should be light in complexion, we should have a specific type of hair, we should wear specific types of clothes in a specific type of manner, we should live in specific areas, we should drive specific cars and work specific jobs (Figure 58).

The above extract appears to imply that to gain acceptance, black people should conform to the principles, be it beauty or standards of living in general. This problem is not unique to South Africa; it exists in other parts of the world. For instance, in Brazil, Afro-Brazilians, particularly women face discrimination because of their hair and skin colour. The 1996 song *Look at her hair* by Tiririca compared black hair to a “scouring pad for cleaning pans” and described the woman as a “smelly *nega* (black woman)” and a “stinking animal that smells worse than a skunk”. Furthermore, in southern Africa, nineteenth century travellers such as David Livingstone, missionaries such as John Smith Moffat<sup>15</sup>, and white settlers often described black people as greasy, smelly and filthy animals. In a journal entry from the autumn of 1863, Moffat described the Shona of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) as “an excessively dirty people” (Wallis 1945). These stereotypical representations denigrate black women through animalisation (Caldwell 2007:82). Throughout the discussion there was continuous reference to society or community. So what or who constitutes society or community? All the respondents agreed that in the South African context society comprises everyone across the racial divide, and they qualified their definition by stating that “there are some black people who still say you can’t have hair like that, your hair needs to look a specific manner it’s just everyone *nje*” (Figure 58).

In addition to perceiving black hair as dirty, there are stigmas associated with certain hairstyles, which affect how members of that particular society view them. The socio-cultural significance of hair largely influenced the earlier comment linking dreadlocks to a certain lifestyle that includes smoking marijuana. Moreover, respondent O from focus group Z, who experiences discrimination in her daily life first-hand, brought to light the social stereotypes she faces in the community and at work because she has dreadlocks, as many people associate this hairstyle with Rastafarianism. As a result, she has to tread cautiously to ensure

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<sup>15</sup> Born in South Africa in 1835, John Smith Moffat was the son of British London Missionary Society missionary Robert Moffat and brother-in-law of explorer David Livingstone.

that there is no misunderstanding regarding her religious beliefs. She explained that she goes to work with her locks visible but when she goes to off-site meetings she covers them “just to eliminate somebody looking at me and already thinking I’m a Rastafarian” (Figure 60). In a similar way, respondent E from focus group Y spoke about how personal assistants (PAs) are required to look a certain way in the office because they are the face of the company; as a result, she cannot go to work with her “African *khanda* [kinky afro] hair” because it is not considered presentable in the corporate world.

Furthermore, hairstyles that make women look older or unclean were considered to be undesirable. Interestingly, this seems to be in line with results from my quantitative content analysis which revealed that during the 12 months of study *True Love* featured mainly well-groomed young women on the covers and advertisements (see 5.1.2). In view of the respondent’s perceptions, I argue that the images on *True Love* texts seem to have shaped and been shaped by the social constructions of ageing and desirable hair qualities. In essence, the above promote long, straight hair and the young ideal and imply that youth is a desirable characteristic, while ageing and kinky hair are associated with ugliness. It also suggests that by choosing an ‘appropriate’ hairstyle a woman can maintain her youthful looks or at least delay the ageing process.

Moreover, societal rules and attitudes have a strong hold over how a black African woman should look when she attends a job interview. Respondent E revealed,

that’s where the problem lies. You have to look fake for people to hire you because they’ll say you’ve to look neat. Sometimes you cannot go with your duke or *chiskop* [clean-shaven hairstyle] if you’re a woman because last week my sister was going for an interview they said ‘please find something that will cover your *chiskop* because we don’t prefer a woman with no hair’. So you understand in interview it’s another story I know for sure but when you’re working ... (Figure 59).

The above point suggests that some black African women are forced by circumstances to look ‘fake’ to get a job, and fake in this context refers to altering hair using relaxers or using hair enhancement products like weaves. Hairstyles such as buzz cut and *chiskop* (bald head) are detested because they are perceived to be “unladylike”. Some black African women have been judged harshly and their careers threatened because of wearing short hair. A case in point is South African sports personality Caster Semenya, whose hairstyle and physique has

been described as unfeminine by some sections of the media. The length of her hair in particular is often cited, and it appears such descriptions come from people who believe that femininity is marked by long hair. The above comment and Semenya's example demonstrate that social meanings attached to hair shape people's perceptions and interpretations, and in this case the "ladylike" look seems to be, defined using the dominant 'white' standard that delineates femininity in terms of having long hair. Describing certain hairstyles as unladylike shows that hair is intricately linked to identity politics as it influences perceptions about what are considered acceptable and unacceptable hairstyles for black African women. In addition, hair interconnects with race and gender dynamics and shapes black femininity, based on white beauty ideals, as it plays an integral part regarding what a black African woman is supposed to look like. Essentially, it means that to improve their career prospects, black African women should embrace the white ideal that promotes long hair. Imposing such restrictions and standards perpetuates inequalities and jeopardises employment opportunities for black African women who do not conform to the "acceptable" and "appropriate" aesthetics.

My findings resonate with an American study conducted by Bellinger (2007:71), which revealed that black women altered their hair to resemble the Western-centric ideal to increase their chances of getting jobs. In line with Taylor's (1999:17) observation, this demonstrates that "racialised standards of beauty reproduce the workings of racism by weaving racist assumptions into daily practices and inner lives of the victims of racism". Respondent E's comments illustrate that hair continues to be used to discriminate and oppress black people, particularly women. It appears as if society sets the standards that women should adhere to and those who do not toe the line are punished. Such practices may further perpetuate gender and racial hierarchy, as evident in the percentage of black African women versus black African men and black African women versus white women in the South African workforce (as previously mentioned, according to a 2013 Statistics South Africa report black African women comprise 30.8 per cent; black African men 42.8 per cent and white women 56 per cent).

The extract from Respondent E also calls for the problematisation of "neat", "professional" and "presentable" since these terms are subjective. Furthermore, it begs the question: who defines what is neat, professional and presentable? The respondents in focus group Y felt that the environment determines what constitutes ideal and acceptable hair and hairstyles. They

believe that during an interview the environment is set by the interview panel and at the workplace it is set by the various employees. A group of people or one person can also influence the environment depending on their influence. For example, if hair that is considered ‘untidy’ or ‘unclean’ is worn by an influential person like a celebrity, the community’s perceptions change and “it becomes a style” that is acceptable (Figure 59).

Therefore, it follows that although hair seems to be a matter of personal choice and preference it is also governed, among other things, by societal norms and attitudes, economic, cultural and political dynamics. As mentioned previously, statements made by influential people like politicians such as President Jacob Zuma and celebrities such as Hugh Masekela can change or challenge the way hairstyles are perceived to be acceptable or unacceptable in black communities. Certain economic and cultural factors may constrain an individual’s freedom from choosing the hair texture or hairstyle they want; for example, someone may not have enough money to buy a Peruvian weave. Or someone might have the money but be shackled by cultural and societal attitudes, as respondent C from focus group Y observed, “I might have a R1,000 but may be not have the desire to even buy may be I’m still construed in those that its fake hair I’m not gonna be natural I’m not gonna be a black person” (Figure 59). This shows that money on its own does not bring freedom to choose a hairstyle one wants. From the above discussion it becomes apparent that social, cultural, economic and political influences seem to be the most important factors that inform black hair care other than media influence. However, having said that, it is worth noting that people who create and disseminate media messages are also cognisant of these factors and take them into consideration when constructing texts.

One of the themes that emerged and recurred throughout the discussions was that long hair represents the acceptable standard of beauty, as evident in the previous extract about interviewers shunning women with no hair and M’s observation that “people believe that if you’ve a long weave you know you’re beautiful”. She added, “that’s how they define you because we looked so much at those ... I can’t say those people [referring to white people] (whispering)” (Figure 60). This nuanced observation alludes to the impact colonisation and apartheid had on black people in South Africa. They were forced to imitate ‘white’ standards such that even now that they are free they still use them as yardsticks of beauty. To get long hair, black African women often straighten their hair or use hair enhancement products such as hair extensions, weaves and wigs. The following sections explore black African women’s

hair and hairstyle preferences, and their attitudes towards hair enhancements and hair alteration. These issues are discussed under different headings; however, there is some degree of overlap because there is a connection between altering hair using a relaxer to change its texture and make it smooth and straight and relaxing to lengthen it. Therefore, relaxing hair falls under both preferences for long, straight hair and hair alteration. Some of the points have already been touched on in the previous sections while addressing other themes. First, I explore whether black African women have a preference for long, straight hair.

### ***8.3.5 Preferred hair types and hairstyles***

One of the objectives of this study was to explore whether black African women are really besotted with long hair. The assumption was that black African women prefer long, straight hair owing to the dominant ideologies perpetuated by colonial and apartheid rule policies as well as international mass media. The data from a quantitative content analysis revealed that Westerncentric hairstyles, especially long hair, featured prominently during the 12 months of study of *True Love*; however, focus group interview findings showed that there was no uniformity in the way black African women perceived long, straight hair. To find out their preferences, respondents were asked to list their favourite hairstyles and they gave varied answers, which are discussed below. Noteworthy is that none of the respondents mentioned long, straight hair as her preferred hairstyle.

Some acknowledged that long hair was a desirable and desired characteristic since it is associated with beauty. A respondent in focus group Z noted that, "... with us girls it's always your hair looks longer than mine this that" (Figure 60). This shows that long hair is an object of envy and is used to forge a person's identity in relation to other black African women. In addition, since it is a look that some black African women strive to achieve, they often subject each other to the "gaze" (Tate 2009) and engage in fierce competition. Adding to the debate, Mokoena (2017:138) observes that "regarding hair, the most uncomfortable gaze can be the gaze of other black women who either explicitly or silently judge each other ...". However, she adds that "such gestures do not have the same effect as the gaze of the white commentator" (Mokoena 2017:138). This group said they preferred hairstyles such as plaiting, straightening and relaxing and braiding because these styles make hair grow quickly,

are cheaper to do and easy to manage.<sup>16</sup> This alludes to the misconception that black hair does not grow or does not grow fast, a concern that normally arises when African hair is compared to Asian and Caucasian hair. Admittedly, even among black people the hair growth rate varies depending on factors such as a person's genes, diet and hair care routine.

However, a significant number also noted that they do not like long hair and went on to give their reasons. Some felt long hair was uncomfortable, particularly when it is hot and one sweats and has to constantly ensure it does not stick to the nape area. These respondents pointed out that they liked short hair either in its natural state or relaxed for its comfort and because it brings out true beauty. S-curl, German and pixie cut were among the much-liked short hairstyle because they make respondents feel good, are easy to maintain, look good and are also affordable, while afro is believed to symbolise and represent African heritage and "looks nice on all Africans". Although most of the women said they preferred short hair, like respondent M, they are forced to lengthen their hair through relaxing or sewing on long weaves because "short hair is a problem you know you must have a tong, a straightener, you must style it every morning so it's still a problem" (Figure 60). In other words, they are compelled to keep long hair even if they do not like it because it is easy to maintain. Black hair care is filled with conundrums; some black African women prefer short hair but cannot keep their hair short because it is difficult to maintain, consequently, they have to wear long hair which they do not like. This illustrates how sensitive and challenging black hair care can be.

Coupled with the aforementioned, other respondents said wearing long hair was not a matter of personal choice, but a professional requirement. For instance, respondent M pointed out that in the legal field people with short or natural afro hair are not taken seriously, they are considered to be at entry level. She cautioned that in the law field "if you appear with your short hair let's say you just cut it to that level [ear length] someone will just look at you and think she's still probably learning she's still a candidate. ... You need to have that serious look" (Figure 60). In addition to being a symbol of beauty, the above confirms that in some

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<sup>16</sup> Other favourite hairstyles that were listed are singles as they make one look beautiful and can be easily maintained without any fuss, and big frizzy hair "because it gives me some different look. People can really figure out my culture". The needle hairstyle is a favourite as it does not use chemicals, while dreadlocks are desired for their versatility since they can be twisted, dyed and highlighted. The *pondo* as it is easy to style and is cost effective. Another much-loved hairstyle mentioned was cornrows since it is neat, easy to maintain, cost effective and makes a black woman look natural.

sectors long hair is perceived to be a signifier of seriousness, sophistication, professionalism, and being knowledgeable. Since hair plays an important role in structural power relationships, this seems to suggest that someone with long hair is believed to exude an air of superiority and in the same vein, someone with short hair is inferior. Noteworthy is that although women with Afro-textured hair are in the majority in South Africa, black hair is positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy, while Caucasian hair is accorded higher status.

Respondents had divergent views and offered various reasons regarding where this notion came from. One camp felt that probably this stems from the colonial past where white people imposed themselves as the superior race and regarded the 'natives', their culture and physical characteristics as inferior. They further argued that "whites who brought apartheid came with these relaxers" (Figure 59) and imposed the Western-centric ideal of long, straight hair. The second camp acknowledged the impact history has on people's perceptions and attitudes, but emphasised that the problem is not unique to South Africa. They further stressed that imposing the white ideal on the 'Other' is a worldwide problem because "white people refuse to accept our culture, the way we do things. They want us to conform to their standards of living or presentation whatever you wanna to call it" (Figure 58). This illustrates that black African women are aware that in this global world certain aesthetics, particularly Western-centric, are endorsed while others are rejected.

The third camp had opposing views, and observed that apartheid had nothing to do with perceptions about hair length and texture. They countered the view that white people introduced the relaxer to black people by mentioning Black Like Me, a home-grown company that made hair straightening products for black hair in the 1960s. A respondent claimed that preference for long, straight hair had nothing to do with the apartheid environment because it ended long ago and most born-frees, who are now in their early twenties do not know what apartheid is since "our history doesn't even teach us what apartheid is anyway" (Figure 59). This statement suggests that the Western-centric ideal is so established in people's minds that some black African women no longer question the influence of apartheid, yet a people's history has a profound effect on their past, present and future. Events that happened in the past influence how people behave and their belief systems, ideals and worldview. The younger generation, which was born post-1994, is far removed from direct experiences of apartheid, but learn about beauty ideals from the older women; it therefore boils down to what black people teach their children. Some black African

women have internalised the long, straight hair ideal and they pass it from one generation to another as the norm. In a nutshell, it is possible that the environment black African women live in has been shaped by the perceptions that prevailed during the apartheid era and have been naturalised and universalised; they no longer critically engage and try to establish the root cause, but just view them as normal.

The fourth group also absolved South Africa's apartheid past, and pointed fingers at globalisation and Americanisation of the world. Following the ANC's victory in the first democratic elections, the leadership believed that after years of isolation, it would be a good thing to expose South Africans, particularly the youth to American pop culture and to encourage them to participate in global culture. The fourth group indicated that even if the white people had not brought relaxers, when South Africa became free and black people were able to travel abroad they "were still going to go and fetch it" (Figure 59). Respondent E believes that assigning higher status to long, straight hair is an "American thing ... really we're driving away to America. We see what Americans do then it comes to us" (Figure 59). Her comment seems to be a reference to cultural imperialism, a system that perpetuates the dominance of the culture of a powerful nation like America over local cultures of other countries. True hairstyling practices are influenced by contact with other cultures, and in an interconnected global world it is inevitable to follow trends emanating from other societies. However, trends do not flow from America only but from other parts of the globe too, and they are negotiated and renegotiated within the national and local contexts. It is not only Africans who imitate other racial groups: white people are doing dreadlocks, a hairstyle that was previously associated with black people. In view of these winds of change, respondents felt that the apartheid past does not impact on hairstyle, but it has to do with "what you want at the end of the day" (Figure 59). However, I would like to point out that despite all the global cross-pollination, it would be unwise to undervalue the historical and cultural influences.

In terms of the hairstyles featured on the covers and advertisements, the quantitative content analysis findings revealed that *True Love* images featured more Eurocentric/Western-centric hairstyles and seem to portray long, straight hair as the ideal. While dominant discourses in the media in general and selected *True Love* issues in particular seem to idealise long, straight hair, in contrast, the sampled black African women themselves said they preferred short, natural hair. Also the pre-group questionnaire and focus group results outlined above appear



to contradict my content analysis findings as they revealed that Afrocentric hairstyles were the most frequently mentioned favourite hairstyles. It appears that the mass media and its related glocalised black feminine celebrity glamour has minimal influence on the respondents' hairstyling choices. Interestingly, the *True Love* team, who are more exposed to international media, drew inspiration for the looks on the covers from global trends and localised them by using local celebrities. However, the glocalisation promoted on *True Love* covers did not seem to appeal to the respondents. This could be attributed to "aberrant decoding" (Eco 1976:16), which happens when the encoders' and decoders' backgrounds differs. For example, the background and personal style of the *True Love* team and readers may be different; hence interpretations of what constitutes glamorous hair may vary even though they belong to the same culture. This further brings to the fore the issue of sub-cultural codes (Eco 1976), which influence how members of a society read and assign meanings to media texts.

I suspect that the hairstyles the respondents had when they completed the questionnaires and attended the focus group interviews may have shaped what they considered to be desirable or undesirable hairstyles.<sup>17</sup> When the pre-group questionnaire and focus group interview results were examined against the 18 women's own hairstyles, there seemed to be some correlations and discrepancies. There was a connection in relation to the type of hairstyles that were mentioned frequently, as evident in that out of the 18 focus group respondents, 12 (67 per cent) had Afrocentric hairstyles while six (33 per cent) had Western-centric styles. However, in terms of length, there was some disagreement because short hair comprised a mere 22 per cent, while long hair dominated at 78 per cent, yet the women said they preferred short hair. It seems at times it is hard for black African women to practice what they preach owing to the reasons that have been stated above.

In addition, pre-group questionnaire and focus group interview findings showed that styles that did not involve the use of chemicals and hair enhancements were popular. As a result, there were few mentions of relaxed hair, and only one respondent said she liked a weave

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<sup>17</sup> The hairstyles the respondents themselves had at the time of the focus group interviews included both Afrocentric hairstyles such as short Afro (11.1 per cent), cornrows (5.6 per cent), dreadlocks (16.7 per cent), long braids (27.8 per cent), long natural wavy hair (5.6 per cent) and Western-centric styles like short s-curl (5.6 per cent), relaxed hair (16.7 per cent), and long straight weaves (11.1 per cent).

because it makes the wearer look elegant, but added that they come at a high cost (see 8.3.6). A connection was established between the findings and the hair types that the 18 focus group respondents had, as only one-third of the sample had hair enhancements and chemically altered hair, whereas the rest had natural and naturally styled hair.

The inconsistencies could be explained by the fact that black African women do not prefer long, straight hair as such. As the results have shown, some reject the long hair ideal, but are forced to wear long hair because of societal pressures and manageability. It emerged that preference for hairstyle was not primarily based on hair length and texture, but on core pillars such as versatility, neatness, looking good on the person, easy to maintain and style, less time consuming and affordability. Interestingly, respondents emphasised that they preferred hairstyles that were not time-consuming, yet they listed braids and dreadlocks, which take a long time to do. At first glance such comments suggest that the responses are riddled with inconsistencies and contradictions; however, they point to the complexities surrounding black hair. For example, a hairstyle like dreadlocks can be described as time-consuming as it may take up to seven hours to lock depending on the length. However, in the long-term it may take up less time, since the locks require styling only once every six to eight weeks, hence frequent visits to the salon are not required.

Another theme worth exploring further relates to the hairstyle looking nice on the person. Drawing on Tate (2009:20), it emerged that some respondents became the beholders of their own hair and that of their fellow black counterparts. When the women focused the gaze on themselves and other black African women, they concluded that most Afrocentric hairstyles looked good on them, and this authenticates and validates the relevance of the idiom “beauty lies in the eye of the beholder”. However, when the gaze was racialised and directed towards black African women by white people, the validity waned as black hair and Afrocentric hairstyles were perceived as unclean and unattractive and never associated with beauty (see 8.3.4), and only Westerncentric styles are referred to as beautiful (see 8.3.6).

A few respondents cited *True Love* images as the source of their favourite hairstyles. This could be an indication that the magazine has negligible impact on black African women’s hairstyling routine. I believe that in this study, the personal circumstances of the respondents influenced the prevalence and omission of certain hairstyles. Affordability and pressure to conform with trends set by others carried more weight compared to the influence of *True*

*Love*; for instance, the person who said she liked weaves was influenced by family members who bought them online. She was prepared to save some money and buy a weave when she went back home. The wide range of responses points to the fact that black African women have different hairstyling tastes and needs. Furthermore, the choice of hairstyle(s) each woman selected was influenced by the respondent's environment, past experiences, socio-cultural, religious and financial considerations. This brings us to the respondents' attitudes towards hair enhancements and what hair can tell viewers about its wearer.

### 8.3.6 *Attitudes towards hair enhancements*

The study assumes that black African women are attracted to hair enhancements, but the findings from the pre-group questionnaire and focus group interviews showed that their attitudes differ. Moreover, while discussing their attitudes towards hair enhancements, they also touched on a related topic of hair alteration, which is examined in the section that follows. The majority of the respondents indicated that they do not like wigs and weaves because they are fake hair. In fact, weaves featured prominently under the hairstyles they disliked. Most respondents stated that they disliked weaves because they tend to damage the hairline owing to the strain of plaiting, and the damage is difficult to reverse. Expressing this aversion to hair enhancements, a 30-year-old health care professional said she hated weaves and wigs made from Brazilian and Indian human hair because "it's not natural" and "they cover our own natural hair and often damage our own hair".

Developing on the issue of hair enhancements being fake or not natural, many respondents questioned the rationale of paying for someone's hair to be put on their heads. They perceived the idea of wearing a weave or a wig made from someone's hair disturbing and stressed that it did not feel right because hair is regarded as a personal thing. Respondent L, who introduced a religious angle, cautioned, "*awazi noma ngithwele ngezinwele* (you don't know if there is something in my hair) for that matter" (Figure 58). She further warned that if people are not careful, they may buy hair that belonged to someone who had a "*thwasa* thing (a spirit that possesses an initiate)" or "*unedlozi* (ancestral spirit)" and it possesses them. These remarks validate that black hair has religious significance. To give weight to the

religious angle, respondent L added that during the days of Qamatha,<sup>18</sup> long before colonisation, among the Xhosa when people wanted to speak to gods they used to grow their hair to get answers. Nevertheless, people still wear products made from human hair probably because they are not aware of these dangers or simply owing to the fact that they subscribe to a different belief system. It could be that some people do not read too much into the matter, for them it could just be a hairstyle and nothing more.

Still on the religious reasons given for rejecting hair enhancements, some respondents felt that wearing weaves was against God's will. Expressing this group's sentiments, a 33-year-old respondent explained that she does not like weaves because she felt it will make her "look black and white where else [*sic*] God gave us different types of hair for his own glory and reasons". This suggests that the religious significance attached to hair shapes perceptions about what constitutes acceptable hair. Altering one's appearance is believed to be against God's plan, therefore unacceptable.

In addition to the above, although quantitative content analysis results revealed that *True Love* covers and advertisements featured many hair enhancements, the idea of wearing weaves and wigs aroused different emotions ranging from anger, resentment to utter disgust. This demonstrates that some black African women were not swayed by *True Love* texts in forming their perceptions about hair enhancements. Some like respondent N, a 33-year-old Ndebele, are wary about wearing weaves, but for a different reason. She reckons that weaves will take away her identity. She wrote on the pre-group questionnaire that she does not wear weaves and then picked up the thread during the focus group discussion,<sup>19</sup> and stated emphatically that she is a 'natural' woman who has never put on a weave or make-up in her whole life. During the focus group interview, she reiterated that she prefers being "100 per cent natural", adding, "serious I don't wanna be defined by those weaves saying oh she's putting on a weave it means she's beautiful she's all that you know I enjoy myself natural" (Figure 60).

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<sup>18</sup> Qamatha is the Xhosa name for the creator. The Xhosa communicated with Qamatha through the ancestral spirits. In other words, the ancestral spirits were the intermediaries between Qamatha and his people.

<sup>19</sup> Using pre-group questionnaires and focus group interviews was beneficial as it made it possible for respondents to explain and elaborate on their views.

Someone expanded on the previously mentioned points and narrated how perceptions of beautiful hair affected her at her work place, which is predominantly white. She pointed out that she tries to avoid weaves most of the time because she does not feel comfortable when her white colleagues make comments like “oh you look so pretty today” when she is wearing a weave. She explained, “when I have a weave I ‘look pretty today’ but when I’m with my natural hair there is ‘no pretty today’. So I stick to braids [and] natural hair” (Figure 58). These examples of an intersection between hair and race show that in South Africa’s multi-racial society beauty is aesthetically racialised, with the Western ideals still regarded as beautiful, while African beauty is not recognised. Drawing on Tate (2009:19), I argue that black identity, particularly beautiful hair, in the eyes of a white beholder is still rooted in dominant ideologies that privilege Eurocentric ideals.

Judging a black person using white standards of beauty and compelling her to conform in order to be regarded as beautiful and acceptable in society could produce a wide range of responses. It may lead to low self-esteem and inferiority complex as black African women navigate through this minefield in their daily lives. On the other end of the spectrum, it may result in conflict, feelings of resentment or a desire to engage in counter-hegemonic practices. The respondents in question chose the last approach and resisted the way their sense of self-identity was framed through a racial lens. Some black African women perceived wearing a weave as a sign of kowtowing to white domination and the Westerncentric standard of beauty, while resisting it and opting for Afrocentric hairstyles such as braids and natural hair was viewed as a way of protecting self-identity and celebrating black pride. Since hair shapes racial identity, it therefore becomes a powerful political tool that black women use to affirm their blackness. Some black women use social media to engage in counter-hegemonic initiatives. In recent years, hashtags that promote black natural hair have flourished. Their aim is to change societal attitudes and encourage black women to embrace their heritage.

Some respondents expressed divergent views from the above and said they do not have a problem with hair enhancements. These women seemed to downplay the importance of hair, saying, “it’s just hair” (Figure 58), yet also declared that certain hairstyles can get you what you want. The respondents’ attitude confirm that myths naturalise things and people end up taking them for granted (this point is further explored below). Others acknowledged that weaves were trendy and beautiful; however, despite this fact they still pointed out that they do not sew on weaves for various reasons including taste and affordability. Respondents

unanimously agreed that weaves are very expensive (around R2,000 to R6,000 or more depending on the type) compared to Afrocentric hairstyles such as cornrows (R100) and maintaining locks (R200 per month).

A respondent categorically stated that although weaves are trendy, they are too expensive and she would not wear them unless “someone pays it for me” (Figure 60). For a 27-year-old HR intern who lives in Roodepoort “it’s [weave] just not for me, I like my hair the way it is ... each to their own”, while for some like the 31-year-old Tswana who works in the financial services, it is a matter of taste, and weaves do not appeal to them. These assertions introduce the theme of freedom; in essence they are suggesting that each person is free to choose a hairstyle she wants. However, this view does not hold true all the time as has been demonstrated in previous sections.

Returning to the issue of the importance of black hair, it became clear that hair is not just hair. Historically, hair symbolised many things and served as an encyclopaedia about the person’s life. Fast forward to the present, the respondents held potentially competing beliefs at the same time regarding what hair can tell the viewer about its wearer. On the one hand, the focus group findings revealed that respondents believe that black hair can communicate certain things such as the person’s age, personality and social class. For example, wigs are believed to be associated with old people. A respondent from focus group Z had this to say, “maybe I’m stereotypes [*sic*] I feel wigs are for old people. Even my mother doesn’t wear wigs” (Figure 60).

Commenting on the hairstyles on the covers of *True Love*, respondent B said,

if you look at Bonnie’s hairstyle and then you gonna compare it to let’s see let’s say Kelly or Boity’s one you’d think that Boity is more social and would easily fit in an environment than Bonnie would because her hair maybe symbolises someone who’s reserved but Boity’s and or Khanyi’s one symbolises that one who says where is the party kind of thing (Figure 59).

The above declaration shows that natural afro hair is associated with being reserved, while long weaves are regarded as hairstyles for people who like to go to parties. Moreover, people who wear weaves are considered to be snobs and pretentious, while those with Afrocentric

hairstyles such as dreadlocks were described as being humble and down to earth, as the following exchange shows:

O: And also in that questionnaire there was a question about why I prefer locks and do I feel pressure from society about my locks. One thing that came to mind is that people with dreadlocks we don't compete if I see a hairstyle I'm like oh I'm gonna try that hairstyle it, really nice not Peruvian, Beruvian what else is there and they differ in cost. We don't worry about that.

M: Yah someone will tell you my hair doesn't tangle so you understand. They'll look at someone and will be like OK that one is not doing justice to that weave you understand probably because hers doesn't tangle its straight it's beautiful.

O: Listen to that.

M: So when people look at you they'll say hers is 100 per cent human hair I'm having Peruvian, Brazilian, Mongolian whatever so with you guys [referring to O] I know that most ladies I find with dreadlocks they're sweet like most of the time if I meet a woman at the salon they appear sweet.

N: They [women with dreadlocks] don't look down on other people.

The extract demonstrates that meanings attached to one's hair can shape how other people around them perceive them, since certain hairstyles are associated with certain personalities and behaviours.<sup>20</sup> In other words, hair can be used to categorise other people as introverts or extroverts, snobs, beautiful or fake as the above examples have shown. However, on the other hand, respondents also demonstrated awareness that black hair issues are much more complicated and it is not always accurate to judge a person by their hair. It is not clear cut, and in most instances the judgements made are based on perceptions. As respondents explained, "you could still have your afro hair and still be the one calling up the party. ... I can still have my Brazilian today and you ask me for a party and I'm like what?" (Figure 59). The above show that "hairstyles are subject to multiple interpretations, depending on the social background and position of those doing the interpretation" (Nyamnjoh & Fuh 2014:64).

Furthermore, the findings from focus group interviews also revealed that some black African women use weaves as a tool to get what they want from men. The weave is believed to give a woman an edge over others. Expressing the majority's opinion, respondent I took pains to explain,

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<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, the same is true for white people – blondes are stereotypically considered dumb and ditsy, brunettes are believed to be serious, while redheads are considered to be fiery.

like if I've braids and she has a weave [pointing at respondent J], it doesn't matter how much make-up I might have. I may be half-dressed but if she has a weave and its beautiful and straight and perfect ah they're going the other way. She can get all of us lunch (Figure 58).

During focus group discussions, respondents described a weave as a powerful weapon that works like a magic wand. A swish of that long, straight weave at a club and voila, all the men melt and the woman has them at her beck and call. The case of Xolelwa, a character in *Generations: The legacy*, was brought up to highlight the power of the weave and the gains that accrue from wearing one. Respondents recounted how Xolelwa's prospects changed for the better when she ditched her natural look for a long, straight weave. Suddenly, men began throwing themselves and a lot of money at her, yet when she had her natural hair no one paid any attention. The weave is believed to have transformed Xolelwa because initially she tried changing her wardrobe and bought nice clothes, but people did not pay her attention; however, "the moment she walked in with a long, silky weave people were just throwing themselves at her like I don't know like she was the last piece of chicken ever like in the world" (Figure 58). These comments seem to suggest that beauty does not come from within nor from expensive clothing, but is something that "has to be inscribed onto the surface of the body" (Tate 2009:20), especially on hair. For some black African women like Xolelwa, a weave is a form of investment (see 8.3.8).

The above discussion illustrates that some black African women use their hair and beauty to their advantage and compete with each other for male attention. On a woman's head, a weave becomes a potent weapon that can get a black African woman far in this life. This aligns with Brownmiller's (1984:18) observation that femininity can be competitive. From hair enhancements the focus shifts to hair alteration.

### **8.3.7 Attitudes towards hair alteration**

This study seeks to establish to what extent *True Love* magazine covers and advertisements influence black African women's attitudes towards hair alteration, a procedure that involves relaxing or straightening hair and using dye to change its natural colour. While quantitative content analysis results showed that *True Love* magazine covers and advertisements gave the impression that black hair is only beautiful when it is altered, focus group interview results



revealed that there were mixed opinions on the issue of hair alteration. The respondent's perceptions of what constituted good and bad hair gave an insight into their attitudes towards hair alteration.

Several definitions were offered, namely, good hair is "clean hair", "hair that bounces", "naturally rich African hair", "it doesn't matter what it looks like if its presented well its good hair" and "any type of hair but as long as it's clean" (Figures 58, 59 and 60). Some of the insights that surfaced were intriguing; particularly the remark that not all fake hair is good hair. Likewise, using descriptions like "hair that bounces", "there should be movement" and "for like your natural hair you don't have to have a like fancy hairstyle or comb a certain way it can just be in a neat ponytail but for the mere fact that its clean its good hair" (Figure 58) in relation to black hair, which is naturally short, was unexpected. Using focus group interviews gave me an opportunity to probe and respondents a chance to elaborate on their views (Kelly 2003:50), as seen in this exchange (Figure 60):

Researcher: How would you describe good hair?

Q: Hair that bounces. [Laughter].

P: To me good hair is naturally rich African hair that's good hair for me.

M: For me good hair is clean hair. Any type of hair but as long as it's clean. You see dreadlocks for me if it's clean is good hair.

O: If it bounces as well you see you heard this bouncing thing *ne*. [Laughter]

M: No I understand what you mean.

Q: There should be movement.

Researcher: And then you're saying there is movement hello there is no movement but my hair is clean. I shampooed it in the morning but there is no movement ...

M: Is it still good hair to you that one? [Pointing at researcher's hair] ...

Q: Yah it doesn't bounce I guess I just said the first thing that comes to mind but it's not the last thing

Researcher: So it bounces its clean any type of hair as long as it's clean what else?

Q: Because naturally African hair doesn't really bounce so as we were saying the media actually influences how we see.

M: Mine does

Q: Mine actually does [referring to braids]

M: Before I cut my hair I can tell you my hair if I relax it used to bounce.

After probing, it became apparent that the “bouncing” and “movement” comments were made in relation to relaxed and hair that is braided using extensions,<sup>21</sup> not to natural afro hair. This confirms the assumption that some people believe that black hair is only beautiful when it is altered. Also noteworthy is that the respondent who made the ‘bouncing/movement’ contribution had braids.

An example of bad hair that was mentioned was *chibhabha* (receding hair line) (Figure 58). Overall the respondents in all three focus groups agreed that good hair was clean hair and bad hair was unclean or dirty hair, regardless of hair type. This is interesting because some existing literature suggests that in South Africa racist notions of beauty propagated during colonial and apartheid eras shaped and still shape insights about good and bad hair. My focus group respondents seem to suggest that some perceptions of good and bad hair are no longer racialised. The black African women’s responses above appear to subvert the racist notions that natural afro hair is inferior, dirty and ugly while Caucasian hair is superior and beautiful. They advocate the re-visioning of all types of hair, be they natural afro, relaxed or ‘fake’/dry hair. For them good or bad hair is determined by its cleanliness, health, and neatness regardless of hair type and texture. These results are in line with what Erasmus (1997:14) found 20 years ago (at the time of writing). I find the similarities between Erasmus’ research, which was conducted three years after the inception of the majority rule and mine carried out more than two decades later remarkable. It could substantiate the claim that older women pass down knowledge and values to the younger generation.

Also notable is that cleanliness featured frequently in the definition of good hair. Unlike in the previous sections where ‘dirty’ was used in relation to Afrocentric hair and hairstyles, in this instance it can be applied to all hair types, including hair enhancements like weaves. The possible explanation lies in the definition of the term ‘dirty’. In this section it seems to mean filthy, unclean, unwashed, and unkempt hair, while in 8.3.6 it may have been used to refer to all these and also carried negative connotations of black hair being ugly, unsightly, undesirable, impure, and inferior when compared to Caucasian hair.

In line with Masina’s (2010) South African study that found that the majority of black women featured in *True Love* and *Destiny* had relaxed hair, results from my quantitative

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<sup>21</sup> As indicated previously, some women classified relaxed and braided hair under African hair and hairstyles.

content analysis and visual semiotic analysis also revealed that altered hair featured more frequently on the covers and advertisements. However, despite the fact that the 12 issues of *True Love* featured more images of altered hair and hair alteration products, focus group interview findings revealed that black African women are wary of using hair altering products, especially chemical relaxers. For instance, respondent N said although she relaxed her hair, she preferred her natural hair and thought that “may be when you relax too much something happens in your mind or something like when you get burnt it’s not good” (Figure 60). If they are aware of the dangers, why do they relax their hair?

Data gathered from the three focus groups brought to light the push and pull factors associated with relaxing hair. A majority of the respondents noted that they began relaxing their hair from a young age and continue to do so, but prefer natural short hair because it is more comfortable compared to other hair types. However, the same people including one from focus group Y, who began relaxing her hair at the age of 13, pointed out that although they preferred short natural hair, keeping it natural was a challenge because it is painful to comb and difficult to style. These statements seem to be contradictory. However, the contradictions can be explained by the fact that different meanings were attached to the term ‘natural hair’. Natural hair was used to refer to short afro hair, which is painful to comb, as opposed to relaxed hair. In other contexts, natural hair was also used to distinguish hair that grows from a person’s scalp whether afro, braided or relaxed from hair enhancement products (see 8.3.1). In the latter sense, natural hair is comfortable compared to weaves and wigs, which sometimes irritate the skin and cause it to itch. Most women said they are forced to relax their hair mainly to make it more manageable in terms of combing and styling.

The pull factors cited were that once relaxed, the hair becomes smooth and easier to comb, hence relaxing is believed to be stress-free although it is also a painful process. Probably the gains associated with relaxing far outweigh the pain and burning caused by chemical relaxers. However, the pleasure that comes with running a comb through smooth hair without feeling any pain is short-lived because black African women have to grapple with another problem known as growth.<sup>22</sup> Respondent O explained, “I think what puts us in a corner is the growth because before I switched to locks I’d find myself having to relax every four weeks”, because it makes it difficult and painful to comb. To get rid of the growth and make combing easier

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<sup>22</sup> Growth is the new natural afro hair that grows at the roots of relaxed hair. Since it is natural, it is painful to comb.

again the person has to retouch,<sup>23</sup> but applying chemicals on a regular basis comes with its own set of problems. The main ones that were cited were that the ends become over processed, the harsh chemicals cause damage to the scalp, and visiting the salon regularly is costly and time consuming. It seems black African women are in a catch-22 situation, whether they relax or keep their natural afro hair they still feel the pain. There is no easy way out of this dilemma, since opting for other hairstyles such as braiding also entails having to make unending decisions such as whether to braid their natural hair only or to braid with extensions, and if using extensions which type to buy. Hair care and styling become a huge hassle. There are similarities between my findings and hooks' (1989:5) observation that for some black African women straightened hair is "a survival strategy ... There are fewer hassles ... straightened hair is easier to manage, takes less time". My findings also resonate with another American study by Bellinger (2007:63), which found that African American women altered their hair for "time, ease of styling, and the creation and perpetuation of healthy hair". Taking a step further, however, my findings show that various constraints make alterations difficult and that most black African women are aware of the hazards such as burnt scalp, *chibhabha*, and so on, but also see the benefits, which include easy manageability.

Additionally, it is important to mention that while Banks' (2000:43-44) American study showed that hair alteration through relaxing was a sign of self-hatred and desire to look white, my study found that black African women in South Africa alter their hair mainly for manageability. The results of my study echo findings from hooks' (1989:5) American study and Etemesi's (2007:25) research among Kenyan women, which found that black women straighten their hair to make it easier to manage and to save time. In addition, hooks (1989:1) points out that as a young girl growing up in America, hair straightening was a rite of passage from girlhood to womanhood. For hooks (1989:1), straightening hair is not "a sign of our longing to be white ... It is a sign of our desire to be women. It is a gesture that says we are approaching womanhood". However, there is one discrepancy because the black African women in my study did not associate hair straightening with coming of age, probably because my sample was limited to a particular age group (18-45 years). In my study, the participants were young early-career women, transitioning between living with parents to living alone, on

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<sup>23</sup> Retouching is a term used to refer to the process of applying the chemical relaxer to new growth only and leaving out the previously relaxed hair. Applying chemicals to processed hair weakens and makes it susceptible to breakage. However, the relaxer normally spreads and reaches the processed hair and causes damage.

the brink of starting adult life and mid-career women, who have come of age. These women could do things with their hair that they could not do when they were little girls, and to re-define their identities as adult working women who have reached sexual maturity, hair becomes particularly important.

My study also found that black African women alter their hair through colouring and the motivations cited were numerous. They ranged from “don’t we wanna look like Amber Rose<sup>24</sup> maybe or something?” to “just to look different and just to shock people” (Figure 58) and wanting to “look proper” (Figure 59). Wanting to look like Amber Rose seems to point to the Transatlantic influence on local black stylisation. Some black African women draw inspiration from global aesthetics showcased by international black celebrities such as Amber Rose. Veit Erlmann (1999:3) sums it up succinctly when he suggests that “the world in the global age has become a smaller place and ... hence, everything that happens in one place always and in some unpredictable and disordered way conditions what happens in other places”. To borrow from British sociologist Anthony Giddens, through hairtyling, some black African women are able to defeat time-space distantiation. While still geographically based in South Africa, by embracing these global trends they also participate in some aspects of global glamour, while also embracing local glamour. They become both local and global citizens who benefit from glocalisation and hybridity.

The respondent who wanted to look proper pointed out that she has grey hairs in front only and it looks clumsy, hence she dyes it, adding that probably she does so because “dye is very cheap may be if it wasn’t cheap I wouldn’t buy it” (Figure 59). Some respondents said they dye their hair to experiment with their look, while others said they opt for blonde or vibrant colours to introduce an element of surprise and get out of their comfort zone.

The above statements seem to suggest that hair alteration using products like dye is largely a matter of personal choice, and it gives black African women the power to choose and freedom to experiment and change their look. However, there are certain social and economic considerations that can be hindrances. Adding to the debate, respondent M said she was afraid to colour her hair when she started working because “people would look at you funny like you can’t just appear with your gold hair or you can’t just appear with your so colourful

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<sup>24</sup> Amber Rose is an American model, actress, musician and fashion designer. She is well-known for her trademark buzz cut that is dyed blonde.

hair” (Figure 60). However, owing to the influence of global media and celebrity culture, hair that is dyed all sorts of colours has become an acceptable, cool style in South African urban areas. Vibrant hair colours were popularised by Western-based celebrities such as Rihanna and transported to other parts of the world, including South Africa. Some of the hair trends are transported from the West directly via international media or online platforms, while others are introduced to the local scene indirectly through local media and celebrities. A good example is Denis Zimba’s (Figure 3) hairstyle on the *True Love* August 2015 cover, which may have been inspired by Rihanna’s look that was drawn from an international magazine. Accordingly, *True Love* readers may draw inspiration from Zimba’s look, which was in turn probably influenced by Rihanna’s. The economic barriers are alluded to by the respondent who dyes her hair because dye is cheap. Since the products and hair altering procedures cost money, it is important to explore the financial implications linked to black hair care.

### **8.3.8 *Financial implications related to hair care and hairstyling practices***

Findings from my research suggest that the respondents believe that black African women should not “just appear” barefaced with unkempt hair but should make an effort and groom themselves. To look beautiful a woman should have clean hair. These comments seem to suggest that “beauty is about labour” (Tate 2009:20), and presuppose the use of products at home or using professional hair services at the salon. The hair products and services come at a price. In addition, when a person styles her hair, she has to complete the look with accessories. Some respondents in focus group Y agreed, and stated that certain types of hair or hairstyles force a person to match it with certain types of clothing; for example, a R2,000 weave has to be worn with clothes that complement the hairstyle. This shows that it is not just about the hair but the whole look, including clothing, a handbag, shoes and make-up. Interestingly, my visual semiotic analysis of the covers revealed that there was a correlation between the celebrities’ hairstyles and make-up and type of clothes worn. For example, celebrities with weaves had heavy make-up while those with natural hair opted for the barely-there make-up look.

However, in the same group, one respondent disputed the notion that an expensive hairstyle should be complemented with equally expensive accessories. She insistently indicated that she can wear her R100 or R200 jeans with a R2,000 weave because she is not interested in hair, and hair advertisements do not mean anything to her. The above assertions suggest that

the impact hair care has on the black African women's finances vary from person to person, depending on how much she values beauty, her preferences and priorities. For instance, some people prioritise beauty and spend to the last cent, while others "know what they can afford and they're comfortable with that" (Figure 58). The latter seems to be the stance that was adopted by the respondents as findings showed that the 30 black African women who filled out the pre-group questionnaires spent between R30 and R800 per month on hair care and styling. The figures varied because black African women have different hairstyling needs and preferences with some opting for relaxers, some keeping natural hair and others using the less expensive hair enhancements like Frika braids. They came across as being prudent and careful with their expenditure on hair, as results from the pre-group questionnaire revealed that most of the respondents earn an average income of R5,000-9,000 per month.

The above begs the question: can hair be used as an indicator of a black woman's social class? There were contradictory beliefs pertaining to the relationship between hair and status. On the one hand, respondents said hair can be used to determine one's social class and status, but were quick to add that there are some people who do not work but wear expensive hairstyles courtesy of 'blessers'.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, it also depends on what an individual values in life. Someone can have a simple hairstyle even if they are very rich. The following exchange illustrates this point:

Q: ... You may find out that someone has a salary of R5,000, the R4,000 goes to make-up and cosmetics you know so I don't think it actually says a lot about your lifestyle it's just how people are it depends from person to person. Some people live for beauty *hantsho* if they want to spend they spend 90 per cent of their salary on beauty so already they don't live a flashy lifestyle and just wanna to look good.

Researcher: Is it keeping up with the Joneses or is it just for their personal good?

M: I think it's about keeping up.

Q: Keeping up you know they just wanna stay trendy.

M: And another thing is like value. People value things differently there is someone would tell you that I'd rather buy a car someone will tell you ... I'm on a R20,000 salary I'd rather invest this money than to buy a Brazilian weave. So people can look at that person and one who earns R5,000 and actually think *ukuthi* (that) this one earns

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<sup>25</sup> The term 'blesser' is a colloquial term for sugar daddy. It is used to refer to a phenomenon where an older man, who is usually married, sponsors the expensive lifestyle of a younger woman or several younger women in exchange of sexual favours. These men who are normally rich are the blessers and the women the blessees.

better because of how they appear how they look yah. I think the society we live in actually values the look more than what you can actually offer (Figure 60).

In a nutshell, the above shows that it is just a perception that people who wear weaves are rich and those with natural or naturally styled hair do not have money. It will therefore be foolhardy to judge a black African woman by her hairstyle.

Hairstyling is a matter of priorities and preferences, as the respondents' stories of friends who spend a lot of money on hair and beauty products demonstrated. In focus group X, respondent I shared the story of a friend who had problems with a housemate who spent all her money on hair and had nothing left to buy food and pay the electricity bill. The problem got serious to the extent that they stopped talking to each other:

To show how bad it was like the fridge was divided in half to say this is my half and that is your half. Food was labelled. My friend even had this like *i khesinyana* [a small case] and she'll put all her food there and lock it (Figure 58).

For some black African women such as respondent H's friend, hair and beauty are intricately linked to their identity, self-esteem, mood and well-being. Respondent H revealed that her friend used her hair to get what she wanted from men and she always made an effort to ensure that it was up to standard. Failing to maintain the standard can have dire consequences because it threatens the woman's livelihood. H recounts that "if her hair is good and perfect and all that she felt good about herself. If her hair was old and stuff then she felt like you know what I can't do anything" (Figure 58). Such women find themselves caught up in a difficult situation because on the one hand, they know that if their hair does not look good they will not "be able to get this and that" but on the other hand, they are aware that maintaining the high standards is expensive and out of reach for them. However, as seen in the previous sections, some black African women regard high-maintenance hairstyles as a form of investment and spend a lot of money on hair, which in turn helps them get what they want. Thus Sandra C Duvivier (2010:1104) observes that the black female body is "currency signifying the potential for basic survival, financial security, and socioeconomic advancement for the girls/women in question and their families. These families at times sanction the use of female sexuality, ... perceiving it as the most profitable means by which to attempt to transcend poverty". Although Duvivier was commenting on prostitution in Haiti, her observations resonate with how black African women in South Africa may be obliged to use



their hair for financial gain. But just like other investments, in some cases there are high returns while in some instances there are huge losses. The case of H's friend indicates that not being able to afford certain hairstyles and achieve the results negatively affects some black African women's self-confidence, and leads to low self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness.

The findings from my study are similar to results from Akkida Mcdowell's (2000:129) research conducted in America, which showed that some black women use hair to attract men and prioritise their hair needs over food and electricity. A respondent in Mcdowell's (2000:129) American study stated, "to get a man, I need to beautify myself by any means necessary - including starving and having my power/telephone/hot water shut off - in favour of phat hairstyles". This shows that regardless of geographical area, black 'sister's' perceptions of beauty and hair impact on them financially by influencing their hairstyling practices.

Overall, the hair advertisements published in the 12 issues of *True Love* did influence some black African women economically by inducing them to buy the products. The covers also have an effect on some respondents because they copy hairstyles and fashion trends from the celebrities they admire. However, it also came to light that the sampled black African women did not glorify everything, but they modified what they saw in *True Love* texts and other media to suit their personal needs and sensibilities.

### ***8.3.9 Discussion of pre-group questionnaire and focus group interview findings***

The findings provided insight into the opinions of the selected black African women. The women were aware that the covers and advertisements reinforced certain lifestyles, stereotypes, myths and ideologies. They pointed out that the women on the covers and advertisements had unnatural hair and were fake because they were trying to be something they are not as they are wearing long hair that is not theirs. The other discourses that were identified by the respondents were physical beauty, sex appeal, glamour, success, consumerism and patriarchal ideology. They noted that the texts presented artificial beauty as appealing, thereby promoting the myth that a woman "cannot look or be lookable without some additional of some sort. Some additional of some eye liner, eyebrow pencil, Brazilian hair, some additional of Maybelline make-up ..." (Figure 59). The images of sexy,

glamorous women were said to be trendy, appealing and desirable. Elaborating on the thread of desirability, Respondent A explained,

when I say desirable I'm not saying per se hair it's like what E was saying you desire may be the woman's shoes, her legs, even clear skin. It's kind of you want something that's part of that woman. May be it's the eye liner the lipstick or the mascara or just the nails. It's kind of the trends you want to go with the trends (Figure 59).

The respondents noted that in the texts, black femininity was associated with having stylish hair, long weaves, fancy clothes and make-up (Figure 59). Even beauty that is presented as natural is not natural per se, as natural hair that is depicted is groomed hair that involves the use of many products. The subtle message put across suggests that beauty comes from the market, thereby reinforcing consumerism.

The focus group interview results disclosed that the women's perceptions of stereotypes, lifestyle, myths and ideologies promoted on the covers resembled some of my observations that emerged during content analysis and visual semiotic analysis. The results of a quantitative content analysis revealed that the women depicted on the covers all work in the entertainment industry and are successful in their own right, and findings from focus group interviews show that respondents picked up on this thread. They noted that the "the women on the covers I guess they portray also independence ... they take charge of their lives so it's not about a certain man being behind or their success depending on a man rather but they worked hard for it. They are where they are because they worked hard" (Figure 58).

Related to the previous points, the effect the visual images had on the respondents depended on the respondent's personal circumstances, tastes, likes, interests, attitudes and relevance to their life. For instance, the respondents noted that some of the celebrities on the covers were wearing fancy clothes that they could afford, but could not wear them citing several reasons, including not liking the celebrities' style, not feeling comfortable wearing the particular type of clothing. Respondent E explained, "I don't like their style I've got my style. ... It's her style it's good for her you understand what I'm trying to say ... I have my own style that I'm comfortable [with]" (Figure 59). Adding her voice to the debate, respondent C said she desired the Burberry jacket (Figure 1), but would not feel comfortable exposing her thigh. The same sentiment was echoed by Respondent E who suggested that if she wore Boity's

dress (Figure 11), she would wear something underneath (Figure 59). This shows that the readers' stylisation is shaped by global fashion trends (Burberry jacket), local celebrity culture (Phuti Khomo), as well as their personal preferences (covering the thigh). The readers adopt and adapt what they see in the magazine to personal taste, style and comfort levels. In addition, the readers' relationship with the product that is advertised, for example its relevance to their life, influenced their perceptions and the actions they took after exposure to the covers and advertisements. If the product was relevant and suitable for their needs they took notice. These examples show that "we never look just at one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves" (Berger 1972:9). The respondents took what was relevant to their situations and rejected those aspects that did not apply to their lived realities.

Additionally, the findings showed that there was a connection between the celebrity's status, personality and character and the influence they had on the readers. If the celebrity's personality was perceived to be desirable and was highly esteemed by a reader the higher the level of influence they had on them. Conversely, if the celebrity had less desirable characteristics the less influence they had on the reader. Celebrities perceived to have pleasing personalities such as Bassie and Connie Ferguson were cited as role models. In focus group Y, a respondent pointed out that she admires Bassie (Figure 8) and reads anything to do with her and some went on to say they would wear the dresses worn by Bassie, Manaka and Connie. Furthermore, they seemed to be aware that some of the images are aspirational because an 'ordinary' woman on the street cannot look like the 'magazine' woman. They acknowledged that some of the looks are for the 'magazine' women and can be worn in everyday life if modified. The distinction between the magazine world and real world was a recurring theme and ties in with the effect the images had on the women.

## CONCLUSION

Chapters Five, Six and Seven presented my own interpretations of the covers and advertisements, and this chapter has revealed the point of view of the respondents. The black African women's readings resonate with my elucidations, which found that *True Love* constructs different images of black femininities and promotes certain myths and ideologies over others. In the same vein, the sections above have shown that the meanings of the text depend on interpretation and the effect the message has depends on the cultural context. The

## Chapter Eight: Findings from pre-group questionnaire and focus group interviews

interpretations were varied, just as *True Love* readership is diverse. Moreover, the similarities and differences were explored during focus group discussion to determine whether the group dynamics altered some of the views expressed in the questionnaire. The results showed that focus group interview responses were consistent with views expressed in pre-group questionnaires, and some respondents referred back to the answers they filled in on the questionnaire.

This chapter has presented the findings and revealed that the selected black African women either accepted or rejected the messages, depending on their personal circumstances. Acceptance was dependent on whether the individual's beliefs, taste and interests aligned with the discourses presented in the text. And conversely, if there was no alignment, the messages were rejected. The advertisements blur the dichotomy between reality and fantasy. Some of the fantasies created by advertisements and covers are acted out by readers on their own bodies. Findings from focus group interviews show that some women draw inspiration and recreate hairstyles that they see in *True Love* advertisements and covers, while others resist them. The chapter that follows provides a conclusion and further highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the study, as well as setting out some suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

The metaphor that the human body is “the geography closest in” (Longhurst 1994:214) explains the relationship between an individual and his or her surrounding environment. This study therefore sought to explore the ways black African women are represented in *True Love* magazine covers and advertisements, paying particular attention to depictions of black hair. Examining the visual representations of black African women is important because the social, cultural, economic and political factors construct and represent certain types of black hair and bodies that in turn form the perceptions about black hair matters and influence actions taken by readers. Previous studies have focused on the representation of black people and gender in the media (e.g., Malanda 2014; Luyt 2011; Masina 2010; Sanger 2008); however, research on the visualisation of black hair in both magazine covers and advertisements in the South African context is limited. Moreover, studies tend to focus on content or the effect the content has on audiences, whereas my research examines both elements.

This study fills that gap as its main aim was to explore visual representations of black African women in both covers and advertisements of a magazine aimed at a predominantly black readership. Data collected from the 12 issues of *True Love* published between June 2015 and May 2016 was examined using quantitative content analysis to establish the hair types and hairstyles that were featured in *True Love* texts. Additionally, a visual semiotic analysis was conducted to uncover the myths and ideologies that are promoted by the images. Lastly, a survey and three focus group interviews were conducted to determine to what extent the images impacted on the lives of the sampled black African women aged between 18 and 45.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the main findings, and thereafter highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the study. Towards the end of the chapter, I give suggestions for future research, and highlight my original contribution and the significance of my research to Visual Studies.

### 9.1 Main findings of the study

The results addressed the research question and supported some of the research assumptions and refuted others. Regarding the hairstyles that were featured, the quantitative content analysis results showed that the magazine featured more Eurocentric hairstyles. On the other

## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

hand, the findings confirm the belief that *True Love* magazine covers advance the notion that black hair is only beautiful when it is altered. The advertisements for hair altering products such as relaxers and dry hair, including hair extensions and weaves, featured prominently during the period of study. Hair straightening using chemicals, heat or enhancement products gives black African women an opportunity to turn their afro hair into something that seemingly resembles the white ideal. This has implications on identity formation and construction. It is important to note that previously it was almost impossible for black African women to attain the white ideal because straightened black hair does not have the same texture as Caucasian hair. However, with the availability of weaves and wigs made from human hair (Peruvian, Brazilian and Indian hair), black African women can adopt Caucasian and Asian hair textures. In view of this, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ascertain one's racial identity through hair or hairstyle.

Despite South Africa's historical background, the findings of this study have shown that the black African women on the covers and advertisements embrace both Westerncentric and Afrocentric hair types and styles. Women with short afro and naturally styled hairstyles were featured alongside those with relaxed hair, wigs and weaves. *True Love* is increasing the visibility of black African women and promoting African standards of beauty, albeit seemingly in conjunction with white ideals. This appears to be in line with global trends that seem to be slowly embracing black aesthetics. Previously, viewers have been exposed to black models with long, flowing hair on the catwalk and red carpet, creating the impression that Afrocentric hairstyles are not good enough to be featured. However, in recent years there has been a shift towards featuring Afrocentric hairstyles, as illustrated by Halle Berry at the 2017 Oscars and Maria Borges at the Victoria Secret's Fashion Show in 2015. *True Love* may be influenced by these changes since the editorial team takes inspiration and ideas for cover photo shoots from international fashion shows and publications.

Moreover, featuring both Afrocentric and Western-centric hairstyles is an indication that cosmopolitan black African women are expanding their repertoire, instead of limiting themselves to the dominant standards and beauty ideals. The results suggest that there is no single hair type that represents ideal black beauty and constitutes beautiful hair. The covers and advertisements promote versatility by featuring different hair types ranging from short afros, big afros, to voluminous curls and bone-straight hair. *True Love* features a variety of hair types and styles because they are likely to appeal to women with different tastes and

## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

styling needs. These findings are in line with Erasmus's (1997:14) assertion that good hair constitutes "healthy hair whatever the texture" and Thompson's (2009:835) observation that "today, hairstyles run the gamut from Afros to straightened hair to Jheri curls, irrespective of skin tone, socio-economic class, and political affiliation".

In addition, the presence of women with different hair types valorises beauty standards that are not totally based on Eurocentric ideals. This is a true reflection of hairstyling practices in African societies. Africans have always worn their hair in different styles, including short afros, simple braids and elaborate hairstyles for special occasions. Moreover, it is important to note that preference for straight hair is not a new thing among black women, nor was hair straightening introduced to Africans by white people. According to stories passed down by older women in my community, people from historical Nguni societies used to straighten their afro hair using hot stones; what has changed is the technologies used to straighten the hair.

Noteworthy is that although women with Afro-textured hair constitute the majority in South Africa, black hair is positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy while Caucasian hair is still accorded higher status. Furthermore, my study, which examined the covers and advertisements as "reflections" (Shields 1990:25) of South African society as well as images that shape the community's ideals, found that the black body, especially black hair is depicted as the "Other". Focus group interview findings revealed that the black body is still constructed as the "Other". The power relations influence the hegemonic discourses that construct black hair as the "Other" and classify Afrocentric hair such as dreadlocks as "untidy", and short hair as "unladylike" and not a suitable professional look. It is the powerful groups that determine what is acceptable and what is not. The dominant groups, in this case black heterosexual men and white people, occupy the hegemonic position, which gives them the power to determine what black African women's hair should look like. A great deal of pressure is put on black African women to conform to socially accepted standards. Some black African women feel pressured to wear long, straight weaves to look good and attract men's attention and to gain approval from white colleagues. Nonetheless, in some cases the influence of the powerful group is subtle and some black African women, who are vulnerable because historically they have always been at the bottom of the gender-racial tier, do not realise it.

## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

Closely related to the previous point, the study sought to examine whether black African women have a preference for long hair and if the covers and advertisements would feature long hair more frequently than short hair. The quantitative content analysis results showed that long hair featured more than short hair. However, during focus group discussions it emerged that black readers have agency and engage in counter-hegemonic strategies. Black African women do not necessarily prefer long hair per se. They relax their hair and use hair enhancement products to lengthen it for various reasons. Furthermore, their attitudes towards hair alteration and enhancements vary and are influenced by societal pressures, manageability and personal tastes. My study found that hair alteration through relaxing, straightening, colouring and using hair enhancements is not a desire to look white or to make blackness disappear. Some black African women use their hair to get what they want. For instance, they do not wear weaves because they aspire to be white, but use them as a form of investment to get what they want from men. In addition, black African women do not straighten their hair to approximate the white ideal of long, straight hair, but do so because relaxed hair is easy to manage in terms of combing and styling.

Although the Eurocentric beauty ideal was promoted during colonisation and apartheid, one of the objectives of this study was to explore if 23 years after the inception of black majority rule, *True Love* will present a different face of black African women. The findings confirmed this assumption and showed that *True Love* does present a different face of the black African woman; however, this is done within the cultural, political and economic environment. The results from my study are in accordance with existing literature which shows that women tend to be depicted on the covers and advertisements as young and glamorous.

Despite some strides taken by *True Love* that have resulted in portraying black African women outside the domestic setting and as successful career women, my findings revealed that stereotypes persist in the representation of black African women. They are still represented in stereotypical roles as caring parents or sex objects, and are depicted as dependent on men. The data collected using quantitative content analysis and semiotic analysis substantiated that femininity on the covers and advertisements is constructed and presented as multiple, and at times contradictory. At one level, black African women are associated with nurturing, whereas at another level they are represented as sexual predators. Representing the many faces of black African women is plausible as it is empowering and shows that black femininity is fluid, not static.



## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

However, although a multiplicity of black femininities is featured there are some that are privileged and others that are symbolically annihilated. For example, *True Love* privileges heterofemininity and portrays it as the most desirable and excludes other gender identities such as lesbian identities. The results from the quantitative content analysis of the covers also revealed that black African women are represented as entertainers (actresses, singers, models, DJs, radio and television presenters), and not as professionals in business or other endeavours. This is in line with findings from international studies such as William Christ and Sammye Johnson's (1987:11) research regarding the occupation of the women featured on *Time* magazine covers, which found that most women were shown as entertainers, artists, and spouses. Another study conducted by David Sumner (2002:12) that analysed 2,128 covers of *Life* magazine revealed that most women featured were from the entertainment industry. The absence of other professions on *True Love* covers is worrying because women and young women need role models. The images on the covers are not a reflection of reality. Some of the "reflections" provided by *True Love* do not accurately reflect the role and position of black African women in South Africa. As a cultural artefact, *True Love* failed to reflect diversity of the South African black communities.

One of the aims of my study was to examine whether black African women living in South Africa pay attention to the front covers and hair advertisements and embrace or identify with the feminine ideals portrayed in the images. The findings from the survey questionnaire and focus group interviews support the assumption, as they revealed that the covers and hair advertisements did influence the respondent's perceptions about ideal beauty and beautiful hair. Some respondents bought the products that they saw in the advertisements. However, drawing on Hall (1981), I argue that like other popular culture texts, *True Love* covers and advertisements constitute an arena of constant consent and resistance. After exposure, various actions were taken: the women either embraced or rejected the messages. The texts reinforced dominant myths and ideologies, but also aided the formation of oppositional cultural sites, demonstrating that black African women have agency and have developed resistance to gender and racial stereotypical representations of their bodies and hair. Through focus group interviews, my study found that the selected black African women have developed a culture of resistance that enables them to respond to the undesirable representations. Some of them engage in acts of defiance and reject products such as weaves.

Furthermore, my findings showed that some respondents used the celebrities featured on the covers as role models. Some women pointed out that they emulate the hairstyles, fashion and beauty trends set by the celebrities whom they closely resembled in terms of personality and body size. This seems to suggest that some respondents engage in practices of social comparison. However, overall results showed that effects of media exposure seem to be minimal compared to other factors such as affordability, personal style and societal influence.

### 9.2 Strengths of the study

My study simultaneously analysed media texts and how they are received and interpreted by readers. The study has a strong methodological and theoretical grounding and used a multi-method strategy as qualitative and quantitative methods were used to complement each other to seek “elaboration, enhancement, illustration, clarification of the results from one method with the results from another” (Greene, Caracelli & Graham 1989:259). Triangulation (Cresswell 2003; Bryman 2004) was employed to determine if there is convergence or corroboration between quantitative and qualitative data. The study employed a mixed method approach and the results from the quantitative and qualitative methods carry the same weight.

Using research instruments such as questionnaires and focus group interviews enriched the research by providing individual opinions and group perceptions of covers and advertisements. Focus group interviews provided in-depth information on how women read and are influenced by the visual images. In addition, focus group interviews helped uncover how readers engage in different reading techniques and make sense of the messages. Since the readership is diverse the interpretations were also varied. The intersectionality of class, gender, religion and age resulted in a variety of voices, and my study highlighted these diverse and at times contradictory discourses instead of imposing consistency from the theoretical standpoint. There is a tendency among researchers to silence the subaltern (Spivak 1994), but I made a conscious effort to let the women speak for themselves instead of speaking for them. My study examined the factors that influence whether the readers accept or reject the texts, and in addition explored what effect this had on the construction of black identity. The arguments were substantiated by quotations from black African women who read *True Love*, which allowed the data to speak for itself.

## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

Although snowball sampling is often criticised for yielding a homogeneous sample, in this study many informants were used to obtain a diverse sample comprising South Africans from different ethnic groups. Additionally, to adhere to research ethics I ensured that the research was not psychologically harmful, and ensured confidentiality by not using real names of participants; instead codes were assigned to each respondent.

My age and race worked to my advantage because I was treated as an insider and managed to build good rapport with the respondents. Having the focus group discussions in public places associated with leisure such as coffee shops made women relax and set aside inhibitions. Since most black African women usually confide in other black strangers about hair issues, the conversations progressed well and they shared their views and opinions freely, even the less vocal respondents.

While the results cannot be generalised because of the size of the sample and the sampling methods employed, the 12 issues of *True Love* still give an insight into the economic, historical, social and cultural context that has, and continues to shape, its production process.

### 9.3 Limitations of the study

The major limitation is that I was the only person responsible for coding the data. To borrow from Berger's (1972:9) concept of ways of seeing, the way I "looked" at images and interpreted them was influenced by my cultural background. Moreover, as a researcher I was not just reading the covers and advertisements looking for beauty and fashion trends like an average reader would, but I was critically analysing them to find out what they said about black African women. I was looking at nuances, delving deeper, something that an average reader may not normally do. Usually when I read a magazine or see a cover on the newsstand I do not necessarily consciously examine the myths and ideologies entrenched in it. The context within which I read the images may have influenced my interpretations and the meanings I assigned. However, I tried to employ reflexivity. Using many coders for quantitative content analysis may have improved reliability. It would have helped to use coders of different age groups and gender to eliminate coder commonality. Having different coders is beneficial to a study because it provides a different age and class perspective. I intended to engage students from the University of Pretoria to serve as research assistants; however, this was not possible because of the student protests on campus.

## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

The visual images are open to various interpretations; hence texts such as advertisements and covers admit a range of possible interpretations to the reader or different readers. It therefore follows that the interpretations given under semiotic analysis and focus group interviews are not universal. Moreover, the focus group discussions proved that there are multiple readings of the same image; for instance, one respondent thought the images on the covers were racy and promoted bad behaviour, while others thought they reinforced the emancipation of women. In addition, although the sample comprised black African women aged between 18 and 45, the average age was 36. In view of this, it is not possible to infer whether the age of black African women influences their perceptions about black hair. The sample comprised people with different skills and positions who work in Pretoria and most of them live in Centurion, Pretoria and Midrand, Johannesburg. As previously explained, the suburbs of Centurion and Midrand were traditionally 'white' zones, but after the democratic elections black people, mainly aged between 25 and 40, moved to these areas. Although the sample is still diverse in terms of ethnic groups, it is limited in terms of age mainly because there are many older black African people who live in the townships compared to those who live in the suburbs.

### 9.4 Contribution of this study

As noted previously, studies on the representation of black African women in South Africa are scarce, yet underrepresentation and representation of black African women in a bad light still remain a reality in the media. To remedy this and fill in the gap, drawing on Kirsten Simonsen (2000:7), I argued that the black body is a "cultural battlefield"; hence my study explored how black African women experience and navigate societal pressures through their hair. My study adds to existing knowledge on black beauty by recording the latest trends of black aesthetics and stylisation documented in the most recent 12 issues of *True Love* at the time of writing. Since most of the studies cited above and in previous chapters were done more than five years ago, my research adds fresh insights to the existing corpus of data in the field of Visual Studies. Furthermore, some studies on the representation of black women only include the researcher's own interpretation of the texts (Malanda 2014; Masina 2010). Over and above my own interpretations, my research brings new insights to the politics of black hair and black femininity by including the perspectives of 'ordinary' black African women and the team that produces *True Love* magazine. Moreover, while Masina's (2010) study focused on hair relaxing and skin lightening products, mine gives an in-depth analysis of hair

## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

and records the hair products and hair textures, lengths and colours, and hairstyles that were trending in South Africa during that period. In this respect, my study generates new knowledge for Visual Studies and serves as an essential documentation that can be used as a reference point by other researchers and people in general. It serves as a record that people can refer back to, to learn about the visual and verbal signs that were used to depict black African women, especially regarding their hair, between June 2015 and May 2016.

Furthermore, examining the black body is important because the body is an “active and reactive entity which is not just part of us, but is who we are” (Butler 1999:239). While most debates on the black body, especially hair, race and gender politics in South Africa have centred on comments made by certain groups or individuals (for example, the Pretoria Girls High incident and the case of a white real estate agent who described black beachgoers in Durban as monkeys), my research brings a different perspective to the discussion by examining how the black body is represented in cultural artefacts such as magazine covers and advertisements. I believe that analysing visual images of black African women on the covers and advertisements is very important; as Berger (1972:7) observes, “seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognises before it can speak”. Admittedly Berger’s assertion excludes the blind; however, it corroborates that the visual text wields power. So, for example, I found that the black African women’s perceptions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ hair were largely in line with the images they saw on *True Love* covers and advertisements. My study contributes new knowledge to the topic of black stylisation and femininity by highlighting the perspectives and experiences of black African women living in South Africa. My research revealed that several factors such as celebrity culture and global and local glamour shape black aesthetics and the way black African women self-fashion themselves.

Additionally, disparaging the black body or hair remains a political reality, as evident in the Pretoria Girls High School incident in 2016. In view of these dynamics, I conducted this study in order to contribute fresh empirical data based on original research illuminating the representation of black African women in the South African context. Using semiotic analysis, the study uncovered the stereotypes, myths and ideologies that are constructed and promoted by the visual representations. Moreover, this research contributes to the body of knowledge that pertains to gender representation, black hair politics, body image and black femininity because results from my study can be used in comparative research to see if there are

## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

similarities and differences in the representation of black women in South Africa and other parts of the world.

In addition, the findings from my study may enrich the field of Visual Studies because this study uses representation theory and employs semiotics, which draws from other disciplines such as linguistics and cultural studies. While some gender studies researchers tend to examine women as a homogeneous group regardless of race and ethnicity (Weitz 2004), my study adds another dimension by demonstrating that to treat them as such negates their historical, cultural, linguistic and geographical differences, as well as economic and political factors that shape their lives. Mindful of the fact that individuals classified under the category of black African women are heterogeneous, this study used a diverse sample comprising black South African nationals and expatriate women from the African continent aged between 18 and 45. Its main focus was the unique issues related to black femininity, appearance and hair types and hairstyles that are considered acceptable and unacceptable in the South African context. Therefore, this study advances the understanding of the impact of texts because it examined both the production and consumption processes by analysing texts to uncover the intended (and unintended) meanings, and thereafter conducting focus group interviews to explore how black readers make sense of the messages they are exposed to and how the images impact on their perceptions.

My study has merit because it analysed texts published in *True Love*, one of the most important publications that contributed towards the development and recognition of the black press in South Africa. Established in 1972 as a men's magazine targeted at black men and later launched as a women's magazine directed at black readers in 1984, the magazine does not feature prominently in research projects focussing on the representation of black African women in South Africa. Additionally, *True Love* is one of the few publications in South Africa that only features black African women on its covers. The images of these black African women are symbols and a celebration of blackness and serve as an important point of reference for black African women because *True Love* is produced by an editorial team led by a black editor for a predominantly black readership. My study recognises the importance of *True Love* as an important artefact in preserving black African women's history and black femininities. During colonisation and apartheid in South Africa, black African women's beauty was devalued while white aesthetics were promoted; specifically, this study's value lies in the fact that it has examined and highlighted the successes and constraints that the *True*

## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

*Love* team face as they try to present views of race and gender that are in line with the current social, economic and political environment in South Africa.

The research showed that *True Love* magazine resembles a department store in the sense that it constructs imaginary shopping spaces where readers can browse through the pages and enjoy what the magazine has to offer. In this way, it provides some form of escapism for its readership. However, this is but one aspect of the role of a magazine in society. In addition to providing information to readers, *True Love* covers and advertisements signify something and are used to reinforce certain myths and ideologies. For example, the visual representations of the women promote certain discourses of black femininity. In other words, they are a fountain of knowledge as they inform black African women about the acceptable cultural values and social taboos. The images provide insight about the depictions of the black African woman in her diverse manifestations as a modern, self-sufficient mother, divorcee, married or unmarried woman. They also present the stereotypical sex kitten and aspirational glamorous actresses and singers. The contradictions in the representations could be attributed to the opportunities and challenges that black African women face as they create and recreate identities in South Africa. Black African women's existence straddles both tradition and modernity, as evident in their behaviour, hairstyles and dress code. This study further revealed that *True Love* has increased the visibility of black African women in South Africa, and simultaneously, promoted natural African hairstyles, albeit alongside Eurocentric styles.

Featuring the many faces of the black African woman and an eclectic mix of hair types and hairstyles could be attributed to the social, cultural, political and economic factors, which play a major role in the way black African women are represented since they determine what constitutes an ideal body and beautiful hair. The content that goes into the magazine is commercially driven and has to meet commercial specifications. Moreover, other factors such as influence of the advertisers, the interests of the editorial team, and the availability of financial and human resources influence the content that is published. Media economics and the ownership structure of a magazine are linked to the representation of black African women and ideal black hair that favours the interests of the capitalist system. In South Africa, print media is largely dominated by a few leading companies, including Caxton, Independent Media, Naspers, and the Times Media Group. Although black ownership and partnerships took root after the end of apartheid, "the level of black ownership of print and digital media is currently below the threshold proposed in the BBBEE [Broad-based Black Economic

Empowerment] guidelines” (Transformation of Print and Digital Media 2013). With media still dominated by white interests in terms of ownership, control and content, the coverage of issues that are relevant to the black majority is still articulated through a white lens. Although *True Love* is run by a black editorial team, it is owned by Media24, which is a part of multinational conglomerate Naspers. The owners, board members and management control and shape the policy and influence the general direction of the publication. This study provides insights that may be utilised by *True Love* staff and brands that advertise in the magazine.

To summarise, my research is innovative in that it sought to add black African women’s voices to a discussion that often excludes them. Furthermore, I wanted to conduct research that would help me understand the subject from the point of view of Africans themselves. It was worthwhile for me as a black woman to write about issues pertaining to black African females in an open manner, instead of having outsiders write about us. In a way this study was partly a personal journey. The findings from my study will add to the existing body of knowledge on the representation of black women in the media by contributing a South African perspective. My study can serve as a blueprint for future research on the politics of black hair, as suggested below.

### **9.5 Recommendations for future studies**

This research has raised many pertinent issues relating to the black body and perceptions of black hair. My research focused on how black hair is depicted on the covers and hair advertisements, which were published in one print publication. However, owing to the proliferation of ICTs, black African women are exposed to other forms of mass mediated visual images, for instance, on the internet and on television. People can access YouTube videos online and images on Instagram and on other social media platforms. These platforms influence their notions of ideal hair and beauty standards. Moving forward, future studies could take a broader approach and focus on how black African women are depicted in other media platforms that they are exposed to in addition to magazines. Including other media platforms will be helpful in getting a holistic picture on the influence of the media.

Furthermore, the samples for my study were small, only 30 women were selected for the pre-group questionnaire and 18 participated in focus group interviews. Most of the women who



## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

participated in survey questionnaires and focus group discussions were South African citizens. Expatriates living and working in South Africa were not comfortable in taking part in the research. It is worth noting that the hairstyles that the respondents had may have had an impact on their perceptions of good and bad hair, hair length preferences and attitudes towards hair alteration and hair enhancements. To mitigate this, future research could include a bigger sample consisting of black African women with different hair types and styles. Moreover, my research only analysed 12 covers and 29 advertisements published over a period of one year. Future studies could undertake a longitudinal study to cover a longer period, as this may provide an opportunity to examine if the representations of black African women in *True Love* have changed over the years.

In addition, the findings from my study suggest that some black African women use their hair to attract men. The results satisfactorily address the research problem; hence they are adequate for this study. Nevertheless, to establish the validity of the women's assertions, it will be worthwhile to conduct research among black African men to give the male perspective. Future research could employ similar methods and examine the hair types and lengths that black African men find attractive in black African women. It would be interesting to see if there are significant correlations or divergences between responses given by black African women and by black African men. The findings from a research giving the black African men's point of view would complement the insights gained from my study.

### 9.6 Concluding remarks

Hair is a potent symbol; it can be styled in different ways, dyed several colours or shaved off from the head. The notion that black hair is dirty was a recurring theme. Some members of South African society across the racial divide perceive black hair to be dirty and ugly, which is probably rooted in colonial and apartheid thought. Even 23 years after the advent of democracy, some people still believe this. To get to the bottom and put this matter to bed, there is a need to "restore the historical consciousness of the African peoples and reconquer a Promethean consciousness" (Diop 2010:46).

Desirable, healthy hair is represented in the covers and advertisements as being altered through relaxers, dyes and dry hair. However, the covers and advertisement also promoted both Afrocentric and Westerncentric values. This demonstrates that black South African

## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

cultures are undergoing some changes punctuated by hybridity, negotiation and translation largely because culture and trends keep evolving owing to the interaction of people from different parts of the world. The technological developments, migration and immigration of people influences cultural practices, beauty and fashion styles. The South Africans who travel abroad and expatriates living in the country influence what is considered to be important. When the various cultures collide, the third space surfaces and “enables other positions to emerge” (Rutherford 1990:211). The meanings are adopted and adapted to meet South Africa’s cultural needs.

Desirable feminine characteristics are portrayed as youthfulness, physical attractiveness, medium body size, and flawless, radiant skin. Binary oppositions are implied; women who do not possess the ideal characteristics should improve their appearance through use of the products. Notable is the absence of older, disabled and big women. The emphasis is on physical appearance; the behavioural and emotional are glossed over. A few advertisements and one cover represent women as part of a group (Figures 4, 2, 25, 27, 28, and 38), but in most visual texts they are shown alone. This seems to promote individualism as opposed to communal identity. Some of the feminine ideals promoted on the covers and advertisements contradict *ubuntu*, a concept that informs the everyday lives of most black African women. For instance, black African women are addressed as individuals not in relation to other people. The products are meant for the beautification of the woman and not her family. This seems to contradict the traditional feminine roles of nurturer, good mother, and good wife who takes care of the family. So is beauty selfish? The individualism depicted is probably not only a perception, but a true reflection of the lived reality of black African women as they negotiate and establish their position in modern cities.

*True Love*, a magazine that is aspirational, embodies individualism and this may be an indication of the atomisation of women in the city and the proliferation of consumer culture. To sell their products, brands are producing special products tailored for niche market segments such as men, women and babies. Since *True Love* is targeted at black African women, the brands that advertise cater to the needs of this niche market, and family magazines feature products for the whole family. However, in a few instances the magazine texts also focus on communality and encourage black African women to embrace black pride and improve the lives of other women (Figure 8).

## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

The findings of my study are different from results from other studies such as Sanger's (2007), who found that women were represented as nurturers and consumers who spend a lot of money on fashion and home products. My study found that black African women are not confined to the home, but are thrust in the limelight and represented as glamorous, self-sufficient, talented and successful. However, black African women are also featured in traditional feminine roles and dependent on men. For example, although the actresses are successful in their own right, the cover lines suggest they are mothers, wives and girlfriends of powerful men.

In addition, my study found that there are counter-hegemonic images positioning black African women as both objects and subjects that use the products to improve themselves and use their looks to get what they want. Focus group findings revealed that women have a significant amount of power and use their hair to get attention from men. However, most Nguni cultures such as Zulu and Ndebele warn against making judgements about a person based on their physical beauty. The Nguni proverb "*ikhiwane elibomvu libolile*" (literally a red fig is rotten), meaning that appearances can be deceptive, teaches that one should not choose a partner based on their physical appearance only, but other attributes such as behaviour and the family's standing in society should be taken into consideration.

Black African women's subjectivities are mediated through stereotypical representation including the discourse of sexuality, which is portrayed openly in *True Love* covers and toned down in the advertisements. The covers put more stress on black African women's sexuality and portrayed them as hypersexual, as most of them are shown wearing sexy, revealing clothes. Although advertisements rely on sex appeal and objectification to sell products, the portrayals are not overly blatant. Since the magazine is targeted at women, it seems brands desist from employing overly stereotypical representations in the form of images of scantily dressed women. Nonetheless, *True Love* still uses tropes that were used prior to the democratic election, for instance objectification, hypersexualisation and exoticisation of the black body. These representations of black African women may influence beliefs about sexuality, gender roles and ideals of beauty, as reflected in the focus group interviews in the previous chapter.

The hypersexualisation of women is problematic, particularly in South Africa because the country is struggling with the HIV/Aids epidemic and there is a high prevalence of rape

## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

cases. The images of scantily dressed women seem to suggest that women are sex objects and they are sexually available to fulfil male desire. Globally, brands are changing their focus. For example, clothing brands like Abercrombie & Fitch and American Apparel, and publications such as *Playboy* are toning down on sex after realising that consumers are constantly bombarded with sexual imagery; as a result, blatant sex no longer sells (Schlossberg 2015).

The unemployment rate is high in South Africa and poverty is widespread, especially in the black communities, yet visual images promote glamorous lifestyles. The images are exploitative; for instance, if readers compare themselves to the unrealistic portrayals and do not measure up or if they cannot afford the lifestyles represented, they may feel inferior and this may lead to low self-esteem and psychological problems. Some women resort to unscrupulous means to afford the kind of lifestyle depicted in media texts.

Focus group interviews gave insight into the implications of featuring beautiful, glamorous women as symbols to represent beauty, success and happiness. The type of clothing worn by women in the images and the settings portrayed depict a kind of lifestyle that is out of reach for many *True Love* readers. Moreover, most of the images, except Figure 33 showing a receding hairline, feature women with beautiful, healthy hair, and this gives the impression that black African women's hair problems can be easily solved by using products. This is misleading because there are many black African women struggling with hair problems although they are already using products.

Promoting these qualities may lead to overspending. This point was substantiated by focus group results, which showed that some black African women prioritise looking good and buy hair products even if there is no food in the house. The drive to lead glamorous lifestyles may lead to low self-esteem and some women feel pressured to engage in immoral activities in order to get money. Focus group findings revealed that some black African women look for "blessers" to pay for the glamorous lifestyle. The glamorous images are the opposite of reality because many black South Africans live in poverty. Research published in January

## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

2017 by Statistics South Africa's Living Conditions Survey shows that in 2015 the average annual income of a black household was R92,893 (about \$7,000).<sup>1</sup>

The covers and advertisements use photographs, iconic signs that resemble that which they represent. However, photographs are loaded ideological instruments. On the one hand, they present a positive image of black womanhood that is marked by beauty, glamour and success. However, on the other hand, the visual texts serve as vehicles for consumer capitalism that commodify black African women's bodies and promote consumerism. Nonetheless, from the above analysis it is evident that *True Love* features both codes of oppression and emancipation. On the one hand, women are represented as objects of the male gaze and desire, while on the other hand, the signifier of a scantily clothed body signifies exhibitionism, narcissism, and women as objects on the other end of the spectrum of aesthetic pleasure. It also reflects their economic emancipation as they have the financial means to buy the clothing and accessories they want. *True Love* presents multiple stances in terms of ideologies including feminist, patriarchal, and consumerist that are promoted. The magazine's aim is to empower black African women, but in doing so it presents contradictory and at times competing messages. Both messages of empowerment and objectification are incorporated into representations of black femininity. The contradictory messages may cause confusion and bewilderment regarding ideal black feminine identities.

It is commendable that *True Love* covers and advertisements used images of black South African women. Featuring black local women fosters a sense of pride among black readers. It also provides role models that women can aspire to emulate. Featuring local celebrities promotes the local entertainment industry, but the use of Western templates for the cover shoots, fashion and beauty pages may lead to inferiority complex among black African people. South Africans will end up believing that the West is still superior and sets the trends that they should emulate. However, overall, *True Love* covers and advertisement play a fundamental role in increasing the visibility of black African women and bringing awareness to the diverse images of black femininities. In *True Love*, black African women can see themselves in different situations, as professional women, married and single women, and single mothers.

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<sup>1</sup> During the same period, the average annual income for white people was R444,446 (Black South Africans ... Reuters Africa 2017).

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### ***True Love* magazine covers**

- Phuti Khomo, cover of *True Love*, June 2015
- Bonnie Mbuli, cover of *True Love*, July 2015
- Denise Zimba, cover of *True Love*, August 2015
- Nomzamo and Maps, cover of *True Love*, September 2015
- Kelly Khumalo, cover of *True Love*, October 2015
- Thando Thabethe, cover of *True Love*, November 2015
- Khanyi Mbau, cover of *True Love*, December 2015
- Bassie Kumalo, cover of *True Love*, January 2016
- Pearl Thusi, cover of *True Love*, February 2016
- Manaka Ranaka, cover of *True Love*, March 2016
- Boity, cover of *True Love*, April 2016
- Connie Ferguson, cover of *True Love*, May 2016

### ***True Love* magazine hair advertisements**

- Dark and Lovely Moisture Plus No.1 Relaxer Kit, *True Love*, June 2015:41
- Caivil colour shines range), *True Love*, June 2015:75
- Sofn'free HairXperts range (Cortical Crème Relaxer, Hydrating Hair Food, Oil Moisturiser and Shine Serum), *True Love*, June 2015:107
- MPL Olive Oil Hair Oil. 4 in 1 Solution, *True Love*, August 2015:39
- Caivil Luxurious hair range (Oil Moisturiser, Hair and Scalp Nourisher, Colour Shines Semi Permanent Colour System, No-lye Relaxer, and Neutral-fix), *True Love*, August 2015:41
- Dark and Lovely Fat Protein Bodifying Relaxer, *True Love*, September 2015:12-13
- Inecto Plus Cranberry Cocktail Permanent Hair Colour Creme, *True Love*, September 2015:14-15
- Inecto Plus Sunkissed Blonde, *True Love*, October 2015:91
- Afri True True to African Hair range (penetrating temple and nape balm, conditioning growth oil, soothing braid spray, moisturising hair lotion, light oil sheen spray, heat protection serum, and no-lye relaxer crème), *True Love*, October 2015:101
- Stylin' Dredz (anti-itch spray and Mouldin' Gel Wax), *True Love*, October 2015:103
- ORS Hair Stengthening Argan Oil Hair Care (Fortifying conditioner, neutralising shampoo, fortifying hair food, no-lye hair relaxer, crème hair relaxer, fortifying hair polisher, fortifying sheen serum and fortifying hair oil), *True Love*, October 2015:119
- Inecto Plus Plum Crazy (Permanent hair colour crème), *True Love*, November 2015:33
- Jabu Stone Natural Hair Care (moulding wax, locking product, and hot oil treatment), *True Love*, November 2015:47
- Sta-Sof-Fro Braids (Spray shampoo for braids, extra dry spray, Hi sheen hair polish spray), *True Love*, November 2015:103
- Dove Advanced Hair Series, *True Love*, November 2015:109
- Schwarzkopf Smooth Shine range (Nourishing hair food, Leave-in Softner, *True Love*, December 2015:45
- Frika braid, Maxi dread 18 Rich Black, *True Love*, December 2016:51
- Frika Yaki Braid, *True Love*, December 2016:53
- Frika Hotex 18" Weave, *True Love*, December 2016:55



- Inecto Plus Just Copper. Hair colour, *True Love*, December 2015:69
- Caivil Fusion oil Competition for readers, *True Love*, December 2016:101
- Frika product range Competition for readers, *True Love*, December 2015:125
- Inecto Plus Red Wine Hair Colour, *True Love*, January 2016:37
- Dark and Lovely colour intensity, Chocolate Brown, *True Love*, February 2016:25
- Inecto Plus Black Velvet Permanent Hair Colour Crème, *True Love*, February 2016:45
- Sta-Sof-Fro Wigs & Weaves (8 hours refresher and anti-itch and moisturiser spray), *True Love*, March 2016:10
- Sta-Sof-Fro Blow Out Relaxer, *True Love*, March 2016:11
- Afri True True to African Hair Range Promotion (penetrating temple and nape balm, conditioning growth oil, soothing braid spray, moisturising hair lotion, light oil sheen spray, heat protection serum, and no-lye relaxer crème), *True Love*, March 2016:89
- Revlon Realistic Hair Range (Conditioning Creme Relaxer, regular; Conditioning Creme Relaxer, super; Conditioning Creme Relaxer, Olive Oil; Olive Oil Moisturising Hair Lotion, Olive Oil Sheen Spray), *True Love*, April 2016:7

**Addendum A: True Love magazine covers**



Figure 1: Phuti Khomo, cover of *True Love*, June 2015



Figure 2: Bonnie Mbuli, cover of *True Love*, July 2015



Figure 3: Denise Zimba, cover of *True Love*, August 2015



Figure 4: Nomzamo and Maps, cover of *True Love*, September 2015



Figure 5: Kelly Khumalo, cover of *True Love*, October 2015



Figure 6: Thando, cover of *True Love*, November 2015



Figure 7: Khanyi Mbau, cover of *True Love*, December 2015



Figure 8: Bassie Kumalo, cover of *True Love*, January 2016



Figure 9: Pearl Thusi, cover of *True Love*, February 2016





Figure 10: Manaka Ranaka, cover of *True Love*, March 2016



Figure 11: Boity, cover of *True Love*, April 2016



Figure 12: Connie Ferguson, cover of *True Love*, May 2016

## Addendum B: True Love magazine hair advertisements



Figure 13: Advertisement for Dark and Lovely Moisture Plus No.1 Relaxer Kit, *True Love*, June 2015: 41



Figure 14: Advertisement for Cavil Colour Shines range (Ebony Black, Deep Mahogany, Cherry Cola, and Racy Wine), *True Love*, June 2015:75



Figure 15: Advertisement for Sofn'free HairXperts range (Cortical Crème Relaxer, Hydrating Hair Food, Oil Moisturiser, and Shine Serum), *True Love*, June 2015:107

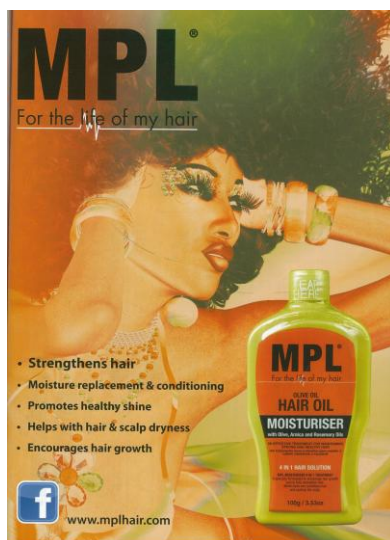


Figure 16: Advertisement for MPL Olive Oil Hair Oil. 4 in 1 Solution, *True Love*, August 2015:39



Figure 17: Advertisement for Cavil Luxurious hair range (Oil Moisturiser, Hair and Scalp Nourisher, Colour Shines Semi Permanent Colour System, Mend 'n Grow Maxi Grow, No-lye Relaxer, and Neutral-fix), *True Love*, August 2015:41



Figure 18: Advertisement for Dark and Lovely Fat Protein Bodifying Relaxer, *True Love*, September 2015:12-13



Figure 19: Advertisement for Inecto Plus Cranberry Cocktail Permanent Hair Colour Creme, *True Love*, September 2015:14-15



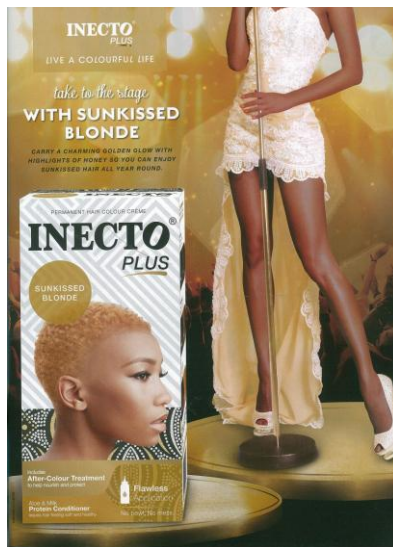


Figure 20: Advertisement for Inecto Plus Sunkissed Blonde, *True Love*, October 2015:91

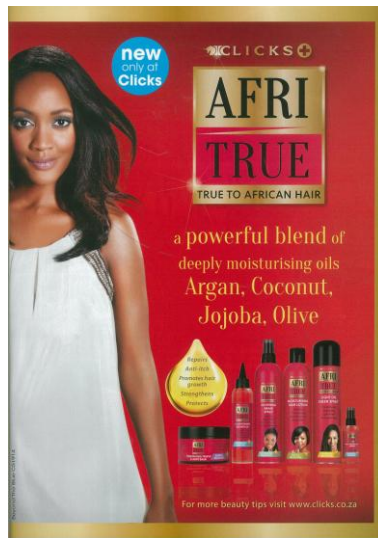


Figure 21: Advertisement for Afri True True to African Hair range (Penetrating Temple and Nape Balm, Conditioning Growth oil, Soothing Braid Spray, Moisturising Hair Lotion, Light Oil Sheen Spray, and Heat Protection Serum), *True Love*, October 2015:101



Figure 22: Advertisement for Stylin' Dredz (Anti-itch Spray and Mouldin' Gel Wax), *True Love*, October 2015:103



Figure 23: Advertisement for ORS Hair Strengthening Argan Oil Hair Care (Fortifying Conditioner, Neutralising Shampoo, Fortifying Hair Food, No-lye Hair Relaxer, Crème Hair Relaxer, Fortifying Hair Polisher, Fortifying Sheen Serum and Fortifying Hair Oil), *True Love*, October 2015:119



Figure 24: Advertisement for Inecto Plus Plum Crazy Permanent Hair Colour Crème, *True Love*, November 2015:33



Figure 25: Advertisement for Jabu Stone Natural Hair Care (Moulding Wax, and Hot Oil Treatment), *True Love*, November 2015:47





Figure 26: Advertisement for Sta-Sof-Fro Braids (Spray Shampoo for Braids, Extra Dry Spray, Hi Sheen Hair Polish Spray), True Love, November 2015:103



Figure 27: Advertisement for Dove Advanced Hair Series (Oil Shampoo, Oil Conditioner, Dry Oil Nourishment Conditioner, and Oil Treatment Balm), True Love, November 2015:109



Figure 28: Advertisement for Schwarzkopf Smooth Shine range (Nourishing Hair Food, and Leave-in Softener, True Love, December 2015:45



Figure 29: Advertisement for Frika braid, Maxi dread 18" Rich Black, True Love, December 2016:16



Figure 30: Advertisement for Frika Yaki Braid, True Love, December 2016:53



Figure 31: Advertisement for Frika Hotex 18" Weave, True Love, December 2016:55



Figure 32: Advertisement for Inecto Plus Just Copper Hair Colour, True Love, December 2015:69



Figure 33: Advertisement for Caivil Fusion Oil Hair Growth Essence (Black Castor Oil and Argan Oil, and Hair Root Nourisher) Competition for readers, True Love, December 2016:101



Figure 34: Advertisement for Frika product range (weaves, and braids) Competition for readers, True Love, December 2015:125



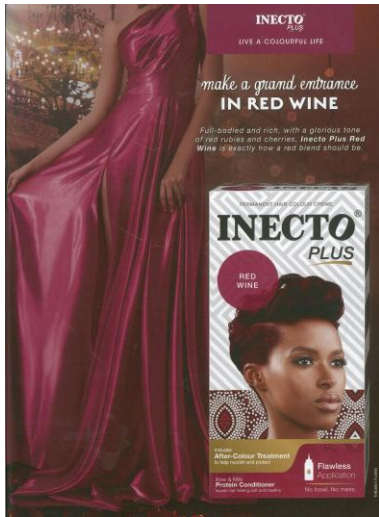


Figure 35: Advertisement for Inecto Plus Red Wine Hair Colour, *True Love*, January 2016:37

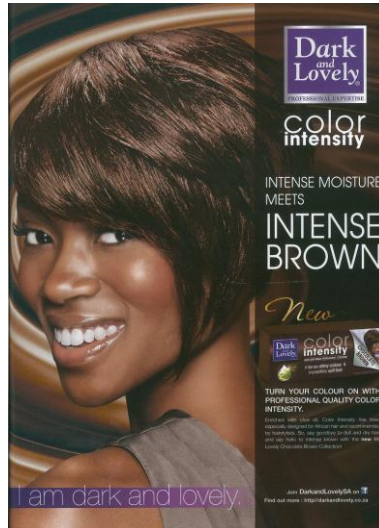


Figure 36: Advertisement for Dark and Lovely Colour Intensity, Chocolate Brown, *True Love*, February 2016:25

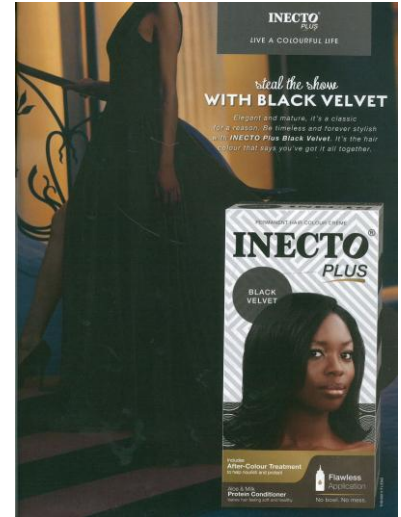


Figure 37: Advertisement for Inecto Plus Black Velvet Permanent Hair Colour Crème, *True Love*, February 2016:45



Figure 38: Advertisement for Sta-Sof-Fro Wigs & Weaves (8 hours Refresher and Anti-itch, and moisturiser spray), *True Love*, March 2016:10



Figure 39: Advertisement for Sta-Sof-Fro Blow Out Relaxer, *True Love*, March 2016:11



Figure 40: Advertisement for Afri True to African Hair Range (Penetrating Temple and Nape Balm, Conditioning Growth Oil, Soothing Braid Spray, Moisturising Hair Lotion, Light Oil Sheen Spray, Heat Protection Serum, and No-lye Relaxer Crème), Promotion, *True Love*, March 2016:89



Figure 41: Advertisement for Revlon Realistic Hair Range (Conditioning Creme Relaxer, regular; Conditioning Creme Relaxer, super; Conditioning Creme Relaxer, Olive Oil; Olive Oil Moisturising Hair Lotion, Olive Oil Sheen Spray), *True Love*, April 2016:73

### Addendum C: Tables and pie charts

Table 1: Age of the women featured on the covers of *True Love*

Age of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>					
	Under 19	20-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	Over 50 years
		Figure 1	Figure 2	Figure 8	
		Figure 3	Figure 5	Figure 12	
		Figure 4	Figure 10		
		Figure 6			
		Figure 7			
		Figure 9			
		Figure 11			
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

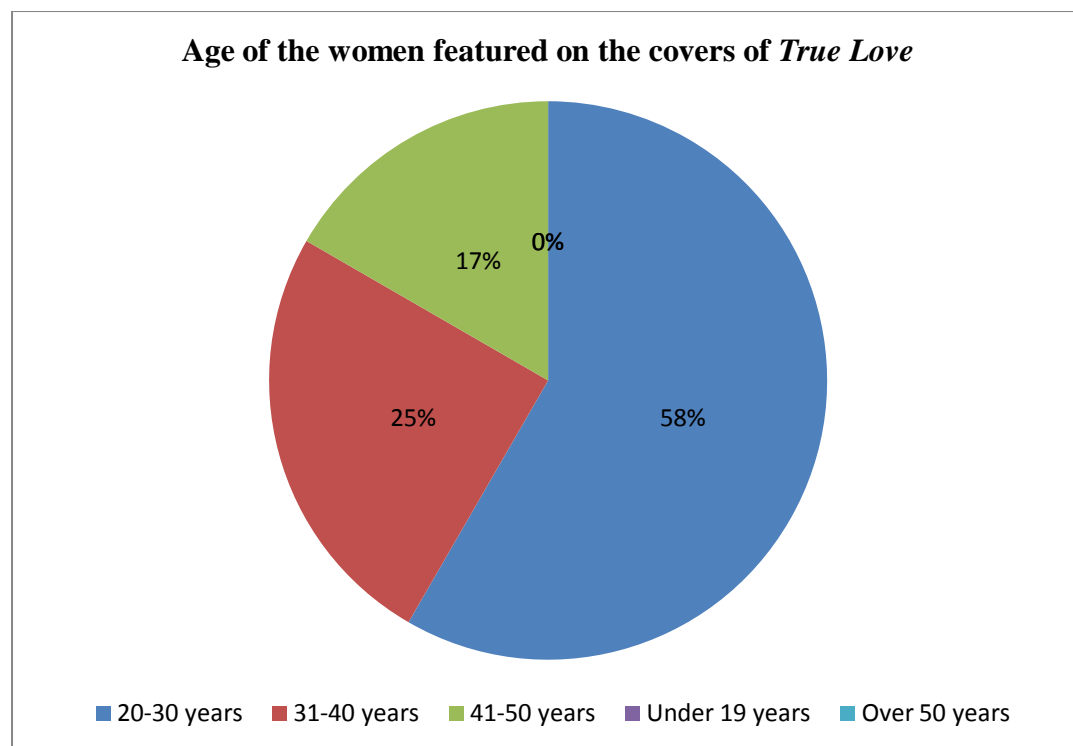


Figure 42: Age of the women featured on the covers of *True Love*



Table 2: Profession of the women featured on the covers of *True Love*

Profession of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>					
	Homemaker	Politician	Entertainer	Sports personality	Other
			Figure 3		Figure 1
			Figure 4		Figure 2
			Figure 5		Figure 8
			Figure 6		Figure 12
			Figure 7		
			Figure 9		
			Figure 10		
			Figure 11		
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

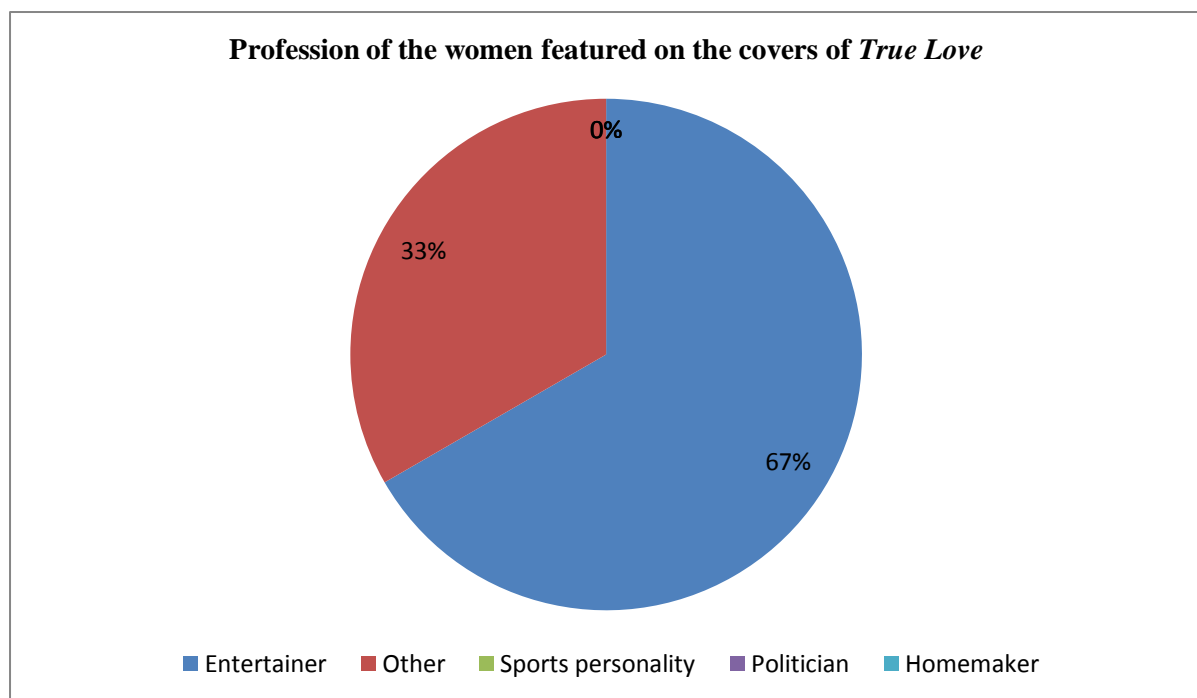


Figure 43: Profession of the women featured on the covers of *True Love*

Table 3: Body size of the women featured on the covers of *True Love*

<b>Body size of the women features on the covers of <i>True Love</i></b>				
	<b>Small</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Big</b>	<b>Other</b>
	Figure 3	Figure 1		
	Figure 9	Figure 2		
		Figure 4		
		Figure 5		
		Figure 6		
		Figure 7		
		Figure 8		
		Figure 10		
		Figure 11		
		Figure 12		
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

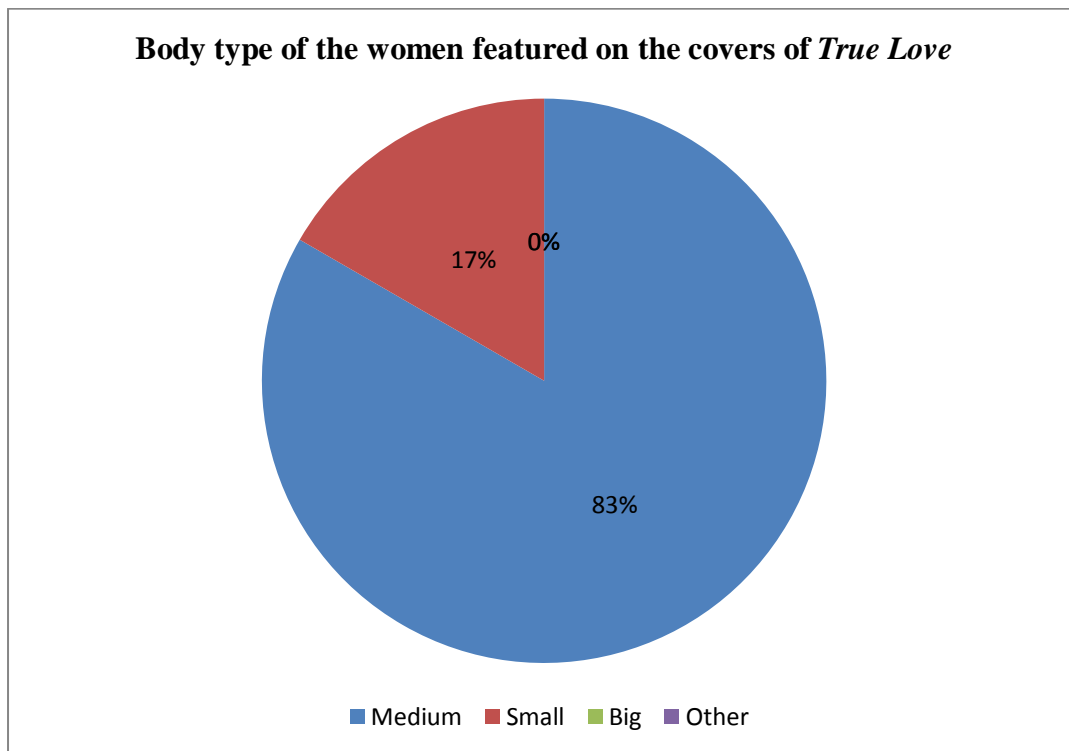


Figure 44: Body size of the women featured on the covers of *True Love*

Table 4: Poses of the women featured on the covers of *True Love*

Poses of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i>					
	Sexualised	Submissive	Dominant	Neutral	Sexualised and Submissive
	Figure 7	Figure 3		Figure 8	Figure 1
	Figure 11	Figure 12		Figure 10	Figure 2
					Figure 4
					Figure 5
					Figure 6
					Figure 9
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>

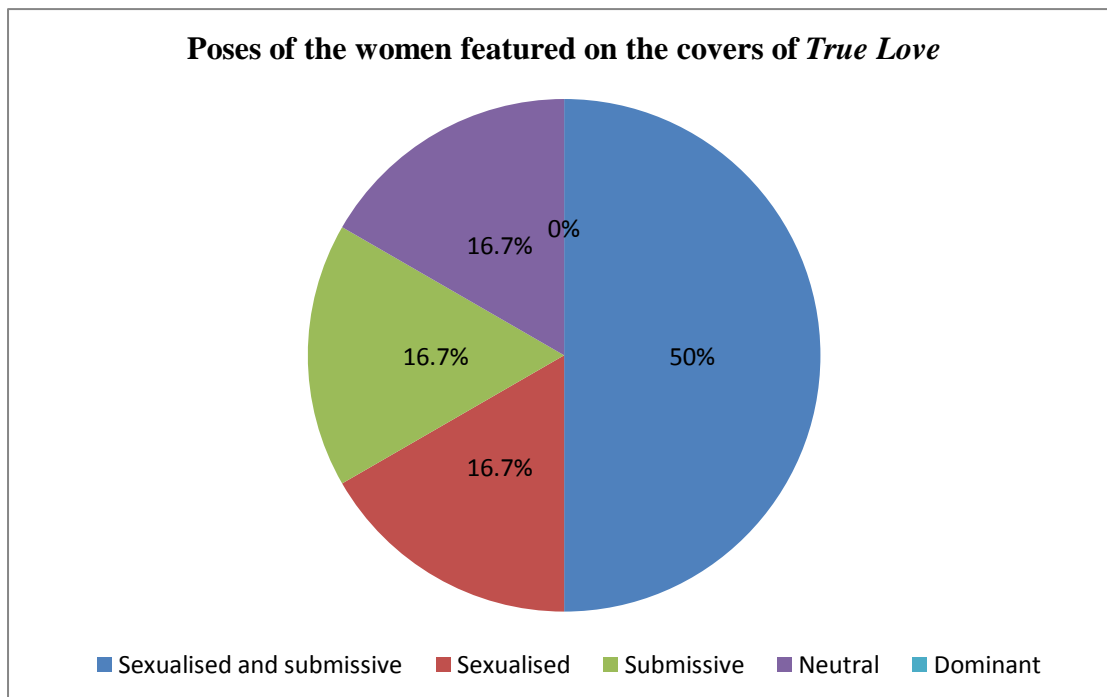


Figure 45: Poses of the women featured on the covers of *True Love*

Table 5: Type of clothing of the women on the covers of *True Love*

<b>Type of clothing of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i></b>			
	<b>Clothed</b>	<b>Scantly dressed</b>	<b>Other</b>
	Figure 3	Figure 2	Figure 1
	Figure 7	Figure 5	Figure 4
	Figure 8	Figure 6	
	Figure 10	Figure 9	
	Figure 12	Figure 11	
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>

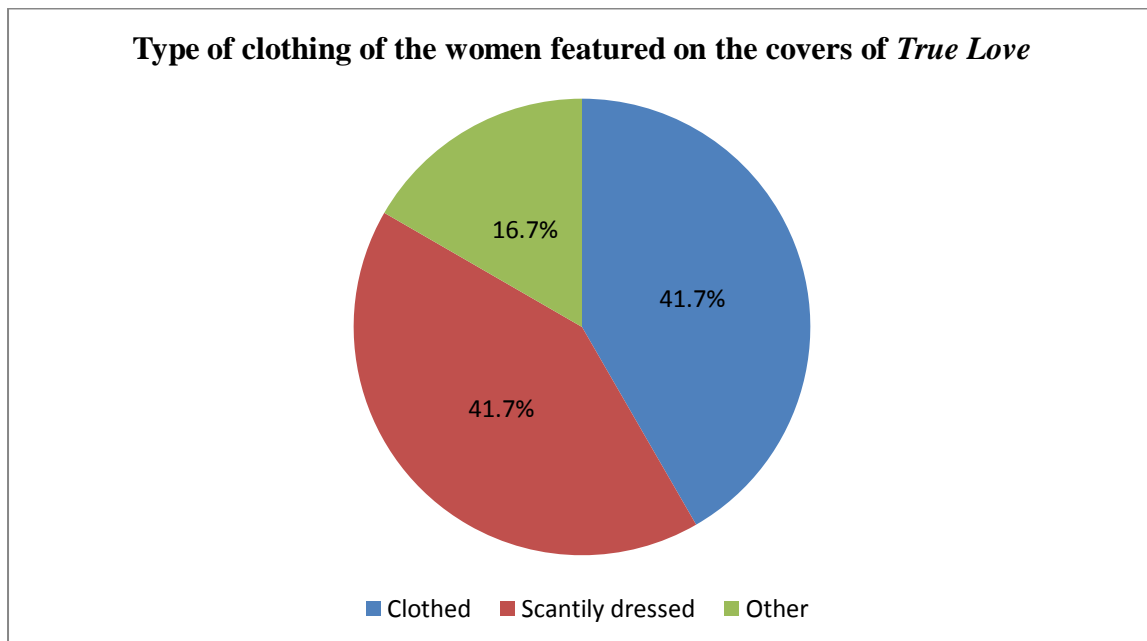


Figure 46: Type of clothing of the women featured on the covers of *True Love*

Table 6: Type of hair of the women featured on the covers of *True Love*

<b>Type of hair of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i></b>					
	<b>Natural</b>	<b>Straight</b>	<b>Curly/Wavy</b>	<b>Naturally styled</b>	<b>Other</b>
	Figure 2	Figure 3	Figure 1	Figure 8	
	Figure 4	Figure 6	Figure 5	Figure 9	
	Figure 10	Figure 7	Figure 11		
		Figure 12			
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

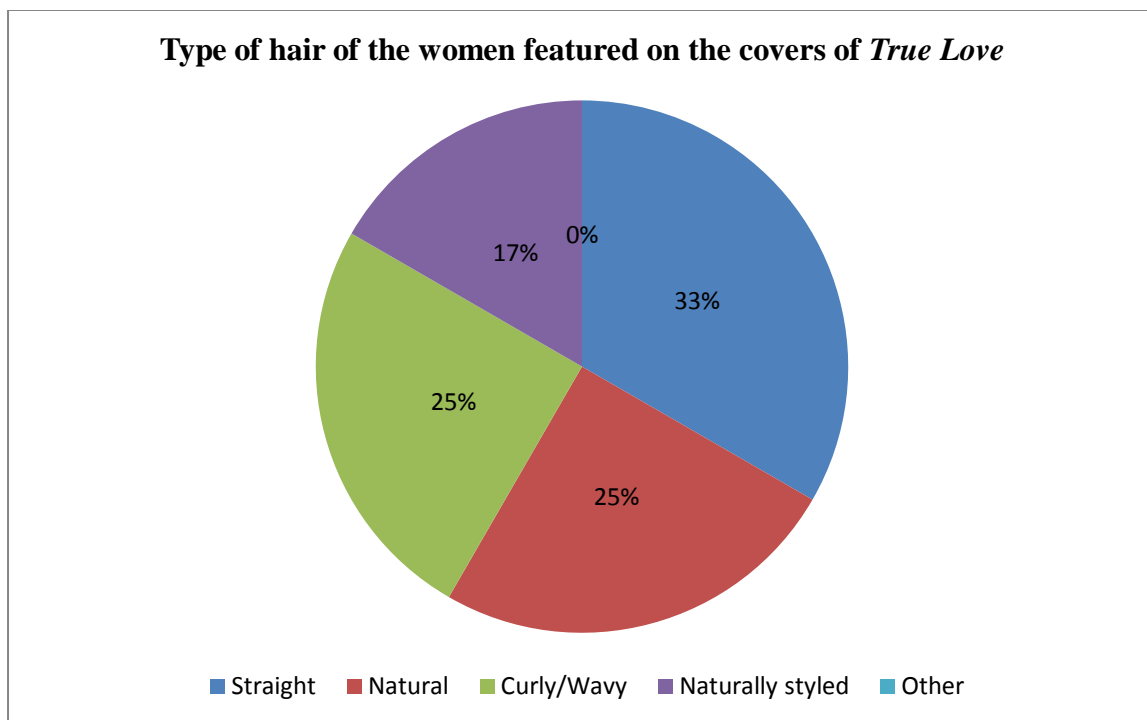


Figure 47: Type of hair of the women featured on the covers of *True Love*

Table 7: Length of hair of the women featured on the covers of *True Love*

<b>Length of hair of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i></b>				
	<b>Short</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Long</b>	<b>Other</b>
	Figure 2	Figure 6	Figure 1	Figure 4
	Figure 10		Figure 3	Figure 8
			Figure 5	Figure 9
			Figure 7	
			Figure 11	
			Figure 12	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>

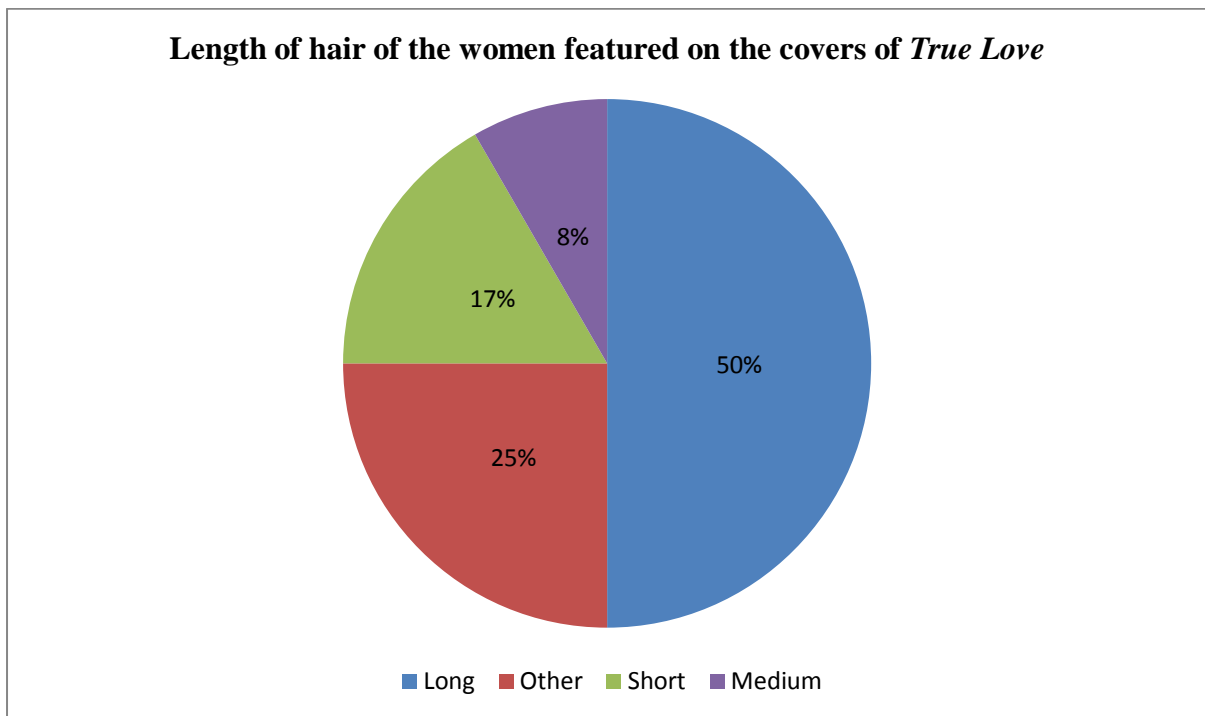


Figure 48: Length of hair of the women featured on the covers of *True Love*

Table 8: Colour of hair of the women featured on the covers of *True Love*

<b>Colour of hair of the women featured on the covers of <i>True Love</i></b>				
	<b>Black</b>	<b>Red</b>	<b>Brown</b>	<b>Other</b>
	Figure 1	Figure 3	Figure 11	Figure 5
	Figure 2			
	Figure 4			
	Figure 6			
	Figure 7			
	Figure 8			
	Figure 9			
	Figure 10			
	Figure 12			
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

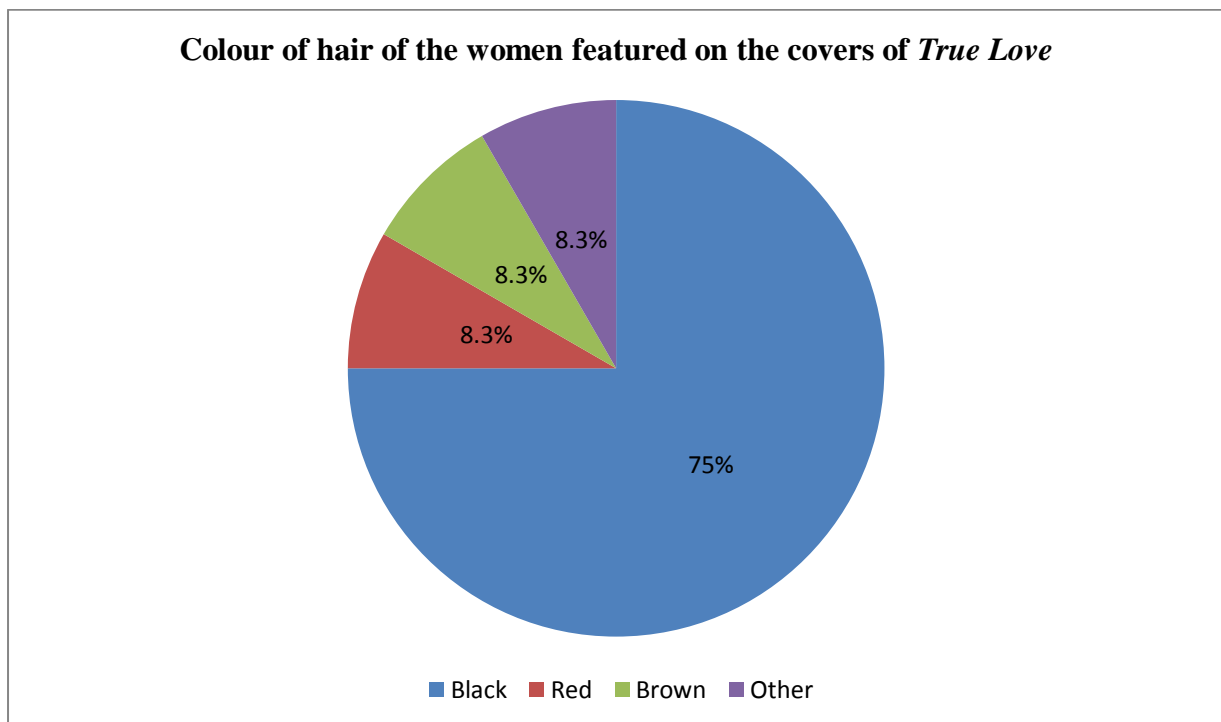


Figure 49: Colour of hair of the women featured on the covers of *True Love*

Table 9: Hair-related advertisements published between June 2015 and May 2016

Hair-related advertisements published between June 2015 and May 2016							
	Month	Full-page advertisement	Half-page vertical	One-third page vertical	Competition for experts	Advertorial	DPS
	Jun-15	Page 41		Page 75			
		Page 107					
	Jul-15	Page 33 repeat				Page 73	
		Page 37 repeat					
	Aug-15	Page 39			Page 27		
		Page 41					
		Page 91 (features a girl)					
	Sep-15			Page 65	Page 103		Page 12-13
							Page 14-15
	Oct-15	Page 35 (there is no model)					Page 4-5 (repeat)
		Page 71 (repeat					
		Page 91					
		Page 101					
		Page 103					
		Page 119					
		Page 145 (features a girl)					
	Nov-15	Page 33					
		Page 47					
		Page 103					
		Page 109					
	Dec-15	Page 45	Page 51	Page 163 (repeat	Page 93		
		Page 61 (repeat)	Page 53				
		Page 69	Page 55				
		Page 87 (repeat)	Page 125				
		Page 101					
		Page 105 (features girl)					
	Jan-16	Page 37		Page 103 (repeat)	Page 17		
	Feb-16	Page 25					
		Page 31 (features white woman)					
		Page 39 (repeat)					
		Page 45					
		Page 93 (no model)					
	Mar-16	Page 10		Page 33 (repeat)	Page 41		
		Page 11					
		Page 49 (features a girl)					
		Page 51 (repeat)					
		Page 71 (repeat)					
		Page 89					
	Apr-16	Page 45 (repeat)	Page 59 (repeat)		Page 97		
		Page 67 (repeat)	Page 61 (repeat)				
		Page 73	Page 63 (repeat)				
	May-16	Page 63 (repeat)			Page 67		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>



Table 10: Sample

<b>Sample</b>					
	<b>Month</b>	<b>Full-page advertisement</b>	<b>Half-page vertical</b>	<b>One-third page vertical</b>	<b>DPS</b>
	Jun-5	Figure 13: Page 41		Figure 14: Page 75	
		Figure 15: Page 107			
	Aug-15	Figure 16: Page 39			
		Figure 17: Page 41			
	Sep-15				Figure 18: Page 12-13
					Figure 19: Page 14-15
	Oct-15	Figure 20: Page 91			
		Figure 21: Page 101			
		Figure 22: Page 103			
		Figure 23: Page 119			
	Nov-15	Figure 24: Page 33			
		Figure 25: Page 47			
		Figure 26: Page 103			
		Figure 27: Page 109			
	Dec-15	Figure 28: Page 45	Figure 29: Page 51		
		Figure 32: Page 69	Figure 30: Page 53		
		Figure 33: Page 101	Figure 31: Page 55		
			Figure 34: Page 125		
	Jan-16	Figure 35: Page 37			
	Feb-16	Figure 36: Page 25			
		Figure 37: Page 45			
	Mar-16	Figure 38: Page 10			
		Figure 39: Page 11			
		Figure 40: Page 89			
	Apr-16	Figure 41: Page 73			
<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

Table 11: Types of products featured in True Love hair advertisements

Types of products featured in True Love hair advertisements									
	Dry hair	Colourants	Hair relaxers	Styling	Cleansers	Nourishers	Protection & treatments	Lustre/shine enhancers	Other
	Figure 29	Figure 14a	Figure 13	Figure 22b	Figure 17f	Figure 15b	Figure 17d	Figure 15d	Figure 16
	Figure 30	Figure 14b	Figure 15a	Figure 25a	Figure 23b	Figure 15c	Figure 21c	Figure 21e	Figure 28b
	Figure 31	Figure 14c	Figure 17e		Figure 26a	Figure 17a	Figure 21f	Figure 23f	
	Figure 34a	Figure 14d	Figure 18		Figure 27b	Figure 17b	Figure 22a	Figure 23g	
	Figure 34b	Figure 17c	Figure 23d			Figure 21a	Figure 25b	Figure 26c	
	Figure 34c	Figure 19	Figure 23e			Figure 21b	Figure 27d	Figure 40e	
	Figure 34d	Figure 20	Figure 39			Figure 21d	Figure 33a	Figure 41e	
		Figure 24	Figure 40g			Figure 23a	Figure 38a		
		Figure 32	Figure 41a			Figure 23c	Figure 40c		
		Figure 35	Figure 41b			Figure 23h	Figure 40f		
		Figure 36	Figure 41c			Figure 26b			
		Figure 37				Figure 27a			
						Figure 27c			
						Figure 28a			
						Figure 33b			
						Figure 38b			
						Figure 40a			
						Figure 40b			
						Figure 40d			
						Figure 41d			
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>

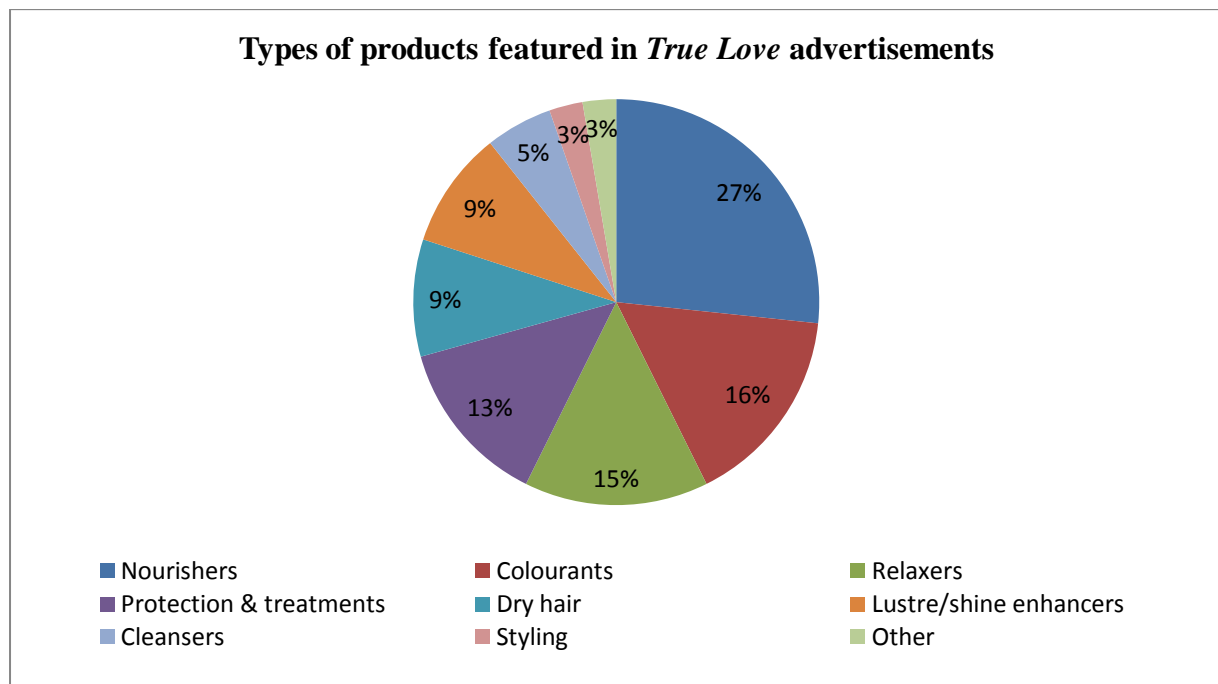


Figure 50: Types of products featured in True Love advertisements

Table 12: Dry hair products featured in *True Love* magazine

<b>Dry hair products featured in True Love advertisements</b>				
	<b>Braids/braids</b>	<b>Wigs</b>	<b>Weaves</b>	<b>Other</b>
	Figure 29		Figure 31	
	Figure 30		Figure 34a	
			Figure 34b	
			Figure 34c	
			Figure 34d	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>

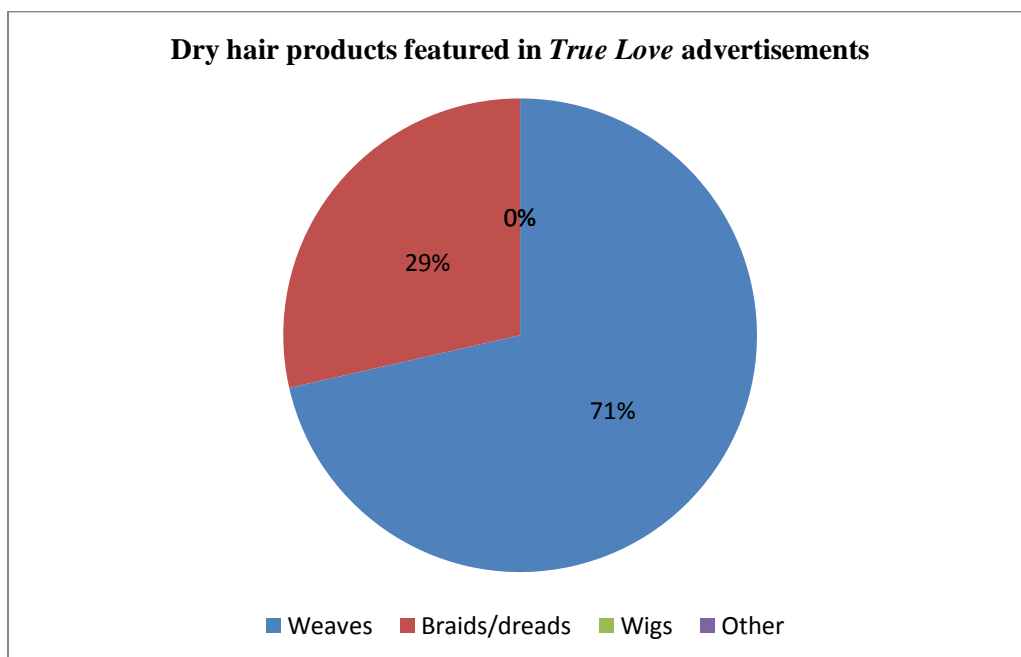


Figure 51: Dry hair products featured in *True Love* magazine

Table 13: Types of hair featured in *True Love* advertisements

<b>Types of hair featured in <i>True Love</i> advertisements</b>					
	<b>Natural</b>	<b>Naturally styled</b>	<b>Straight</b>	<b>Curled/wavy</b>	<b>Other</b>
	Figure 20	Figure 21b	Figure 13a	Figure 14a	Figure 16
	Figure 24	Figure 22	Figure 13b	Figure 14b	
	Figure 25b	Figure 25a	Figure 15	Figure 17b	
	Figure 28c	Figure 25c	Figure 17a	Figure 27	
		Figure 26	Figure 18a	Figure 28a	
		Figure 29	Figure 18b	Figure 28b	
		Figure 30	Figure 19	Figure 34b	
		Figure 34a	Figure 21a	Figure 34c	
		Figure 40a	Figure 21c	Figure 34d	
			Figure 21d	Figure 35	
			Figure 23	Figure 38a	
			Figure 31	Figure 39	
			Figure 32	Figure 41	
			Figure 33		
			Figure 36		
			Figure 37		
			Figure 38b		
			Figure 40b		
			Figure 40c		
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>

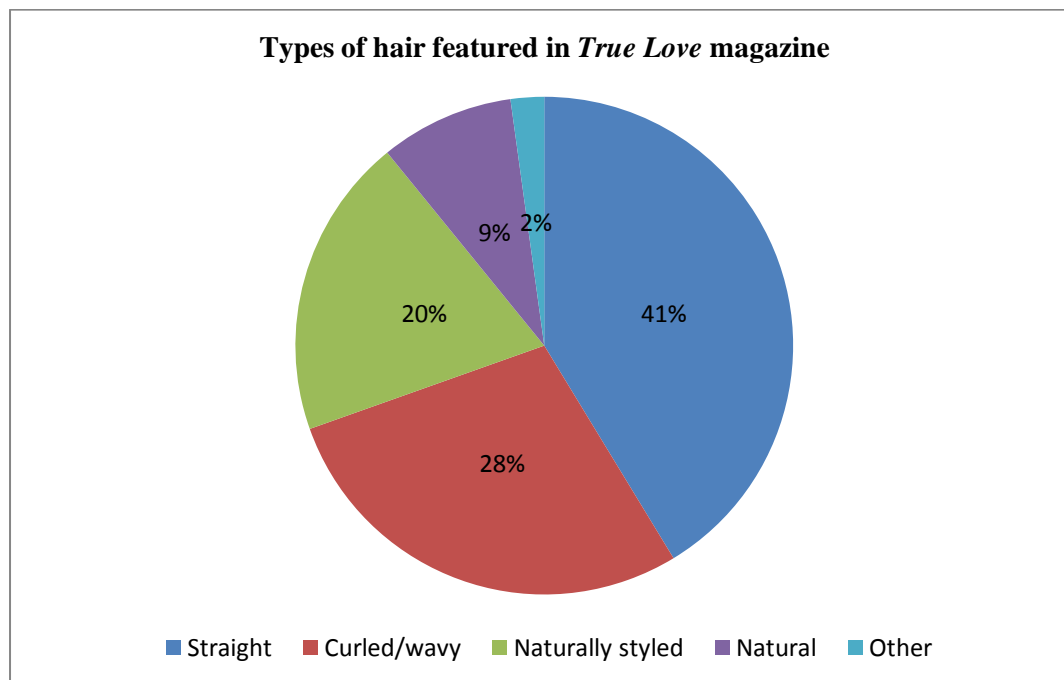


Figure 52: Types of hair featured in *True Love* advertisements

Table 14: Hair colours featured in *True Love* advertisements

<b>Hair colours featured in <i>True Love</i> advertisements</b>				
	<b>Black</b>	<b>Red</b>	<b>Brown</b>	<b>Other</b>
	Figure 13a	Figure 14a	Figure 32	Figure 20
	Figure 13b	Figure 14b	Figure 36	Figure 26
	Figure 15	Figure 17b		Figure 29
	Figure 16	Figure 19		
	Figure 17a	Figure 24		
	Figure 18a	Figure 25		
	Figure 18b			
	Figure 21a			
	Figure 21b			
	Figure 21c			
	Figure 21d			
	Figure 22			
	Figure 23			
	Figure 25a			
	Figure 25b			
	Figure 25c			
	Figure 27			
	Figure 28a			
	Figure 28b			
	Figure 28c			
	Figure 30			
	Figure 31			
	Figure 33			
	Figure 34a			
	Figure 34b			
	Figure 34c			
	Figure 34d			
	Figure 37			
	Figure 38a			
	Figure 38b			
	Figure 39			
	Figure 40a			
	Figure 40b			
	Figure 40c			
	Figure 41			
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

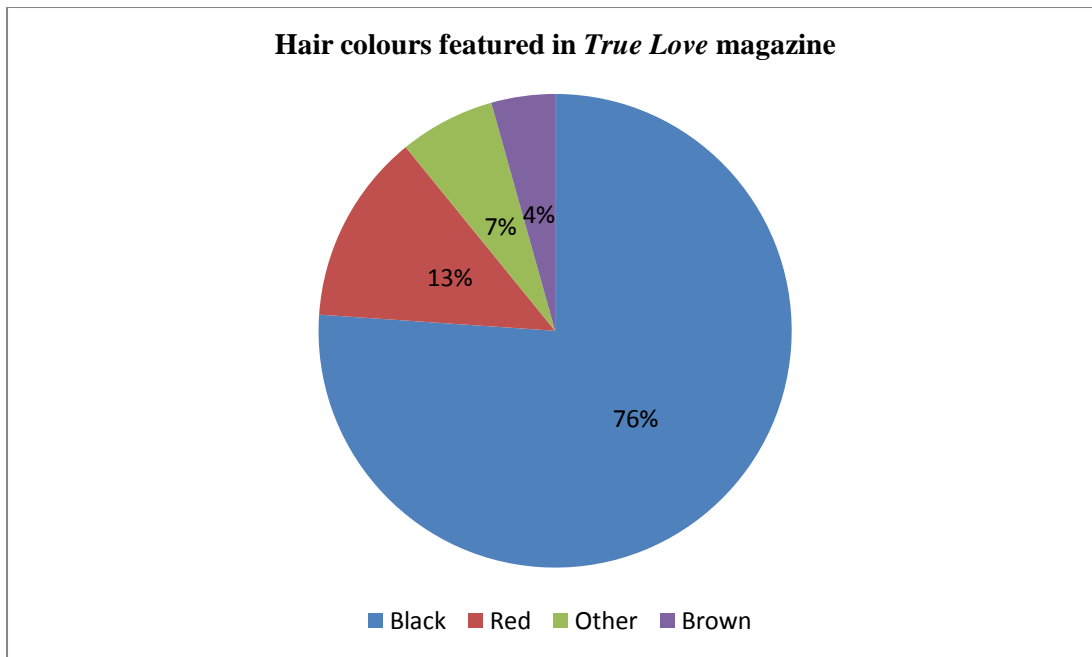


Figure 53: Hair colours featured in *True Love* advertisements

Table 15: Length of hair featured in *True Love* advertisements

<b>Length of hair featured in <i>True Love</i> advertisements</b>					
	<b>Short</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Long</b>	<b>Very long</b>	<b>Other</b>
	Figure 20	Figure 14a	Figure 13b	Figure 13a	Figure 16
	Figure 24	Figure 14b	Figure 17a	Figure 15	Figure 25a
	Figure 25b	Figure 17b	Figure 18a	Figure 21a	Figure 25c
		Figure 28c	Figure 18b	Figure 21b	Figure 28a
		Figure 35	Figure 19	Figure 21d	
			Figure 21c	Figure 22	
			Figure 23	Figure 26	
			Figure 32	Figure 27	
			Figure 33	Figure 28b	
			Figure 34a	Figure 29	
			Figure 36	Figure 30	
			Figure 39	Figure 31	
			Figure 40b	Figure 34b	
				Figure 34c	
				Figure 34d	
				Figure 37	
				Figure 38a	
				Figure 38b	
				Figure 40a	
				Figure 40c	
				Figure 41	
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>4</b>

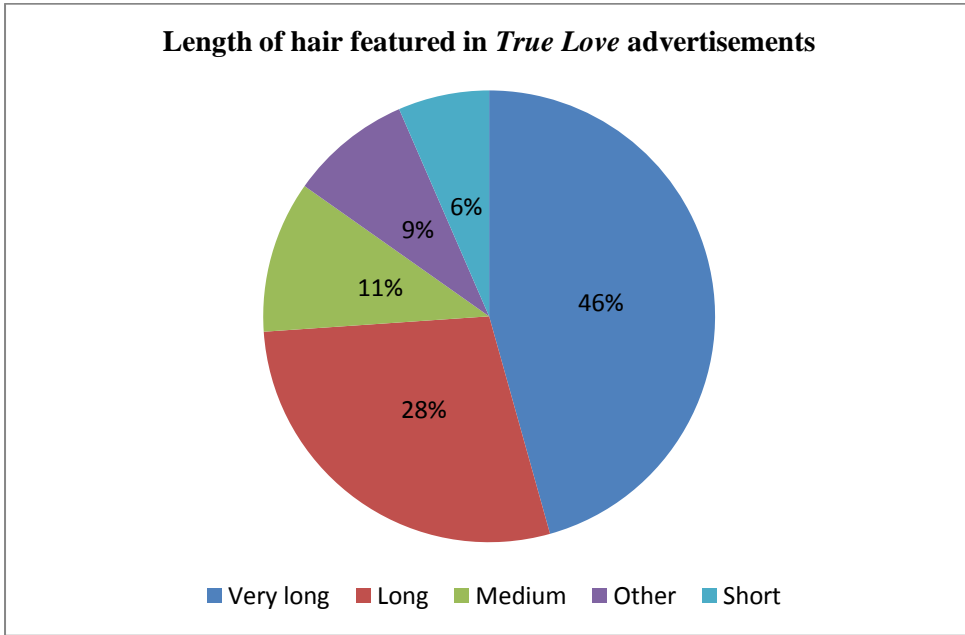


Figure 54: Length of hair featured in *True Love* advertisements

Table 16: Age of models featured in *True Love* advertisements

<b>Age of models featured in <i>True Love</i> advertisements</b>			
	<b>Young adults (18-35)</b>	<b>Mature, middle-aged women (36-50)</b>	<b>Old women (51-plus)</b>
Figure 13a		Figure 15	
Figure 13b		Figure 16	
Figure 14a		Figure 17a	
Figure 14b		Figure 21c	
Figure 17b		Figure 22	
Figure 18a		Figure 27	
Figure 18b		Figure 28c	
Figure 19		Figure 29	
Figure 20		Figure 37	
Figure 21a		Figure 38b	
Figure 21b		Figure 40b	
Figure 21d			
Figure 23			
Figure 24			
Figure 25a			
Figure 25b			
Figure 25c			
Figure 26			
Figure 28a			
Figure 28b			
Figure 30			
Figure 31			
Figure 32			
Figure 33			
Figure 34a			
Figure 34b			
Figure 34c			
Figure 34d			
Figure 35			
Figure 36			
Figure 38a			
Figure 39			
Figure 40a			
Figure 40c			
Figure 41			
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>



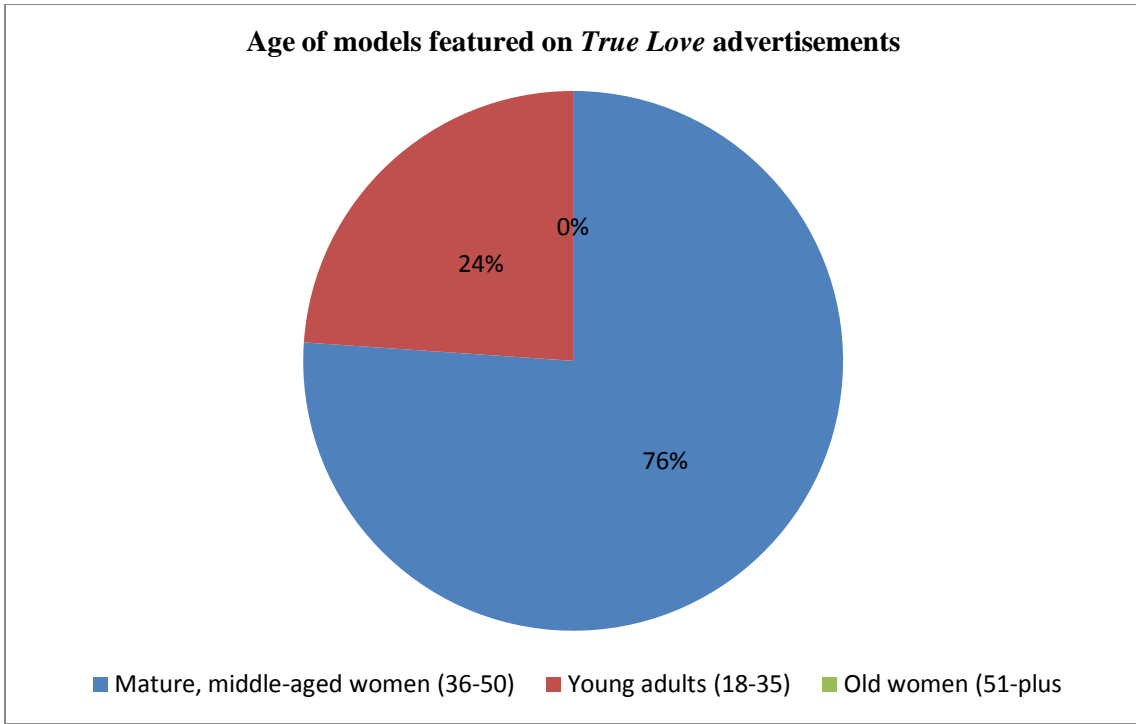


Figure 55: Age of models featured in *True Love* advertisement

## **Addendum D: Pre-group questionnaire and focus-group interview guide**

### **Figure 56: Pre-group questionnaire**

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Pretoria. I am doing a qualitative research study on the representation of African women in advertisements and front covers of South African *True Love* magazine, paying particular attention to hair. The study examines how African women are constructed and represented on 12 covers and 48 hair advertisements of *True Love* magazine issues published between June 2015 and May 2016. In addition, the study discusses how female readers who are black, aged between 18 and 45 and live in urban areas in South Africa experience these ideals and ideologies of beauty. I am doing this research under the supervision of Professor Jeanne van Eeden, a lecturer in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Pretoria.

Please note that participation is voluntary and that the information you give will be treated with confidentiality and your name will not be mentioned in the report. If you have any questions concerning this study, please contact me on [madlelak@ymail.com](mailto:madlelak@ymail.com) or +27737353268.

Name of researcher: Khulekani Madlela

Please answer the following questions. Write your responses on the dotted lines and tick the applicable box. If there is anything you would like to add please write it under the “comments” section.

1) How old are you?

.....

2) In which city/town do you live?

.....

3) What is your country of birth?

.....

4) What is your mother tongue?

.....

5) What is your highest level of education?

.....

6) What is your monthly income?

R1,000 – R4,999

R5,000 – R9,999

R10,000 – R14,999

R15,000 – R19,999

Above R20,000

7) Please state your religion.

Christianity

African Traditional Religion

Islam

Other (please specify) .....

8) How long have you been reading *True Love* magazine?

.....

9) How often do you read *True Love*?

Every month

Occasionally

Rarely

10) Why do you read *True Love* magazine?

.....

.....

.....

11) In your own words, please describe what you understand by 'African hair'.

.....

.....

.....

12) Please list natural African hairstyles

.....

.....

.....

13) What is your favourite hairstyle?

.....

.....

.....

14. Why do you like it?

.....

.....

.....

15. How do three women (could be family members, friends or colleagues) you know maintain their hair?

.....  
.....  
.....

16) Do their choices influence your hair styling routine? How?

.....  
.....  
.....

17) How do you feel when you see images of African women on the covers and advertisements published in *True Love*?

.....  
.....  
.....

18) How does being an African woman impact on your hair styling routine and choice of hairstyles?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

19) Do you normally buy the products you see in advertisements? .....

.....  
.....

20) What do you like about the looks and hairstyles featured on the covers of *True Love* magazine?

.....  
.....  
.....

21) Do you copy or get inspiration from the looks/hairstyles that you see on the covers and advertisements?

.....  
.....  
.....

22) Which looks or hairstyles do you not like?

.....  
.....  
.....

23) What do you not like about them?

.....  
.....  
.....

24) What impact do the looks/hairstyles on *True Love* magazine covers and advertisements have on your life as an African woman?

.....  
.....  
.....

25) On average how much do you spend on hair care products and hairstyling per month?

.....  
.....  
.....

Comments

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Thank you for volunteering to participate

## **Figure 57: Focus-group interview guide**

### **Welcome and introduction (5 minutes)**

- The researcher introduces herself to the respondents and thanks them for volunteering to participate.
- Explain the purpose and objectives of the study.
- Ask each respondent to introduce herself to the group and encourage everyone to participate.
- Reassure respondents that information given will be kept confidential and their names will not be used in the study. Seek permission to use a tape recorder. Reiterate that the tape and transcripts will be safely kept at the Department of Visual Arts, University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years.
- Present a slide show of the 12 magazine covers and selected hair advertisements. Ask each participant to write down words and thoughts that come to mind as they view the images. Respondents will be asked to go back to their pieces of paper as the discussion progresses. (The words and statements on the cards are helpful as they capture “uncontaminated opinions”, the views each individual had before the discussion).

### **Focus-group interview (55 minutes)**

Moderator’s role

Guide the discussion by explaining the purpose of the discussion and ensuring that respondents are comfortable to participate and share their views.

Ensuring that the discussion is focussed and all themes addressed.

Observing paralinguistic cues such as nodding or shaking of the head, body posture, intonation and facial expressions.

Taking down notes.

Asking follow up questions and probing to clarify points.



## Guiding questions

1. What role does hair play in your life?
2. Do you think hair can point to one's background (for example class, culture, social status, ethnic group)?
3. Can you describe good hair and bad hair? / What constitutes good or bad African hair?
- 3b. 7a. What do *True Love* magazine advertisements represent as beautiful in terms of black hair? Do advertisements have a single definition or multiple definitions of what constitutes "beautiful" in terms of black hair?
4. How do you maintain your hair (natural, chemically altered, length, colour)? / Why do you do maintain it like that? What or who influenced/inspired you to make that choice?
- 4a. Which products do you use? Why? How often? How much do you spend on your hair (products and styling)?
5. Has your hair texture or styling had an effect on your life, for example career prospects, finding a partner? Please explain.
6. Describe the covers and advertisements in *True Love*. What kind of lifestyle, myths and ideologies do they promote?
7. How do you feel about the way African women are represented on *True Love* covers and advertisements? / What kind of feelings do you get when you see the images of women on the covers and hair advertisements? How do their hairstyles and the products that are featured in make you feel?
8. Are there looks/hairstyles that you like or dislike? / Which hairstyles do you prefer? Natural, chemically altered, wigs and weaves? Why? Have *True Love* hair advertisements changed your perceptions about hair enhancement products such as wigs, weaves, hair extensions and hair pieces?
- 9a. How have hair advertisements in *True Love* impacted your hair decisions, for example hair-care products, hairstyles, hair enhancements and so on? Do you consult *True Love* magazine covers and advertisements for hair styling ideas and new hair care products? Do you follow the beauty trends that you see on *True Love* covers and advertisements? To what

extent, for example, do you copy a hairstyle or are influenced to buy a product that is advertised?

10. How has the media, particularly *True Love* magazine covers and hair advertisements influenced your beauty ideals and hairstyling practices? / What do images of African women on the covers and advertisements teach you about being a black woman, that is, how you are supposed to groom yourself, or the type of hair you are supposed to wear?

11. How has your family, peers, and society influenced your ideas about African beauty?

12. Has Africa's/South Africa's colonial past had an influence on your opinions about hair length and texture?

## **Addendum E: Focus-group interview transcriptions**

### **Figure 58: Focus-group X transcript**

Focus-group X

Date: November 11, 2016

Location: Berkeley, Centurion, Pretoria

Time: 1pm to 2pm

Respondents

Respondent G: 31-year-old S Sotho cleaner. At the time of focus-group interviews she had chin length relaxed hair.

Respondent H: 23-year-old seTswana front desk administrator who lives in Centurion, Pretoria. Her highest qualification is Matric. At the time of focus-group interviews she had long braids.

Respondent I: 23-year-old seTswana creditor's controller in the oil industry who lives in Ga-Rankuwa, Pretoria North. She has a Bcom degree. At the time of focus-group interviews she had long, brown box braids.

Respondent J: 23-year-old seTswana administration intern in the oil industry who lives in Centurion. Her highest level of education is matric. At the time of focus-group interviews she had a short s-curl.

Respondent K: 25-year-old SiSwati software development and support officer who lives in Midrand, Johannesburg. She has a degree in IT. At the time of focus-group interviews she had long twist braids.

Respondent L: 37-year-old Xhosa entrepreneur/business partner in the marketing and branding industry who lives in Pretoria. She has a degree. At the time of focus-group interviews had dreadlocks.

Researcher welcomes and thanks respondents for participating. Noisy inside coffee shop and had to move outside. Assigning the codes.

I: I'll start. Should a say my code name? From the first slide i noted the dreads very beautiful very high maintenance i think, um hair colouring also high maintenance. I've noted some beautiful afros that i saw there. The TL colours sorry covers I saw Boity, Denise and Phuti had beautiful weaves i bet high maintenance and viewed by society as acceptable instead of

the previous slides which had afros and dreads. i just had to note down the beautiful cover by Pearl i think they styled her afro very well.

Researcher: Sorry who

I: Pearl Thusi they styled her hair very beautifully it makes you want to have an afro very beautiful.

Researcher: Thank you Neo anyone else

H: I'm Precious what caught my eye was natural hair that you see that's dreadlocks, afro and extensions yah they were nice and everything but then for me it's not being you know real it's just an extension and yah that's it. So with the dreadlocks and the afro like Neo said Pearl Thusi it's you being yourself or she was herself and everything even the beauty if you had to say she's beautiful and everything its she's her she's not beautiful because of a weave or whatever but because of her hair. And then in terms of the products i'd definitely go for natural hair products if i'd dreadlocks obviously i'd root for the dreadlocks products and for natural hair as well i wouldn't mind even using the products for afro rather. Keeping it natural and keeping it and being an African woman rather embracing being an African woman. An then the covers the women on the covers i guess they portray also independence because most of them they're women they don't depend on anyone they do the work they work hard rather they and take charge of their lives so its not about a certain man being behind or their success depending on a man rather but they worked hard of it. They are where they are because they worked hard.

Researcher: Thank you Precious

L: I saw the covers so I'll just speak about the covers. They look high maintenance number one, they look perfect. It looks like everyone just ran out of their way just to look a certain way that's different from themselves. But then I'm also in two parts about it because it represents women of today who tell +++ you can be whoever you want to be at any given time but also for the magazine itself they need to sell so they need to change laba bantu they can't be looking like themselves per se. So that's what In terms of hair everything looks perfect i see some weaves i don't have a problem with people with any different hairstyle because it's a personal choice at the end of the day. That's my two cents

Researcher: Thank you.

K: I also in terms of the covers the weaves they look very perfect and i think compared to the ladies with the weaves when you compare them with the natural one like Pearl and what's the other lady with the short hair?

Bonnie

K: Yes the make-up is different the one with the weaves the make-up is too enhanced it's just too much but the ones with natural they look more natural than the one with the weave so yah. And slide two i think they tried to there is braids there and they've advertised natural products the ones that African women can really use compared to the first slide of which there is chemicals and stuff, colouring and whatever.

Researcher: Melody

J: I think i'll just talk about the first slide about dreadlocks and colouring i think the dreadlocks they are beautiful and nice and also the colouring because i think it's much better to use i don't know can't i just do this some other time because i didn't write anything this thing and you didn't tell me like

Researcher: Oh you were not writing. OK its fine.

J: No remember you gave Neo and Kgali the other day.

Researcher: No the small paper that's what we're reading now on the small paper.

J: I think i'll just talk about the dreadlocks.

Researcher: OK Cool. Alright. And then ah based on what you've seen and from your reading of TL which hair type or hair length, hair texture do you think TL promotes. From what you've seen in the adverts on the covers and from your own reading of other issues of TL which hair type like the hair texture hair length does it promote?

ALL: Weaves. Long weaves

I: I mean kinky hair like our hair is not acceptable in society so it's like now they're starting with natural hair because more people are choosing to go natural but it's still weaves

K: Like it's still weaves all the way

L: You know what i was also thinking i was thinking is it the fault of TL because if a Khanyi Mbau if they're doing a shoot for uKhanyi Mbau what hairstyle does she have she has a weave you know what i mean so may be it's not necessarily i fault ye TL but it's the people they that have on the covers because they're having their own hairstyles TL doesn't necessarily i don't think they'd physically go out to look for people with weaves to be on the covers i don't know.

Researcher: So you think it's the celebrities?

H: Yah

L: Yah it's the people on the covers. Maybe TL ayina choice may be there's not a lot of us with natural hair.

Researcher: OK and then can you please describe good hair and bad hair

K: In what sense?

Researcher: However you interpret it

L: For me good hair is clean hair

I: Yah. Laughter

L: It doesn't matter what it looks like if its presented well its good hair

Researcher: Any more thoughts any more any contradictory or anything to support?

L: Chibhabha. Chibhabha is bad hair.

Researcher: Sorry

L: Chibhabha

Researcher: What's that?

L: What do you call this thing when they don't have hair here (pointing to hairline)

J: No hairline

L: When the hairline has receded and gone that's bad hair

I: Even for me like dirty hair is just not whether it's natural or it's a weave or

K: It just has to be clean

I: Yah it just has to be clean and imagine you don't have to i don't know for like your natural hair you don't have to have a like fancy hairstyle or comb a certain way it can just be in a neat ponytail but for the mere fact that its clean its good hair

Researcher: So whether its a Brazilian its a Peruvian if its dirty its not good hair

I: Even not all fake hair is good hair

L: Maybe that's something to say fake hair is not good hair

I: No, no not all fake hair is good hair

Researcher: Has your hair texture hair length or hair type ever impacted on your personal life. What role does hair play in your life? Have you ever been victimised, disadvantaged because of your hairstyle in the workplace or in society?

ALL: No. Not really. Its all fine

Researcher: So all hairstyles are acceptable you can go with natural, dreadlocks anything goes

I: I've never had an experience

H: So long as I guess you're lookable you're neat you know that OK right now i'm at a club ah whatever now i'm at work you know you're presentable rather so it fine

Researcher: So no pressure to have certain hairstyles its all up to any individual to choose. So what about other people's experiences have you heard of people who've had problems

K: I've watched Real Talk with Anele they'd uClaire Mawisa. She has beautiful dreadlocks like long beautiful dreadlocks and then she says something about in the media she lost so

many opportunities because of her hair. It was +++ no its dirty we're not going to feature her because her hair is dirty regardless of how she looks she's beautiful, she's the most beautiful skin ever she looks young she looks 20 even if she's

J: 40

K: 37 yeah or something like that but she was not regarded as the perfect you know perfect media person because of her hair. She had to chose because of her hair but she didn't i think she was very brave if she was someone else she'd like cut her hair and go for a weave or whatever but she was really, really brave

I: Even just recently we just heard about those Pretoria Girls High girls who said its stipulated in the rules that you're not allowed to have basically black hair you can't have short hair you can't have an afro you can't have braids you can't have Bantu knots and you know some of these hairstyles you can understand you know i mean you can't you can have like a Pearl Thusi afro the size of a Pearl Thusi afro but if you tie it in a neat bun and go to school i don't see that as a problem. Some of these hairstyles really what the girls were saying some of them were just ridiculous because i heard they've to put their natural hair in a swimming cap and if it doesn't fit then its too much you need to cut it off or you need to relax it or you just need to do something its just not right if it doesn't fit in a swimming cap which is unrealistic

Researcher: Why do you think there are such incidents? Do you think SA's past has something to do with that like SA's apartheid past? Could it be influencing such behaviours, perceptions and rules in schools?

I: Maybe

H: It could be

I: I think society has a certain view of how black people should be. You know we should be light in complexion we should

K: We should look a certain way

I: We should have a specific type of hair we should wear specific types of clothes in a specific type of manner, we should live in specific areas, we should drive specific cars and work specific jobs. I wouldn't really say its apartheid it could be the reason may be may be not but its society i think society has taught us that our people are not really accepted so we need to change and conform to these long weaves and all these standards of beauty. And just more to say we've to conform to the standard of living nje not even just beauty but living.

Researcher: And who is society? You're saying society dictates how our people and who is society and who is our people?

I: I think society is everyone included even black people and there are some black people who still say you can't have hair like that your hair needs to look a specific manner it's just everyone nje

Researcher: So across the racial divide.

K: It could be the apartheid thing just that may be it did shape us you know like the black sisters to think a certain way to look a certain way to be acceptable in the society so it could be its possible

Researcher: But its 22 years later

K: No the thing is its 22 years later but this thing its been there ever since it just moves from one generation to another

I: I think it also depends on what we teach our children i mean if just to make a practical example if i think that I am being light skinned i'm superior than Melody who is darker than I am if i teach my children that then that's what they carry because in most cases they're gonna live with me for at least 18 years so if i drill that in them those kinds of perceptions then they grow up with those kind of perceptions and it carries on from generation to generation

L: I think obviously our history will somehow in a way impact

I: In a huge way

L: but also in terms of its not only a problem relatable to SA but a worldwide problem where white people refuse to accept our culture the way we do things they want us to conform to their standards of living or presentation whatever you wanna to call it. So its a worldwide thing really but of course in SA in particular racial history will have an impact on it.

Researcher: How much time do you spend reading TL looking at the covers the advertisements and what action do you take after that do you take inspiration do you go out to buy the products and so on. How much time do you spend looking at the images, reading the advertisements and what action do you take do you seek out more information, do you buy do you recommend to friends?

L: Yes when i used to read TL i told you i don't buy magazines anymore. So yah i mean if you i think its a natural thing if you see anything you like you'll go and get more info on it whether you see it in True Love, Drum or Cosmo or whatever if uyayifuna you wanna go out and do research on it or buy if its something you buy off the shelf or whatever

Researcher: Do you take inspiration for the styles or looks

I and H: Sometimes

K: If there is something nice and you like it



Researcher: What are the financial or economic implications of the influences that we get from the media like spending too much on Brazilian weaves and starving or not being able to pay school fees? How do people prioritise or making them feel bad if they can't afford to buy certain. At what cost does these things come both financially economically and for someone's well-being?

I: I think it depends on the type of person that you are

H and K: Umm it a personal thing yah

I: Some people know what they can afford and they're comfortable with that i mean some people are just not my friend once had a roommate she'd always prioritise hair over everything else and she didn't care how much it cost whether electricity was paid or whether they'd food in the house that was not her problem and it affected the household so to say badly because they were sharing so its 50-50 everything so now if you whenever you get money you're prioritising hair and you can't afford electricity now i've to cover electricity and i have to cover groceries and i've to cover everything. Because second semester they were not talking to each other they had even divided the fridge in half to show how bad it was like the fridge was divided in half to say this is my half and that is your half. Food was labelled. My friend even had this like i khesinyana and she'll put all her food there and lock it

L: My ghosh ha ha ha

I: I was like is this necessary you people. So some people really go all out. It depends on the person you are and how much for lack of a better word how much beauty your idea of beauty means to you.

H: I guess also like i'll use a friend as an example that she her identity mostly was based on her hair if her hair is good and perfect and all that she felt good about herself. If her hair was old and stuff then she felt like you know what I can't do anything i can't get what may be you know some people like they use hair and their beauty to always get what they want so obviously now its that whole thing if i don't look good if my hair is not up to date and what not then i can't be able to get this and that. So obviously now it goes back to what she was saying that she chose to prioritise hair over food you know something that is so essential where you can just comb your hair and put on some nice whatever like hair food and stuff and still look good. so for her it was like if i don't have a weave or don't have a certain kind of weave then you know i'm not good so keeping up with the standard at the same time which you can't even afford

Researcher: What do you mean by using hair to get what she wants?

I: I mean let's face it like weaves attract a whole lot of attention

H: Yes

I: Like if i've braids and she has a weave it doesn't matter how much make-up i might have i may be half dressed but if she has a weave and its beautiful and straight and perfect ah they're going the other way she can get all of us lunch

H: Yes

I: She can get all of us lunch

Researcher: How? That's the how that i need, how

H: A practical example i used to go to clubs and sometimes i do but i guess now and back then OK in terms of my motives for going out like at a club and stuff its quite different as from back then. Obviously there are other girls you know i need to make sure that i've got heels i need to make sure i've got nice clothes, make sure my hair is up to date, nails are up to date and what not because this is who i am when i go out there whatever shots that i call it happens so that's what we mean that you get everything from that. I can also get your guys food if i've to dress otherwise and my hair is on point i can get anything i want.

Researcher: I understand but i want you to spell it out. From who how?

H: From the guys obviously oh.

I: You see what's happening in Generations now i mean since that girl uXolelwa got a weave like men are just throwing themselves at her and they're throwing a lot of money at her

L: That's so wrong its like perpetuating a problem

I: Lots of money but when she'd her natural hair people weren't paying attention and then she changed her clothes but still had her natural hair and people were still not paying attention but the moment she walked in with a long silky weave people were just throwing themselves at her like i don't know like she was the last piece of chicken ever like in the world.

Researcher: Um so a weave can get you whatever

I: A weave can get you far in this life hey

Researcher: Invest in a weave like 6,000, 7,000 and get a lot more may be 100,000

I: Its an investment. This thing is an investment

Researcher: OK ladies what's your attitude towards hair alteration like relaxing straightening hair and colouring hair?

L: Personal choice.

K: Yah i also don't have an issue

Researcher: For you personally is it something that you do?

L: Yah my hair is coloured currently. I dye my hair when it is long before i cut it. I used to like twice a year change the colour may be so its a personal thing

I: Me too i relax my hair and it has highlights in it. Its a personal choice.

Researcher: what about the fact that some of these relaxers have harmful chemicals and that its painful sometimes when you're relaxing you can get burnt.

I: You know I like i tried i had like an afro I'd what do you call than an s-curl back in the day and i think now its time for relaxing hair. Its just hair, its just hair you know

Researcher: Why do you relax it?

I: It's time for a change. There is nothing really motivating me to relax my hair its just

L: its a different hairstyle

I: Yah like even with colouring its just i'm just trying something new that's it

L: you're not enhancing you're not its just something different qha

I: Its just different i've had short hair i've had s-curls before now i've got long relaxed hair with highlights and may be next year when you see me i might have something different its just hair

Researcher: Melody, is it s-curl or i can't really make out but i think its s-curl or another version thereof. What's your attitude towards hair alteration

J: I don't know i think i just love short hair. Before i relaxed my hair and do this s-curl i had natural and afro and put a little bit of dye on the top.

Researcher: What colour had you gone blonde

J: Blonde

Researcher: It seems many black people are going blonde why is it so? many people love brownish, blonde

L: We want to look different don't we wanna look like Amber Rose maybe or something. Just to look different and just to shock people.

H: Out of your comfort zone as well because normally I mean what's the point of having black hair and still going for a black dye so you wanna try something different and see yourself in a different colour and and like OK is this colour is fine or what so its just being out of your comfort.

Researcher: Samu you've twist what's your attitude towards hair alteration straightening relaxing dying

K: Its just hair just wanna change look different try this try that no particular reason. But for me like i've worked with white people most of the time so i try to avoid weaves most of the time because i don't want them to say 'oh you look so pretty today' because i've a weave so i do i think the last time i had a weave it was like two years ago because of that because when i

have a weave i 'look pretty today' but when I'm with my natural hair there is no pretty today. So I stick to braids natural hair.

L: No one says anything

K: I do relax i change my hair every now and then short hair big afro long relaxed hair whatever as long as its not a blonde weave because i'll look like the white people and i'll look pretty today. So to avoid all of that

Researcher: You've already addressed some of the things like your attitudes towards hair enhancements like weaves, wigs and extensions. So is it something like human wigs and weaves made from human is it something that you'd feel comfortable wearing

H: Can you repeat your question?

Researcher: Wearing a weave or wig made from 100 per cent human hair those Brazilians, Peruvians is it something that you'll feel comfortable wearing? Like wearing somebody else's hair?

L: No

Researcher: Why is that?

L: I don't know it doesn't sound right. Its just like these people that sell their dreadlocks and someone else buys it i mean hair is a personal thing awazi noma ngithwele ngezinwele for that matter. If i've got a thwasa thing and its in my hair you know what i mean and you go and buy someone else's hair that you don't know that doesn't make sense that doesn't sound right

Researcher: Do you think if you've a thwasa and then someone else buys your hair it can possess them

H: Anything can happen

L: Of course with hair you never know with those people

I: Its personal its DNA after all

H: Yeah because if you have to be identified they don't have to suck out your blood and whatsoever they use your hair to identify that this is whoever

L: Plus also for me I did some research about our history and all of that and i read an article that said back in the day of Qamatha before we were colonised people when they wanted to speak to gods they used to grow their hair to get answers and then wena you've your dreadlocks now and then all of a sudden you're having dreams. Laughter. we don't know our culture from back then so its something i've researched and i believe the story if they were growing their hair to get answers and then someone buys your dreadlocks kanti unedlozi why would they not get it.

Researcher: Interesting why are these weaves and wigs so popular if there is that danger?

H: People are not aware of it.

L: I don't know may be they're colonised in their minds. I don't know how to answer that because again it goes back to your belief system do you believe those kinds of things do you think about the fact that you have someone else's hair on your head

I: Oh is it just hair to you?

L: or its just a hairstyle to you it depends on the person

Researcher: Precious you wanted to say something.

H: Perhaps nobody has an idea or they are not aware of those kinds of things or they don't think to such an extent so for them its just a hairstyle or even if they think about it at the end of the day its personal choice whether they want to believe what is said.

Researcher: Thank you ladies. END

## Figure 59: Focus-group Y transcript

Focus-group Y

Date: November 10, 2016

Location: Eco Glades 5, Centurion, Pretoria

Time: 12 noon to 1pm

Respondents

Respondent A: 31-year-old Afrikaans-speaking accounting executive who lives in Pretoria. She has a diploma in financial accounting. At the time of focus-group interviews she had long natural wavy hair.

Respondent B: 27-year-old SeTswana who lives in Johannesburg. She has a paralegal qualification. At the time of focus-group interviews she had relaxed hair with gel up styled into a ponytail with a pom pom.

Respondent C: 31-year-old Tsivenda woman who works in the financial services sector and lives in Johannesburg. She has an honours degree. At the time of focus-group interviews she had a weave.

Respondent D: 34-year-old Pedi who lives in Centurion, Pretoria. She has NQF Level 6. At the time of focus-group interviews she had relaxed hair tied into a ponytail.

Respondent E: 50-year-old Sotho personal assistant who lives in Acardia. She holds a diploma. At the time of focus-group interviews she had singles (braids) and a duke on top.

Respondent F: 31-year-old Setswana research analyst who lives in Pretoria. She has a masters degree in business information systems. At the time of focus-group interviews she had locks (last minute cancelation).

D: For this hair it forces you to maintain with certain kind of clothes you're wearing. Remember the weave on its own costs R2,000.

C: I can still wear my R100 jeans

D: With 2,000 hair?

C: So those are two different things. For example I don't even think i fit here because when i see adverts i don't run for them but if i see adverts for cars that's why i'm saying i can wear R200 jeans. Hair and adverts don't mean much to me.

A: Basically you're natural.

Thank you we'll pick up the thread from where we left.

D: I think when i first saw the covers i just saw these fake girls who are trying to be something that are not. I see fake somebody because you've got this long hair that is not even yours.

C: Yo hawu (nodding towards D's head)

D: This is mine (pulling at her hair)

B: You've styled it. You've its...

D: Me i think i'm better than...

A: But its natural

B: Its natural but its enhanced

C: No no it's relaxed

E: But is relaxed on whose hair? On poppy hair or on her hair?

C: But still it's relaxed

E: We're fine its relaxed but on whose hair?

C: On hers

E: Thank you

B: Are you sure that she doesn't have anything there?

E: No

C: OK i saw it is stylish prepared. Its prepared hair even on the ones that were natural it was combed it was prepared

E: You're right its natural and prepared

B: Aki remember a mix of natural and fake

E: the only thing for me i see is artificial beauty that is looking so appealing

Consensus: Yah

E: And then i will say again for me it shows me that if i'm a woman i cannot look or be lookable without some additional of some sort some additional of some eye liner eyebrow pencil, hair, Brazilian hair, some additional of Maybeline make up i'm sorry to say some additional of something to make me feel i'm..

D: Beautiful

E: I'm not saying to a woman. No to feel like a true a magazine woman not a live walking somebody in the streets woman to be a magazine woman you need to look this part

C: You need additional things

B: Most of the people that are advertised there are celebrities and not a lot of natural hairstyles are there its all weave not all of them probably two people are there

D: There is Bonnie and Manaka

B: The rest of them have something extra. The've extensions of some sort

A: i'd say desirable. The reason for that not just on hair by the way its my natural hair guys.

E: We know baby we can see from afar

A: When I say desirable I'm not saying per se hair it's like what E was saying you desire may be the woman's shoes her legs even clear skin it's kind of you want something that's part of that woman may be its the eye liner the lipstick or the mascara or just the nails it's kind of the trends you want to go with the trends.

Researcher: I've written glamorous sexy, sex kitten, objectified, trendy clothes. Would you agree that these women are objectified like the clothes they're portrayed as sex kittens?

Consensus: Yes especially if

D: Look at this one [pointing at Pearl Thusi, Boity, Khany Mbau and Bonnie].

E: The best sexy woman in those TV things they do and then they become the sexiest woman the best beautiful woman ever the sexiest ever the what what ever so it is

Researcher: Is that something that's desirable?

C: I'm not a man so

E: For me no

A: When i say desirable i mean you fancy may be she's wearing nice earrings

B: Yah for women yah it will be like i like this and that

E: For me if you talk about say clothes yes like if you see what they're wearing we can afford we can wear its their style isn't it i don't like their style i've got my style. Like the ... has her own style its her style its good for her you understand what i'm trying to say for me it's good for her because i have my own style that i'm comfortable.

C: That's what i was about to say that i could desire it but its about the comfort. Not everyone would like to be shot in that ... i want to wear it but the comfort in me i wouldn't wear it i might like it but would be like that's not me. Its also about the comfort that jacket (Phuti Khomo) i can wear it but not the way she's wearing it so she's wearing a brown jacket just the way it is with a thigh out i won't be comfortable with that

E: That dress the other lady (Boity) is wearing you can wear may be putting something inside

B: I can wear Connie's dress

D: But remember others out there ne they can wear it and want to wear exactly the way they saw it in TL.

E: Yes others do that other people. Actually let me not say other people but our small generation they really i can say i can talk about my sister's daughter my son my son will wear its a pity i'm talking about mine is a son so i'll talk about my son will wear a trousers that



goes under the thingy (demonstrating that he drops trousers) which is so disgusting and i say to my son if you see me we pass each other and don't even tell people that i'm your mother because really i don't understand what people will say looking at me and looking at you. They'll think i don't have what do you call it discipline at home and i do so the problem i cannot discipline you in the street if you see me in the street just pass my darling like you didn't see your mother because i'll be embarrassed to say that's my son because when people look at me they think my son will be portraying me but he's a different story altogether. So my sister's daughter can go like this (Boity, exposed cleavage) because for her this is how the 2016 people should look

D: And i think also i think

E: How a woman should look you're supposed to see you from afar that hey i can take this woman, so its another thing that for our kids its good

D: But again on these covers if you look at Connie's dress and Bassie's dress

B: Even Manaka's dress

D: Its different

C: I think its about different personalities. Like if you look at Manaka's personality and compare it to Pearl Thusi's personality or Khanyi's personality.

E: Its totally different.

C: It's about comfort and personalities. Different clothing will be acceptable for different personalities. If you have a certain personality like all of us have different personalities i might like Khanyi's dress because that's my personality and can even wear it because my personality doesn't care even if you're looking or whatever i can wear my thingy. But a person who's she's not gonna be able to wear that

B: She doesn't want to reveal too much

C: Its about personality also not that there is right or wrong. It's about personalities and comfort. Even with hair someone is not comfortable with a weave because they say its itchy, someone is like they can't do natural hair if they cut their hair they'll wear a wig so you can't say you've got fake hair but its about comfort.

E: Its just like me and my duke someone will never go to work with a duke

C: Like why are you wearing a duke?

E: But i'm comfortable with my duke because i think i look so nice with it so you understand

D: Except its a bad hair day

A: I was looking at your duke Like i'm going on Sunday to a pool party i bought a duke almost like yours. I was like how does this woman fix her duke

E: I'll fix it for you. Call me i'll fix it for you.

Researcher: What role does hair have in your life. Has your hair length texture hairstyle had an influence in your life at work, society. Have you been discriminated because of your hair?

D: No. Fortunately in SA we don't have such.

B: Yah it's also us.

C: It goes back to comfort because i think if you don't look comfortable in people will start saying look at her but if you're wearing a weave and look comfortable in it we won't comment.

B: In the workplace you've to look professional and neat whatever the kind of hair you are wearing

E: Again it can be neat to you but not someone else you understand what i'm trying to say. Some afro some people are saying it's not neat some will say it's neat

B: Same with dreadlocks some will say dreadlocks are not neat

E: Its up to you if you look comfortable in that it's how you want to look

Researcher: But do you set the rules. Pretoria Girls High incident

C: At work i've never heard of this

E: i've only heard of dressing well

B: I've worked in different companies even in private companies you'll have your dreadlocks you won't be judged you'll still have your afro and you know have afro combed up or its a bit of dreadlocks ... as long as its neat

E: The only thing that I heard is when you're going for an interview

C: Of course that one is different

E: That's where the problem lies. You have to look fake for people to hire you because they'll say you've to look neat sometimes you cannot go with your duke or chiskop if you're a woman because last week my sister was going for an interview last week they said please find something that will cover your chiskop because we don't prefer a woman with no hair. So you understand in interview its another story i know for sure but when you're working

B: Once you're in

Researcher: So i've to be fake to get in?

E: Yes that's what I'm saying. Sometimes you have to be fake to get in. That's how it is, you put lipstick even if sometimes you don't put it you make sure that you do things that

D: Even make up sometimes like i'm going to an interview today

E: they say you look presentable if you look like not clear as if you just got into water and can out and no make up

Researcher: Who defines presentable, who defines professional ? At some stage you've to conform

C: The environment. When you're at an interview the environment is set by your interviewers but when you're at a workplace it's an environment that is set by different employees because you get to be in an environment where a lot of things are acceptable but then certain environments i think its an environment you get to a company you see coming at 9 is fine because you get to a company and find an environment that already exists and you conform to it and its made up by employees who are already there. For example you get to a company and know that coming at 8.05 its late or get to another where 5 people come in at 8.30 and think oh its acceptable. So who sets up what's clean and what's acceptable is the environment you live.

D: Yah i agree

E: Us for us I'm a PA. For PA professions it really they usually say you have to look people judge you by how you look. If i can come now with not combing my hair according to them I can sometimes my hair looks like its not combed you know some natural hair has those lines that you cannot manage to comb, my hair when its natural looks like that after combing it goes back to African khanda hair. If i can go like they it says you don't look you have to take care of your outer look to look the inner look. We judge. Its this thing of judging a book by its cover. That thing its there people judge people by looking. You don't even know where that person is from but the fact that that person pass you or the hair is looking so neat or so now you judge that person. Its there.

Researcher: I want to look for the root cause. Where do we get it from? You said its the environment and that environment is shaped by us. Its a vicious cycle. If someone has natural hair they were born it and i say its untidy what does it say about me as an African?

C: You know what happens sometimes its also about influence. Sometimes if that certain hair for example if that untidy hair get worn by someone else just because that person is respected it becomes tidy.

E: It's a style. It becomes a style.

C: Sometimes its about who that person is they who the person is may influence the environment. As I said that sometimes clean and not clean is determined by the environment but also who the person even if its that singular person can influenced the environment. But at the end of the day clean not clean is determined by the environment but the environment can still be influenced by different individuals. I can come with my duke and they say that its not acceptable at Sefa but if may be the CE comes with the duke suddenly it will be part of

the environment. So it's an environment but the environment is influenced by different individuals or that person has influence or there are more people if five of us come with dukes the following day it becomes acceptable.

Researcher: Hair and social status. Before we started officially you were talking about weaves, Brazillians etc. Do you think that someone's hairstyles can determine their social status?

B: Yes you could like if you look at Bonnie's hairstyle and then you gonna compare it to lets see let's say Kelly or Boity's one you'd think that Boity is more social and would easily fit in an environment than Bonnie would because her hair maybe symbolises someone who's reserved but Boity's and or Khanyi's one symbolises that one who says where is the party kind of thing. But that i think comes from really person to person because you could still have your afro hair and still be the one calling up the party. But also that's a perception thing because i can still have my Brazilian today and you ask me for a party and I'm like what? Still but i think Its a perception thing

A: In my opinion i think that your hair identifies your personality so just by looking at you guys reserved, reserved, reserved, reserved it depends as well you got social life social but you're not party animals.

E: I agree with A that sometimes your hair really i think it makes you blend in with the society of today.

Researcher: What about like status as in rich or poor that we can gauge that this person

All: There's no way you can gauge

E: No no no I say no that one I disagree

C: You can't

E: Because i've seen so many things that i cannot even say a person driving a Mercedes-Benz and staying in a those smallanyana

A: Yes

B: Yah True

E: thing that you've done with the box.

Researcher: In a shack

E: No it doesn't say that. In this life i think if you want people sometimes people when they want whether you can buy a Brazilian for R3,000 and don't have food in the fridge people do that. So you can think i have when i have got Brazilian not knowing that i'm from i don't know. So that one because a person with 10 Mercedes-Benz can come so natural

B: True

E: you'll be shocked and say that oh i didn't realise that he drives that and that person thinking she doesn't have anything kanti she can buy you with your family so that i wouldn't even agree it because I know people surprise us

D: OK sometimes sometimes ne

B: I think its perception because it says people who've fake hair can afford it but sometimes perception is far from reality

D: People who've got money don't even do those fake hair.

E: Thank you some don't even do that.

D: Because you can see like with clothes ne those who don't have enough money or a lot of money they like labels

E: Our 2000

D: Yes 2000 what what while those who have money they go to PEP store

C: But those are economists people who've got money still buy brands wena

E: Yah they still buy brands ... try so hard

C: The thing is the difference between i could still be carrying a Loius Vuitton bag and have a lot of money but i probably won't flash it as much because i've a lot of money but won't flash it as much as someone

D: Who doesn't have

C: No still has the same Loius Vuitton bag as me but they'll flash it as much because that Loius Vuitton bag cost them a hand and an arm but to me it's just like an ordinary bag. That's why probably see the person who's poor you'll probably see their bag the most (Raising hand over head) because bakla ... they'll carry it so that everyone sees it because its not normal to them but to me its normal. Its like if you see a person who's driving a Benz and it's not even theirs they'll rev it all the way but the person who drives it every day will pass by and you won't even notice them but the person who doesn't drive it they'll have loud music vroom vroom they don't even know how much petrol is

D: But what if I love loud music?

E: Some are theirs they've just won a fortune may be you're not aware that we win and by the time you get it you say let me use it to my advantage before it goes away. There you're right yah it's about who you are.

D: Eh

C: I think most of these things really depend on who you are because you can have fake hair and still be reserved you can still have very expensive clothing and still be reserved or actually can be the other way round not have have fake hair it's about a person. Like you can

still wear fake hair like Connie and you be still a reserved person and may be not allow them to put you in a magazine but your face could fit to be on the face of there but because you're a reserved person. Its not about material things like i'm wearing Dolce & Cabbana sunglasses then i feel like i fit in there its about the person you are. You can have all these things the fake hair, fake boobs the fake everything and still be reserved.

E: If you know who you are you'll still be reserved.

C: You can still have the same things and be on the other side its about personality thing

E: because you're not moved by it.

C: it's not about the adverts you can still buy the same things which someone bought them because they saw it on the adverts you buy it not because of the advert you buy it not because but because you just like it. So i think all this on in all depends on who you are you can still carry the same things, wear the same things, go to the same places but who you are you can still see me at Newscafe but may be you not see me on the dance floor. Laughter

A: Exactly

B: Just because i go to Newscafe doesn't mean that i'm bad

D: Those cases where you're hanging with them until 11 o'clock but i'm not drinking

B: Yes I'm one of those

D: Actually the car what do you call them the person who drives

C: Designated driver. But I'm there but that doesn't mean i'm a socialite. These things all in all you can have them you can do whatever it's about the personality of a person.

Researcher: And you said something about the adverts someone seeing something on an advert and then buying it so what do you do like after exposure to things like this the covers the advertisements. Do you go out to buy do you seek more information?

C: It depends who you are like i was saying now i can someone can see that weave which Kelly has and go seek Kelly's weave what is it called so that they go buy it. But I might happen to buy the same brand as Kelly's one not because of an advert

D: Not even seen

C: not even having seen it on Kelly may be i went to the shop saw it I liked it but we both have the same product but our influence of buying it is too different. Thta's why i'm saying that just because we have the same things doesn't mean we were influenced by this i could still have the same hair because of an advert or may be i googled or whatever.

D: And sometimes you don't even read TL. Like me this year I never bought TL. I'm no longer reading TL.

Do you read online?

D: No I no longer read magazines I used to do them when I was at school but now i've moved to ... business book. I think at school wabona varsity

B: Its also peer pressure you're growing up you're young

D: I used to stay with this lady her mama was a teacher so they subscribed every month and they delivered at the house so that's where i got to buy magazines when i go to obo Shoprite ... i will look at Glamour and say they've got this but now because i'm no longer close to her i don't even look.

E: I think for me its a different thing altogether because you know when you grew up having TL for me its like having... you understand i buy it i have to buy it because there is something i usually check recipes and sometimes the cover because i don't see TV too much i know if i've missed something once on TV sometimes i may find it in TL.

D: Soapy updates

E: No no not soapy updates those are i'm sorry i don't want you to hear what i do. But anyway for me its like something that i'm used to reading i know i'll get those recipes that are suitable for my African needs that sometimes i get in here sometimes i have a recipe that i know then have seen it somewhere most of the times there is a recipe here.

C: You see now why she buys TL its got nothing to do with what's being advertised its inherent to her but someone could be buying because they saw the advert or they saw cover page but yena mindless of the cover page of who is there the hairstyle or whatever she still buys but someone will be like oh there is Boity lets go and buy. Let's see Boity's style

D: That one i know the cover one ne does have an effect. Its OK there is Bassie i want to read about Bassie. After you read kaBassie there is these other topics that women what what women in business ini ini then you page through these ones and you're done.

C: But she'll still buy it regardless of who is there

E: Whether you're Bassie i don't even for me you know the way life is there are so many problems whether Bassie has problems doesn't bother

D: Wena you just want your TL.

E: Whether you're who's married Basetsane whether you're Boity i know when i walk in the street someone will say hey did you here that Boity and Mamang are no longer together so its those things that you'll know even if you don't want to so the gossips i don't even read i don't really care i just go to what i want but its something that i buy all the time.

Researcher: Some of these you've already addressed them like your attitude towards hair alteration like straightening hair, dying hair and stuff. What would you say is your attitude towards hair alteration? I know you don't relax your hair.

A: Its a personal preference for me its like C was saying you need to feel comfortable. Personally me sometimes i feel wigs are too much and you get some that look natural.

Any thoughts

E: For me I my hair i do relax since i was a kid because my hair is so hard that i cannot comb it

C: So she relaxes for convenience

E: If my hair was so because i'm one person to do something to my hair you have to have a very soft hand to touch my head because my hair is so sensitive. So for me in order to comb my hair i have to relax to make it a little bit softer. Again for me i cannot put a weave because i don't want anybody to touch my head and sometimes i cannot pay somebody's hair to be put in my head, no. And then the other thing i dye because I don't like my hair has got is a little bit grey so for me its either my hair is grey from front to the back because for me if its grey somewhere mine is grey only in front I look like for me i look untidy because its two colour. Its just in front If it was may be mixed I would say no I wouldn't. The dying part i dye for those reasons i want to look proper i think for for me my hair should look proper a little bit brushed and properly coloured and again its because dye is very cheap may be if it wasn't cheap i wouldn't buy it and relaxer is very cheap i wouldn't buy it i think if it was expensive because for a relaxer i take a year for a dye i take six months so the fact that at least i'm working i can afford that amount. i don't have a problem with those things. The only thing i have problem with weave yona i don't like

Researcher: A wig?

E: its one of those its the same.

C: For me it doesn't matter i can tomorrow i can relax my hair I'm like for me its about comfort for me at the end of the day its am i comfortable in my hair with whatever i have on my head. Today i can relax tomorrow but mainly i prefer my hair natural. And I can put weave today tomorrow i'll have natural. For me its about if i put something in and i'm not comfortable i don't care how much i put it on for i'll take it out that's for me it ends up being comfortable if i go do a straight back and they've tightened it hard and i've paid R100 or R500 i'll take it out because if i can't sleep at night because i've something on my head no no for me comfort and convenience is priceless. So for me its about the comfort which i have If i've relaxed hair and suddenly feel its fluffy i'll cut it and start afresh so for me its about comfortable can i breath, if i have a weave and suddenly I feel like they've my head can't breath i'll take it out for me its about am i feeling comfort in my head that's why i prefer my hair to be natural to be naturally comfortable.



D: OK for me what makes me comfortable I'd like to have natural hair may be short but my hair like E said its hard if i keep it natural. And another thing i once cut but i was not comfortable with the short you see if its gonna be short then you have to do blow out and have comb nyana I was not comfortable with it because i relax my hair ever since i was 13 so i became comfortable with relaxed hair. Weaving its not my thing and your straight back, i love your twists, braids i love the braiding and relaxer i'm more comfortable with relaxers. But when i'm tired i'm gonna cut and when i cut i'm gonna use my relaxed hair.

E: And i forgot i like the singles

D: Yeah the singles yah

E: i love singles its just that I'll do it once in two years for the same reason of being sensitive on my hair if i didn't if i didn't have all those problems i think i'd be a single woman. Its only that my sensitive skin oh that one i love i'm telling you I love i love oh that one i love.

Researcher: May be to add one last thing has SA's past like the apartheid past had any influence on your hair length preferences like may be preference for long hair, preference for relaxed hair. I've heard that people relax for totally different reasons like manageability but do you think that could have had an influence on society.

B: Yes that's why we're seeing Brazilian no

C: No, no

E: No its not SA its American thing but if you can see really we're driving away to America. We see what Americans do then it comes to us. We are you know I once had an American friend i think in 2010 or 2008 after work we used to go to a pub ne and this guy was surprised because we were going to a pub with a cap and a jean and a tacky he said eh i think you don't know Times Square there was a pub called in Times Square in Johannesburg during those time and there is a Times Square in America i heard so when we talk about Times Square he thought we were talking about something. Then when went there in caps he said what why are you so caps and where we come from when women get in there you see that these are women they make up. We said heyi wena we're at work for five days this is our time to relax we've been making up Saturday and Sunday we're casual we wear caps we wear these things so some i think the trends where people get from where they've been because people travel ne they see things we come and sometimes introduce things to others but really i don't think SA we have those problems of how.

B: I don't think people have

D: Where does South Africans get these things

C: Her question was has apartheid does apartheid influence your hairstyle. I'm saying no some people

Researcher: As an individual but then also as an individual you're shaped by the environment may be the environment is shaped by that and then as an individual you're also drinking into that may be not directly but its .

D: Me i think I agree

C: No i wouldn't think so I will tell you why i wouldn't think so. You still find in SA you see you still find someone who's natural hair for their own reasons, you still find someone who's Brazilian hair for their own reasons. Its got nothing to do with the apartheid environment or that now we're free its about like even if you like let's see someone who was born in 1994 they're 22, 24 now don't even know what apartheid is even our history doesn't even teach us what apartheid is anyway so how would that influence what we do today? Then if...

Researcher: But this professional look having to go to an interview and then i have to wear fake hair which is normally Eurocentric to get in to get my foot in if i don't hasn't that environment been shaped by the past?

C and E: No.

Researcher: Now i'm born free but

E: That's not the past because i think its done everywhere. I don't think its done in SA. I think that's what done

C: I think its about cleanliness

E: Yes

Researcher: So African hair is not clean

C: No no you come to an interview you've African hair its very clean

Researcher: But will I get a job if someone comes with

C: But i can come with the same hair not combed it won't be clean its still African. Its about clean. i can still have dreads and not wash it won't be clean but if i wash my dreads it will be clean so i don't thing apartheid has got anything to do with that.

D: What about the long hair?

E: Again its about people in the interview that one has nothing to do with SA it has to do with the owner of that company at that moment

D: I hear you guys ne remember during apartheid ne apartheid our gogos and mamas used to have their natural hair

B: Why do you know why?

D: Because its how they were born with.

C: They didn't have access to relaxers

D: Ne, yes listen i'm coming to that and the whites who brought apartheid came with these relaxers they started relaxing and we're some of them who are now saying long hair is cool. Are they not the ones who influenced?

C: No i'm saying that i have afro hair i'm not having my afro hair because I'm still pulling some struggle in year 19 whatever its because i'm comfortable with it and if i'm clean in it that's why i was giving an example with her (pointing at the researcher's hair). Clean in an interview that's clean nahana if i don't comb that hair or I do't wash it it won't be clean but its still the same hair it has nothing to do with apartheid.

E; Yes thank you.

D: But the relaxer part who brought the relaxer part?

C: It may not be only white you know why i'm saying that who brought the Brazilian hair its about travelling

D: But the Brazilian hair is like

C: Yes its still not about apartheid

E: My mother used to wear a wig in those days

D: Who brought the wig

E: That's what i'm saying

D: Remember in Africa ne

E: my mother used to have a wig used to wear very nice i'm surprised when i see the pictures

D: Remember o gogo ne o gogo gogo didn't have wigs so who brought the wig

C: Even if the white people who came with apartheid did not bring weave or bring relaxers because SA became free and they were able to travel anywhere it was gonna come anyway

D: But now the question is did apartheid influence so you guys are saying no.

C: No it didn't influence i'll still be using my thingy Black Like Me because it has always been there and it was for black people

D: Me i disagree

Reseacher Black Like Me Mashaba

E: Yes. My mother used to have a wig then when i was six my mother had a wig so what am i going to say when was it in 1970 i don't know. These things its up to you whether apartheid is there or not there if you want to have a thing you have it

C: I relaxer some people don't use it its got nothing to do who brought it its about what you're comfortable with imtshisa i scalp

E: Its not about apartheid no

D: Me i still think that

C: You're saying because they brought it i'm saying even if they'd not brought it we were still going to go and fetch it

D: Are you saying in SA we just adopt adopt to anything

E: Not in SA across

C: limahuwa they wanna do dreadlocks because of what globalisation

A: Its like white people are doing dreadlocks. like two months ago i was doing flocks locks because of its a trend in my opinion i don't feel i don't think apartheid influences hairstyles its about what you want at the end of the day

B: We can say freedom influences hairstyles

Many: Umm

D: Yeah lets say that people

Researcher: Are people really free? Are we really free or think we are free but have limited options

B: That's something else.

Researcher: Are we really free or think we are free but have limited options?

D: In terms of hair angkri here we're discussing hair.

E: In terms of hair everybody is free to do their hair the way they want.

Researcher: If i can't afford a Brazilian but want it am i free?

ALL: Its your problem; How is it our problem; That one is not my problem

Researcher: I don't have economic freedom

C: I'll me tell you what there is a person who can so i don't think its about therefore are you saying if there is a limitation of access to everything therefore that person is free someone was saying about rich and poor i know i might sound controversial

E: Say my darling

C: I'm gonna say it this was just another conversation in the bible God aspires for all their kids to be free or to be rich and the question was that what's rich? Mina i believe rich is having peace its got nothing to do with so someone was like if i'm poor God doesn't love me but i was saying no you may be the richest person ever in earth because you know what these people in mansions

E: Exactly in the Bible it says that

C: they are busy fighting beating each other in the big mansion wena in your small shack you have

D: Peace of mind

C: you have the best peace ever. Same thing with hair i might have a R1,000 rands but may be not have the desire to even buy may be i'm still construed in those that its fake hair i'm not gonna be natural i'm not gonna be a black person so does money really bring you freedom because you're coming from economic freedom i'm looking at freedom as a whole.

D: Yah

Researcher: Even cultural freedom sometimes as you're saying people will think i'm fake i have the money but now i'm constrained by culture that people will judge me so that's why i'm saying do we really have freedom whether its economic, cultural?

E: While you're there guys

C: Freedom is a personal thing i've realised freedom is a personal thing you choose to be free you chose to be suppressed because they'll always be someone who's got a perception about you. I might have fake hair and someone will be like go Ele go Ele and someone will be like oh look at that fake girl. If i'm free with my fake hair whoever says what doesn't say whatever is their own problem

E: On that note if then we're saying we're Africans we're black Africans ne if we want to enlarge these things then we'll go back to say if we're Africans and are taking everything and putting it back we'll say why don't we go and wear our (touching waist referring to traditional clothing made from animal skin).

C: Yes why are you wearing

E: No no no

D: Ah ah Mabe

E: OK 11 o'clock go and wear it

C: And see what the sun will do to you

E: Nobody is saying.

D: In the beginning was there no sun

E: No one takes you to the shops

C: The problem its the same thing like kids of those days they used not to get sick they eat soil and didn't get sick. Take your child and put them in the sun they'll get sick within hours you know why it goes back to the environment the environment you're in now global warming it was not there then now its there. It was fine for your grandfather to have five women but now if your husband has another roll on then the whole household comes down. Your mother was fine with him having ten wives so what are you gonna say its just like that are you gonna say white people brought jealousy to us it was the environment

D: The whites came with their way of life of having the roll on and stuff

E: No no whites came to make your life easy

C: You know what its because now your husband doesn't ask permission from you then he used to ask for permission to take another second wife

D: If he was gonna ask lets say he asks tomorrow

E: Then ask for a horse if you don't want a car

D: I'm saying

C: Its not white people

Thank you. END.

## **Figure 60: Focus-group Z transcript**

Focus-group Z

Date: November 9, 2016

Location: Oxford, Centurion, Pretoria

Time: 1pm to 2pm

Respondents

Respondent M: 26-year-old Tshivenda lawyer who lives in Pretoria. She has a bachelor's degree. At the time of focus-group interviews had a weave.

Respondent N: 33-year-old Ndebele administrator who lives in Mamelodi, Pretoria. She has a higher certificate. At the time of focus-group interviews had short natural afro hair.

Respondent O: 30-year-old South Sotho HR manager who lives in Midrand, Johannesburg. She has a degree. At the time of focus-group interviews had dreadlocks.

Respondent P: 30-year-old Pedi sales administration who lives in Dawn Park, Johannesburg. She has a higher certificate in information technology. At the time of focus-group interviews had natural hair plaited into cornrows.

Respondent Q: 22-year-old Shona/Zimbabwean beauty therapist who lives in Centurion, Pretoria. She holds an international diploma in health and skincare. At the time of focus-group interviews she had braids.

Respondent R: 27-year-old Zulu HR intern who lives in Roodepoort. She holds a bachelor of arts – industrial psychology and sociology. At the time of focus-group interviews she had short afro hair.

Researcher welcomes and thanks respondents for participating.

Setting up slide show.

Researcher: We will start with a slide show. Please write down whatever comes to mind as you view the images. The kind of lifestyle that is promoted, the stereotypes and the ideologies.

Setting up and viewing the images on the two computer screens.

Researcher: We'll read what we've written. Where shall we start? Anyone can start.

Q: Can I start because I need to ...

Researcher: Sure

Q: I've written what was the...?

O: I think the results are going to be skewed.

Q: You'd said we should write the first thing that pops into our minds when we're looking at these pictures so looking at these pictures i saw that these people were healthy. I could see that most of them focussing on fitness some of them were even talking about religion and feminism because most of them are women and African hair.

Researcher: Are you OK there?

O: I'm fine if i'm not OK i'll move. Don't worry.

Researcher: Fine. Thank you +++. OK next Next. Anyone can chip in when someone finishes.

O: I noted the TL cover the first slide show most of the women were modern women slim, sexy figures. Type of hair varied so it was natural with artificial and they sort of displayed independent kind of women so women who work for themselves. The second set i saw hair pieces, wigs, Frika products most artificial hair. Third set Revlon, Inecto, Dark and Lovely it's mostly it's seems they are marketing beauty enhancement products. Different kind of products to make you look different.

M: What I saw and what got into my mind was all i could see was glamorous covers, beautiful ladies, and smiles each cover everyone was like smiling. And then also shiny hair all over. That's what i saw.

N: Me the way i noted my things i wasn't even sure what i was noting down hey. i noted down hair products. I didn't really look at what was happening there.

Researcher: It's Ok that's what popped.

M: That's what came to your mind.

N: I just noted down the product names only MPL Oil, Caivil and Inecto.

P: I saw two of my role models. Batsetsane Kumalo and Connie Ferguson. Especially Batsetsane Kumalo, ah beauty. I'm not sure if she had a weave on or natural hair

M: It's a combination i think

Researcher: So its difficult to tell whether its real?

P: Its because she has long hair herself so i couldn't define if it was her hair or weave.

Researcher: So it is like faking it so it looks real. Even the real looking like fake, the thin line

P: No i wouldn't say she's faking it.

Researcher: The kind of lifestyles that i've heard many people referred to glamorous, shiny hair, healthy, role models

M: Beautiful

Researcher: What role does hair play in your life? OK i'll expand a little bit on that: has hair texture or hair length or hair type impacted on your life either positively or negatively may be in the workplace or in the community. How?



P: Because like with us girls it's always your hair looks longer than mine this that. So people i don't know if it's true but people plait their hair, especially if it has growth they plait for a couple of weeks say three four weeks and they go and relax their hair using harsh chemicals on their hair in order for hair to... some people do have naturally long hair some don't.

Researcher: Yes please when someone finishes you can chip in..

Introductions. Code names noted.

O: It depends. From the pictures that we saw of females on those covers none of them really affect my private space that much. But in terms of the natural hair that i chose to go with in terms of locks i find that the stereotype out there is that people who have locks are Rastafarians. That's the stereotype i face outside even at work i can come with my locks visible like this but i know when i have to go into meetings or outside meetings i have to cover my locks just to eliminate somebody looking at me and already thinking I'm a Rastafarian. Those are the social stereotypes that I've come across.

M: For me i think it doesn't really matter whether you have dreadlocks, short or long hair. I naturally have very long hair but i used to be afraid to just cut my hair because i felt that the work that i do people will not really give you respect if you just appear with short hair. Society has this thing of saying that if you have you need to look serious so with short hair mostly people don't what i've observed they don't really take you serious.

Researcher: Why do you think

M: I think in my profession if you just appear simple with simple natural hair they think you're probably still on your entry level or like yah. And its M by the way.

Researcher: What's your field?

M: Law. If you appear with your short hair let's say you just cut it to that level [ear length] someone will just look at you and think she's still probably learning she's still a candidate. You need to look serious, you need to have that serious look.

Researcher: Do you think SA's past like what used to happen during apartheid could have had an influence on how society views?

M: I think so because you see the other problem is that people believe that if you've a weave a long weave you know you're beautiful that's how they define you because we looked so much at those i can't say those no i can't say those people (whispering)

O: Long hair

Researcher: You can say Cacasian hair, long European hair something like that.

M: Another thing is colour. The colour of the hair you see most people she her locks are like blonde i think and you see i've used this colour but when i started working i used to have

problems because people would look at you funny like you can't just appear with your gold hair or your you can't just appear with your so colourful hair. Colour contributes to type of hairstyles that we choose like you see with her (O) she's done but someone may just think she could have left or used black because that is how they define sophisticated. Sometimes as women we feel we can't wear certain colours because there are certain standards that are set.

Researcher: Interesting you talked about weaves and people thinking you're beautiful do you think your hairstyle can define social status?

M: Definitely it does.

Q: I don't know because i don't think your hairstyle can actually say a lot about you because you get people that are actually not doing anything but have blessers. I don't know it's very unprofessional or whatever to say this but its people that are coming out of a cave but you see them like other people care a lot about how they look but not where they're coming from. You may find out that someone has a salary of R5,000 the R4,000 goes to make-up and cosmetics you know so i don't think it actually says a lot about your lifestyle it's just how people are it depends from person to person. some people live for beauty hantsho if they want to spend they spend 90 per cent of their salary on beauty so already they don't live a flashy lifestyle and just wanna to look good.

Reseacher: Is it keeping up with the Joneses or is it just for their personal good?

M: I think it's about keeping up.

Q: Keeping up you know they just wanna stay trendy.

M: And another thing is like value. People value things differently there is someone would tell you that i'd rather buy a car someone will tell you i'd rather walk and buy a house so and someone would tell you OK i'm on a R20,000 salary i'd rather invest this money than to buy a Brazilian weave. So people can look at that person and one who earns R5,000 and actually think ukuthi this one earns better because of how they appear how they look yah. I think the society we live in actually values the look more than what you can actually offer. You understand so

P: But I also think a woman's appearance is important you can't just appear you know just but appearance is very important

O: Hey! Mara.

M: You can't just appear

P: I don't like putting on weaves on i've naturally long hair i prefer I can spend on make up trust me i can but i spend R120 plaiting my hair so it differs from person to person

M: Yes exactly

N: And like now with me like i am not easily influenced by the hairstyles and everything i am a very natural woman. Like my whole life i've never put on a weave or make up. I prefer myself natural 100 per cent natural. Serious I don't wanna to be defined by those weaves saying oh she's putting on a weave it means she's beautiful she's all that you know I enjoy myself natural.

Q: I actually oh sorry I also like as I was saying there are people who spend much I also spend. Personally i spend on hair OK though i'm don't really like put on make up. I put make up but not every day but I actually spend when i buy my make up i'm gonna go for that Bobbi Brown i'm gonna go for the Brazillian because i feel like when i buy something it has to be of good quality.

M: Are you like my sister. Are you my sister? Laughter. I also don't put make up every time it depends on where I am going. But if i'm buying make up i know that i should buy the [Real thing] i can't just go for R10. But it's not like you'll find me flashy all the time like you understand. But if i'm buying a weave I know i'm gonna invest on that weave.

O: True.

Researcher: You talked about blessers. Please elaborate on that.

Q: I think. It's something that i can't even explain but i'll try to explain. A blesser apparently is like em wu

O: Sugar daddy.

Q: Oh yes yah. It's a sugar daddy you have to exchange money for you've to offer your body i think that's how it is because it's usually men like elderly men they can't just give you money and not expect anything in return. it's usually married men. A married man just can't come to me and say oh i love you it's just love there is something that he wants from me it can't be love honestly i've to offer my body and he has to offer its an exchange.

O: So they've to look pretty for them.

Q: Yah they've to look pretty for them and these people can actually spend on them because i mean they've got money for you to actually look for an extra girl you can afford it it's not easy it's not anybody who can you know.

M: Yah

Researcher: Thank you ladies. How would you describe good hair and bad hair?

N: Um Good hair. I think good hair is clean hair that's how i can say

O: By good hair are you referring to the artificial hair or the natural one which one?

M: I think that's where

Researcher: I'm leaving it like that.

M: Exactly I think i get what she's saying

Researcher: How would you describe good hair. You can qualify it. You can choose whether you're talking about natural, artificial or whatever as long as you qualify. What is good hair for you?

Q: Hair that bounces. Laughter

Researcher: So its clean, its hair that bounces

P: To me good hair is naturally rich African hair that's good hair for me.

M: For me good hair is clean hair. Any type of hair but as long as it's clean. You see dreadlocks for me if its clean is good hair

O: If it bounces as well you see you heard this bouncing thing ne. Laughter

M: No i understand what you mean.

Q: There should be movement

Researcher: And then you're saying there is movement hello there is no movement but my hair is clean. i shampooed it in the morning but there is no movement. I can spin and spin but there is no movement

O: But its clean

M: It's clean its good hair

Q: You said i should say what i think

Researcher: Yah I'm asking all of you you said its clean you said its bouncing. Mine is clean but its not bouncing someone else's can bounce but dandruff this and that so

M: Is it still good hair to you that one?

Q: No no. This is good hair as well

Researcher: But it doesn't bounce

Q: Yah it doesn't bounce i guess i just said the first thing that comes to mind but its not the last thing

Researcher: So it bounces its clean any type of hair as long as its clean what else?

Q: Because naturally African hair doesn't really bounce so as we were saying the media actually influences how we see

M: Mine does

Q: Mine actually does (referring to braids)

M: Before i cut my hair i can tell you my hair if i relax it it used to bounce.

Researcher: So its like silly hair go back kind of thing. How much time do you spend reading the magazine looking at the cover and ads?

M: Ok with me i'm that type of person who just don't go through like if i'm i can spend if i have time i can read the magazine like for three hours sitting because i read every that's why i don't just buy magazines just for the sake of buying same goes for the TL i only buy it after reading what's on the cover what might interest me because sometimes what's written there is just not interesting. So i can spend 3 hours reading if i have time

Researcher: Ok let me follow it up that question with another what action do you take after reading the magazine

M: Most definitely. For instance if they're talking about fitness which TL always almost has that column where they talk about fitness, health how to take care of yourself as a lady i immediately put those things into practice.

Q: For me it depends on how they're advertising because i'm a person who believes in seeing. So the moment i see something beautiful but is its just an advert i'm not going to look at it i won't even give it time i believe in seeing great things. It has to look pretty for me to actually give it my full attention.

M: I understand why you work there (nodding towards the wellness centre).

O: Seldom. I seldom read magazines. I don't look through magazines i just look at the covers in the shops that's it I don't buy them that's why Google is there. There is Drum online. I read online.

M: The hard copy is becoming irrelevant

Q: My lunch is finished. See you guys it was nice knowing you.

P: To me i'd buy the magazine if Batssetsane Kumalo is there

O: Role model, role model

P: If Connie Ferguson is there i'll definitely buy the magazine read their stories. I often for the first time when I read the magazine I scan through but on a Sunday afternoon i will re-read the story again properly and go through the hair products.

Researcher: Do you believe like what you see in the ads

P: Not everything. If it's too good to be true then it's not true

Researcher: You've been talking about these glamorous hairstyles what are the financial/economic implications for black women. Someone has already mentioned blessers and there are omashonisa so what are the financial implications. All of you emphasised that black women should look beautiful.

O: I'd say it depends.

N: It depends on what maybe for example you get a person who specifically likes Brazillian weaves you get a person who likes what do you call it 100 per cent natural you get those that like Frika

Researcher: What's your attitude towards hair alteration relaxing, straightening hair

P: I relax and straighten my hair

N: I relax my hair but still somehow most of the time i feel natural this hair is the best hair i feel like sometimes may be when you relax too much something happens in your mind or something like when you get burnt it's not good.

P: It gets over processed the ends get over processed that's what my hairdresser told me.

N: And its not good for our scalp like relaxing too much

O: I think what puts us in a corner is the growth because before i switched to locks i'd find myself having to relax every four weeks

N: You see now

O: Because the growth makes it really difficult to continue combing its fluffy on top here (bottom) its like that way

N: Then you've to relax again and again

O: Then i decided i have to switch to a style that is less time consuming

Researcher: So you used to relax every four weeks?

O: Yah

M: The perks of being a black person

P: But four weeks is too soon four weeks

O: I did not choose this because you know i liked locks its just finding myself at the salon every month just going there with locks i can extend it between six to eight weeks before i can go back again for it to be washed .. or whatever case it may be. But its just less time consuming. If i don't relax i have to plait, plait do i use natural or do i buy fibre. Yeyi my... became too much to worry about those things. Locks it was an economic decision for me to go with this kind of hair

Researcher: Those who relax why do you relax your hair?

N: Easy to comb. Its very easy hey. That's why even sometimes i relax every two weeks so i can easily comb in the morning otherwise if i leave it for three weeks it goes like ouch yeah its a problem

M: The hair becomes smooth there are no problems

N: Stress free.

O: If i recall four years back i don't get a good feeling always at the salon plaiting or relaxing or something hayi

Researcher: What about lengthening hair, is the sole reason making it easier to comb or there are other reasons as well for relaxing?

M: I've never really liked long hair because i naturally have long hair. So for me its not a ... to have long hair i actually cut my hair my hair is actually very small now because i was tired of having long hair my own natural It becomes very tiring

P: Especially when its hot. You're doing this (removing it from neck) all the time.

M: Now i regret actually putting this (long weave) because i have got short hair now but short hair is a problem because you know you must have a tong a straightener you must style it style every morning so its still a problem I think i've to lock my hair

O: No-no

M: You must sell the pony just cut and sell it to me.

Researcher: What is your attitude towards hair enhancements? Weaves and wigs.

P: Wigs for me is a no-no.

O: Why?

P: May be i'm stereotypes I feel wigs are for old people. Even my mother doesn't wear wigs and weaves are expensive i won't wear weaves unless someone pays it for me

O: Blessers.

P: I won't just go to a salon and say you know i want a weave i've never done that. I plait and relax that's all. It cost me R100 to do this (cornrows with braids)

O: This is like R200 every six weeks R200 if i style then it goes to R300 fine but on an average month 200 bucks.

M: It used to be R100 but because there are a lot of people doing it on the market because i know around 2012 i'd a cousin who had locks but she'd do everything R100 but now the numbers are increasing of women who

O: Which makes sense because if you look at the Peruvians their cost anybody will switch to there is a correlation driving everyone to locks

Researcher: Why would you think many women are turning to locks?

O: The cost of maintainance

M: Also i think the confidence people now have that confidence in their own natural hair compared to before because i've seen a lot of hashtags where people will say black women you're beautiful with your own natural hair.

O: So society is being more open or comfortable with their natural hair

M: Like being natural not necessarily hair but i think time is moving wherein now we know that people are.

O: And also in that questionnaire there was a question about why i prefer locks and do i feel pressure from society about my locks. One thing that came to mind is that people with dreadlocks we don't compete if i see a hairstyle i'm like oh i'm gonna try that hairstyle it really nice not Peruvian, Beruvian what else is there and they differ in cost. We don't worry about that.

M: Yah someone will tell you my hair doesn't tangle so you understand. They'll look at someone and will be like OK that one is not doing justice to that weave you understand probably because hers doesn't tangle its straight its beautiful.

O: Listen to that

M: So when people look at you they'll say hers is 100 per cent human hair i'm having Peruvian, Brazilian Mongolian whatever so with you guys (referring to O) i know that most ladies i find with dreadlocks they're sweet like most of the time if i meet a woman at the salon they appear sweet

N: They don't look down on other people

P: Most women who wear weaves don't have hairlines because of plaiting and sewing of weaves

M: But i plait a lot probably because i've a lot of hair

P: But with most women they'll buy hair foods to repair the hairline but it doesn't work.

I'm covered.

Thank you for participating. END