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THE DEVELOPMENT OF MICROAGGRESSIONS IN THE ONLINE NATURAL
HAIR COMMUNITY: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS

by

YASMIN HARRELL

Under the Direction of Sarita Davis, PhD

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores microaggressions in the online natural hair community. Using a thematic analysis, it specifically analyzes conversations about natural hair texture discrimination and /or biases, also known as *curlism*, in natural hair online spaces such as blogs and YouTube videos. This study concludes that hair texture biases and the ways in which Black women with natural hair experience difference in hair texture is multifaceted; therefore, natural hair companies, women in the natural hair community, and the natural hair community are not individually responsible. Each plays a different role in the perpetuation of hierarchy and difference within this community. The themes developed in this research are as follows: The Kink Vs. The Curl, Curlism as Colorism, Insurgence of Hair Texture Biases, and Empowerment of the Natural Hair Community.

INDEX WORDS: Natural hair, Hair texture, Bias, Black Women, Youtube, Blogs

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MICROAGGRESSIONS IN THE ONLINE NATURAL HAIR
COMMUNITY: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS

by

YASMIN HARRELL

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2015

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Yasmin Kalese-Shareece Harrell
2015

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MICROAGGRESSIONS IN THE ONLINE NATURAL
HAIR COMMUNITY: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS

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Georgia State University

May 2015

DEDICATION

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this research project to my Heavenly Father. For without him, I would not have been able to complete this process. I also want to dedicate this to all Black women who have transitioned to wearing their hair in its natural state. I hope that throughout your journey you have found support and learned to love your hair exactly how God meant for it to grow. You my sisters are beautifully and wonderfully made. Last but certainly not least, I want to also dedicate this to my mother and my sister. You both have encouraged and supported me throughout this entire process. I am forever thankful.

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PROLOGUE

On December 12th 2010, I decided to no longer relax my hair and start my natural hair journey. Prior to doing my first big chop, I transitioned for ten months and during this time I did extensive research on natural hair by looking at blogs and YouTube videos. These resources were extremely beneficial as they taught me how to wear protective styles while transitioning, since two different hair textures can be very hard on the hair, and I also learned what to expect after cutting the relaxed ends off. I wore braid outs (where the hair is braided and unbraided in the morning to give the hair a crinkly look) and extension braids for majority of my transition process. At the end of 2010, I decided that I was ready to see my hair in all its natural glory. I went to my hairstylist in Colorado who only cut my relaxed ends off and did not style my natural kinks, so I went home and looked up a natural hair twist-out tutorial on YouTube. After doing the style step by step, I was so disappointed about how my hair turned out. My curls did not look anything like the woman in the YouTube videos; as a matter of fact, my hair did not look like any of the naturalistas' hair in which I aspired.

The first 18 months I struggled with my hair. I did not like the length or my natural curl pattern. One of the first natural hair products that I tried was Miss Jessie's; this product assured its consumers that it turns kinks into curls. Like Miss Jessie's, several products that I tried, made the same promise to their customers; however, I was just as disappointed with the results. Such hair products made me feel as though I needed to tame my hair, because my natural hair texture still needed to be maneuvered. Over the course of 18 months, I wore braids, wore my hair in a poof, and never wore my hair out, because I was discontent with this experience. It was not until my hair grew out that the love-hate relationship that I had with my hair, transformed into me accepting my hair for what it was. Naturally kinky. I began to do wash and gos and let my hair

naturally kink up. My false expectations had distracted me from why I first wanted to go natural, which was to negate Eurocentric conventions of beauty and not assimilate to western culture. As my hair grew, I begin to fall in love with every kink, and sometimes curl that formed.

April 2014, I decided to do a second big chop because I wanted to re-experience my natural hair journey from the very beginning. I noticed the first time I went natural, I hardly took any pictures of my hair in its shorter stages, because I was not happy with my curl pattern or the length. Besides knowing how to style my hair, my second big chop taught me to love my hair in the stages that most naturals wish not to be in; the short stage. Because natural hair tends to grow faster than relaxed hair, I am learning to appreciate the shorter stages while I can. During this process, I noticed that other naturals, who are newly natural, like I did in the beginning, had different expectations when they cut off their relaxed ends. They expected to experience this great amount of liberation coupled with a specific curl pattern, but once I became natural, I noticed that this community that I longed to be a part of was not as liberating as I assumed. Beauty brands such as Miss Jessie's and popular natural hair inspirations cater towards women who have looser curls, meaning a softer gradation of hair. Natural hair beauty brands tend to make products that advertise a defined curl look that supposedly all women with natural hair can achieve. My confusion and negative feelings towards my hair the first time I went natural definitely arose from the way the natural hair community and beauty brands portrayed Black natural hair. I understood from the beginning that women have different natural hair textures, but I had no idea that different hair textures would receive different treatment within the natural hair community, which would eventually make me feel self-conscious about my hair because it did not fall or curl the way I imagined. This experience definitely tainted my natural hair journey. As I became more familiar with the natural hair community, I noticed that beyond the support that it

appears to offer Black women, it is also affected by hair typing which influences hair texture biases. My observation of this system within the natural hair community has led me to the present research inquiry about hair texture discrimination or *curlism* within the online natural hair community.

1 INTRODUCTION

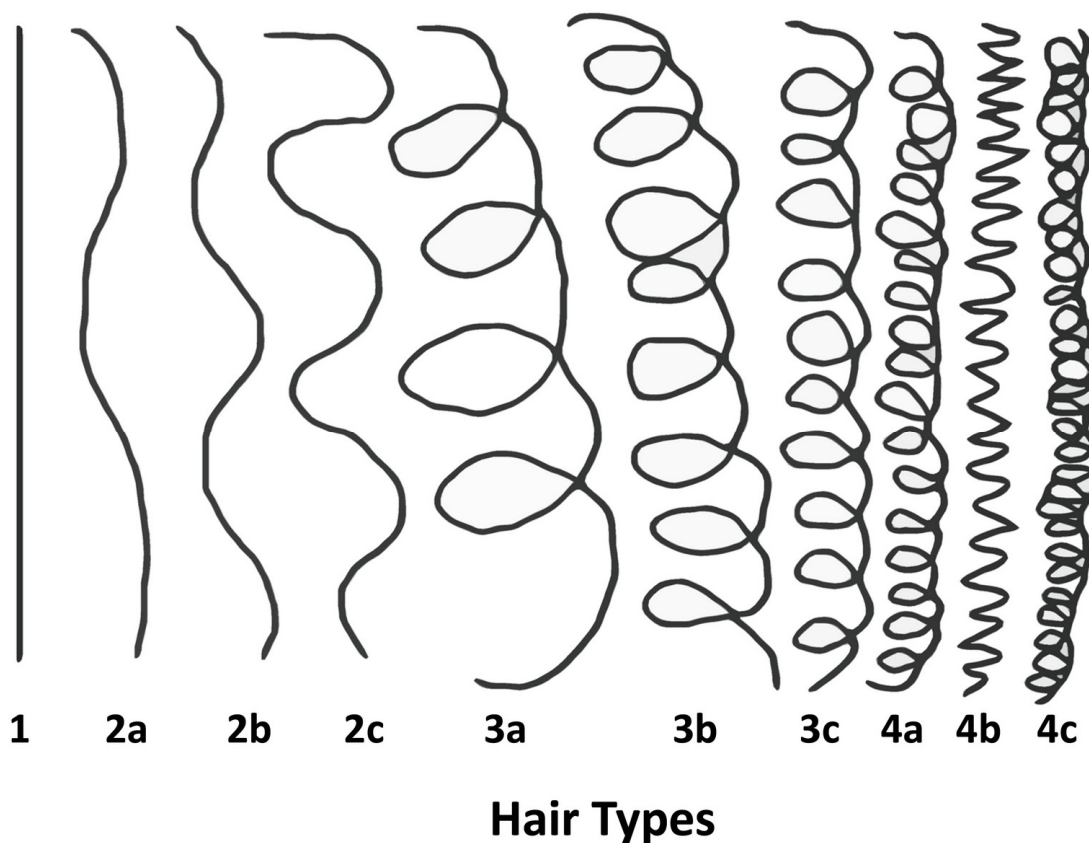
As the popularity of natural hair and its online community continue to rise, the politics of Black hair remain very complex. Spaces such as the workplace, the military, and sometimes educational institutions regulating how Black women wear their hair have been the main topics of academic conversation; however, natural hair communities have attempted to provide a safe space for Black naturals to connect and support one another. Unfortunately by hair typing, which indicates the softness or kinkiness of a woman's curl pattern, the natural hair community has become influenced by *curlism*. The term *curlism* coined by the natural hair community, defines curlism as hair texture discrimination or placing one hair texture above the other. Arguably, it is perpetuated by natural hair bloggers, social media outlets, and beauty brands. The commonly known definition of *curlism* is placing one type of hair texture above the other; this definition is the definition the researcher uses for this research. The role that *curlism* plays within the natural hair community produces hair hierarchy and curl patterns that have a proximity to whiteness, which tend to be ranked at the top. Hair texture, length, and hairstyles have been a reoccurring issue amongst Black women and continue to be a problem in the natural hair community. The definition of natural hair is "hair whose texture has not been altered by chemical straighteners, such as relaxers or texturizers" (blackhair.about.com).

However, over the last 10 years Black women have made a conscious decision to go natural. "According to a study in 2011, there was a 36 percent increase among African-American women who decided to do away with hair chemicals" (Black Like Moi, 2013). Now that natural hair has become more popular among Black women, the image of Black hair continues to evolve. For example, Pantene, the first mainstream hairline to produce products for Black women, believes that they "are creating a new healthy image that says straight hair is not

good hair, but good hair is healthy hair” (Compton, 2005, p. 37). Because more hair companies like Pantene are expanding positive images of Black hair in its natural state, other competing images of Black hair within the natural hair community, such as placing a softer hair texture above a kinkier one, have been ignored. A professor at the University of Delaware, Tiffany Gill posits, “ ‘we can think of that as sort of a victory in some ways, but also not to overshadow that there’s still discrimination against women in certain industries based on how they wear their hair’”(Black Like Moi, 2013). By examining hair texture discrimination, I draw attention to a community of women who have been underrepresented in scholarly research, which leads to a deeper understanding why certain types of natural hair are preferred.

1.1 Background

This research investigates the affects that *curlism* has on Black women in the online natural hair community. It is important to note that Black hair has a rich history that connects to culture, identity, political activity, and have been in a cycle of constant evolution. Black hair has undergone change in political and cultural value, but as the natural hair community began to form, hair typing became an important factor in the process. One of American’s most prominent Black women, Oprah Winfrey, chose to wear her hair in its’ natural state on the cover of her magazine, O in 2012. Because of this decision, Oprah’s cover received controversial remarks. Some Black women commented that Oprah’s hair did not represent a Black woman’s natural hair, unless you are of mixed race. Others said that some Black women’s hair does in fact resemble Oprah’s natural hair texture, and they are not of mixed decent (George-Parkin, 2012). In attempt to help women better understand their hair texture, Oprah’s personal hair stylist, Andre Walker introduced “The Hair Typing System”. The following is an example of the chart:



snazzyhair.blogspot.com

Figure 1.1 Hair Types

The purpose of this system is for women to be able to determine what type of hair they have so they can choose products that best work for their hair, but the circulation of this chart on natural hair sites and blogs are also conveying difference in hair texture. Walker stated, "I always recommend embracing your natural texture. Kinky hair can have limited styling options; that's the only hair type that I suggest altering with professional relaxing" (Wallace, 2011). Natural hair pages have utilized Walker's hair typing system to help new naturals determine their curl pattern and hair products that will work for their hair. In attempts to explain his reasoning, Andre Walker responded:

"It is a fact that kinky hair (my Type 4 definition) is extremely fragile and breaks easily. Even when you are very careful, something as simple as combing can break this texture. It is

very difficult to achieve a longer length when the hair breaks, even with simple combing. That being said, there is the style option of wearing braids, dreads, or twists, which allows the hair to grow longer because it is combed less often. Another style choice is to simply wear a shorter cut, which is very attractive on some women but just not right for others. So when I say to embrace your natural texture, but consider relaxing kinky hair, am I contradicting myself? I don't think so! You see, even relaxed hair can still be worn naturally. If you want a natural look, but find that your kinky hair is difficult to manage, breaks too easily, lacks shine and luster, and limits your preferred styling options, I say feel free to consider a mild chemical relaxer, sometimes called a texturizer, that eases your hair to a more manageable texture and allows you to make peace with your hair" (Wallace, 2011).

Walker's comments demonstrate the hierarchy within the hair typing system, which is shown through his negative and offensive comments about type 4 hair textures. In the following are some naturals' responses to Walker's explanation (all of these responses were found directly below "Andre Talks Down Kinky Hair: A Response" article which was posted on July 11th 2011 on Curlynikki.com):

1. "For a professional, Mr. Walker sounds like a complete idiot! I say we ban the use of his hair typing system (which IMO, causes unnecessary division and is reminiscent of the paper bag test). Let's not refer to our hair by type, which does nothing to help with product selection or styling, and show him and other 'so called professionals' that we are not OK with the sentiment that kinky hair is less than!" (Username: MelMelBee).
2. "If our hair is so fragile (which it actually is), why would he suggest us to chemically alter it? It's better left in its natural state! He's contradictory... seriously" (Username: Moderne Meid).

3. “I am at a loss for words regarding his views on kinky hair. I do not know what to say other than I am extremely disappointed and he has loss complete credibility in my book. Seriously, how can you have natural hair, if your hair has been chemically altered (seriously)? There is nothing natural about that” (Username: Tabitha).

As a result, Black women belonging to the natural hair community are potentially experiencing, if not more issues dealing with idealistic views of beauty in various spaces of their lives. For this reason, the research problem is of important social concern because Black women are still having hair issues, which could possibly affect how they navigate through life, starting with their health. Feature writer for Time Free Press Karen Hill reports, “In 2011, U.S. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin said highly-coiffed hair deters Black women from exercising and cited a recent study, published last December in the Archives of Dermatology, which showed about 40 percent of Black women skip exercising because of hair issues” (Hill, 2013). The following issues also exist in the natural hair community: texture, length retention, maintenance, and exclusion of other Black women who are not natural or going natural. However, the overarching issue that surface in the natural hair community can often contradict the reasons for going natural, which also leads back to the social concern involved in the research problem.

As more Black women go natural, it appears that texture continues to play an influential role in what is seen as beautiful natural hair and length usually follows. Studies have shown “that some reasons Black women decided to go natural are: to follow a healthier lifestyle, to explore curiosity about their natural hair texture, to support their daughters’ hair, and to save the time and energy they spend on relaxers” (Thomas, 2013, p.1). Whatsoever the reason may be, Black women have formed alliances with other Black women who are natural; however, the primary natural hair inspirations for Black women are often times women with a softer gradation

of hair. The popularity of Black women with a softer gradation of hair compared to a kinkier one shows that the process of going natural and having natural hair has again been disrupted by Eurocentric norms of beauty, which could possibly influence what is considered beautiful for natural hair. Overall, the social concern is that *curlism* recreates the issue of Black women aspiring, consciously or unconsciously, for their hair to be attached to racial ambiguity rather than Blackness, coupled with separating a community that is suppose to empower Black women.

This also shows that difference remains an important factor in how Black people perceive themselves and others. For example, since the increase of Black women wearing their hair in its natural state, hair companies have begun to cater to naturally curly hair; however, products appear to have a bias against certain hair textures by putting Black women in different groups according to curl pattern. As a result of the natural hair movement, relaxers have declined. “According to Mintel, ‘Relaxers represent 21% of the Black hair care market with expenditures at \$152 million, down 15% since 2011 due to the natural hair trend’ (Unruly, 2013). It is clear that there has been a shift in the black hair market; however, products made for natural hair such as Miss Jessie’s whose slogan is “turn kinks into curls” and Mixed Chicks perpetuate and influence the differentiation in curl patterns. This could also possibly be stigmatizing Black women from other black women within this community. These products are promoting a looser curl and using a particular type of curl pattern (3A-3C) to advertise an “achievable” curl for Black naturals.

Defined as a group who experiences triple oppression, the theoretical interest of the research problem, specifically utilizing Black feminist thought, focuses on a group who share a cultural connection to investigate how potentially *curlism* affects Black women by exploring the elements of oppression, resistance and empowerment. By using this theoretical framework while

doing a thematic analysis, the researcher is able to speak to the lived experiences of Black women with natural hair on multiple levels, as well as explore the inequality of curls that have spread amongst this group.

This study explores the affects of *curlism* in the natural hair community, and uses Black feminist thought to examine all spaces of life of different Black women with natural hair as they navigate through a society with ingrained practices of colorism. This theoretical framework benefits the research because its focal points are Black women living in the United States, the issues of black womanhood, self-definition, as well as oppression and resistance to that oppression. Black feminist thought is extremely multifaceted but utilizing it to speak to the Black natural hair community allows the researcher to collect hair stories that illuminate the unsettling issues in this community, such as *curlism*, which could affect the overall progress of the Black woman. Black women have a particular relationship with their hair, one that other women do not experience; therefore, a theory that is specific to a certain group of people, such as black feminist thought, greatly assisted the researcher in understanding the research problem.

Black feminist thought incorporates multifaceted ideas to produce different worldviews, self-reliance, self-definition, and overall independence for black women. Author Patricia Hill Collins explains, “Suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for the dominant groups to rule because the seeming absence of dissent suggests that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization” (1998, p. 5). Meaning, that the unheard ideas of black women advance social inequalities. However, as a historically oppressed group black women have reconstructed their thought processes to not only advocate for women’s emancipation and empowerment, but also resist social injustices geared towards black women that feminism alone does not address. Black feminist thought allows Black women to evaluate

their lived experiences through their own defined worldviews, which is demonstrated in the thematic analysis. The theoretical interest of this research is to explore a problem through the lens of a particular group in order to gain insight on the constraints that prevents the natural hair community from empowering all Black women that belong to it.

1.2 Statement of Problem

From the growing popularity of natural hair social media pages, YouTube channels, and bloggers, the natural hair community has influenced Black women to wear their hair in its natural state. However, self-love of all curl patterns has not been consistently conveyed within this community. Conversely, “the same folks who have been talking about just getting over it and loving you while dismissing the lack of representation of Type 4 naturals and how that impacts the core of the natural hair community and who to this day are being told that their hair texture aint it” (Jouelzy, 2014). As a result, the problem is that Black women continue to experience controversy over their hair that affects their everyday lives. Furthermore, reoccurring issues over Black hair, even the emergence of the natural hair community has succumbed to creating a hair hierarchy system. Scholar Paulette M. Caldwell adds, “Whether motivated by politics, ethnic pride, health, or vanity, I was outraged by the idea that an employer could regulate or force me to explain something as personal and private as the way that I groom my hair” (Caldwell, 2004, p. 367). This study analyzes online spaces where Black women potentially experience hair texture discrimination. The general population studied is women belonging to the online natural hair community. This study examines the ways in which Black women are affected by *curlism* through thematically analyzing Youtube videos and blog posts discussing hair texture discrimination, as well as the comments that follow the posts.

1.3 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the different ways that *curlism* affect Black women in the online natural hair community by examining conversations and comments. This thematic content analysis targets Black women who are 18 years or older who have been natural at least 2 years and/or natural all of their lives. This study examines three research questions: 1) What do women value about going natural? 2) What challenges/biases do natural women encounter on their journey? 3) How do women resist the oppressions they encounter? All relationships investigated are primarily focused on analyzing hair texture discrimination, not particularly the environment in which it occurs.

1.4 Significance of Study

The significance of this study is to illuminate an issue that is not discussed in present literature. The focus of the study is to explore the experiences of Black women belonging to the natural hair community and the issues that they experience by having a particular type of natural hair. Past studies have explored the motivations for Black women going natural and the problems that women have had with wearing their hair in its natural state in the workplace, but there has been no observations exploring problems that are occurring with Black women who belong to the natural hair community. Because of the lack of academic discussion, there is a need for more research on the natural hair community, particularly, the experiences that affect the overall condition of Black women and beauty. This research contributes to building more conversation surrounding the natural hair community/movement and the happenings of microaggressions within it that appear to be missing from present research.

Unlike past research, this study does not seek to analyze the binaries of natural hair compared to the dominant standard of beauty; instead the focus is to primarily focus on binaries

that exist within the online natural hair community alone. But to be clear, the higher placement of a softer hair texture over a kinkier one does have a relationship with whiteness being placed above signifiers of blackness; however, white and black comparisons are not the focus of this study.

This research may lead to a solution that eliminates Black women from experiencing hair texture discrimination within and outside the natural hair community. By identifying the problem and how it affects this particular population of people, possible research that needs to be conducted on the natural hair community in the future is discovered. This study informs the discipline of African American Studies by contributing new insights about Black women from their own perspectives. In addition, this research informs the ways that the natural hair community and natural hair beauty brands can improve and /or eliminate hair typing of curl patterns, which influence bias.

Black hair is a continuing conversation because of the complex relationship established between hair and the Black woman. According to author Cheryl Thompson, “While black hair might seem like fun to outsiders, given the plethora of styling options at a woman’s disposal, beneath each style there is a deeply personal story and a lot of scalp damage that for some is irreversible” (2009). As a result, numerous Black women have transitioned from chemically processed or relaxed hair to wearing their hair in its natural state; however, hair typing began to play a major identifier of natural hair as the community began to take form. That being so, the exploration of hair typing needed to occur, due to the conflicting difference of hair texture that has been created within the natural hair community.

1.5 Nature of Study

This research utilizes a thematic content analysis in order to extract themes from the discussions in the online natural hair community about natural hair discrimination. The thematic analysis includes three Youtube videos and two natural hair blogs. The video and blog posts both provide an overall interpretation of the research problem. According to authors of *Applied Thematic Analysis*, Greg Guest and Kathleen M. Macqueen, a thematic analysis “move beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is themes” (2012, p. 10). This form of analysis in qualitative research uses codes to develop the identified themes and then apply the themes to future research.

The process for a thematic analysis includes data compliance, developing codes, looking for themes from the codes, review and defining themes, and produce findings. The relationship between the codes is graphically displayed chapter 4. Thematic analysis “is still most useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set” (Guest and Macqueen, 2012, p. 11). Furthermore, this study informs and draws attention to a group experiencing a significant problem, and through the exploration of hair texture discrimination in online settings, the research data obtained reveals how Black women are affected.

1.6 Research Questions:

The overarching research question for this study includes the following: What role does curlism play in the natural hair community?

1. What do women value about going natural?
2. What challenges/biases do women encounter on their natural hair journey?
3. How do women resist the oppressions they encounter?

Within the context of this study *curlism* is defined as hair texture discrimination, or placing one type of hair above the other. In order to understand how curlism is created and works within the natural hair community, these questions are able to provide a deeper insight. The overarching research question(s) provide guidance for the thematic content analysis by examining if curlism has personally affected Black women, and exploring the ways in which natural hair beauty brands help or add to the research problem.

All questions that follow the overarching research questions were in relation to *curlism* experienced in the natural hair community, specifically in the digitally space. Bloggers and Vloggers have created an online space to discuss curlism, which ironically acts as a vehicle for curlism and how it moves throughout the natural hair community.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that explores the research problem is Black feminist thought. Black feminist thought speaks to Black women's relationship with one another, employers, and families and communities. This critical social theory can be considered African-centered because it speaks to "the convergence of race, class, and gender oppression of U.S slavery (which) shaped all subsequent relationships that women of African descent had within Black American families and communities, employers, and among one another" (Collins, 1998, p. 6). Even more so, Black feminist thought allows the worldviews of Black women to be included, which gives this group the opportunity to challenge the "stereotypical images of black women that permeate popular culture and policy" (Collins, 1998, p. 7).

In addition, Black feminist thought seeks to connect all women of African descent to one another; therefore, crossing national barriers, Black feminist thought in a transnational context seeks to speak to black women's experiences in relation to the process of colonialism under

racial, sexist, and classist circumstances. African feminist Obioma Nnaemeka explains, “As people of African descent, our attention should not be solely on how blacks in Africa and those in the African Diaspora are *related* to each other, but also how they *relate* to each other” (Collins 1998, p. 257). Therefore, by using this theoretical framework, this research not only gives voice to Black women living in the United States, but also shows how other Black women living in the African Diaspora are interconnected.

With this framework the researcher is able to decenter the discussion from a white/black binary, and using an independent Black feminist consciousness that is able to discuss the common issue of *curlism* exclusively experienced by Black women. However, the complication of using Black feminism for this research is that arguably white women remain at the center. But if the researcher places Black feminist thought in a transnational context, the lived experiences of hair texture discrimination can reflect all experiences of women living in the African Diaspora. It is very possible to include women outside the United States because of online access, but women not living in the United States are excluded from the study.

Through the employment of this theory the researcher discusses *curlism* in the context of Black women speaking about their own lived experiences in the context of oppression, empowerment, and resistance. This allows the researcher to eliminate the white/black binary, and only incorporate the common concerns of women of African descent. Using a thematic analysis, the researcher is able to develop themes through the exploration of *curlism* and analyze those themes utilizing Black feminist thought.

1.8 Natural Hair Terminology

Due to the context of the research, significant definitions are provided below:

Natural hair- Hair whose texture has not been altered by chemical straighteners, such as relaxers or texturizers (blackhair.about.com)

Afro: hairstyle that is rounded in shape and naturally curly coiled hair (Nique1076, 2011).

All of the following definitions are from Naturallycurly.com.

Blogger- a person who writes their opinion and observations online

Vlogger- a person who records himself or herself talking about their experiences and opinions

Curlism- The belief that a particular curl pattern is better than another

Hair typing system- system details the varieties of wavy, curly and coily hair

3A- Curly Twirly (Well-defined curls and definition, naturally big and loose curls)

3B- Curly Spirally (Well-defined springy curls, bouncy ringlets)

3C- Curly Coily (Kinky, tightly curled)

4A- Coily Springy (Tightly coiled with a S pattern)

4B- Coily Crimpy (Less defined, the curls have a Z pattern)

4C- Coily Ziggly (Wiry, and course)

1.9 Assumptions

The purpose of this research is influenced by multiple assumptions that have arisen from my observations of the natural hair community and natural hair beauty brands. First, I noticed that often times when Black women go natural they automatically expect for their natural hair to have a similar texture of a woman who is of mixed race. As a result of this expectation, some naturals do not wear their natural hair out for a long period of time until it is a certain length, so their curls can “fall” more. Secondly, I noticed that a lot of the products geared toward Black

naturals are ultimately catering to a softer gradation of hair and/or advertising achievable looser curls for women with tighter/kinkier hair. Lastly, the hair typing system is personally alarming to me, because the creation of yet another difference between Black women is being established in the Black community. Taking a different but similar form of straight hair v. natural hair, the natural hair community seems to be forming groups based on softer and kinkier hair. These observations led me to believe that hair texture discrimination has infiltrated the natural hair community, which ultimately have affected the different areas of life for black women; therefore, I assume the natural hair community and natural hair beauty brands are responsible for creating and practicing *curlism*, which affect how Black women and other people view them. I assume that hair texture discrimination can also affect the progression of Black life and opportunity.

1.10 Scope, Limitations, and Delimitations

This qualitative study uses a thematic content analysis to gain deeper insight on hair texture discrimination in the natural hair community. The study's limitations are the small population sample; therefore, this study does not represent every Black woman in the natural hair community. Finally, the last limitation in this research is introducing the discussion of *curlism* and the natural hair community into scholarly conversation; therefore, further research needs to be conducted. This can also be seen as progressive, since it is introducing a community that has been left out of academic research.

1.11 Summary

This chapter is used to introduce the research. Historically, Black women have always had a complex relationship with their hair and the emergence of the natural hair community and natural hair beauty brands have added to the complexities of Black hair. The need to provide voice to the lived experiences of Black women belonging to this community helped me choose Black

feminist thought as a theoretical framework. All assumptions and limitations are identified above and the researcher understands how both affect the overall results of the study. In the following chapter, review of past literature pertaining to Black hair, colorism, and beauty brands is analyzed and the gaps of the studies included are also identified.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section includes a review of literature that explores the politics of Black hair through a historical and contemporary lens. This literature review illuminates what scholars have found in previous studies closely related to the current study, as well as show what is missing. For clarity, a historical review of the literature is necessary because it shows the significance of Black hair; thus, also showing the overall significance of the current study. This section includes the emergence of natural hair in the late 1960's-1970's and the politics that surround Black hair during this era, and evolution of Black hair thereafter. In addition, previous studies have built upon the idea that Black women have a complex relationship with their hair, and the images portrayed in the media also play a role in the difficulty of defining the relationship between the Black woman and her hair. While researching, the researcher did a broad search of Black hair and colorism. The historical literature review, followed by a traditional literature review provides an appropriate foundation for the later exploration of the affects of *curlism* in the online natural hair community. This literary exploration provides deeper insights on the development of colorism and curlism, which developed later in the natural hair community.

2.1 Pre-Enslavement/ Post Enslavement

Black hair carries great significance and even greater social baggage. Before Black hair was in bondage, the variety of hair texture ranging from “deep ebony, kinky curls of the Mandingos to the loosely curled, flowing locks of the Ashanti” Black hair shared social and

cultural significance (Byrd and Tharps, 2001). The significance of Black hair in African culture ranges from revealing one's status in society, rank within communities, wealth, age, religion, and marital status. Furthermore, the importance of hair in African societies surpassed social significance; it was believed that the bigger the hair, the closer one was to the divine. As authors Ayana D. Byrd and Lori L. Tharps analyze the transition of the meaning of Black hair from Africa to America in their text *Hair Story*, they explain that to African people, "its social, aesthetic, and spiritual significance has been intrinsic to their sense of self for thousands of years" (Byrd and Tharps, 2001, p.7). Although the meaning of Black hair changed as the slave trade emerged, its' impact on the identity of African people still play a crucial role.

Historical research conducted by Byrd and Tharps shows that prior to the slave trade, European explorers, who were only trading goods and not people, were intrigued with Black hair and its complex texture and style; however, the Europeans took advantage of the Africans' willingness to trade human cargo. This enlarged the slave trade from a few slaves to over 20 million men, women, and children being traded and forced into slavery over almost a four hundred year time period. This period is also known as Maafa, or the African Holocaust, which "is a crime against humanity and is recognized as such by scholars who have documented the primary culpability of mainly, but not limited to, Europeans in the ongoing Holocaust against African people" (Shahadaah, 2012). For example, before transporting slaves, Europeans shaved the heads of new human cargo supposedly for sanitary reasons, but "the shaved head was the first step the Europeans took to erase the slave's culture and alter the relationship between the African and his or her own hair" (Byrd and Tharps, 2001). As a result of this, the relationship between Black women and their hair became very complex.

In comparison to the excessive time spent for hair grooming, during enslavement, slaves working in the field had little to no time to groom their hair, as well as any tools to untangle their hair. Slaves wore head rags to protect their hair from the sun, but when hair diseases such as ringworms or lice occurred, wearing a head rag over the head only made the infection worse and left behind scabs that created breakage and baldness. On the contrary, house slaves who usually were light skinned and did not have kinky hair had more time to do their hair, and often they wore wigs to imitate their masters (Byrd and Tharps, 2001). As a result, the difference between *good* and *bad* hair become a part of Black culture and “straight hair translated to economic opportunity and social advantage” (Byrd and Tharps, 2001, p.17). For this reason, Byrd insists that the development of good hair and bad hair was an immediate result of slaves receiving better treatment according to lightness of skin tone and softness of hair texture.

2.2 The Development of *Good* and *Bad* Hair

As research suggests, the emergence of good hair and bad hair dates back to slavery where it was evident to slaves that social advantages were afforded to slaves with lighter skin and softer hair. Scholar Tracy Owens Patton, director of African-American Studies and Diaspora Studies at the University of Wyoming with experience in research topics such as the interdependence between gender, race and power explains “this thinking creates a hierarchy of skin color and beauty that was promoted by slave masters and slavery” (Patton, 2006). The socially constructed idea of good hair and bad hair has historical roots in the Black community; furthermore, affecting the way in which Black people view themselves and one another. In Whitney Bellinger’s *Why African American Women Try To Obtain ‘Good Hair’* study, she explores how Black women choose to define ‘good hair’ and their motivations to alter or wear their hair in its natural state. Some of the younger African-American girl participants believed

that just because they want to straighten their hair that they are not trying to imitate whiteness. However, there were participants who shared that they did not straighten their hair as a result of racial pride being taught in their homes. Even so, more negative connotations were attached to nappy or kinky hair, due to the fact that “some women regarded good hair as manageable, while bad hair is unmanageable” (Gilchrist, 2011, p. 15).

Bellinger includes a variety of young women belonging to other races as well, in order to get the opinion of women who do not identify as a Black women to give their reasoning why they believe African-American women alter their hair. Out of the responses from the African American participants, Bellinger notices that the primary reason why Black women chose to alter their hair is because they are trying to obtain ‘good hair’, which can be argued as an unattainable standard of beauty for Black women. Bellinger argues, that ‘good hair’ for “Black men and women is an unattainable myth perpetuated by generations of (mostly) Black women. Nevertheless “African- American women still continue to attain this ideal” (Bellinger, 2007, p.70).

2.3 The Black Power Movement

As time progressed, during 1965-1979 the Afro and the Natural emerged in Black culture and essentially changed the politics of Black hair. Byrd and Tharps argue “hair came to symbolize either a continued move toward integration in the American political system or a growing cry for Black Power and nationalism” (Byrd and Tharps, 2001). Black hair then became more than just a style, but it asserted a connection to African ancestry; however, by the end of 1979 the Afro evolved into simply a hairstyle, and no longer carried as much political weight. When actress Bo Derek wore cornrows in a 1979 film, “for the rest of the world it showed that anyone could wear that hairstyle, no matter what the color of the skin. For African-

Americans, however, it symbolized the end of the ‘Black is Beautiful’ movement...” (Natural and Nappy, 2007). Nevertheless, “some African -American women have considered changing their hair from its natural state to be an act of self -hatred. Others especially in the 1960’s began viewing hair as a political statement and a symbol of the Black power movement” (Bellinger, 2007).

Black people wearing Afros, a “ hairstyle that is rounded in shape and naturally curly coiled hair” (Nique1076, 2011), during the Black power movement signified a rebellion against white society. Today some Black women feel, “that women who wear their hair natural may be showing a desire to go against Eurocentric beauty standards, but ultimately it’s not a political statement... African women had similar thoughts and felt hair is not that important because it is just a part of them” (King and Niabaly, 2012). Believing that Black women should have more hair information accessible to them at an early age, scholars King and Niabaly imply that this will help them make “conscious hair choices and feel comfortable to wear their hair however they want to without fearing to be stigmatized” (2012, p.15). It is unclear if that is really an attainable solution.

The Black power movement also introduces another element about Black hair- resistance. Looking at power and resistance, Rosa Weitz posits, “For the most part, sociological studies of power and resistance focus at this explicitly political level, where social movements arise” (Weitz, 2001, p. 668). In Weitz’s research, it is first important to define resistance and the level of effectiveness within the resistance. In contrast to hair being used as a tool for rebellion during the Black Power Movement, Weitz’s findings imply that women of color “emphasize accommodation to mainstream ideas about attractiveness” (Weitz, 2001, p. 672) as a way to utilize their hair to seek power. Therefore, the act of resistance is not as emphasized as much as

the act of accommodation. Weitz includes that depending on what ethnicity that the individual belongs to, depends on what they find attractive; however, conventional attractiveness are not negated by these groups, because women are drawn to power. Weitz further argues, “results from numerous research studies (that) suggest that conventional attractiveness is, in fact, a realistic route to power for women, in both intimate relationships and careers” (Weitz 2001, p.673). Therefore, physical characteristics that are not seen as conventionally attractive, such as Black natural hair, can affect the socioeconomic status of individuals. The Black Power Movement started as resisting the dominant standard of beauty, but the realities of the lack of opportunity for people during this time outweighs political intent of wearing hair in its natural state.

The evolution of Black hair politics during this time period did not last long, but it did provide a space for Black people, particularly Black women, to oppose white standards of beauty and reclaim their blackness. Despite these motivations, the ideological shifts strained away from pursuing a Black aesthetic and had more political than cultural ties.

Bryd considers “a new way of defining beauty may seem an unlikely tenet for a revolutionary movement. But for Blacks in America, a new way of looking at themselves was as revolutionary as most anything could be” (Byrd and Tharps, 2001, p.59). However, alternative Black standards of beauty are mostly focused on Black women; Author Audrey Elisa Kerr, argues that hair politics are exceptionally gendered, which in this case, make Black women the main victims of the racialized values of skin color and hair texture.

Author William Cross’s examination of the Black Power Movement reveals that this particular movement promotes a change in Black identity by allowing Black people to achieve a group identity. However, this does eliminate issues of assimilation, alienation, and white racists, instead “the good and bad labels functions as reminders of slavery analogous with other forms of

discrimination such as the brown-paper-bag test used years ago to categorize, separate, and even degrade members of the Black community based on their skin color” (Bank, 2000; cited by Gilchrist, 2001, p.5). However, research indicates that during this period “racial consciousness and Black pride” were thereby encouraged and “were especially powerful because they represented a rejection of hegemonic and ideological views of race and color that deemed anything light or close to European as superior” (Wilder, 2010, p.187).

According to Wilder, during this time period skin color did not separate Blacks from other Blacks and the younger generation viewed darker skin and natural hair as an important factor in the ‘Black is beautiful’ ideology (2010, p.187). Wilder references various scholars’ arguments that explain why the political and ideological shifts made in the 1970’s that did not have what it needed to maintain longevity. This shows that the ‘Black is Beautiful’ movement of the early 1960’s was instrumental in working to destroy the stereotypes associated with varied shades of skin, yet it was not entirely successful (Breland, Coard, Raskin 2001). Going into the 1980’s, Black women who were natural transitioned back to chemical relaxers, as a result of wanting to achieve a professional look for employment purposes. Wilder writes, “Despite the perception that colorism is a distant memory, contemporary research on colorism indicates otherwise” (2001,p. 188). This suggests that colorism still exists within the Black community, which also includes hierarchies within hair texture gradation. The differentiations in hair texture are key factors in colorism; as a result, curlism (hair texture discrimination) remains strongly linked to the rich history of colorism.

Moving into the 20th century, with the invention of hair softener along with a hot comb created by Madame C.J. Walker, Walker ““attempted to shift the significance of hair away from concerns of disavowing African ancestry”” (Patton, 2006, p. 29). Patton explains that Walker’s

attempt became problematic when the Black Power Movement began to emerge. Patton includes Jones and Shorter-Gooden's arguments that states " 'Not every woman who decides to straighten her hair or change the color of her eyes by wearing contacts believes that beauty is synonymous with whiteness' " (Patton, 2006, p.29). But the influence of Madam C.J. Walker is still very prevalent in the Black hair community. Whether straight hair is believed to reflect whiteness or not, Madam C.J. Walker created products that are intended to enhance Black hair; however, while trying to help the maintenance of Black hair, her products also promote the alteration of Black hair. In attempt to reinforce self-esteem and Black female independence, Madame C.J. Walker was "accused of imposing white standards on Black women" (Tingle, 1989).

Scholar Zimitri Erasmus believes that hair is sexualized, gendered, and political; therefore, in her research she examines Black hair treatment and its contradicting identities. Erasmus uses hair to measure race and class because she argues, "Black hair is politicized by class and gender. It is also racialized. The vocabularies of hair in Black discourses are rich, indicating both the importance of hair and its complex politics" (1997, p.12). Furthermore, the range of texture in Black hair also indicates difference, which creates racial hierarchies in the Black community. Erasmus refers to historical events such as colonization to emphasize the value and hierarchal system developed during this time that affect the livelihood of Black women and their connection to their hair.

2.4 Legislation

Furthermore, it is also believed that the way in which Black women choose to wear their hair also affects their employment opportunities. Scholar Tracey Owens Patton argues that women have control over their hair, "however, some African-American women have lost their jobs due to their hairstyle preference, which was deemed 'too ethnic'" (Patton, 2006, p.37). In

such cases, some Black women are not willing to go through great lengths such as losing their job, in order to have a personal hairstyle preference.

Patton includes court cases in her argument that show when women of color are fired from a job due to refusing to adhere to the company's hairstyle policy. These employers rarely suffer consequences for their policies. Cases such as the *Rogers v. American Airlines* began happening in the late 1980's and multiple lawsuits and claims remained pending for a long period of time. While Patton includes free choice of hairstyle in her argument, the lawsuits and claims indicate that Black women are subjected to choosing between their job and their personal hairstyle preference, because some employers prohibit African inspired hairstyles in the workplace. Policies have also expanded to the military level, where the military created and enforces policy-prohibiting hairstyles primarily worn by African-American women.

Dr. Brittney Cooper, an assistant professor of Women's and Gender Studies and Africana Studies at Rutgers University, writes, "But the specificity of these guidelines encodes a belief that something fundamental to Black women's personhood and physical presence is excessive, unruly and must be subject to military discipline" (Cooper, 2014). As a scholar of Black Feminist thought, race, and gender in popular culture, Copper explains that it is not new that institutions feel the need to regulate Black bodies, but Cooper claims that Black women have a huge part as well in regulating or "policing" other Black women's bodies; for example, family members being concerned with employment opportunities if their relatives start to wear their hair in its natural state. For this reason, Copper insists that Black women succumb to the regulations to "protect themselves from being looked down upon or treated unprofessionally" (Cooper 2014). The practice of hair straightening was not seen as that big of an issue for Black women, as it was for Black intellectuals such as Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Dubois. Majority of Black

women “felt straightened hairstyles were not about emulating Whites but having a modern hairstyle” (Cooper, 2014).

2.5 Colorism and Curlism in the Black Community

Before we address curlism, we must explore the concept of colorism. Empirical research on colorism attempts to provide an explanation of its existence in the Black community by focusing on its creation and evolution through pre-civil rights, the Black power movement, civil rights, and post civil rights time periods. The discussion of colorism in “historical and contemporary literature reveals that skin color of African Americans has exerted powerful and persistent influences on societal attitudes toward and treatment of Blacks, within both White and Black cultures” (Breland, Coard, and Raskin, 2001). Difference in treatment based on the lightness or darkness of skin color influences the way in which Black people view themselves and how other people in society view them as well. The influential role of skin color creates “different levels of symbolism for African-Americans and there exists a preponderance of colloquial (both positive and negative) terms used to describe their various shades of skin” (Breland, Coard, and Raskin 2001). Similar to using hair typing to describe hair texture, terms such as blue-black, tar baby, red-bone, and high yellow are used to describe dark to light skin tones. However, tar baby and blue-black is used to assign dark skin with negative connotations, compared to light bright used to describe light skin. This is also seen when describing hair texture; nappy is often used to describe kinky hair, which is a term sometimes viewed as offensive or negative.

In “Revisiting “Color Names and Color Notions A Contemporary Examination of Language and Attitudes of Skin Color Among Young Black Women”, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of North Florida, Dr. JeffriAnne Wilder, writes, “the internalization

of light-skinned women as the most beautiful Black women has pervaded virtually every literary, theoretical, and empirical body of work on colorism” (2010, p.193). Thereby, showing that colorism still counteracts solidarity in the Black community, which creates issues surrounding light and dark skin tones that become attached to positive or negative connotations of hair texture. The data collected in Wilder’s study shows the language of colorism by asking participants to identify color names that they often heard. The color names were associated with light, medium, and dark skin tones, and majority of the names that described darker skin tones, were negative descriptors. However, Wilder found that there were no negative descriptions for Black women who were considered medium skin tone. As a scholar whose interests are researching the “contemporary” experiences of Black Americans, race relations, and gender issues, Wilder states, “Despite the few names offered, there is some indication that the experiences of women in the middle are quite different from those of their light and dark counterparts, suggesting that colorism is a three-tiered structure rather than a binary construction” (2010, p.191). Yet, being in the middle does not create an imbalance in the Black community’s value system. Meaning, that light skin is still held to a higher standard, which socially divides Black women even further from one another.

Furthermore, the proximity to whiteness still plays a role in the development of the differentiation between hair textures in the Black community. In her work, Audrey Kerr utilizes *The Paper Bag Principle* to explore the impact and significance of class and skin complexion within Black communities. Throughout the development of this cultural study, Kerr also includes phenotype and hair texture in her exploration of Black folklore and the relationship between intraracial and racial discrimination. Employing the state of Washington, D.C., a few other states, and students who attended Howard University, Kerr reaffirms that the “proximity to

whiteness is still a passport to access and opportunity. Black America's telling of this legacy manifests itself, in part, in the form of paper bag lore" (4-introduction). The complexion consciousness produced through rituals, legends, rhythms, songs, and fiction about black life revealed the ideas of race, class, and color, as well as the present and future experiences that a black woman would have, especially concerning her skin color and hair texture. Also, "because of their skin tone, many light-skinned Blacks historically looked down upon other Blacks, distancing themselves through many social clubs and organizations" (Wilder, 2010, p. 193).

The procedure for this cultural study was developed through a large number of interviews from Howard University students. To participate in the study, participants had to live in Washington, D.C., identify as African-Americans, be Howard alumni or faculty, and be religious leaders and or members of a district church congregation. There were so many Howard University students participants because Howard University had and still does have the most historical significance within the city concerning Black life. Kerr's findings suggest that hair politics are exceptionally gendered, which in this case, make Black women become the main victims of the racialized values of skin color and hair texture. Therefore, hair texture does have a significant role in defining one's closeness to whiteness and blackness; furthermore, affecting an individual's believed advancements and opportunities in life.

However, Russell-Cole, Wilson, and Hall argue, "African-Americans in the medium-brown range, by far the vast majority on the bell-shaped curve of skin color distribution, are typically least concerned about skin" (2013, p. 167). Meaning that since, "brown-skinned" Black people are in the middle they disregard the color dynamics in the black community, because they have not experienced colorism. This implication is conflicting because to some degree

advantages or disadvantages are promoted through skin color and hair texture; therefore, it does not matter if you fall in between light or dark on a socially constructed color spectrum.

Through the incorporation of empirical studies in author William E. Cross 's work, he explores and re-examines the ways in which self and group identity is developed in the Black community. Cross seeks to eliminate self-hatred as the main argument for the issues within the development of Black identity. For example, he includes the studies of Kenneth and Mamie Clark, who conducted one series of doll tests on Black children, as well as other tests that explored self-consciousness and racial identification. The findings of these tests reveal that “children were not orienting themselves according to an awareness of belonging to socially defined groups; instead, the children made comparisons and achieved greater degrees of self-differentiation based on the properties of their bodies” (Cross, 1991, p. 19). Therefore, dark skinned children would compare themselves with dark skinned figures, and light skinned children would do the same with light skinned figures. These findings suggest that colorism is implemented at an early age in the Black community, and the dark groups within Black society tend to suffer from negative group identity attitudes and receive personality damage.

Nevertheless, by applying this to current research, it is evident that differentiation is very prominent in the Black community, and with that being so, the Black natural hair community has created two different groups based on hair texture. Cross includes in one of the final analysis in *Shades of Black*, that identity change can be a result of one carrying over old components that lead back to an old self or transformation of “old elements to new elements” (Cross, 1991, p.207). Because of the history of Black hair, hair can be considered as one of the primary indicators of identity for Black women. Black women deciding to wear their hair in its natural state negates self-hatred and assimilation, but it could also sometimes denies Black affiliation.

Meaning that there is difference between a Black woman who has looser curls and lighter skin and a Black woman who has tighter curls and darker skin. Exploring this difference contributes to the exploration of the affects of natural hair texture discrimination, or curlism in the online natural hair community, in relation to social problems. Researchers explain “because these ideas of light skin have been so ingrained within the psyche of many Black women, there is no question that these internalized scripts are indeed verities in the everyday lives of these women” (Wilder, 2010, p. 194). Which affect the ways in which Black women perceive themselves and their decisions in personal hairstyle choices. Furthermore, mass media has also influenced the perception of Black hair.

2.6 Mass Media/ Self Perceptions

The media uses its platform to advertise products that perpetuate hair texture biases by showing products that cater to a softer gradation of hair. King and Niably’s research findings indicate this to be true. For example, Black hair magazines use attractive descriptors, such as “beautiful”, “long” or “flowing” to describe straight hair. In the media, “often times, media portray white women with straight hair as the beauty ideal” (King and Niabaly, 2012, p.4). In this study the length of hair is found to be amongst the highest-ranking category when it comes to portraying hair, or rather a certain type of hair. Natural hair ranked the fourth highest and curly and full/thick hair is ranked seventh and eighth. However, most of the participants agreed that Black hair magazines are extremely diverse, but the ranking of what is depicted most beautiful negates Black natural beauty. More than 50% of the participants included in this study agree that advertisements in Black hair magazines influence their hair care and styling practices, and play a role in what they believe to be physically attractive. The proximity to whiteness, which is colorism, is held to a higher standard within the Black community, which is colorism.

Curlism uses the same characteristics, softer gradation of hair, also close to whiteness, which places a softer texture of hair over a kinkier one.

Therefore, Black hair politics continue to be extremely complex and whatever the reason may be behind Black women relaxing or wearing their hair in its natural state, Black women still have a difficult time navigating through life with their hair texture. In dealing with conversation surrounding Black hair, interviewer Mary Huelsbelk interviewed cinematographer Regina Kimbell to discuss the *Nappy Roots project*. The significance of the year 2008 is that it marks the year when the growing popularity of natural hair and the natural hair community builds momentum.

Researcher Regina Kimbell described her daughter's experience in Africa with her host family to show that the Afro did not always mean Afrocentric in Africa. The same images that project a certain type of beauty in America also circulate on an international level; therefore, Kimbell daughter's host family did not approve of her Afro; they thought it was unattractive. Kimbell's film *Nappy Roots* examines the role that images play on black hair and Huelsbelk ask how Kimbell describes her own hair growing up. Kimbell responded, "Nappy was probably worse than the 'n' word. I didn't think growing up Black with nappy hair that I would be celebrating it the way I am now" (Kimbell, 2008, p.54). Kimbell used a variety of resources to conduct her research for the project, including the library and hairstylists. Kimbell collected 200 hours of footage and interviewed several people. Describing a study within a study, Huelsbelk asked Kimbell where the word nappy originated and if the word has changed over time. Using Kimbell's personal experience to measure the negative or positive connotations of the word nappy Kimbell responded, "If another African-American uses the word, it doesn't have the same intensity or meaning than if someone else like Don Imus uses the word" (2008,p.56).

Moreover, in the discussion section of Gilchrist's study she refers back to Bryd and Tharp's argument that "the media's ideal beauty standard has not drastically changed since the late 1800's" (Gilchrist, 2011, p. 17). On the contrary, Gilchrist's study shows that Black hair magazines "are attempting to provide many different images of beauty" (Gilchrist, 2011,p.17); conversely, sometimes these images of hair cannot be defined by good or bad hair. Other media outlets, such as social media have also influenced Black women in making hair choices. Inadvertently, mass media has moved in "a direction that celebrates Black hair for what it should be –a personal choice and not a social construction of acceptance or rejection" (Gilchrist, 2011, p 17). However, the notion of good and bad hair still exists and impacts an individual's social and cultural dynamic; therefore, creating a space where there is need make Black hair more manageable.

For some Black women, the motivation behind chemically relaxing their hair is because of the "struggles with her hair choice throughout her life" (King and Niabaly, 2012, p.8). In most situations, Black women with relaxed hair have been motivated to do so by female members of their families (King and Niabaly), 2012. On the other hand, the motivations for some Black women to wear their hair in its natural state are to obtain healthier hair. King and Niabaly explain that some women feel like straight hair does not define who they are, but environments and perceptions differ. For example, participants shared that family members believed that relaxed hair represented transition to adulthood, or they would experience Black males saying negative comments about natural hair. Interestingly enough, some Black women encounter more males outside of their racial group that accept their natural hair, and "for this reason, African-American women concluded that (Black) men like relaxed hair or with a weave more than women with natural hair" (King and Niabaly, 2012, p.12).

The younger generation of Black women seems to be more focused on quick styles or something easy to do and the idea of hair having significance becomes disregarded. Hair is no longer, “only a marker of what status one has, it is now a marker of individual personality, and a matter of convenience” (Bellinger, 2007, p.71). Convenience may be one of the reasons Black women straighten their hair, but studies such as King and Niabaly reveal that there are several motivations behind the practice. The historical and social context cannot be overlooked, because Black hair one way or another affects a Black woman’s life experiences. Specifically, African and African-American women included in the King’s and Niabaly’s study who agree that natural hair is a personal choice, and both include family or community in their responses to who influenced them to relax their hair.

These explanations show that hair is just hair, a personal choice in which the individual have no cultural resonance with self when making hair decisions. It is important to note “in general, African -American women reported more exposure to natural hair than African women who, for the most part, went natural when they came to the United States” (King and Niabaly, 2012, p.2). This research suggests that African American women are more exposed to natural hair, while African women consider the media as one of the top influences for hair choices, are not as exposed. Which also suggests that the media does not provide a space for Black women to celebrate their natural hair.

2.7 The Emergence of the Natural Hair Community/Movement

Arguably the natural hair community and more so the natural hair movement started in the late 1990’s to early 2000’s; however, the natural hair community, over the last 5-7years have become even more prominent because of the advances of technology. Social media, blogging, and YouTube have provided a space for Black women with natural hair to share hair tips,

support for women transitioning to natural hair, and overall celebrating the beauty of Black natural hair. Such spaces are extremely important to this research because it allows the researcher to have reliable resources for an analysis, which answer to the overall research problem. Natural hair bloggers specifically have created space for naturalistas to converse with one another about issues, such as hair texture discrimination that they I have noticed within the natural hair community, or personally experienced.

The emergence of natural hair communities have positively reconstructed images of Black hair by highlighting and celebrating the beauty of natural hair; however, there are still some problems that Black women with natural hair are experiencing in spaces where they are suppose to be fully accepted them. For example, beauty brands and popular hair bloggers choose not to celebrate 4A hair (kinky) the way they choose to celebrate 3A hair (softer curls). This becomes extremely problematic for Black women who have natural hair and are seeking support or a true representative of their hair. As a result, the current research problem seeks to further investigate and understand hair texture discrimination within the online natural hair community.

2.8 Limitations in the Literature

Different disciplines such as Black studies and women and gender studies have used Black women to explore body politics, which include the evaluation of hair. In addition, scholars have explored self-esteem issues, socially constructed standards of beauty, gendered racial identity, media influences, employment and so forth. Black women included in these studies differ in age, economic status, and educational background, but these studies do not analyze biases in hair texture occurring in the Black natural hair community, because it does not exist in the literature. Thus, the academic scholarship about the natural hair community is very scarce. The existing conversation consists of “the discussion about natural hair is typically framed

around the general topic of tutorials. Books on natural hair primarily provide instruction on how to style, wash, and care for the hair” (Geniece, 2014). Scholars have researched the motivations of Black women wearing their hair in its natural state but in future scholarship researchers must discover what is in between natural hair no longer being a political statement, and some Black women believing that hair is just hair. Historical context does help negate the idea that Black does not hold any significant weight. Nonetheless, the limitation in the existing research is the lack of attention to the natural hair community as a separate research question. Often Black hair is compared to the white standard of beauty, but “it is essential that black people unlearn the preconceived beauty ideals and internalized racism Eurocentric societies instilled in them in order to form a strong collective and support each other against discrimination and oppression” (King and Niabaly, 2012, p. 15).

Conversely, discrimination is also perpetuated in the Black natural hair community, and due to the lack of research, the researcher utilizes studies pertaining to colorism and Black hair in order to define the concept of *curlism*. In doing so, the limitation of literature reveals that there is little to no conversation about colorism/curlism in the Black natural hair community. Scholars have explained the lighter skin tone and softer hair being the unattainable idea of attractiveness by some Black women; however, since the occurrence of the natural hair phenomenon, academic research as failed to include research on social outcomes of women belonging to the natural hair community, who are sometimes subjected to *curlism*. The term ‘curlism’ is used in the natural hair community; curlism is a “belief that a particular curl pattern is better than the another. In this case, it seems that natural hair beauty brands are cashing in on a looser pattern, promoting a stretching affect over an accepting and empowering one” (Wallace T, 2013). The kinkier the hair the more negative the connotation. The concept of *curlism* is very similar to ‘colorism’ in

the Black community, in the ways in which lighter skin tones are celebrated more. Research has showed that hair categorizations can be learned at an early age or “particularly salient were early messages that Black males favored females with longer, straighter hair over those with shorter, nappy hair” (Okazawa-Rey, Robinson, Ward, 1986, p. 367). However, there is limited literature that speaks to problematic issues, excluding problems in the workplace that Black women in the natural hair community experience.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

Reaching beyond a historical lens, scholars have used a variety of theoretical frameworks to evaluate their findings. For example, Tracey Owens Patton utilized Afrocentric and standpoint theory to explore the struggles that Black women had with beauty, their body, and hair. Patton writes, “Standpoint theory coupled with Afrocentric theory is an extremely powerful critical tool in which to examine body image, hair and race, (and) Afrocentric theory is another way to redefine and confront the marginalization and racist beauty standards by all women” (Patton, 2006, p. 32). Patton’s use of these theoretical frameworks, particularly Afrocentricity, eliminates the Euro-supremacist framework from the research.

For the current research, the researcher’s goal is to understand a particular group within a specific community; therefore, adds to the literature by using Black feminist thought as the theoretical framework. It is important to consider different frameworks that have been used in similar research to identify, in order to decide which one works best for the current research.

Black feminist thought incorporates multifaceted ideas to produce different worldviews, self-reliance, self-definition, and overall independence for Black women. Author Patricia Hill Collins explains, “Suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for the dominant groups to rule because the seeming absence of dissent suggests that subordinate

groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization” (Collins, 2000, p.5). Meaning, that the unheard ideas of Black women advance social inequalities. However, as a historically oppressed group Black women have reconstructed their thought processes to not only advocate for women’s emancipation and empowerment, but also resist social injustices geared towards Black women that feminism alone does not address. Black feminist thought allows Black women to evaluate their lived experiences through their own defined worldviews. As a result of colorism, gradation of hair texture has served as a determinant of blackness or closeness to whiteness. Through the review of literature, the researcher concludes that Black feminist thought speaks to the importance of the individual’s personal experiences, in which the researcher examines in order to develop an analysis of the affects of curlism in the online natural hair community.

2.10 Summary

Throughout the review of literature, it is clear that colorism has a strong connection, if not a parallel relationship with *curlism*; however, there is no discussion about *curlism* in present literature. Conversely, present literature does reveal that softer hair and lighter skin allot Black people social advantages and easier access to Black elite social clubs, education, and employment, and as a result of slavery and post-enslavement, colorism has crippled the Black community in ways that highlights proximity to whiteness and dismissal of signifiers of blackness. As a result of colorism, gradation of hair texture has served as a determinant of blackness or closeness to whiteness. That being so, the online natural hair community has been affected by one of the biggest issues within colorism: difference in hair texture. However, because of the lack of literature discussing hair texture discrimination, the need for further exploration is of high importance. In the next chapter, the research methods, the way in which

the research problem is explored and assessed, describes the future steps taken that speak to the overall research question.

3 RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN APPROPRIATENESS

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the origins and affects of *curlism* in the online natural hair community, which have a role in creating and perpetuating *curlism*. Having ties to colorism, this study provides a deeper understanding about Black women who experience hair texture discrimination in multiple aspects of their everyday lives. The emergence of *curlism* or hair texture discrimination is due to the growing popularity of the Black natural hair community in the late 2000's. The topic is rooted in various areas of study such as racial identity and pride; however, this current manifestation is an informal cultural movement. As a result, there is a scant empirical research on the topic. Including the study and research design, sampling, data collection, and analysis, this chapter describes the process by which the inquiry will take place.

The approach chosen for this study is a thematic content analysis; the purpose of the design of this study is to understand the experiences of Black women belonging to the online natural hair community. The research question investigates the problematic occurrences that have transpired as a result of the emergence of the natural hair community, such as *curlism*. The overarching research question explores the biases in the online natural hair community.

1. What do women value about going natural?
2. What challenges/biases do women encounter on their natural hair journey?
3. How do women resist the oppressions they encounter?

The data is collected through analyzing natural hair blog posts and YouTube videos. The research's primary focus is to explore *curlism*; the study's findings, as indicated in chapter five,

suggest that future research needs to be conducted. The empirical literature does not address hair biases within the natural hair community; therefore, in order to bridge the gap, this research directly speaks to the specific issues that strictly occur in the online natural hair community.

Qualitative studies deal with data that can only be analyzed through observations; therefore, the investigation of *curlism* is analyzed and documented through a reliable lens. A quantitative design of study is used in existing literature that analyzed the affects and construction of colorism in the black community; however, again there is not any literature that discusses *curlism* in relation to personal experiences happening in the natural hair community, more so in digital spaces. In efforts to fill this gap, using a qualitative approach helps further examine the affects of this problematic happening occurring in this particular community in which affect the overall life condition of Black women.

3.1 Population and Sampling

For the purpose of this study, a thematic analysis of bloggers and vloggers on the research problem is assessed. The population is found through the Google search engine. The keyword(s) included in the search includes natural hair, hair typing, and natural hair biases. 94, 400,000 results came up for natural hair, 25,300,000 results for hair typing, and 1,020,000 results for natural hair bias. The top results for natural hair biases discuss natural hair biases occurring in a military setting. The term natural hair texture discrimination, which is biases, is commonly used within the natural hair community, as well as the *curlism*. The search results for hair texture discrimination are 64, 300 and 8,400 results for *curlism*. The most relevant blogs or articles appear on the first two pages of the Google search. Since the focus is exclusively on the natural hair community, the blogs and vlogs chosen are authored by Black women who clearly identify with the natural hair community. Hair texture discrimination and *curlism* are the keywords used

in the YouTube search to find vloggers who benefits the overall research problem. Only 84 results came up for *curlism* and most of the videos had less than 500 views; however, 5,010 results came up for the hair texture discrimination search. The three videos chosen have more than 10,000 views and were published within the last year.

Members of the online natural hair community are the population included in this study. The focus is on blog posts and YouTube videos that exclusively talk about natural hair texture bias. The sample includes comments from women who subscribe or visit these natural hair pages. Coupled with the blog posts and videos discussing the research problem, the research also includes comments under these posts, which are included in the thematic analysis as well.

3.2 Data Collection

The data is collected from content that is produced online. All contents have a great number of viewers and followers; this is important for the researcher because it provides a wide range of responses, which accurately represents the online natural hair community. The researcher viewed and read the content individually, and conducted a separate thematic analysis from the online sites included. The following details the online sites, vlogs, and blogs included in the study.

3.2.1 Online Sites:

For the thematic analysis the researcher uses Curly Nikki, Black Girl Long Hair, Taren Guy, Jouelzy, and Jade Kendle (LipStickNCurls). All of these bloggers and vloggers have created a space to talk about hair texture within the natural hair community, and it is important to have a variety of bloggers and vloggers to better understand the research problem.

3.2.2 Vlogs:

YouTube helps women with natural hair to create a platform in which they can discuss natural hair, and have access to a wider audience. For the purpose of this research, the researcher uses vloggers LipStickNCurls, Jouelzy, and Taren Guy. These vloggers were chosen because of the high number of views they received, and the respect that these vloggers/bloggers have gained within the online natural hair community.

3.2.3 Blogs:

The blog sites included in the study are the following: Curly Nikki and Black Girl Long Hair. All of these sites have developed an immense following; therefore, an active conversation about *curlism* between the bloggers and their audience are available and are assessed.

3.3 Discussion of Thematic Analysis

The researcher conducts a thematic analysis on natural hair blogs and vlogs in order to obtain insight about women within this community. Users' comments following the respective posts are also collected. The researcher determines which comments to use by looking at the most popular and recent comments. The most popular comments are determined by how many likes the comments received or the amount of interaction that the comment brought to the overall conversation.

For the data analysis, the researcher follows the thematic analysis and representation as seen in Greg Guest and Kathleen MacQueen's *Applied Thematic Analysis*. As explained in this text, "The emphasis on supporting claims with data is what links applied thematic analysis to grounded theory. Grounded theory is a set of inductive and iterative techniques designed to identify categories and concepts within the text that are then linked into formal theoretical codes" (p.12, 2012). Although the researcher is using a thematic analysis, this research includes a

synthesized methodological framework (grounded theory and phenomenology), because “the approach borrows what we feel are the more useful techniques from each theoretical and methodological camp and adapts them to an applied research context” (Guest and MacQueen, p.15, 2012). The researcher includes the six aspects of data analysis: data compliance, developing codes, looking for themes from the codes, review and defining themes, and producing findings. In the data compliance process, the researcher reads and/or watches data several times, specifically paying attention to the patterns that occur, then document where and how the pattern occurs. Following the development of the meaning of codes, the researcher creates themes and reviews data to decipher how the themes support the data. Before producing the findings, the researcher determines which themes contribute relevant information to the overall understanding of the data. The following are the types of coding used in this study.

After evaluating the appropriateness of the types of coding, for the thematic analysis, the researcher uses emotion coding for the first cycle of coding because “emotion codes label the emotions recalled and/or experienced by the participant, or inferred by the researcher about the participant (Saldaña, 2013, p.105). This type of coding allows the researcher to focus on the participant’s experiences and possible role in the action of *curlism*. By using emotion coding for the first cycle of coding, the researcher is confident that describing the distinctive experiences of the participants is achievable. Emotion coding also deals with defining psychological states; therefore, it assisted the researcher in acquiring the participants’ feelings experienced in their personal hair stories. For the second cycle of coding the researcher utilized values coding because it reflects “a participants’ values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspective or worldview” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 110). In the first cycle of coding, the researcher codes the participants’ responses by focusing on abstracting descriptors of emotion from their

responses. The emotional adjectives contextualize how participants' share their personal natural hair stories. The same process is repeated during the application of values coding.

The last step in the data analysis process is the production of findings. The researcher uses Black feminist thought as the theoretical framework to interpret and contextualize the data collected. Black feminist thought helps the researcher analyze an experience specific to Black women; furthermore, revealing the value, resistant, and power codes dynamic of hair texture discrimination experienced by Black women belonging to the online natural hair community, which is produced in the coding process. In addition, the researcher includes how Black women are affected by the overall research experience.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity of the study includes note taking, self-transcribing the data, and developing and producing findings in accordance to the protocol for a qualitative study. During the thematic analysis process, the researcher watched three Youtube videos of three popular natural hair vloggers discussing hair texture discrimination. Each video was watched a total of three times. After watching the videos, the researcher read and re-read two blog posts; while doing the analysis, the researcher took detailed notes. The purpose of note taking is to extract patterns and words in order to later develop themes. All data is self-transcribed and because of the re-occurrence of reading the blog posts and watching the videos, the reliability of the codes extracted from the content is increased; however, no one else reviewed the codes and/or created textual associations or scored for compatibility with the codes produced.

3.5 Limitations

The researcher foresees that one of the limitations in the study is the fair sample size; however, this study did not seek to represent all black women; only represents 20-30 women,

which make the analysis appear to be narrow. The researcher did not use anyone else to verify the coding. The thematic content analysis is discussed through discussion of the data, an analysis of the data, and interpretation of the data. This helps further understand the of the overall research question.

3.6 Summary

This chapter discusses the design and appropriateness of study, which includes population and sampling methods, and research procedures used to collect the data. The reliability and validity is also included. The next chapter discusses the findings.

4 FINDINGS

This chapter gives an overview of the findings from this research study. The codes and themes are developed from the thematic analysis of blogs, videos, and comments following those posts. All the participants' responses are examined and presented. The analysis of the overall research question, which explores hair texture biases within the natural hair community, will conclude this chapter. This chapter includes the demographics for this study, data collection, analysis, and summary.

The purpose of this study is to explore hair texture biases within the natural hair community. With the use of a thematic analysis, hair biases experienced by women in this community are further understood. As indicated in the literature review, hair texture biases within this particular community have not been previously explored in current literature. This qualitative study seeks to understand these biases as experienced by women who have not been represented in current empirical literature since the emergence of the natural hair movement. The fundamental research questions that guided the thematic content analysis are follows:

1. What do women value about going natural?

2. What challenges/biases do women encounter on their natural hair journey?
3. How do women resist the oppressions they encounter?

Other discussions that are raised through blog and video posts, and the comments from other users and/or subscribers are included in the thematic analysis. All questions and discussions are significant in benefitting the complete understanding of the overall research question, which helps uncover the way in which hair texture biases travel within the natural hair community.

As aforementioned in chapter 3, a thematic analysis is used for this study; this qualitative approach helps to explore the research question, developed codes, and an overall analysis of apparent themes. The thematic analysis of blogs, videos, and comments/and or responses to blog/vlog posts, was conducted in three sittings. During each sitting the researcher wrote down reoccurring issues and concerns. The assessment of the videos focused language, tone of voice, and the position taken by the blogger or vlogger. The only identities that are disclosed in this study were the name of the blogger and vlogger. The identities of the users in the comment section are not disclosed. The data analysis is based on emotion and value coding, as seen in John W. Creswell's text, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*.

4.1 Demographics

First and foremost, participants in the comment section are only identified by their usernames; therefore, the age, socioeconomic status, and location of the participants may widely vary, but all participants live in the United States. It became a trend for Black women living outside of the U.S. to make a comparison to the United States and their respective location. Their responses are not included. However, the demographics for the bloggers and vloggers are as follows: Black women, age ranges from 24-35, live in the United States, and identifies as being a

member of the natural hair community. All participants are Black women and are members of the natural hair community; therefore, the participants met the basic criteria for the study. Due to the lack of information provided by the participants, such as age and occupation, the researcher cannot confirm that all participants met all the criteria for the study.

Two of the vloggers, which state hair biases in the natural hair community as hair texture discrimination in their video blogs, are biracial, and the last vlogger is Black but all vloggers identify as Black women. Their ages range from 24-35 and they live on the east coast of the United States. The first vlogger whose username is Lipstickncurls, real name Jade Kendle, to date has 18,149 views and 291 comments on the “Texture Discrimination?” video. Vlogger Jouelzy has 128,315 views and 2,267 comments, and the Taren Guy has a total of 55,967 views with 1,173 comments under her video.

4.2 Thematic Analysis and Description

The analysis procedures for thematic analysis, coupled with a Black feminist thought theoretical framework, are utilized when examining the collected data. For a thematic analysis it is recommended that the researcher represent the collected data in six aspects: (1) familiarize data, (2) create codes, (3) look for themes in codes, (4) review themes, (5) define and name themes, (6) and develop findings (Guest and MacQueen, 2012). These steps conclude the analyzing process.

The three vloggers included in this study are Black women who live in the United States. The two bloggers included in this study are Black women who live in the United States as well. The comments analyzed are from Black women who are members of the online natural hair community. Their ages vary; however, there is no additional information on the subscribers. Below is a detailed description of the individuals who posted an online video or blog.

Vlogger Jade Kendle, posted a video on Youtube entitled “Texture Discrimination?” on August 23rd 2014, which is recorded in her room. Jade Kendle is a 24 years old biracial woman from Dallas, Texas. Her hair is long with soft, elongating, loose curls. She started her vlog under the user name Lipstickncurls in 2011. In this video she discusses the hair texture discrimination in the context of light skin and softer graduation of hair women being the victim of hair texture discrimination. Kendle imagines herself in the same position of Black women with kinkier hair and explains, “I’m trying to be me, be natural, and I can’t even get the props that I deserve because of the type of hair that grows out of my head”. She refers to this experience as “texturism”, and believes that women with softer curls also experience hair texture discrimination. She states, “It’s just sad to see that it is trickling into this natural hair movement and culture that is suppose to be pure and free place for us”.

Jouelzy is an African American blogger and vlogger living in the Washington, D.C. area who promotes Smart Brown Girls through her content produced on videos and blogs. With more than 125 subscribers and 6.6 million views, Jouelzy proudly represents 4C naturals, which is underrepresented in multiple spaces. She posted her “So Over the Natural Hair Community & Texture Discrimination” on April 27th 2014.

In the video Jouelzy identifies the gap in the representation of 4C naturals in digital spaces and lack of support from hair product beauty brands. She states, “I know I saw that the natural hair community always promoted a kind of shiny, curly, baby hairs. Visually of what it means to be a natural they may not share my picture or promote what I’m about because one I don’t have hair that’s pretty to watch from beginning to end”. Jouelzy is not saying that she hates her hair, but from the perspective of other viewers, 4C hair is not seen as beautiful, as a woman with big, shiny curly hair. She believes that their needs to be some duality and balance that “we promote

this curly hair texture and along with the kinky hair.” Her frustrations with lack of support from the natural hair community and natural hair beauty brands has lead her to creating less content about natural hair.

In 2009, Taren Guy, a biracial woman from New York City, started blogging and vlogging about natural hair, and has gained over 20 million view world wide, and a half a million following on social networks. Taren Guy posted “Natural Hair *Separation* Equals B.S.” on June 5th 2014. Guy discusses hair texture discrimination in the context of natural hair separation. She states, “Let’s not point fingers to the ‘light skin’ curly girl that you feel is privileged and say that her message necessarily doesn’t matter because of the color of her skin and the type of texture of hair she has”. Guy is addressing some naturals’ comments about dismissing her natural hair experience and self-acceptance of her hair, because she has softer, looser curls. She agrees that their needs to be more representation and presence of kinky hair in social spaces and from beauty brands; however, she argues that kinky-haired women have to provide representation and presence for themselves; they cannot wait for other people or companies to represent them.

Blogger Nikki Walton reposted an article by Dr. Susan Walker, a licensed Naturopathic doctor and natural hair consultant, entitled “Curl Envy and Hair Texture Discrimination” on her blog site, Curlynikki.com on June 25th 2014. Following the blog post are 587 comments. The date of the last post on this site is March 19th 2015.

The second blog, Black Girl Long Hair, writer Chinwe posted a blog entitled “Does ‘Texture Discrimination’ Affect the Success of Naturals on Youtube and Social Media” on May 11th 2014 with 244 comments. The latest post on this site is March 19th 2015. This is the order that the researcher collects the data. The following is the analytical framework.

4.3 Analysis

To develop the themes found in the data, emotion and value coding is used (refer to appendix). During the first cycle of coding the researcher-extracted feelings from the comments following the blog and video posts. Table A, found in the appendix, shows the emotion that occurred when discussing hair texture biases and how it affected their personal natural hair journey.

During the second cycle of coding the researcher extracted the beliefs and attitudes from the commenters' responses to develop codes that address the issues of value that came up in the research. The following overarching four themes are developed from the first and second cycle of coding: The Kink Vs. The Curl, Curlism as Colorism, Insurgence of Hair Texture Biases, and Empowerment of the Natural Hair Community. The following table demonstrates the themes in correspondence with the research questions and the theoretical framework.

Table 4.1 Developed Themes

Research Questions:	Significant Statements:	Developed Themes:
What do women value about going natural?	(1) Going natural is overwhelming but I was proud after learning how to take care of it". (2)"Hair typing can be good in the beginning of your journey, as far as getting techniques or tips from people with a similar texture."	The Kink Vs. The Curl
What challenge/biases do women encounter on their journey that they did not expect?	(1) "I experienced the good hair vs. bad hair mentality; I thought it would change when going natural. "I thought going natural was freedom and liberation but you come in this community and you experience more problems than when you were relaxed". (2) "Even on IG, I can't follow a lot of natural hair pages because all I see are big bouncy curls. Beautiful as they are, my texture is not represented".	Curlism as Colorism, Empowerment of the Natural Hair Community
How do women resist the oppression that they encounter?	"Texture discrimination is very real, and judging by the majority of beauty ads featuring 3A-C adds validity to this video. We will rise up and fight, and I have done so with my pocketbook and support of certain vloggers."	Insurgence of Hair Texture Biases

Following is a detailed description of all the developed themes found in the study.

4.4 The Kink Vs. The Curl

The majority of the respondents had either personally experienced hair texture discrimination, or as new members was soon introduced to *curlism*. Hair typing is a reoccurring conversation between the commenters on the blog and video posts. Commenters become serious and sometimes have heated conversation about how a 3A-3C-hair type woman did not endure struggle the ways in which a women with 4C hair does. Many of the women believe women with looser curl patterns are incapable of experiencing hair texture discrimination and that women of mixed race in particular should not even be considered a part of the natural hair community. Several women felt that vlogger Lipstickncurls, a biracial woman, is trying to play the victim role when addressing (as she refers to it) “texturism”. When she asks if hair texture discrimination exists, Black women and mixed women, who reiterated that they too were Black, immediately chose opposing sides. A Black woman who is biracial commented, “Texture discrimination is not attacking people with a looser curl pattern, but empowering those who do not have that curl pattern”. Another woman responded, “How can you empower by marginalizing people? Black women have to stop doing this to each other”. First, it is important for the researcher to distinguish Black women from a mixed woman, because throughout the digital conversations these explicit distinctions are continuously made. From these comments it implies that light skinned women with loose curls cannot experience hair texture discrimination; however, mixed women feel dismissed because the struggle with their natural hair is not included. Another commenter said, “Texture discrimination is more about other naturals and society not accepting kinky hair the same as looser curls”. The same woman continues on to suggest, “3A-3B naturals will never understand the struggle of a 4C hair type, because we know

looser curl patterns are accepted”. The intense tension between the curly and kinky haired woman led the researcher to the following theme: Curlism as Colorism.

4.5 Curlism as Colorism

As stated in the literature review, colorism and *curlism* have a strong correlation, if not explore the same kind of hierarchal difference. The conversation quickly moves from hair type to hair type and skin tone. Every time a woman referred to looser curls she would associate that with lighter skin tones, and short, kinky hair with a dark skinned women. Referring to Lipstickcurls’ video post, many commenters believed that light skinned women with looser curls did not have a legitimate opinion about hair texture discrimination, because they would never realistically experience it in their lifetime. A commenter argued, “Being dark does not mean you have kinky hair, being light does not mean you have looser curls”. Also stating “she cannot deal with the direction that the natural hair community is going in”. Another woman believed that “curly hair is put on a pedestal; dark skinned women with kinky hair gets less subscribers because their hair is seen as undesirable”. However, some of the commenters under vlogger Jouelzy’s video blog, “So Over Natural Community and Texture Discrimination” raised the question of how one particular curl pattern makes women more Black than another type of curl pattern. One woman asked, “What is good hair really? It is hypocritical to bash type 3 hair, and say that type 4 hair makes you blacker. This is just bringing more hate to the natural hair community”.

All the comments make it clear that majority of women in the natural hair community are well aware that 4C natural hair is not as not celebrated or represented well, or even at all on online. Vlogger Taren Guy, a biracial woman argues in her video “Natural Hair ‘Separated’ Equals B.S.” that hair texture and skin tone have no connection to each other. Several

commenters disagreed with her by explaining that, “experiences say otherwise about difference in hair texture -skin tone does matter”; however, some agreed that the fundamental differences are unnecessary. Nevertheless, commenters express that texture discrimination is present in social media and in real life. Black women do not feel appreciated in this space, because of this anti-Black image that “products who target characteristics like *mixed chicks*, *anti-shrinkage*, and *curl definer*”. As a result, the kinky haired woman feels unappreciated.

In Susan Walker’s “Curl Envy and Hair Texture Discrimination” posted on *Curlynikki.com*, many of the respondents believed that kinky hair was underrepresented and the sad reality was that Black naturals are also held responsible for hair texture discrimination against other natural and themselves. One of the commenters reflected back on when she wanted “pretty hair” when she was a little girl and believed that Black naturals “have a lot of work to do, wounds to heal, and have a presence that needs to be made”.

The blog post “Does ‘Texture Discrimination’ Affect the Success of Naturals on YouTube and Social Media, posted on *Black Girl Long Hair*, implies that the reason why 4B/4C naturals are not represented as much as 3A/3B naturals in a social space is because of the lack of “watchability”. Suggesting, that women with looser curls typically produce better natural hair videos. Blogger and vlogger Jouelzy’s name arose in the comments following the post. Jouelzy vented about how 4C naturals are not as supported from natural hair brands and natural hair Youtube subscribers, even with similar hair textures. A large number of respondents agreed with one of the comments that said, “These girls watch looser curl YouTubers and think when they turn natural that their hair is going to look like the girls they watch. The more you try to ignore or compare the blatant discrimination that tighter coiled hair faces on a daily, you’ll always see a

looser texture in the natural hair community even though it was originally created for girls with 4C hair.

Several commenters said that the reason why Jouelzy has less support is because of her bad attitude and her short hair was not presentable in the video. One of the commenters said, “I started to think that length plays a role, and the rate of hair growth becomes an issue. You need the whole package to be “watchable”. This suggests that natural hair women, even with kinky hair gravitate towards vloggers with looser curl patterns and longer hair. As a result, the natural hair community has been divided and Eurocentric standards of beauty have been used to validate what is seen as acceptable. Several commenters admitted that they seek validation from men and society, and 4C naturals become invisible in a community that appears to be upholding Eurocentric beauty standards. This leads to the following theme: Insurgence of Hair Texture Biases.

4.6 Insurgence of Hair Texture Biases

Some of the respondents suggest that the natural hair community excludes dark skinned women; others believed that light skinned women are also being excluded from this community. Overall, respondents agreed that different textures have issues of their own. However, women with type 4C hair believe that “3B-4B hair type women will never understand the struggle of a 4C hair type girl, and its offensive when they try to relate”. The comments suggest that natural hair beauty brands cater to what they see people want. Since natural hair Youtubers has more support, it is easier for them to get sponsors. Vlogger Jouelzy says, “The natural hair community promotes that healthy natural hair is curly, shiny, full of baby hair, and this leaves a large number of women left out who think they may be doing something wrong with their hair”. She mentions that woman with 4C hair struggle with issues ranging from slicking down their edges to not

supporting women who really need the support. As a result, as Jouelzy discussed in her video, looser curl patterns get more support. She compares a 4C flat twist out and curl Youtube tutorial to another Youtube tutorial demonstrating the exact same style with a woman who has a looser curl. The 4C hair tutorial had been online for a year in a half and had received over 200,000 views; however, the vlogger with a looser curl pattern had 200,000 views within a two week time period. The time period it took for both videos to reach 200,000 views shows that 4C naturals are not as supported by each other or even other naturals.

Respondents express that 4C naturals are not represented in the natural hair community, a community in which is created for tightly, coiled, kinky haired women. However, women who identify as curly girls believe that it is not their fault that they receive more attention. Some of the women of mixed race feel that kinky haired women blame them for their struggle, because they need someone to blame for their hair struggle. However, Taren Guy clearly stated in her video that she recognizes her privilege, but does not mean that women should dismiss her message about self-love. Light skin and looser curls are readily validated in the mainstream, but light skinned women are not the ones to blame. Majority of the responses suggests that light skinned women feel attacked and judged by dark skinned women in the natural hair community, while dark skinned women feel light skinned women take advantage of their higher placement within the natural hair community. This can lead to dark skinned women bashing light skinned women, and going as far as to not support light skinned women with a looser curls Youtube channels or blogs. This lack of support shows an attempt to resist curlism; however both groups still do not fully feel included in the natural hair community as a result of the strong impact of hair typing, creating hair texture biases. There is no balance between type 3 and type 4 natural

hair textures. The division between hair types result in the development of the last theme: Empowerment of the natural hair community.

4.7 Empowerment of the Natural Hair Community

A greater number of the respondents disclosed that the natural hair community is exclusively created for a woman with kinkier hair because their hair type is not accepted by society. Suggesting “more should be done to put dark skin, shorter length, tighter textured women at the forefront. The whole movement should work toward that”. The natural hair community does not promote 4C hair because the media and product lines do not promote natural 4c hair. Although a lot of commenters agreed that we all struggle with natural hair, a majority of the respondents said, “You’ll always see a looser curl texture to represent that natural hair community even if it was originally created for girls with 4C hair”. Whereas, kinkier hair is constantly being dismissed in the natural hair community and women with this hair type endure a longer process to arrive to loving their hair for how it is.

The lack of support that 4C receives in the natural hair community demonstrates the process in which the beauty brands capitalize off the insecurities developed within the natural hair community. One of the commenters under Taren Guy’s video said, “Self-hate is real, and natural hair divisions are deep; that is why they have to constantly explain why they love their hair”. However, some of the respondents argue that natural hair companies are not the only ones to blame, but also the natural hair community as well. Some of the comments following Dr. Susan Walker’s post on Curlynikki.com “Curl Envy and Hair Texture Discrimination”, the responses indicate that the only value of the hair typing is to recommend products women should use for their hair, particularly used as a guide for new naturals; however, there is no real objective parameters for this system. As a result, the natural hair community battles with what is

considered manageable, especially when styled a certain way. Because of hair texture biases, some women who went natural because of the support they thought the natural hair community provides have rejected the natural hair community; however, some women find their personal natural hair journeys to be empowering. The online natural hair community produces a monolithic view of what natural hair is, but perpetuating this image of all Black women having or wanting to have loose, soft curls is dangerous.

These four themes are used as a way to understand the comments that are evoked by the aforementioned blogs and video posts within the natural hair community. This data is collected from the responses provided from the online sites. Emotion and value coding is selected in order to understand, deconstruct, and develop themes in correspondence with hair texture bias in this community and Black feminist thought.

4.8 Summary

This study explores the ways in which hair texture biases occur as it determines how Black women reflect on their personal natural hair journey and experiences that they encounter. All respondents appeared to be under 40 years of age and clearly are very involved and aware of issues occurring in the online natural hair community. Black feminist thought, as defined and used by Patricia Hill Collins also adds to the body of literature on understanding the biases that natural hair women experience, specifically hair texture biases within this particular community, and how women who primarily suffer from it resist this oppression, by supporting only 4C naturals. This theory provides a deeper insight, as it insists on analyzing the specific experiences of Black women living in the United States, controlling images (mostly women with looser curls representing the natural hair community in digital spaces), self-definition, and the establishment of safe spaces for Black women. Through the utilization of a thematic analysis, this chapter

traces and illustrates the findings, which shows how natural hair biases are experienced in the online natural hair community and who is responsible for producing texture biases.

5 CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter details the findings of how Black women within the online natural hair community experience hair texture biases, as well as includes other implications and recommendations for possible future research. The following includes discussions and conclusions, the analyzed implications of the study, and finally, recommendations for future research.

5.1 Discussions and Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to explore hair texture biases in the online natural hair community and who is essentially responsible for perpetuating these biases. The overall research question for the thematic analysis conducted is as follows: Do Black women experience hair texture biases within the online natural hair community? To assure that the respondents address the overall research question, Black women who are a part of the online natural hair community are included to discuss the selected blog and video posts in the following questions used to guide the thematic analysis:

1. What do women value about going natural?
2. What challenges/biases do women encounter on their natural hair journey?
3. How do women resist the oppressions they encounter?

All respondents met the basic criteria of the study; however, requirements such as age could not be determined because of lack of information from online subscribers/followers. In the beginning, this study was under the hypotheses that Black women with natural hair do experience hair texture discrimination, and the beauty industry were partially responsible for

perpetuating hierarchies within the natural hair community. It also hypothesized that hair texture biases do affect Black women's natural hair journey, because some women expect to have a looser curl pattern when going natural and are disappointed when they do not have looser curls post big-chop.

The findings in this study demonstrate that hair texture biases are also referred to as curlism, texture discrimination, and texturism, as indicated from bloggers, vlogger's and respondents' comments. In studies that analyze colorism within the Black community, physical features that have proximity to whiteness have more access to power and privilege. Black women have endured pressures from Eurocentric standards of beauty and now they experience the same pressures within the natural hair community. This study uses Black women with natural hair order to further understand how hair texture biases occur in online spaces.

Historical stereotypes of Black hair such as bad hair, nappy, and unmanageable, shape the ways in which Black women perceive their hair. Some of the respondents express that these stereotypes often are developed in their childhoods, and they grow up wanting more desirable hair. However, when introduced to the natural hair community, some respondents do not expect the same issues they experience when they were relaxed: wanting "desirable" hair, division between two groups of black women, and their hair type still not being celebrated. According to Dr. Susan Walker, a licensed Naturopathic doctor and natural hair consultant:

"Tight, coily and kinky haired naturals are underrepresented and not given the same accolades and props that their shiny, silkier, looser curl counterparts are given. This reality is seen on social media as videos and images of these looser curls textures get more shares, likes and favorable comments than kinkier textures. It's also argued that these women have more media and sponsorship opportunities as well. Blogger and

vloggers are speaking up as well pointing some of the blame at the natural hair care companies who perpetuate the stereotypes of good hair. Essentially it's hair that is long, loosely curled and shiny with a lot of movement... And so this is where the division comes from" (Curlynikki, 2014).

As illustrated in chapter four, Black women with looser curl patterns receive more opportunities from the beauty industry and favoritism from other members within the natural hair community. Dr. Walker argues, that the roots of hair texture biases do not begin in the natural hair community; it originates from European colonialism, which created institutionalized mechanisms of racism within Black culture. With colorism being so deeply ingrained in Black culture, even women who have natural hair, struggle with accepting their natural hair without having to alter it with products. Many of the respondents articulated that a light skinned woman with looser curls cannot relate to the experiences of dark skinned woman with kinky hair. As result of one type of hair being celebrated in images produced in public digital spaces, the community becomes divided.

Patricia Hill Collins explains, "This particular expression of the journey toward self-definition offers a powerful challenge to externally defined, controlling images of African-American women. Replacing negative images with positive ones can be equally problematic if the function of stereotypes as controlling images remains unrecognized" (2013, p. 125). Originally, the natural hair community was created to provide an accepting space for Black women with natural hair; however, the face of this community gravitates toward light skinned women with looser curls. This study illustrates that Black women in this community feel that light skinned women with looser curls have obtained power and privilege. Although, the natural hair community also produces positive stereotypes such as the idea of black women wearing

their hair in its natural state, it still determines what types of natural hair is virtually and physically accepted.

Many of the respondents are aware and/ or experience hair texture discrimination. As a result, in the beginning of some women's natural hair journeys, they are expecting their curls to be less kinkier, as portrayed by popular hair vloggers they follow on Youtube. Furthermore, hair texture difference began circulating through the online natural hair community and this 'safe space' as Patricia Hill Collins describes as, "this realm of relatively safe discourse, however narrow that is a necessary condition for Black women's resistance" is compromised (2000, p.95). Furthermore, hair texture discrimination projects negative stereotypes in the natural hair community and is "fundamental to Black women's oppression" (Collins, 2000, p. 7). Acts of curlism perpetuate inequalities within a group (Black women) that are already oppressed; even more so, positions of power are developed through a hair hierarchy that is established within the online natural hair community. In turn, the natural hair community recognizes softer curls and lighter skin as the hegemonic image of Black natural hair. As aforementioned, in the following one of the respondents demonstrates this:

"These girls watch looser curl Youtubers and think when they turn natural their hair is going to look like the girls they watch. The more you try to ignore the blatant discrimination that tighter coils face on a daily, you'll always see a looser texture in the natural hair community even though it was originally created for girls with 4C hair."

This respondent's comment is not representative of all Black women; however, it does reflect the main concern and frustration of the mistreatment of 4C naturals. Collins posits, "Despite the common challenges confronting African-American women as a group, individual Black women neither have identical experiences nor interpret experiences in a similar fashion"

(2000, p.30). For this reason, Black women with softer curls and Black women with kinkier hair are on opposing sides of hair texture discrimination. For example, women with softer curls believe that their experiences and opinions are viewed as invalid because of their hair texture. However, Black women with kinkier hair believe that women with softer curls are not capable of experiencing hair texture discrimination because their curls are celebrated within and outside of the natural hair community. One of the respondents said, ““I think mixed girls need to stop forcing themselves in an African textured hair movement””.

The development of the natural hair community set out to redefine Black womanhood through aesthetics, and “U.S. Black women’s collective historical experiences with oppression may stimulate a self-defined women’s standpoints that in turn can foster Black women’s activism”. These lived oppressions such as the Black standard of beauty being suppressed by the white aesthetics, lead to resistance; however, the online natural hair community, which carves out a space for Black women to represent themselves, disproportionately represents all types of Black natural hair. As a result, Black women have to start resisting controlling images within the online natural hair community. The ways in which some Black women choose to resist hair texture discrimination in divesting support to vloggers with softer gradation of hair and natural hair beauty brands that cater to women with softer curls. As Collins explains “Black feminist thought encompasses general knowledge that helps U.S. Black women survive in, cope with, and resist differential treatment”; furthermore, it is important to note that hair texture discrimination in the natural hair community cripples women from resisting oppression as a group, because they are being oppressed within their identified group (2000, p.35).

Consequently, the online natural hair community is no longer a safe space, and a space that is safe is necessary for Black women’s resistance to occur (Collins, 2000). By choosing to

highlight and support a certain type of curl pattern, the images of the self as African-American women in the online natural hair community have developed contradictions. For this reason, Black women's relationship with each other within the online natural hair community has devolved into categorizing hair types which, according to curl, develop separate groups and support systems. The natural hair community can still be considered a safe space, which encourages Black women's empowerment, but according to the findings, these spaces have become exclusionary. Collins posits, "Any individual Black woman who is focused to remain 'motionless on the outside' can develop the 'inside' of a changed consciousness as a sphere of freedom. Becoming personally empowered through self-knowledge, even when conditions that severely limit one's ability to act." (2000, p.129). Therefore, Black women can still be empowered through their own natural hair journey, despite their negative experiences within the natural hair community.

The use of Black feminist thought illuminates the ways in which Black women resist hair texture discrimination, and how they can still be empowered and undeterred by this experience. Through deeper understandings of natural hair biases within and also outside the natural hair community, possible solutions can be explored.

5.2 Implications

The findings in this study imply that both light skinned and dark skinned Black women experience hair texture biases; however, according to the majority of the respondents' comments, only dark skinned women with kinky hair can experience hair texture biases. The discussions from the comments reveal that hair texture biases are experienced in different ways, but dark skinned women are the primary victims of these biases. As stated in the literature review, "the difference between *good* and *bad* hair become a part of Black culture and 'straight hair translated

to economic opportunity and social advantage” (Byrd and Tharps, 2001, p.17). In the case of this study, looser curls translate to social advantage. These social advantages are implemented also in the online natural hair community, causing women with looser curls to become the common face of the natural hair community and gain more support from beauty brands and other naturals.

This study reveals that hair texture and skin tone still have a very strong correlation with one another. Majority of the respondents correlate a looser curl and long hair with light skinned women and associate dark skin with short, kinky hair. In addition, most of the hair texture biases occur within the natural hair community between members of this community. Natural hair companies are also responsible for perpetuating positive stereotypes of good hair, but they are not solely responsible for not celebrating women with 4C hair. Several respondents who were dark skinned with kinkier hair express that light skinned women play the victim when it comes to hair texture biases, and light skinned women express that dark skinned women blame them for having a popular type of curl and feel excluded from the natural hair community. However, light skinned women with looser curls tend to have more views and subscribers because even women with 4C hair choose to watch women with 3A/B hair; whereas, 4C YouTubers do not receive the same support.

Hair texture divisions are developed within this community because historically speaking, Black women, who deal with the internalized oppression, have been conditioned to create these differences. Hair texture biases are very pronounced in the natural hair community and Black women’s natural hair journeys are very much affected. Majority of the respondents admitted that because the considerably larger representation of looser curls, women who are going natural have false expectations of how their hair will look when they are completely

natural. The respondents' use the hair typing system to determine what hair products will work for their hair; whereas, some other respondents believe that the hair typing system is frivolous and susceptible, especially for 4C naturals. When women do not have the type of hair that is widely circulated in and out of this community, they are inclined to buy hair products that they believe will help them achieve a more "desirable" hair type.

As a result, natural hair companies and other beauty brands capitalize off the insecurity of having kinky hair, and market products that will define and stretch curls. All 4C naturals do not have issues with their hair; however, some have admitted that they wish to have less kinky hair during the detangling process. Another aspect that arose is that beyond texture biases, there are also biases about length. The longer one's hair, the more desirable it is perceived. Other respondents expressed that they refuse to identify with the natural hair community because of hair texture biases. Lastly, this study concludes that the natural hair community is not entirely a safe place for Black women to exist in.

5.3 Recommendations

The purpose of this research is to explore hair texture biases within the online natural hair community and examine who is responsible for this occurrence. However, it is understood that further research will have to be conducted to gain a deeper insight on other issues that occur within the online natural hair community. As shown in the findings, hair texture biases continue to be extremely problematic, especially for women with 4C hair and women who are newly natural.

In order to gain more insight about the other issues that Black women face in the online natural hair community, future studies should examine the following:

1. Explore natural hair companies.
2. Explore the elimination of hair texture biases.

5.3.1 *Explore Natural Hair Companies*

The first recommendation for future studies will exclusively examine natural hair companies. The current study only conducts a thematic analysis of natural hair Black women with blogs, YouTube videos, and responses to those video and blog posts. Natural hair companies and other beauty brands with natural hair product lines did not get fully introduced into the conversation; that was not the main focus of this research. According to the findings, natural hair companies are partly responsible for perpetuating hair texture biases, but other aspects are not furthered explored. As a result, “Curly and wavy girls dominate the branding in products mass marketed to natural hair” (Trudy, 2011). Future research can provide deeper insights on the natural hair product market. In order to understand how the natural hair community can successfully eliminate hair texture biases and/ or use natural hair companies’ co-optation of the natural hair community to benefit all Black women, an examination of the natural hair companies needs to be conducted. A study that includes an exploration of other important factors, such as an exclusive study that examines natural hair companies, can potentially dissolve hair texture biases, no longer making it an issue.

5.3.2 *Explore the Elimination of Hair Texture Biases*

The second recommendation explores how hair texture biases can be eliminated in the natural hair community. This exploration will help further understand how to combat hair texture biases and recreate a positive natural hair journey experience for Black women who may consider going natural in the future. Vlogger Taren Guy made very broad solution statements in her video, suggesting that the healing starts from within oneself and the community. Since there

are many layers of historical wounds that need to be healed, a future study should analyze how hair texture biases can be discontinued, so Black women can move forward. The research states that majority of Black women are aware of hair texture biases; however, little to none address how the natural hair community can discontinue their participation in hair texture bias practices. By exploring this aspect, it is possible to discover a solution and revert the natural hair community back to a safe space that makes all Black women with natural hair feel equally celebrated and included.

5.4 Summary and Final Thoughts

The purpose of this study is to examine hair texture biases in the online natural hair community. This chapter outlines the discussions, conclusions, and implications drawn from this study. As aforementioned, there were limitations in the study but that did not affect the overall findings. Because future research needs to be conducted, two recommendations are also included in this chapter. Majority of the respondents' personal experiences with hair texture discrimination resonated with the researcher, because the researcher too has experienced the affects of curlism- feeling like my kinkier curl pattern did not properly emulate Black natural hair. At some point in my natural hair journey, I have felt that my hair was still not desirable; however, I consciously made an effort to find and follow naturals who had a similar hair texture. Seeing these images, even though I had to search more for them, assisted me in loving my hair in its entirety. I have never used the hair typing system; early on I realized that it did not benefit my journey in a positive way; however, my curls are more celebrated when they are stretched and defined. Because of my findings and analysis, I believe that a great approach to overcome hair texture discrimination within the online natural hair community is to practice freedom, by way of

being personally empowered through one's own natural hair journey. For the sake of oppressor never giving it, it must first be demanded by the oppressed.

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APPENDICES**Appendix A****Appendix A.1 First Cycle of Coding- Emotion**

Assigned Code	Significant Statement(s)
Frustrated	“I experienced the good hair vs. bad hair mentality; I thought it would change when going natural.”
Tired	“Don’t point to the curly girl and say that she is privileged, or her message does not matter”.
Unloved	“Beauty is in all different textures of hair. Girls with kinkier hair take that negative energy and internalize it, which causes them to feel bad”.
Attacked	“The hate is unreal for light skinned women”
Excluded	(1) “These girls watch looser curl YouTubers and think when they turn natural their hair is going to look like the girls they watch. The more you try to ignore the blatant discrimination that tighter coils face on a daily, you’ll always see a looser texture in the natural hair community even though it was originally created for girls with 4C hair.” (2) “I think mixed girls need to stop forcing themselves in an African textured hair movement”.
Insecure	“The 4C girl feels like people are ridiculing her in their heads”
Judged	“I thought going natural was freedom and liberation but you come in this community and you experience more problems than when you were relaxed”.

Appendix A.2 Second Cycle of Coding- Value

Assigned Code	Significant Statement(s)
Accessibility	“4B/4C’s have a difficult time finding watchable naturals with their hair type.
Inconvenience	(1) “When I started my natural hair journey I became irritated for a long period of time because it did not look the way that I wanted. I don’t like my hair when its time to detangle. I have the worse hair you could imagine but I love my hair now”. (2). When I first went natural, it took a year to really understand the natural hair community. I wanted to achieve looser curls; now I want looser curls ONLY because of minimalizing tangles. Desire is convenience not Eurocentric standards of beauty.
Acceptance	(1) “The beauty industry clearly ignores one type of natural hair and new pressures come up for natural hair women to achieve a specific type of natural hair. This causes kinky hair women to experience hair texture discrimination. Women with 4 type hair are ridiculed, which leaves them hoping for manageable (desirable) hair”. (2). “Kinky vs. curly shows the issues our country still has with race relations, and how one gets the shorter end of the stick even within the natural hair community”.
Favoritism	“4B/4C hair is not represented but the same women keep watching women with 3A/3B hair.”
Support	(1) “Those with kinky hair tend to follow more curl-haired naturals”. (2) “The natural hair community is really here to empower and bond with one another. It needs to get back to the sisterhood of it; Corporate America distorted it”. (3) “More women with 4C hair need to support each other and not other naturals with different hair types”.