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AFRICAN AMERICAN NATURAL HAIR
AS A SYMBOL OF SELF

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**AFRICAN AMERICAN NATURAL HAIR
AS A SYMBOL OF SELF**

By

Tameka Nicole Ferguson

A THESIS

**Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

AFRICAN AMERICAN NATURAL HAIR AS A SYMBOL OF SELF

By

Tameka Nicole Ferguson

The purpose of this research was to examine the self perception of African Americans regarding their choice to wear “natural” hair as a symbol of their professional and personal identities. Within this study, the ideas behind how those people perceive themselves with natural hair and how they feel others perceive them was examined. Natural African American hair was reviewed back to the recent history of the 1960s-1970s Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, when African Americans began to break free of the mainstream society’s definition of beauty. A purposive sample of 25 African Americans with natural hair was interviewed regarding their self perceptions of natural hair. This study’s ultimate goal is to provide companies, organizations, and individuals with information that can help increase cultural awareness. An additional goal is to ultimately determine whether business practices restrict display of culture through natural hair styles and personal appearance. Lastly, this research hopes to build acceptance of African Americans wearing natural hair within their own communities as well as among other racial and ethnic groups.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Photographic Images of Hairstyles.....	vi
List of Tables.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
<i>Hair as a symbol</i>	2
<i>History of Processed/Straightened hair</i>	3
<i>Are they rebelling against society?</i>	4
<i>Statement of the problem</i>	5
<i>Operational Definitions</i>	5
Rationale.....	12
Theoretical Framework: The Self Perception.....	15
Review of the Literature.....	17
<i>Theoretical views of hair and clothing as a symbol of self and culture</i>	17
<i>Theoretical views of clothing as a symbol of the professional self</i>	23
Methodology.....	28
<i>Description of sample</i>	28
<i>Pilot Study</i>	29
<i>Procedures and Instrumentation</i>	30
<i>Data Collection</i>	31
<i>Data Analysis</i>	32
Results/Findings.....	33
<i>Consistency in Responses</i>	33
<i>Thematic Analysis</i>	40
Summary and Conclusions.....	52
<i>Problem Statement</i>	52
<i>Methodology</i>	52
<i>Conclusions</i>	52
Limitations.....	57
For Further Research.....	57
Appendix A Pilot Study.....	60
Appendix B Invitation to participate in study.....	65

Appendix A Pilot Study..... 60

Appendix B Invitation to participate in study..... 65

Appendix C Advertisements for study..... 66

Appendix D Contact sheet/sign-up sheet..... 67

Appendix E Consent form..... 68

Appendix F Rosenberg Self Esteem Questionnaire..... 70

Appendix G Interviewing Guide..... 72

Appendix H Demographics/Identification form..... 75

Bibliography..... 76

LIST OF PHOTGRAPHIC IMAGES OF HAIRSTYLES

Image	Page
1. Mature Dreadlocks.....	7
2. Mature Dreadlocks with Sterling Silver Rings as adornment.....	8
3. Baby/Immature Dreadlocks.....	9
4. Two Strand Twist.....	10
5. A Close Cut.....	11

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Consistency in Responses.....	38
2. Motivation for Wearing Natural Hair.....	40
3. Responses to Hair Texture Terminology.....	47
4. Change from Processed Hair to Natural Hair.....	50
5. Tabular Representation of Themes 3, 4, and 5.....	50
6. Hair Texture Acceptance.....	51
7. The Amount of Time and Money spent of the Upkeep of Natural Hair versus Processed Hair.....	51
8. Their Perceptions of Themselves/Their Thoughts on Perceptions from Others: Research Questions.....	56

Introduction

Is it about Black Pride? Is it about rebellion? Or, is it just about loving one's self, culture, and heritage? Hair: what is it about?

Dress and adornment [hair] play an important part in everyone's life because they reflect one's social role, self concept, values and lifestyles. The dress of an individual communicates information and is usually a basis on which impressions are first formed.

(Wright, 1982, p. 1)

Since the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, African Americans have been more culturally conscious about themselves and where they originated. An African American person is any Black person of African descent who was born and raised in the United States (Green, White, Whitten, 2000, p. 167). Emerging from a time when African Americans had to adapt and conform to a prejudiced society in which they were forced to live, the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements allowed African Americans to break free of the mainstream images of the "good hair" and "bad hair" perceptions of society, by letting their dress, hair, and way of life display their love for their heritage. "Good hair" is a term adopted by African Americans from slavery times depicting African Americans who have straight or wavy hair. "Bad hair" is interpreted to mean African American hair that is kinky, curly or frizzy and puffy. In the sixties and currently, the way African Americans choose to style their hair says much about that their Black consciousness, social status or economic status, and even lifestyle (Russell, Wilson, Hall, 1992, p. 82). Black women with shorter kinkier hair are often disparaged and devalued by both the dominant culture and segments of the Black community as being less feminine and less attractive than Black women with long straight hair (Greene, White, Whitten, 2000, p. 171).

Hair as a symbol

Hair has been identified as a symbol of socio-economic status, artistic expression, religious beliefs and heritage. In Egyptian times, beards were a symbol of maturity and authority. They were mainly worn by adult male rulers, young kings and even Queen Hatshepsut, who ruled around 1500 B.C., was known to have worn a beard (Tortora, Eubank, 1995, p. 30). Hair also has been used as artistic material. In the fifteenth century West African tribe, Qua-Qua, the men cut off locks of their wives hair, dyed them red, plaited them, then affixed them to their own heads (Byrd, 2002, p. 4). This behavior could be interpreted as a symbol of ownership. The adornment of hair can be a symbol of religious beliefs and customs. Rastafarian beliefs require that the hair (Dreadlocks) never be cut. They believe that Dreadlocks are their strength and unity with God. (Evans, 2001, p. 3-D). Also Muslim women observe hijab (the covering of the head and body). The women do this because they feel that Allah has told them to do so. Also the men and women both have uncut hair covered by a turban (for men) or a scarf/wrap (for women) because of the requirement to be modest and for religious reasons. They believe that in doing so, they will be judged for intelligence and skill rather than looks and sexuality. The Muslim women feel they are making a statement about their identity by covering their hair. Anyone who sees them will know they are Muslim and have a good moral character.

Hair has always been a major symbol of heritage and culture in the Black community. It also has been a way of bonding for mother and daughter for years and still is today. This also goes back to the early years when straightening the hair (taking a warm metal comb and combing the hair straight with heat and oil) was only done on

holidays, picture day, or other special occasions. French braids or cornrows (narrow rows of three-section braiding tight to the scalp), were the everyday school hair styles. Mothers would spend hours washing, conditioning and then braiding or straightening their daughters' hair. Black hair has always required a process that takes time to manage and keep "under control". African Americans have since gone through lengthy processes to persuade their hair to become a more mainstream (acceptable to society) symbol of their outer selves.

History of Processed/Straightened Hair

In 1872, Marcel Grateau, a Parisian, was the first to ever use the concept of a heated comb to straighten hair. Hot combs were then available in Sears and Bloomingdale's catalogues in the 1890s. They were originally designed for white women. African American women who wanted to straighten their hair had to place it flat on a surface and press it with a flat iron. Madame C. J. Walker was the first African American woman to begin to help women with this process. Walker developed hair tonics, straighteners, cleansers and conditioners that eventually brought her wealth. (Byrd, 2002, p. 6). Simkins (1990) who writes about hair and headgear among African American women, stated that "This process (straightening the hair) has been perceived as a mechanism which aided African Americans in their efforts toward somatic accommodation to the majority culture." In writing about historical change in African American hairstyles, Wright (1982) claims that, "By straightening their hair, blacks adorned themselves to be acceptable to the majority...."

Since the early 1900s African American men and women have been willing to sit in a chair for hours and have their hair “fried, dyed and laid to the side” (a riddle African Americans created to mock the rigorous efforts taken to manage their hair). Before his Islamic transformation, even Malcolm X, one of the great leaders during the civil rights era, wore his hair in a conk, a process used on men’s hair in which the hair is chemically processed to obtain a straight effect.

When Shorty let me stand up and see in a mirror, my hair hung down in limp, damp strings.... My first view in the mirror blotted out the hurting. I’d seen some pretty conks, but when it’s the first time on your own head, the transformation, after a lifetime of kinks, is staggering.
(Haley, Malcolm X, 1964, p. 54).

Are they rebelling against society?

What about those African Americans who do not chose to conform to the mainstream? Are they rebelling against society and society’s definition of how beautiful hair should look? Or are they just satisfied with their natural kinky roots that descended from thousands of years ago in West Africa?

Many accounts of African American life testify to the fact that the Africans, and later African Americans, never totally surrendered to Western values in matters of personal adornment. As in certain areas of Africa, traditions and customs surrounding the manipulation of the hair have survived the pressure of New World colonial influences. (Simkins, 1990, p. 167).

How are these people with “natural hair” (African American hair that has not been processed, straightened or altered to appear to be something other than its original state) looked upon in the workplace and other professional settings? Few in the Black community wear natural hair (especially among women). Approximately 75 percent of women still wear straightened hair (Russell, Wilson, Hall, 1992, p. 91). According to Pantene, an international hair care brand owned by Proctor & Gamble, only 20-25% of

black women have natural hair (Madden, 2003). Implying that 75-80% of African American have processed hair

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this research is to examine reasons why some African Americans have chosen to “go natural”, wearing their hair in any natural state such as Afros, Close-Cuts, Dreadlocks, and Braids or Cornrows. How do they perceive themselves with natural hair, and how do they feel they are being perceived by others (co-workers, managers/bosses, friends/family and new acquaintances)? Lastly, in what way if any, do people wearing natural hair, feel that they have been prohibited from certain occupational/personal aspects of their lives because of the choice to wear natural hair?

Operational Definitions

- 1) Afros - the normal state of most African American's hair. The hair is allowed to curl tightly and form a smooth round shape around the face and head (Wright, 1982, p. 6).
- 2) Close-Cut - the normal state of African American's hair except it is cut close on top of the head and extremely close on the sides (Wright, 1982, p. 6). This style, until just the last 15-20 years, was worn by men mostly. Today many women wear this style also (See Photographic Image 5, p. 11. Images in this thesis are presented in color).
- 3) Dreadlocks - allowing the hair to create a natural twist and matte formation growing into individual large or small sections on the head. This style was first worn

in the 1950s by the Kikuyu soldiers of Kenya as they fought British colonizers. Soon after, Jamaican Rastafarians adopted this style because of spiritual/religious reasons, which forbade them from cutting their hair. Dreadlocks were brought to the United States by Jamaican musicians in the early 1970s. (Byrd, 2002, p.6). There are some theories of where the term Dreadlock came from. Some believe that Europeans felt the locks were disgusting and “dreadful”. Others believe that the Rastafarians had a dreadful fear of Jah (Jehovah). (www.geocities.com, retrieved 8/2/2003). The gender association with Dreadlocks is unisex; women wear this hairstyle just as much as men. Within the process of developing and growing Dreadlocks there are three stages that the hair goes through:

1. **Baby locks** from the beginning to about one year of growth (See Photographic Image 3, page 9)
2. **Teenage/Adolescent locks** from about 1 year to 2 ½ -3years of growth
3. **Adult/Mature locks** after 3 years of growth (See Photographic Image 1 and 2, pages 7-8)
- 4) Braids - individual 3 section plaits prepared in large (1”) to very small (2/16”) sections.
- 5) Cornrows - parting the hair in narrow rows and three-section-braiding it tightly to the scalp.
- 6) Two-strand-twist - this is a new alternative to Dreadlocks and braids that emerged and became popular about 10 years ago. The hair is prepared in individual 2 section twists in large (1”) to very small (2/16”) sections (See Photographic Image, page 10).



Photographic Image 1. Mature Dreadlocks

Subject 021 (Male) has been natural for 3 years and has worn Dreadlocks the entire 3 years. He contested that going natural for him was commanded by a spiritual connection with God. He works as a Habilitation Specialist (training mentally retarded adults).



Photographic Image 2. Mature Dreadlocks with Sterling Silver Rings as adornment. Subject 003 (Female) has been natural for 4 years and wearing Dreadlocks for all 4 of those years. She is a Real Estate Agent.



Photographic Image 3. Baby/Immature Dreadlocks

Subject 019 (Female) has been natural for over 20 years, but wearing Dreadlocks for about one year. She wore an Afro in the summer and Braids in the winter until she decided to go with Dreadlocks. She works as a Nursing Aid Assistant.



Photographic Image 4. Two Strand Twist

Subject 004 (Female) has been natural for 3 years and 6 months and has worn either a short Afro or the two strand twist the entire time. She is a Hospital Administrator and does not plan on switching to Dreadlocks.



Photographic Image 5. A Close Cut
Subject 015 (Female) has been natural for 2 years and has worn a Close Cut the entire time. She works as a Librarian.

Rationale

Hair has been a symbol of the African American culture for numerous years, and still not many research studies have been conducted concerning hair as a symbol of the personal and professional self. No studies have been conducted regarding natural African American hair and the self perception of the people who wear it, or their thoughts on how they are being perceived by others. Self perception can be a marvelous or wicked thing. The way that African Americans' perceive themselves results from years of influence in society from other races, and from other African Americans. The results of this study could help African Americans and others comprehend symbols of heritage such as natural hair, while enhancing their views of the African American community and themselves.

Society has suggested that an African American woman or man whose hair grows naturally straight, is usually thought to be from a "better" family than a person whose hair is very nappy or kinky. (Russell, Wilson, Hall, 1992, p. 90)

Professional dress verses traditional African dress in the workplace has been studied in depth (O'Neal, 1998). Professional dress means men's and women's suits or career-wear separates, while traditional African dress depicts such garments as Kente cloth garments, dashikis or others. Traditionally, the term nappy has been used as a derogatory term used to describe very tightly curled hair (Russell et al, 1992). The manner in which some people are affected by this attitude toward hair permeates into both the professional and personal world of African Americans.

Within this research, the ideas of how those wearing natural hair think they are being perceived by others will be addressed. Results could be used to promote a better understanding of each other in all interpersonal relationships. Some African Americans

are still not accepting of each other and the differences in their appearances. A Black woman reports that while she was in the beginning stage of her dread locks, her Black colleagues harassed her unmercifully about her “nappy-looking” hair. (Russell, et al. 1992, p. 129)

While more and more Black women today are daring to go natural, they remain a distinct minority. Straightened hair is standard for “respectable” Black women - those with corporate careers as well as the wives of Black politicians and business men. (1992, p. 91)

Lastly, another potential outcome for this study is to educate companies, organizations, and individuals about those African Americans wearing natural hair. This could allow them to see how certain aspects of the dress code may be affecting their African American employees.

Many businesses have strict rules about makeup and hair, and some corporations, including the major airlines, specifically prohibit employees in particular jobs from wearing certain Black hairstyles.... Switching to an unprocessed style, like a short and natural or cornrows, is not an option in many workplaces. (Russell, Wright, Hall, 1992, pp132-3)

In 1981, a New York federal judge ruled against a female airline ramp attendant who was barred from wearing her hair in cornrows on the job she held for ten years. The judge made his ruling on the grounds that the hairstyle, similar to that worn by Bo Derek in the film 10, was not a natural style but the result of “artifice”. (Simkins, 1990, p.168)

A more recent example of African Americans being prohibited from job/career opportunities because of their choice to wear natural hair was documented in the September 5, 2001 issue of the Lansing State Journal.

Michael Escoffery and Nigel Loney (from the New York City area) were fired by Federal Express for refusing to cut their dreadlocks along with five other dreadlock employees. (Evans, 2001, p. 3-D).

The People Manual (the Federal Express Employee Handbook, November 2003) does not suggest that there are any stipulations on types of hair styles that can be worn. The only reference to hair is regarding beards. This manual states: “for men wanting to wear a beard; the beard should be ‘neat and well groomed’.”

Helping employers and others understand and appreciate the meaning associated with African American symbols (such as natural hair), will hopefully permit some changes to be made in dress code policies if they are effecting some of the employees or potential employees and their rights to express their heritage.

Theoretical Framework

The Self Perception

Having a positive self identity or self perception can be defined as possessing individuality through having self understanding and self acceptance. Building a self identity through dress has been of great importance to the African American community (Holloman, 1989). Possibly, this is because of the constant comparisons being made with the majority culture in media, in professional environments and in other instances. Humans can create their own identities, in part, by managing their appearances (Kaiser, 1990, Nagasawa, et al., 1993). Most individuals have two self identities: the professional self and the personal self. The way in which individuals dress in these different realms can have a major effect on how that person is being perceived by others. In an investigation done by Lennon and Miller (1984-85), the combined effects of specific physical appearance cues such as hairstyle, skirt length and shoe style were examined to see what effect these things have on impression formation. The researchers found that the impact of any one physical appearance cue decreased in the presence of similar cues (either social or intellectual) but increased in the presence of dissimilar cues (Lennon and Davis, 1989). Impressions through dress that one receives from others can have an effect on one's own self perception.

Self perception theory suggests that variables such as clothing [hair] that affect perceptions of others may also affect perceptions of self. (Lennon and Davis, 1989).

Self perception is an important part of life for all human beings. It is also a way of consistently evolving into a better self or a self that one may be proud of or accepts.

Within this self perception and evolution, one looks to find consistency and continuity in his/her perceptions (Nagasawa, et al., 1993).

Among the African American community this concept of self perception, which contributes to the evolution of self, demands much attention. The African American community has overcome many obstacles concerning self perception in order to obtain a better acceptance of self. An example is the name of the race being changed from Colored, to Black, and then to African American which depicts that African Americans are now able to proudly accept their African ancestry. This evolution also connects with the symbolic interaction theory discussed by Sandrom, Martin and Fine which states:

...a variety of social factors, such as language, race, class and gender, constrain people's interpretations and behaviors. In light of this ...people's actions [and way of life] are influenced but not determined by prior events or social and biological forces (Brissett and Edgley, 1990, Sandrom, et al., 2003).

Through dress within the two realms of self (the personal self and the professional self), the self emerges, develops (evolves) and is sustained through processes of social interaction (Lennon and Davis, 1989). In theory, as the name of the race changed, the self perception within the African American community changed as well. This new self perception allowed African Americans to take pride in themselves and their culture exemplified through the wearing of natural hair.

Review of the Literature

Theoretical views of hair and clothing as a symbol of self and culture

O'Neal interprets African Americans' way of dress as "style". Style is then defined as an aesthetic element found in African American dress that is described in terms of its use as a tool in usurping unauthorized power (1999, p. 127). The particular power she is referring to is the result of a history of slavery, servitude, racism and discrimination, where this sense of power became necessary to survive as a people and as a culture. O'Neal's purpose was to explain her theory of dress (style) as power and to consider the political use of dress in establishing cultural boundaries among African Americans. The expressions of style are shown through the creative, energetic use of clothing, hairstyles, and accessories, along with various gestures and body movements (O'Neal, 1999, p. 130). She conducted a study which included questioning forty-five African American male and female adults, both old and young, educated, college students and uneducated subjects to describe an African American aesthetic of dress. The researcher discovered that style is definitely an expression of culture that is often a tool in defining the self, redefining interpersonal relations, and exerting influence in a social situation. Some of the subjects commented on the manner of style:

A female adult stated: The passion we (African Americans) have for dress. Its unique to us - style, you have to be an individual.

A female college student stated:we express our concerns about political issues through the way we dress.

A male adult stated:It's not what you wear, its how you wear it.

In her research, O'Neal found that within African Americans, style dates back as early as 1838. With the finding of a diary written by a British woman who married a South

Carolina plantation owner, the woman wrote about her witnessing the “style” displayed by some of the enslaved Africans:

The passion for dress is curiously strong in these people [enslaved Africans] and seems as though it might be made an instrument in converting them outwardly, at any rate, to something like civilization....(pp. 93-4, O’Neal, 1999, p. 134).

This example certainly supports African Americans using dress (style) as a symbol of themselves and their culture.

In another study done by O’Neal, a different aspect of dress is the focus. This study continues her theory of dress as a symbol of self and culture in the African American community. The actual aesthetic of dress was researched for the purpose of determining if the “aberrations” in dress (e. g., the combining of equal amounts of intense colors), historically used to stereotype African Americans, constitutes an aesthetic of dress that has its roots in West African culture (O’Neal, 1998, p. 168). The main concept of this study was to allow African Americans to give their opinions of their own aesthetic of dress. This concept parallels with the theory of self perception of people who have natural hair and how they feel they are being perceived by working peers. O’Neal observed fifteen African American women between the ages of 35-60 who wear “cultural” attire. Cultural attire consists of garments imported from various African countries, made of fabrics, constructed and finished in those countries, or replicas of such garments (1998, p. 169). Data collection included observing African American women at various cultural events and conducting interviews. O’Neal found that the participants all agreed that there is definitely an African American aesthetic of dress that is manifested in many different ways: the most common being the use of styles, colors, and patterns worn on attire. She categorized the comments on manifestations into four

elements: The affinity for loud or high affect colors, the element of “style” or individual’s expression, exotic features (off beat patterns and rhythms), and the tendency to dress up. Her ultimate discovery was that the subjects believed that dress was a symbol of one’s self and culture.

Hair is hair is hair? Not exactly. Hair is also a powerful symbol of the self. Synnott describes hair as being our most powerful symbol of individual and group identity (1987, p. 381). The purpose of his research was to describe developments in hair symbolism in North America and Britain over the last forty years and to offer a new theory of hair symbolism modifying and complimenting the symbols now and in the past years. The researcher looked at hair as different symbols for one’s self: long hair as a symbol of unrestrained sexuality; short hair as restricted sexuality; cutting the hair as having social control; also hair as fashionable and political symbols in the African American community. Through this research, Synnott continued the theories of hair as being a political statement, cultural statement and a statement of one’s identity. He concluded that hair is a social and physiological phenomenon; a symbol of the self and of group identity. A recurring theme throughout the research is that hair continues to be a symbol of self expression and communication.

Hair being a symbol of self pride and culture was researched in a thesis by Wright (1982). She began by elaborating on the history of hair during the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements as a symbol of socio-cultural changes in the African American society. This study was conducted to document the change in black hairstyles from 1964 through 1977, to examine the meaning associated with the change in form, and to examine aspects of the pattern of adoption (Wright, 1982, p. 5). By looking at ads,

Wright wanted to discover when in the sequence of events the Afro was introduced and when did modifications in its form occur. She also examined what meaning was associated with black hairstyles, and looked for a discernable pattern of acceptance of the Afro. A content analysis of Ebony magazine for the period 1964-1977 was conducted using feature articles related to current events, achievements, and biographical sketches of nationally known individuals. Wright learned that based on published images, the Afro was first worn by men and women in 1965: about 5 percent worn by men and 2.8 percent worn by women. During the Black Power Movement, the appearance of the Afro increased dramatically from 37 percent in 1968 to 95 percent in 1969 for men. With women it increased from 14.8 percent to 57 percent from 1968 to 1969. Variations of the Afro (braids and shags) began to be worn by women from 1970 to 1976, thus the symbolic meaning of the Afro was established and individuals were free to follow fashion in hairstyles. The shag is defined by Wright as a variation of the Afro in which the hair is trimmed everywhere except the nape. The hair at the nape is longer and lies flat on the neck (1982, p. 7).

Through the analysis of ads and the meanings associated with the hairstyles, it was determined that racial pride and identity accounted for the largest share of the increase in the number of people wearing the Afro. There was definitely a pattern in the acceptance of the Afro. At the height of the Black Power Movement the appearance of the Afro increased dramatically by both men and women. Toward the decline of the movement, the numbers of people who wore the Afro dropped considerably. Some people began to wear variations of the Afro and some people went back to straight hair. Hair in the African American community became a fashion statement as well as a symbol

of pride. This study parallels with O'Neal's study of "style" among African Americans. The people took a political statement (the Afro) which demonstrated the unwillingness to conform to the mainstream, and added some "style" to it by coming up with different variations of the Afro, now symbolizing the self as a fashion entity.

Sensitivities about hair have many complex determinants and may be symbolic of a woman's feelings about other aspects of herself (Greene, White, Whitten, 2000, p. 166).

These authors believe not only that hair is a symbol of one's outside self, but it may determine how a woman feels about her inner self. This study focuses on the metaphorical meaning and significance of hair pertaining to the relationship between African American mothers and their daughters. The significance of hair texture, length, and style in the psyche of African American women is approached. The study showed how beauty standards in society for women were based on idealized and non realistic depictions of White women's physical features (Greene, White, Whitten, 2000, p.167). Observing that, any female face that had Caucasian features was judged to be more attractive than "Negroid" features (dark skin and kinky hair). The view that hair, unlike skin color, height, weight, body build and to some extent facial features (nose and lip shape) is somewhat malleable and therefore easier to alter or control, was shared by these authors and Synnott (2000, p. 175).

In a case study, the authors discovered how hair can be an inevitable source of conflict between mothers and daughters. They examined a conversation between a therapist and his patient, an African American woman, who was depressed ultimately because the only attention she got from her mother was when her mother combed her hair as a child. Throughout the study, instances of the patient's life were evaluated, which

described her life with her mother. The conclusions showed that the patient's overall lack of animation was due to the fact that the most prolonged physical contact that she experienced with her mother was whenever she got her hair braided. This research displayed just how important hair and the sociology behind it is. In a very early study, Berg's research (1936) also agreed with these findings. He believed that a woman's feelings about her hair are often symbolic of her conscious and unconscious internalized feelings about herself, her racial identity, and significant others. (Berg, 1936; Greene, White, Whitten, 2000, p. 169). This statement supports the idea that hair can be and is a symbol of self and culture, positively or negatively.

Wade's research examined a different level of self and culture for African Americans. His topic dealt with the different ranges (light/fair to dark) of skin color among African Americans. The main issue centers on the bias whereby fair skinned African Americans are said to be evaluated more favorably than dark skinned African Americans (1996, p. 350). These interpretations parallel with the discovery made by Russell, Wilson, and Hall:

The politics of hair parallels the politics of skin color. Among Black women, straight hair and European hairstyles not only have been considered more feminine but have sent a message about one's standing in the social hierarchy. "Good hair" has long been associated with the light-skinned middle class, "bad hair" with Blacks who are less fortunate (1992, p.82).

Within Wade's study, the ranking of attractiveness was conducted for African American men and women. The hypotheses were that fair-skinned females ranked themselves higher in physical, sexual attractiveness and self esteem than dark-skinned females. With men, the opposite would occur; dark-skinned males rated themselves higher because they can attract fair-skinned females as mates. The method here included

a sample of 91 African American students and alumni (51 males and 40 females). The participants were between 18-38 years for the men; the women ranged in age from 19-38 years. Random students were approached on campus and asked to complete and return a self-administered questionnaire, and a random sample of alumni subjects received a questionnaire in the mail and were asked to complete and return it. Wade found that on a two level scale of dark and fair skin, with male and female participants, the results were as follows: more people considered themselves light compared to dark skinned. The sexual attractiveness scale measure revealed a significant interaction of skin color and sex of the participants. The fair-skinned females' and dark-skinned females' self rating of sexual attractiveness was the same. Whereas the dark-skinned male rated themselves higher in sexual attractiveness than the fair-skinned males rated themselves. This study displayed the important role of skin color in the African American lifestyle. It depicts the relationship between skin color and hair texture as a symbol of self.

Theoretical views of clothing as a symbol of the professional self

Jenkins and Atkins (1990) conducted a basic study of what the majority feels are "appropriate" items to wear in the workplace. The main focus of this article was to help prepare people getting ready for interviews through wardrobe selection. They wanted to determine how important personal appearance during the initial interview is, if navy is the most acceptable color to wear during an interview, which styles of suits are most acceptable, if the most acceptable styles for men are more conservative than those for women, and to determine which styles are unacceptable to interviewers (1990, p. 39). The subjects were 54 campus recruiters, representing a variety of organizations. This

sample represented 90 percent of the potential employers who recruited on campus. Questionnaires were designed in regards to garment styles, hairstyles, shoes, carry-ins, and jewelry.

The authors found that the majority of the recruiters felt that appearance is *very* important. Navy was the most preferred suit color and tailored 2-piece suits for both women and men were the most acceptable. The hair style for women that was most acceptable was the “softly waved” look. Punk was the least acceptable. This article is an example of how many companies do not consider the need for African Americans to display their heritage (through clothing and hair). This article discussed the fact that the “soft waved” look was the most acceptable, and most African American hair is not soft and waved. This was based on an appearance norm of the majority without considering the minority.

More recently, Rucker, Anderson, and Kangas (1999) also examined the idea of plain, dark, tailored suits being the most “appropriate” for the workplace. They wanted to provide a historical perspective on clothing and power in the workplace and present new data on views of work clothing, power and career advancement in the 1990’s, with a focus on effects of minority status and relatively casual work environments (1999, p. 60). This research found that dark or cool colors, jackets and overall plain tailored appearance tend to garner higher ratings on work-related scales, and also that conservative dress had a positive association with the number of promotions. Their study was designed to determine the attitudes of working men and women from diverse ethnic backgrounds about business attire and power; also to explore how appearance has managed to create a powerful image under conditions of more and less formal business dress codes (Rucker,

Anderson, Kangas, 1999, p. 64). Data was collected via telephone interviews. The researchers found that minority respondents rated clothing as more important than did the non-minority respondents. Comments that helped explain the differences in how individuals felt about clothing included references by minority respondents to being a man or woman 'of color' and therefore having to be twice as good at everything to be noticed in the workplace; therefore, they hardly ever wore casual clothing. The general (non-minority) respondents expressed the need not to wear formal work attire when their jobs did not involve much contact with outside audiences.

The research done by McLeod (1999) dealing with minorities needing to be twice as good as other races, parallels with the study done by Rucker, et al. Both studies documented that many African Americans do not participate in dress down or casual dress when working in a corporate environment. Referring back to the study about style, by O'Neal (1999), this article shows how African American males have had to use their sense of style in order to adapt and be accepted in the workplace.

African American males have a dressier version of "corporate casual" attire because of the possibility of negative perceptions by others (McLeod, 1999, p. 272).

In this study 15 African American male executives, managers, professionals, and administrators in Des Moines, Iowa, were interviewed about their participation in casual days at work. The author found that many of the men felt negatively about casual day. Recent research has found that most African Americans feel that "...if you look sharp, you're more likely to act sharp" (1999, p. 20). Thus, suggesting that dress is a symbol of one's professional self.

Ethnicity is a major symbol of the self, and the choice to wear “cultural dress” is also a symbol of one’s personal self and professional self. The purpose of O’Neal’s study was to examine the use of “cultural dress” by some African American women. She felt it important to study individuals and groups who use dress to create meaning and to position themselves in society (1999, p. 388). She discussed the history of the Civil Rights era when much media attention was given to the dress of African Americans. Many men and women began to allow their hair to “go natural” and they began to wear symbols of their West African heritage. These uses were associated with identity (self perception) and heritage. Wearing symbols such as natural hair and cultural dress may come with a consequence:

Wearing symbols representing an African heritage might elicit perceptions ranging from eccentric to adversarial with the potential to impede positive interactions, thus negatively affecting one’s career (O’Neal, 1999, p. 389).

The methods of this research were taken from the larger study done by O’Neal dealing with the African American aesthetic of dress. Within this study she discovered that the subjects felt that cultural dress is a symbol or expression of pride in one’s heritage. Some women experienced wearing cultural dress as an opportunity to educate others about their culture and heritage. Lastly, according to the women interviewed, they perceived cultural dress as a symbol of their professional selves.

In conclusion, dress has been documented as a symbol of African American culture and pride and has been studied in-depth. The “style” of dress that an African American chooses and their aesthetic of dress have also been studied. Hair as a symbol of sexuality and individual identity has been studied in-depth. Even hair as a symbol of

cultural pride within the African American community has been studied. Albeit, there has not been any research found on the self-perception of those African Americans wearing natural hair and their perceptions of how they feel they are being perceived by society.

Methodology

Description of Sample

Using a purposive sample of 25 African Americans (men and women), interviews were conducted. A purposive sample is defined by Frankel and Wallen as:

A nonrandom sample selected because prior knowledge suggests it is representative, or because those selected have the needed information. (2000, p. 76)

Twenty of the subjects wore *Dreadlocks*, three subjects wore *Two-strand-twist*, and the last two subjects wore the *Close Cut* hairstyle. Rather than asking about the subject's age, their age was estimated through observation by the researcher. The subjects ranged in age from approximately 25 years to about 65 years of age. The estimated average age was 45 years old and beyond. So that the measurements of self esteem would not be disproportionate, a group consisting of professionals and non-professionals was utilized for the interviewing process. Past research indicates that most professional people have high to very high self esteem ratings, which results from their professional status. It is claimed that high self-esteem or self-acceptance is a necessary prerequisite for successful professionals/entrepreneurs, especially for women and minorities (Coleman and Grothus-Magee, 1991). The prerequisites for selecting the subjects for this research were that the subjects be African American with some form of natural hair.

Pilot Study

The purpose of the pilot study was to examine reasons why some African Americans have chosen to wear their hair natural, and to find out how they perceive themselves, and their thoughts on how they feel they are being perceived by others. The

pilot study was conducted as a project for a graduate class, Dress and Environmental Settings as Nonverbal Communication. This pilot study was conducted to lay ground work for this thesis research. The pilot study (located in Appendix A page 62) helped produce the instrument to be used and the procedures necessary to complete this study. The research questions produced as a result of the pilot study were divided into categories:

Their perceptions of themselves

- RQ1: Do people with natural hair have a higher level of self-esteem?
- RQ2: Do people with natural hair prefer natural compared to processed hair?
- RQ3: Do people with natural hair plan to keep it natural for a lifetime?

Their thoughts on perceptions from others

- RQ4: Have people with natural hair had negative responses about their hair?
- RQ5: Have people with natural hair had African Americans react more negatively toward their hair compared to other races?
- RQ6: Have people with natural hair experienced situations where their choice to wear natural hair prohibited them from occupational or personal opportunities?

Procedures and Instrumentation

All subjects were solicited by advertising through the salon of Significant Change in Shaker Heights, Ohio. Fliers (Appendix C, page 68) along with invitations (Appendix

B, page 67) were posted throughout the salon and a sign-up sheet (Appendix D, page 69) was presented to interested clients. This salon caters to African Americans who wear their hair natural. The stylist/owner of Significant Change specializes in educating others about natural hair and caring for all types of natural African American hairstyles. All of the interviewing done for this study took place at the Shaker Heights Library in Shaker Heights, Ohio. After completing the interviewing process, the participants received a \$10.00 off discount coupon for their next visit to Significant Change.

The interviewing process took approximately 35-45 minutes as in the pilot study. Each interview was held on a one-on-one basis to allow for privacy and openness of the subjects' answers. If the subject agreed, the interview was voice recorded on an audio cassette to assist with accuracy of the subjects' answers. After signing the consent form (Appendix E, page 70), all subjects were given the same Rosenberg questionnaire (1965) used in the pilot study to measure their self esteem (Appendix F, page 72). The questionnaire created by Rosenberg consisted of 10 items that were measured using a 4-point forced choice attitudinal scale (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, and 4=strongly disagree). To retain consistency throughout the study with the higher numbers representing higher scores and the lower numbers representing lower scores, the scores were reversed so that "4" indicated strong agreement and "1" indicated strong disagreement (Holloman, 1989). According to past researchers the Rosenberg self esteem questionnaire is claimed to have a reliability score of .85 (Jung et al., 2001; Silber and Tippet, 1965). The next section of the objective portion of the questionnaire created by the present researcher included items concerning the respondents' thoughts about their natural hair texture. The only modification to the pilot study questionnaire was to add an

item asking: “On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), how important is your appearance to you?”

After completing the objective questionnaire the subjects responded to the open-ended interviewing guide (Appendix G, page 74). The final version of the interviewing guide included added items that obtained more accurate data concerning the subjects’ opinions of how accepting others are of their natural hair. The final version also questioned respondents on the time and money spent on the upkeep of their hair to compare whether there was a difference in time and money spent for the upkeep of natural hair versus processed hair. After revisions, approximately 95% of the items for the interviewing guide were open ended/discussion questions. During the interviewing process a demographics form (Appendix H, page 77) was filled out by the researcher for each subject detailing their approximate age, gender, and hairstyle. Lastly, if the subject had agreed, a side view photograph was taken of them. These photographs were used as examples of the different types of natural African American hairstyles in the operational definitions section of this thesis.

Data Collection

A chart to determine the consistency of the subjects’ responses when answering the questions was prepared. Within this chart three series of comparative questions were evaluated. Within each series of questions, one question from the interviewing guide was compared with a similar question from the questionnaire on hair texture. Once the two questions were compared, the subject was tallied under either “yes” (their answers were consistent or “no” (their answers were not consistent). Next the chart incorporating the

thematic analysis of the seven themes throughout the research was prepared. Each theme had its own subcategories in which the subjects' answers fell. Each subcategory was tallied according to how the subject answered the question related to one of the seven themes. Lastly, a chart was created to display how the six research questions were answered. Each research question was broken down into categories of yes, no or unsure. The research question concerning the subject's level of self esteem was also broken down into three categories: high, moderate, and low.

Data Analysis

This research was exploratory in nature, and thus, data were analyzed qualitatively to determine themes in subject's responses. The subjects' answers were tabulated by a tally method and then converted into percentages. Exact quotations were used to support the answers given by the subjects.

Results/Findings

The purposes of this research were to: 1) determine how African Americans who wear their hair natural perceive themselves with natural hair and 2) examine how these African Americans feel they are being perceived by others. In the present chapter, data are presented and discussed in relation to consistency in responses, themes throughout the study and research questions.

Consistency in Responses

Since similar questions were answered on both the objective questionnaire and open ended questionnaire, I looked for consistency in answers from one format to the other. The similarities in each subject's answers determine much about their true feelings on the topic of their natural hair. There were three series of comparative questions used to measure consistency. Each series had two responses that the subjects' responses could fall under; either "yes" the answers were consistent or "no" the answers were not consistent, as seen in Table 1. Within each series, one question was taken from the interviewing guide and one question was taken from the hair texture questionnaire and these were compared with each other. When comparing the question "Why did you decide to wear your hair natural/What motivated your choice?" (from the interviewing guide) with "How would you describe the way you wear your hair?" (from the hair texture questionnaire); 68% (17) of the subjects were consistent with their answers. For example subject 009 provided consistent responses to these two questions:

When asked: Why did you decide to wear your hair natural/What motivated your choice?

She answered: It was the time for me to be free.

Then, when asked: How would you describe the way you wear your hair?
She selected: (c) My hair demonstrates a way of self acceptance.

Subject 024 answered those same questions similarly.

When asked: Why did you decide to wear your hair natural/What motivated your choice?

She answered: I loved the freedom that it gave me.... I love the way it (dreadlocks) looks.

Then, when asked: How would you describe the way you wear your hair?

She selected: (c) My hair demonstrates a way of self acceptance.

Within this series of comparative questions, the inconsistencies of respondents' answers were looked at also. Subject 016 was one example from 32% (8) of subjects who answered inconsistently to the following questions:

When asked: Why did you decide to wear your hair natural/What motivated your choice?

She answered: An option to get away from weaves (synthetic hair) and relaxers (processed hair).

Then, when asked: How would you describe the way you wear your hair?

She selected: (c) My hair demonstrates a way of self acceptance.

This subject's answers clearly suggests that her true feelings about the way in which she would have described how she wore her hair was not shown within the objective portion of the interview. In order for her answers to have been consistent, she would have had to answer the questions as such:

When asked: Why did you decide to wear your hair natural/What motivated your choice?

She answered: An option to get away from weaves (synthetic hair) and relaxers (processed hair).

Then, when asked: How would you describe the way you wear your hair?

A consistent selection: (a) My hair makes a fashion statement

The options the subjects had to choose from when answering the question "How would you describe the way you wear your hair" were as follows: (a) My hair makes a

fashion statement, (b) My hair serves as a means of not conforming to society, (c) My hair demonstrates a way of self acceptance, and (d) Other. Eighty-four percent (21) of all subjects chose answer (c) My hair demonstrates a way of self acceptance to describe the way they wore their hair. This high rate supports the importance to African Americans of self perception as discussed earlier in the theoretical framework section (pg. 15).

Secondly, the consistency in responses for the questions: “Have you ever gotten any positive/negative responses about your natural hair?” (from the interviewing guide) was compared with, “How do you feel others would describe your hair texture in the state it is in now?” (from hair texture questionnaire). Each subject was asked to give their understanding of the following terms (*Worsted wool*, *Extremely nappy*, *Matted masses*, and *Kinky curly*) using the options: (a) positive, (b) neutral, (c) negative and (d) unsure. Positive/negative associations with hair textures were compared to positive/negative responses received from others regarding hair texture. How the subject ranked each term, and how they felt others would describe their hair texture, determined if the response they received was positive or negative. Lastly, that positive or negative answer was compared with what the subject said during the interview. Seventy-six percent (19) of subjects were consistent in their answers.

The response to, “How do you feel others would describe your hair texture in the state it is in now?” using the answer choices: (a) *Worsted wool*, (b) *Extremely nappy*, (c) *Matted masses*, (d) *Kinky curly* and (e) Other was compared. If the subject answered this question in a positive manner, then the actual answer for the positive response the subjects received from others regarding their hair was compared with this. If the subject answered this question in a negative manner, then the actual answer for the negative

response the subjects received from others regarding their hair was compared with this.

For example, subject 002 responded to the following questions consistently:

When asked: What is your understanding of the following terms below?

She answered: Extremely nappy is (a) positive

Then, when asked: How do you feel others would describe your hair texture in the state it is in now?

She selected: (b) Extremely nappy

Finally, when asked: Have you ever gotten any positive responses about your natural hair?

She answered: Yes, I have. Strangers would stop me on the streets and simply say 'I love your hair'.

An inconsistent example in this series is from subject 004:

When asked: What is your understanding of the following terms below?

She answered: Extremely nappy is (c) negative

Then, when asked: How do you feel others would describe your hair texture in the state it is in now?

She answered: (b) Extremely nappy

Finally, when asked: Have you ever gotten any negative responses about your natural hair?

She answered: No

How would this subject know that others perceived her hair negatively if she had never gotten any negative responses about her hair? Instead of saying that she felt others would be negative toward it, to be consistent in her answers, she could have responded (e) Other, she was unsure how others felt.

The third and last series of questions concerned how the subject themselves felt about their hair and their hair texture. Subjects were asked, "Do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable about your hair in the natural state it is in now?" (from interviewing guide), compared with, "How would you describe the texture of your hair in the state it is in now?" using the options: (a) *Worsted wool*, (b) *Extremely nappy*, (c) *Matted masses*, (d) *Kinky curly* and (e) Other (from the hair texture questionnaire). Seventy-two percent

(18) of subjects were consistent in their answers. These questions were evaluated in the same manner as the second series of questions. Depending on how the subject answered the question and how they felt about the terms used to describe natural hair, determined how those two questions would be evaluated. Subject 021 was one of two males that participated in the study, and he had a very unique way of answering these questions while staying consistent in his answers.

When asked: Do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable about your hair in the natural state it is in now?

He answered: Very comfortable

Then, when asked: How would you describe the texture of your hair in the state it is in now?

He answered: (e) Other, and responded: 'Not as nappy as I'd like it'.

With such consistent answers as these, this suggests that this subject's true feelings about his hair were really revealed. An inconsistent example would be with subject 022:

When asked: Do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable about your hair in the natural state it is in now?

She answered: Very comfortable

Then, when asked: What is your understanding of the following terms below?

She answered: Matted Masses is (b) neutral

Finally when asked: How would you describe the texture of your hair in the state it is in now?

She answered: (c) Matted masses

If this respondent was truly comfortable with her hair texture, she would have chosen a positive term instead of a term that she considered to be neutral. This example suggests that not all subjects were completely comfortable about their choice to wear natural hair.

All consistency percentages can be viewed in Table 1, page 38.

Consistency in Responses

Comparative Questions Asked	yes	no
Why did you decide to wear your hair natural/What motivated your choice? <i>(Subjective - Interview)</i> {compared with}	17	8
How would you describe the way you wear your hair? <i>(Objective - Questionnaire)</i>	68% Consistency	
Have you ever gotten any positive/negative responses about your hair? <i>(Subjective - Interview)</i> {compared with}	19	6
How do you feel others would describe your hair texture in the natural state it is in now? <i>(Objective - Questionnaire)</i>	76% Consistency	
Do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable about your hair in the natural state it is in now? <i>(Subjective - Interview)</i> {compared with}	18	7
How would you describe the texture of your hair in the natural state it is in now? <i>(Objective - Questionnaire)</i>	72% Consistency	

Table 1

Thematic Analysis

This portion of the study includes the seven themes that emerged throughout the research. Each theme has been broken down into subcategories in which the subjects' answers fell. Each theme was tallied according to how the subject answered each question. The seven themes are listed below:

1. Motivation for going natural/Why did you go natural
2. The change from processed hair to natural hair
3. Responses toward hair
4. Occupational/Personal limitations
5. Self-Esteem level
6. Hair texture acceptance
7. The amount of money and time spent on upkeep of hair

Within the theme of Motivation for going natural/Why did you go natural, the data was broken down into seven different subcategories: 1) Wanted a different look, 2) Family and friends, 3) For healthier hair, 4) Less Maintenance, 5) Self acceptance, 6) Something I've always wanted to do and 7) Other or Miscellaneous responses. Out of these seven subcategories, the subjects responded to each as follows:

Motivation for wearing natural hair

Why	n	%
Self acceptance	8	32
Less Maintenance	8	32
For Healthier Hair	8	32
Family and Friends	5	20
Always wanted natural hair	5	20
Other Responses	5	20
Wanted a different look	3	12

Table 2

A subject may have selected several responses to answer this question; therefore that subject could have been categorized into several areas, as seen in Table 4 pg. 52.

Subject 009 was an example of this concept. She answered the question of “What motivated your choice?” under two themes: self acceptance and wanting healthier hair.

It (natural hair) was the time for me to be free.... And those chemicals (in processed hair) broke my hair off.

Subject 014 (age range 45 and up) was another example of the subject responding to the theme of motivation with more than one response. Her answer can be categorized into at least three of these subcategories.

I had been thinking about it for a while and I was tired of the “hair thing” in regards to being an African American female and with being a female period. I was tired of the money, waiting around for people to ... the cosmetologist to serve me, and I’m the one who is waiting and paying my money. I was tired of it (the processed hair style) not staying the way it was done when I left the beauty shop; sometimes right after I walked out the door. I got tired of the high maintenance

and I just really admired the locks. Years ago, I think it was in the early 70s, in the 60s and 70s, I did wear an Afro. Plus, I had really been out of wearing my hair relaxed for some time. What I was doing is... it (my hair) was some what relaxed, mildly, but I was wearing it in braids. You know, the extensions, you know, this braided hair into my hair. And then after a while I got tired of even that, even though it lasted maybe three months. I was tired of having to service it and the maintenance. It was just an evolutionary process. This was just the way I wanted my hair. This is the way I wanted it. And I really had reflected on it for a while before, because I didn't want to make a decision about something which is quite permanent. When I decided to do it (go natural) I was very comfortable because I felt.... 'Well this is me'.

Within the subcategory of "Other", for the theme of motivation or why, subject 012 gave a response that did not correlate with any response given by most subjects. Her response was as follows:

I became a vegetarian about five years ago. I felt like it was time for a change. I wanted to get the locks when I was working, but I didn't have the strength to do it until I was retired.

Lastly, on the theme of motivation, subject 021 answered this on his own terms also:

It (going natural) was a religious choice for me. I was at a time in my life where some statements had to be made and I felt that the Lord had wanted me to make those statements with my hair.

The second theme (Change from processed hair to natural hair) concerned the subject's preference for natural hair over processed hair. Eighty percent (20) of the subjects preferred natural hair over processed hair. This theme did not apply to sixteen percent (4) of the 25 subjects because they had never had processed hair. One of the subjects was unsure if she preferred natural hair over processed hair. This is what subject 004 said:

When asked: How did you feel about your processed hair?

She answered: Positively, I felt good about it.

When asked: Do you like your natural hair better than the processed hair you had?

She answered: I'm undecided. I just love hair.

Of the subjects who had processed hair before, all preferred their natural hair over the processed hair they had. Here are some examples:

Subject 003 said: Processed hair is lifeless and natural hair has more life

Subject 005 said: It's (natural hair) beautiful! Relaxed hair is just imitating another group of people.

Subject 010 said: This is me! This is how it (my hair) was made and I like it.

Subject 014 said: (She preferred natural hair over processed hair.) Less maintenance, and because it's (my hair) in it's natural state and like it. I wish I would have done it sooner.

Lastly, Subject 023 said: This is the natural way people should feel about themselves. You should not have to feel like you have to conform to be equal.

The third theme involved the Types of responses that subjects received about their natural hair. One hundred percent (25) of the subjects had gotten a positive response about their hair at one point. Within all 100% of those subjects, 80% (20) of them had also received negative responses about their hair; therefore these subjects fell under more than one subcategory of this theme. A few of the positive responses that subjects received are listed below:

When subject 003 was asked: Have you ever gotten any positive responses about your natural hair?

She answered: Yes, some people says it [my hair] looks cool!

When asked: From whom did the response come?

She answered: More mature men and women who are more positive toward it (natural hair).

When subject 015 was asked: Have you ever gotten any positive responses about your natural hair?

She answered: Yes, everybody complements me on my hair. People stop me on the streets and say that my hair looks good.

When asked: From whom did the response come?

She answered: Family, coworkers, strangers.

Then, when subject 020 was asked: Have you ever gotten any positive responses about your natural hair?

She answered: Yes, people would say, 'Your hair is beautiful' and 'I didn't know it [dreadlocks] was so versatile'.

When asked: From whom did the response come?

She answered: Coworkers, males and females, some white colleagues.

On the other side of that concept comes the question of whether subjects received any negative responses about their hair. Conversely, these same subjects: 003, 015, and 020, all received some negative responses about their hair.

When subject 003 was asked: Have you ever gotten any negative responses about your natural hair?

She answered: Yes, but not verbal. I've gotten negative looks from people.

When asked: From whom did the response come?

She answered: Younger women or older women who just don't understand why I would lock my hair.

When subject 015 was asked: Have you ever gotten any negative responses about your natural hair?

She answered: Yes, some people just asked why I cut my hair. (This subject was wearing the close cut hair style).

When asked: From whom did the response come?

She answered: Two older men, one black and one white.

Finally, when subject 020 was asked: Have you ever gotten any negative responses about your natural hair?

She answered: Yes, I got negative responses from beauty salons.

When asked: From whom did the response come?

She answered: From hair stylist and from my grandparents. They [her grandparents] told me I look like a picanini.

Occupational/personal limitations was the fourth theme. The subcategory was whether that subject had been prohibited or limited because of their choice to wear natural hair or not. Seventy-two percent (18) of the subjects had not been prohibited from occupational/personal opportunities. Sixteen percent (4) of the subjects were prohibited or limited and 12% (3) of the subjects were unsure if they had been prohibited or limited. Of the subjects that said they were unsure if they had been limited, all of them said they went natural much later in life or they had been at their jobs for some years and had not been in the process of looking for a job or a relationship. The subjects that felt they were or had been prohibited made these comments:

Subject 010 said: Well, once I was in Texas, I wasn't prohibited or anything. It's just I was told, well my boss was told, that my hair was intimidating to white men and women alike because I wore my hair braided. And they were French braids, they were natural.

Subject 013 said: My husband doesn't like it [my hair].

Subject 014 said that she was unsure if she herself had been limited but she had a friend whom she knew was being limited by the choice to wear natural hair. This is what she had to say:

I do have a friend who is a teacher and she just finished up school and when she was going for her interview for her teaching position, at the time she was wearing braids, and it wasn't extensions. Her hair is just thick and long and black and she's African American. And the person who interviewed her was an African American female, asked her, 'Well are you going to change your hair aren't you'. So she started wearing these ugly wigs, and everything, and now she has a teaching position. And she is waiting until she gets her final contract before she goes to locks.

Three of the subjects that had not felt as though they had been prohibited or limited because of their choice to wear natural hair made the statements below:

Subject 019 said: You know, I'm in nursing so, it really doesn't I guess if I was in the corporate world, I would be more prominent as far as anything like that [natural hair]. But I'm in the nursing and as long as you basically show up and you basically neat and clean, I don't think they.... You are there to do what you supposed to do; they [her supervisors] really don't care what's happening.

Subject 009 said: I'm my own boss. [This subject is a private duty nurse]

Subject 008 said: If it have, I wasn't aware of it or I didn't let it hinder me. I am a skilled person and I bring good technical skills to the company I work for.

The subjects' Level of self esteem was measured within the fifth theme.

The subjects' self esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self Esteem Test (1965). In order to determine if someone had a high/low self esteem, the scores were reversed allowing the highest level of self esteem to equal "4" and the lowest level of self esteem to equal "1". Subjects that were seen to have a moderate level of self esteem had scores that were either a "2" or a "3" for the responses. With this instrument, 68% (17) of the subjects were measured as having a high level of self esteem. Thirty-two percent (8) of the subjects were considered to have moderate levels of self esteem. No one had a low level of self esteem. A few subjects displayed this aspect with certain comments they made during the interview.

Subject 011 stated: I'm doing my own thing

Subject 014 stated: This is naturally me.

Subject 015 stated: I don't care how others describe it [my hair].

The sixth theme dealt with Hair texture acceptance, and how the subject felt about their hair texture, or how they felt others perceived their hair texture. Within this theme there will be some inconsistencies in the answers given because each

subject had the opportunity to give their opinion on the terms applied to natural hair. The subjects were evaluated on descriptors which they considered to be positive or negative. As stated earlier, there were four terms describing hair texture within this portion of the study. These terms were evaluated by the subjects in the hair texture questionnaire portion (see Appendix F). *Worsted wool* was considered to be positive by 40% (10) of the subjects. Twelve percent (3) felt *worsted wool* was a negative term; 24% (6) felt it had a neutral connotation; and 24% (6) were unsure what the term meant. The term *Extremely nappy* was said to be positive by 40% (10) of the subjects. It was considered negative by 28% (7) of the subjects; and neutral by 32% (8) of the subjects. *Matted masses* was considered positive by one subject; 52% (13) felt this term was negative. Thirty-two percent (8) felt *matted masses* was a neutral term and 12% (3) were unsure about the term. Of all of the four terms, it seems as if *Kinky curly* was a term that most subjects recognized and could relate to. *Kinky curly* was rated by 72% (18) of the subjects as having a positive connotation. Eight percent (2) of subjects felt it was a negative term and 20 % (5) felt it was a neutral term. Please see Table 3 on page 47 for hair texture terms and response percentages.

Responses to hair texture terminology

	Worsted Wool	Extremely Nappy	Matted Masses	Kinky Curly
Positive	40%	40%	14%	72%
Neutral	24%	32%	32%	20%
Negative	12%	28%	52%	8%
Unsure	24%	0%	12%	0%

Table 3

The terms the subjects evaluated to have a positive connotation determined if they felt positively about their hair and how others perceived their hair. Seventy-six percent (14) of subjects felt positive about their hair texture; and out of those, 80% of them used the term *Kinky curly* to describe their hair. Twenty-eight percent (7) felt that others perceived their hair texture in a positive way. No subject felt negatively about their hair, but 24% (6) of subjects felt others perceived their hair negatively. Twelve percent (3) felt neutrally about their hair and 16% (4) felt others were neutral as well. There were 32% (8) of subjects who gave their own description of how they felt about their hair texture.

When asked: How would you describe your hair texture in the state it is in now?

Subject 024 said: Strong/Great

Subject 019 said: Not as nappy as I'd like it

Also 32% (8) of subjects gave their own opinion about how they felt others would describe their texture.

When asked: How do you feel others would describe your hair texture in the state it is in now?

Subject 014 said: Lovely, strange

Subject 005 said: Braided (My hair is not braided. I have locks).

This section of the thematic analysis supports the evolution of a new acceptance of natural hair among the African American community. Forty percent of the subjects evaluating the term *Extremely nappy* as positive, along with the 32% that felt it had a neutral connotation, are examples of this evolution. In the last 50 years, the term to describe this race of people elevated from Colored, to Black, and now to African American; so have the terms which describe the natural hair of African Americans. Until the late 1960s and early 1970s, the term “nappy” was considered by most African Americans to be the most negative term you could use to describe the texture of their hair. “Nappy” was even a term that would start fights or confrontations within the African American community (Russell, et al, 1992). After the fall of the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement, the term “nappy”, once again was left with a negative connotation. Beginning in the 1980s, when celebrities and other public figures were being seen with Close cuts, Dread Locks and other natural hair styles, many African Americans have joined this evolution. Today there are websites such as nappturality.com and nappyhair.com, both displaying different styles of natural hair and promoting this term we call “nappy hair”. Many African Americans today are wearing their hair natural and will let anyone know that they are “Happy to be Nappy”.

The seventh and final theme concerned the Amount of time and money spent on the upkeep of natural hair versus processed hair. This theme had been taken as a subset from the theme of why did you go natural or what motivated your choice to go natural. The concept of maintenance was a recurring reason subjects wanted to go natural. Eighty percent (20) of the subjects said that the time in the upkeep of natural hair was less than the time to keep up processed hair. One person felt that she spent the same amount of time on the upkeep of her natural hair as she did with the processed hair she previously had. On the concept of cost or money it takes for the upkeep of natural hair versus processed hair, 68% (17) of the subjects said they spend less money on their natural hair upkeep. Twelve percent (3) of subjects said that they spent about the same amount of money on their natural hair as they did with their processed hair.

Subject 011 stated: The cost was equal because of the cost for products. [Natural, chemical free products are what this subject and most subjects used for their hair. Since these products are all natural they tend to be more expensive]

There were subjects that had statements that contradicted or disagreed with this statement of cost being equal. Subject 020 and 016 explained that they spent less time and money on their hair and this is what they had to say:

Subject 020: If your hair is natural, you don't have to use as many products because your hair is healthier.

Subject 016: With my hair natural, I only go to the salon every two weeks and with a processed hair style, I went almost every week.

All thematic analysis scores may be viewed within Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7 below.

The scoring for the theme of motivation for natural hair was shown in Table 2 on page 40.

Change from Processed Hair to Natural Hair

Preferred Natural hair	20
Preferred Processed hair	0
Unsure	1
Not applicable	4

Table 4

Tabular Representation for Themes 3, 4, and 5

3 *Responses received toward hair	<u>Negative</u>	<u>Positive</u>	
	20	25	
4 Occupational/personal limitations	<u>Limited</u>	<u>Not Limited</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
	4	18	3
5 Self-esteem Level	<u>High</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Low</u>
	17	8	0

* Subjects fell under more than one category

Table 5

Hair Texture Acceptance

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Mis c.
Self-Perception from subjects	14	3	0	8
Perception from others	7	4	6	8

Table 6

The Amount of Time and Money Spent on the Upkeep of Natural Hair versus Processed Hair

	Natural hair: time	Natural hair: money	Processed hair: time	Processed hair: money
More	0	1	20	17
Same	1	3	1	3
Less	20	17	0	1

*** Four subjects were not applicable because they had never had processed hair**

Table 7

Summary and Conclusions

Problem Statement

The purpose of this research was to examine reasons why some African Americans have chosen to “go natural”, wearing their hair in any natural state such as Afro, Close cuts, Dread Locks, and Braids or Cornrows; and to see how they perceive themselves with natural hair, and how they feel they are being perceived by others (co-workers, managers/bosses, friends/family and acquaintances). Lastly, in what way, if any, do the people wearing natural hair feel that they have been prohibited from certain occupational/personal aspects of their lives because of the choice to wear natural hair?

Methodology

The data for this study were collected using an instrument that consisted of two parts: 1) self esteem questionnaire (Rosenberg, 1965), and 2) a hair texture questionnaire in which subjects gave their opinions on terms describing natural hair. Then, one-on-one interviews were conducted with each subject which recorded their opinions of experiences with natural hair. The data were tabulated by a tally method and then converted into percentages. The research questions and their conclusions are explained below, along with their comparison to previous research results.

Conclusions

The research questions were separated into two categories: Their perceptions of themselves which relate to research questions 1-3, and Their thoughts on perceptions from others which relate to research questions 4-6 (See Table 8, page 56).

The first research question was “Do people with natural hair have a high level of self esteem?” This question was answered “yes” by 68% (17) of the subjects. Self concept, self identity as well as self esteem plays a major part in how one chooses to wear and style their hair. The data showed that African Americans who went natural had some sense of self acceptance and pride in one’s self. This supports Synott’s (1987) statement that hair is a social and physiological phenomenon, a symbol of self and of group identity.

“Do people with natural hair prefer natural compared to processed hair?” was the second research question. This question was not applicable to 16% (4) of the subjects because they had never experienced wearing processed hair. Eighty-four percent (21) of the subjects had processed hair before, and from those, 95% (20) of those subjects prefer their natural hair over the processed hair they had. This indicates another means of self acceptance in wearing natural hair.

The third research question was, “Do people with natural hair plan to keep it natural for a lifetime?” Ninety-two percent (23) of the subjects answered this question with a “yes”. One person said that she would probably go back to a processed hair style and one of the other subjects said that she was unsure if she was going to be natural for a lifetime. Subjects making comments such as “This is me

now” and “I love the way my hair looks” further suggests the new evolution of self acceptance among the African American culture.

Research question four was as follows: “Have people with natural hair had negative responses about their hair?” Twenty percent (5) of the subjects had never gotten negative responses about their hair, while 80% (20) of the subjects had received some kind of negative response toward their hair. Of the subjects that received negative responses, 72% (18) received verbal responses and 8% (2) received non-verbal responses.

Research question five explored the demographics of those individuals who expressed negative responses to natural hair. The research question was as follows: “Have people with natural hair had other African Americans react more negatively compared to other races?” Eight percent (2) felt that Caucasians were the least accepting of their natural hair, while 52% (13) felt that neither African Americans nor Caucasians were more likely to perceive their hair negatively. Forty percent (10) of the subjects felt that other African Americans were more negative towards their natural hair. They made comments such as: “Muslim African American men don’t like my hair”; “Older generations of Blacks don’t like my hair”; and “Some African American women don’t want to commit to being natural”. Wade’s study (1996) suggested that many African Americans rated themselves or other African Americans positively or negatively according to how straight their hair is or how light their skin is. This shows that African Americans can be critical of their own race; therefore, the African Americans who have natural hair can be considered a minority within a minority.

The sixth and last research question was, “Have people with natural hair had situations where their choice for natural hair has prohibited them from occupational/personal opportunities?” Twelve percent (3) of the sample were unsure if they had ever been prohibited, while 72% (18) of the sample felt as if they had never been prohibited. Sixteen percent (4) of the subjects felt that they had been prohibited from occupational/personal opportunities. According to Russell, et al., “good hair” (straight or wavy hair) has long been associated with the light-skinned middle class, “bad hair” (kinky curly/tightly curled hair) with Blacks who are less fortunate (1992, p. 82). For many years African Americans had been prohibited from occupational/personal opportunities because of their appearance. This concept relates with the study done by Wade (1996). Wade’s theory was that the color of one’s skin and the texture of one’s hair would predict who one would choose as a mate. The prohibition of personal relationships falls into play here. The small percentage of 16% (4) having felt as though they had been restricted in forming relationships because of their choice to wear natural hair, suggests that society as a whole has made an evolution toward accepting natural hair.

Their Perceptions of Themselves

Research Questions	Results
RQ1: Do people with natural hair have a high level of self-esteem?	Answered yes by 68% of subjects
RQ2: Do people with natural hair prefer natural compared to processed hair?	Answered yes by 80% of subjects
RQ3: Do people with natural hair plan to keep it natural for a lifetime?	Answered yes by 92% of subjects

Their Thoughts on Perceptions from Others

Research Questions	Results
RQ4: Have people with natural hair had negative responses about their hair?	Answered yes by 80% of subjects
RQ5: Have people with natural hair had other African Americans react more negatively compared to other races?	Answered yes by 40% of subjects
RQ6: Have people with natural hair experienced situations where their choice for natural hair prohibited them from occupational/personal opportunities?	Answered yes by 16% of subjects

Table 8

Limitations

The present study was strictly an exploratory case study. Taking this research to the next level and using a larger sample would heighten the possibilities for richer more in-depth information. Similar to the study done by Wade (1996), discussing skin color and mate selection, this present study did not discuss the level of black awareness or black consciousness the subjects' may have had. Asking questions such as, "How important is your African American heritage to you?" and "How greatly does your African American descent have an affect on the decisions you make on a day to day basis?" could have accomplished this aspect of the study. These types of questions related to the level of black consciousness one has, could further explain why subjects chose to go natural and why 92% of them plan on remaining natural for a life time. The level of self-esteem could then be correlated to the dimension of black consciousness, comparing to see whether a high level of self-esteem in an individual could predict a high level of black consciousness and vice versa. Finally, there were geographic limitations. Results can not be generally applied in that the study took place in one city and with one salon.

For Further Research

This study touched on the idea of an evolution in attitude toward natural African American hair among the African American community. This evolution in attitude could be studied in depth beginning at the fall of the Civil Rights/Black Power Movement until currently. Along with attitudes, self-esteem of women wearing natural hair could be further studied. The difference in the level of self-esteem among women who wear natural hair could be compared with those women wearing processed hair or synthetic hair. Noticing that some Caucasian males and females are simulating the style of dreadlock, how these Caucasians are being perceived by the African American population wearing dreadlocks could be examined. Lastly, approximately 80% of the subjects studied in this present research were wearing dreadlocks. A study could be conducted surveying the number of African Americans wearing natural hair and of those how many are wearing dreadlocks and why (fashion, trendy, political, religion, etc.)

The purposes of this study were to 1) interview and record the perceptions of African Americans about their natural hair and 2) to record their thoughts on how others perceived them with natural hair. This research hopes to inform African Americans and others about the situations and responses some people have experienced because of their choice to wear natural hair. The ultimate goal of this research is to provide literature that companies, organizations and individuals can read to help communicate that being an African American who has pride in their culture and who displays it through hair should not dictate whether one will be prohibited from a career (job) or personal relationship because of the choice to wear natural hair.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Pilot Study

Description of Sample

A sample of 6 Michigan State University students (4 females and 2 males), all from different majors participated along with 3 professional women working in the fields of retail, education, and Episcopal ministry. Ages ranged from 18 years to approximately 40 years old. Subjects hair styles varied as follows: 2(males) wearing cornrows, 3(females) wearing dreadlocks, 1 (female) wearing a close cut, and 3(females) wearing an Afro.

Methodology

Subjects were solicited by attending the Black Poet Society (a Michigan State University student organization) meeting and inviting members to participate. Others were seen in passing on campus or other public places and asked to be a part of a natural hair study. All subjects were given a short questionnaire to fill out, then were interviewed concerning their thoughts about their natural hair. The one-on-one meetings were arranged to suit the subject's need or preference. All meetings were held in a quiet environment either a library, dorm room or the subject's home.

Instrumentation

The interviewing process took approximately 45 minutes for each subject. All were given the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale questionnaire (1965). This questionnaire was slightly modified by adding two questions concerning opinions of the way one looks. Questions such as "I take a positive attitude toward myself" and "I am happy with the way I look" were used as measures to determine self acceptance among the subjects.

Also three items were developed to evaluate the opinions of how the subjects' felt about their hair texture. Phrases such as "Matted Masses" and "Worsted Wool", were adjectives used to describe hair texture. The second instrument was an interview guide developed to obtain the subjects' perceptions of their hair and how they feel others perceive their hair. A few of the questions were not applicable to the two males who had never had processed hair; still all information given by the male and female subjects was collected in the same manner. The list of twelve interview questions such as "Why did you decide to wear your hair natural?" and "How do people you've just met respond to your hair?" were open-ended questions that gave the subjects opportunity to express their opinions and tell their stories. The questions were developed depending on theme.

Data Collection

A thematic analysis was used to record the data collected. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) was measured on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 being strongly agreed and 4 being strongly disagree). The items concerning hair texture were measured by the selection of phrases chosen to describe the hair. "Worsted Wool" and "Extremely Nappy" were considered the negative responses toward natural hair and "Matted Masses" and Kinky Curly" were considered positive/neutral responses to natural hair. Next, the interviewing questions were broken down into four of the six themes: (1) Why/Motivation for natural hair, (2) The change from processed hair to natural hair, (3) The response from others, and (4) Occupational/Personal relationships being effected by natural hair. Each item was tallied and analyzed by comparing answers recorded in the interview to those filled out on the questionnaire to determine if there was a pattern in responses. Questions such as "How do you feel about your hair in the natural state it is in

now?”, taken from the interview and “How would you describe the texture of your hair in the natural state it is in now?”, taken from the questionnaire on hair texture; were compared and contrasted to determine if the responses were consistent. Then these data were recorded on a chart. Lastly, the research questions were divided into two themes: Their Perceptions of themselves and Their thoughts on perceptions from others. Each response related to the research questions were tabulated and recorded on a chart.

Results/Findings

The purposes of this study were to find out how African Americans who wear their hair natural perceive themselves, and if these people display a high level of self esteem. Their perceptions on how they feel others perceive them in a work environment, school and other person-to-person meetings were studied also. In this section of the paper, the results and findings are discussed.

The consistency in the responses of the subjects’ was accounted for first. This was an important aspect to measure because the similarities in each subject’s answers determined much about their true feelings on the topic of natural hair. When comparing questions concerning how subjects’ feel about their hair/hair texture, 88% of the subjects were consistent throughout the interviewing process. The question about how the subjects’ feel others respond to their hair/hair texture, was compared with whether they had ever received any positive or negative responses about their hair, 66% of the subjects remained consistent in their answers. When responding to the questions asked concerning the motivation or choice to wear natural hair, again, 88% of the participants remained consistent. One example is from one female student whose answers were parallel throughout all of her interviewing process. When asked: “How would you

describe your choice to wear natural?" (from the hair texture questionnaire) she answered with choice (C) "A way of self acceptance". Then she was asked "Why did you decide to wear your hair natural?/What motivated your choice?", (during the interview) she answered:

"I just figured that God made my hair like that (kinky) for a reason."

Figure 2 displays the thematic analysis of the six main themes of this research. When asked "Why or what was their motivation for wearing natural hair?" 6 of the 9 participants explained that maintenance of natural hair was easier than processed hair. "Do you prefer natural hair over processed hair?" was then asked, and 2 subjects (both male) who had never had processed hair, were not applicable for this question. All of the 7 (females) in this study who had processed hair at one time, all preferred natural over processed hair.

"Have people with natural hair had negative responses?" was answered "yes" by 77% of subjects. Yet, all 9 of the participants also discussed having had positive responses toward their hair.

Within the theme discussing whether occupational/personal aspects of their lives had been negatively affected as a result of their natural hair choice, 5 of the 9 participants had been affected negatively by their choice to wear natural hair. One of the female subjects explained how some of her friendships had been diminished because of her choice to wear natural hair. She stated:

"...some people feel you (I) are out to convert them...."

A male student talked about being singled out at a youth group geared toward professional black men. The student wears his hair in braids and was told he would have to change his hair style in order to participate in the group. Another male student explained:

“Some people that I meet don’t like my nappy hair, so I’m a loner.”

Out of these negative occurrences, 6 of the 9 students discussed how other African Americans who were not wearing their hair natural, gave more negative responses than any other race. Even though some subjects have felt restricted in certain aspects of their lives and labeled as a minority within a minority, 7 out of 9 (77%) participants said they would be natural for the rest of their lives. Therefore, research question 3 was answered, which stated: “Do people with natural hair plan to keep in natural for a lifetime.”

Lastly, the issue of self-esteem was evaluated in this study. Six of 9 of the subjects were regarded at having a high self-esteem. Three of the 9 were considered to have a moderate self-esteem and no one was considered to have a low self-esteem. This suggests that a personal self image goes hand in hand with the choice to wear natural hair.

Appendix B

Invitation to Participate in a study on The Perceptions of African Americans On their Natural Hair

You were invited to participate in a study of African Americans and their perceptions of their natural hair, because you have chosen to wear your hair in a natural state.

You will be interviewed and asked to fill out a small questionnaire concerning your thoughts about your hair and how you feel others perceive your natural hair in your work environment, school, and other person to person meetings. Your time is very valuable; therefore this study will only take a short 45-55 minutes of your day. Your time and efforts are greatly appreciated for this voluntary research. Every aspect of this study will be kept completely confidential.

If you are interested in participating, or have friends who wear their hair natural and would like to participate, please contact **Tameka Ferguson** at:

(517) 882-0447

Or e-mail: fergu162@msu.edu

**** You must be 18 years or older to participate**

Appendix C

Advertisement for
**The Perceptions of African Americans
On their Natural Hair**

How would you like to get a \$10 discount on your next haircut or grooming?

Tameka Ferguson, a fellow client of Significant Change is conducting a research study concerning African Americans who wear their hair natural

><<<<<<<<<<

By Participating in this study you will be assisting a fellow client reach the goal of finishing her Master's of Arts Degree at Michigan State University.

><><><><><><><><><

Just sign up, participate and receive \$10 off your next visit
See Barbara for details

Appendix D

Contact Sheet for Volunteers for the study on
**The Perceptions of African Americans on
Their Natural Hair**

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please fill out this form and drop it into the locked box by the entry way. Thank you for your interest, and I look forward to meeting with you.

Tameka Ferguson
Email: fergu162@msu.edu

Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Appendix E

Subject Consent for the study of The Perceptions of African-Americans on their Natural Hair

You are invited to participate in a study of natural African-American hair styles. The study conducted will serve as my Master's Thesis Research. The purpose of this study is to determine how African-Americans who wear their hair natural, feel about their hair and how they feel others perceive them. The end result of this study will hopefully provide literature that others can read to learn more about the positive and negative aspects of going natural. You were chosen for this study because you previously made the choice to go natural.

If you agree to participate, I will meet with you for a one on one interview that will take approximately 45 minutes. There will be a \$10.00 discount coupon given to you for you completion of this interviewing process. Before the interview, a short questionnaire will be given to you. I am interested in knowing why you haven chosen to go natural. The interview will be voice recorded on a tape cassette. You may choose to have your voice recorded or not, this will not eliminate you from the study. In addition, you may also elect to have a side view picture taken of your hair for my records. You may participate in the study without having your picture taken. All cassette tapes and photographs will be destroyed after the study is complete.

Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. All information you provide in the questionnaire and interview will remain completely confidential. Your name will not be associated with any comments you make. The questionnaire, answers to the interview questions and your audio taped responses will be recorded using an identification number instead of your name. Also all of your information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in which I am the only person with access. Any saved information will be securely kept on a computer that will be accessed by my password only. Again, all of your information will be shredded and destroyed after the study is complete.

All portions of this study are completely voluntary. While I hope you will complete the whole study, you may choose to omit questions or end your participation at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study please feel free to contact me, Tameka Ferguson, at (517) 882-0447, email: fergu162@msu.edu. My advisor, Dr. Sally Helvenston will also be available to answer any questions you have about this study or your rights. Contact her at (517) 355-7716 or email: helvenst@msu.edu. If you have any further questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact – anonymously, if you wish – Ashir Kumar, M.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human subjects (UCRIHS) by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, email:

ucrihs@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

I will provide you with a signed copy of this form at your request.

Your signature below indicates you have read all parts of this consent and you have voluntarily decided to participate in this study. I greatly appreciate your interest and participation.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signature of the Participant

Date

Optional: do you agree to have your voice recorded on a cassette tape?

Yes or No

Optional: do you agree to have a side view photograph taken?

Yes or No

Signature of the Participant

Date

Signature of the Researcher

Date

Appendix F
Questionnaire
The Perceptions of African-Americans on their
Natural Hair

Subject ID # _____

All questions are voluntary. Please answer as you see fit. Respond to each question with a **1-strongly agree, 2-agree, 3-disagree, or 4-strongly disagree.**

1. On the whole I am satisfied with myself1 2 3 4
2. At times I think I am no good at all.....1 2 3 4
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.....1 2 3 4.
4. I certainly feel useless at times.....1 2 3 4
5. I am able to do things as well as most people.....1 2 3 4
6. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least
on an equal plane with others.....1 2 3 4
7. I feel that I don't have much to be proud of.....1 2 3 4
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.....1 2 3 4
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure....1 2 3 4
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.....1 2 3 4

-
11. I wish I could change the way I look.....1 2 3 4
 12. I am happy with the way I look.....1 2 3 4

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), how important is your appearance to you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. How would you describe the way you wear your hair?

- a) My hair makes a fashion statement
- b) My hair serves as a means of not conforming to society
- c) My hair demonstrates a way of self acceptance
- d) Other _____

3. What is your understanding of the following terms below?

Worsted wool

- a) positive
- b) neutral
- c) negative
- d) unsure

Extremely nappy

- a) positive
- b) neutral
- c) negative
- d) unsure

Matted masses

- a) positive
- b) neutral
- c) negative
- d) unsure

Kinky curly

- a) positive
- b) neutral
- c) negative
- d) unsure

4. How would you describe the texture of your hair in the state it is in now?

- a) Worsted wool
- b) Extremely nappy
- c) Matted masses
- d) Kinky curly
- e) Other _____

5. How do you feel others would describe your hair texture in the state it is in now?

- a) Worsted wool
- b) Extremely nappy
- c) Matted masses
- d) Kinky curly
- e) Other _____

Appendix G

Interviewing questionnaire for The Perceptions of African-Americans On their Natural hair

Case # _____

Subject ID # _____

1. Why did you decide to wear your hair natural/What motivated your choice? _____

2. How much time and money per month do you spend on the upkeep of your hair?

3. How long have you had your hair natural? _____ months _____ years
4. How long do you plan to keep it natural? _____
5. Do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable about your hair in the natural state it is in now? Explain. _____

6. Did you ever have any kind of processed hair? If so, what kind?
Yes _____ No _____ What kind? _____
 - a. Compare the time and expense of maintaining processed hair verses natural hair.

Natural Hair

More time _____ Less time _____

Processed Hair

More time _____ Less time _____

More costly____ Less costly____ More costly____ Less costly____
Comments_____

b. How did you feel about your processed hair?

Positively____ Negatively____
Comments_____

c. Do you like your natural hair better than the processed hair you had?

Yes____ No____

Why?_____

7. Have you ever gotten any positive responses about your natural hair?

If so, what type of response? _____

From who did the response come? _____

Is there a particular race or ethnic group who you feel is **most** accepting of your natural hair? What group? _____

8. Have you ever gotten any negative responses about your hair? _____ If so, what type of response? _____

_____ From who did the response come? _____

Is there a particular race or ethnic group who you feel is **least** accepting of your natural hair? What group? _____

9. How do people you've just met respond to your hair? Do they ask questions, etc.? _____

10. What is your occupation? _____

11. How do you feel your coworkers and boss perceive your hair?

12. Does your work dress code prohibit certain types of hair styles to be worn at work? Yes _____ No _____

If so, what types of hair styles aren't allowed?

13. Do you feel you have ever been prohibited from certain aspects of your life such as careers, personal relationships, etc. because of your choice to wear natural hair? Yes _____ No _____

14. If so, what aspect of your life has been prohibited? _____

Appendix H

Identification Form for Study on The Perceptions of African-Americans On their Natural Hair

Case # _____

Subject's Name _____ Subject's ID # _____

Subject's Sex: **M** or **F**

Subject's Age: 18-25 25-35 35-45 45 and up

Subject's Hairstyle: Dreadlocks Close Cut

 Braids Afro

Comments about the Subject

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