



Complexities of colour: Black women negotiating space and identity in Braamfontein through skin-tone registers.

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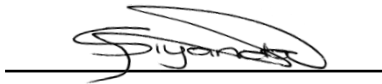
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Declaration form

I hereby declare that this dissertation is entirely my own work and that any sources of information have been duly cited.

I hereby declare that any internet sources published or unpublished, from which have quoted or drawn references have been referenced fully in the texts and contents list. I understand that failure to do this will result in the failure of this portion of the degree due to Plagiarism.



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19th April 2020

Date:

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Abstract

This study focusses on the meanings of skin-complexion for a group of young black women living and working in the inner city of Braamfontein. It investigates the various ways in which they come to negotiate, shape and form their identities within multiple spaces in the city. The study attempts to explore the kinds of terminology used to describe different contexts in which space and identity are negotiated, such as, the term “woke” and “yellow-bone”; and furthermore, investigated the weight and depth that these words carry in the social normative setting of Braamfontein life for these young women. The study makes use of an intersectional lens to engage these narrated experiences; just to understand in what ways the various skin-complexions of a black woman, including the yellow-bone, play a role in the spaces they are able to access within the inner city. Being a black South African woman in the context of diversity tends to be challenging for some in different settings. Skin-complexion has always been used as a significant measure that identifies a woman’s, worth in beauty. However, with various intersections at play, especially 25 years post-apartheid, the skin-complexions that one would expect to see in common places may have a different place now in modern society. Six themes emerged from the results, that explore how young black women come to perceive and understand their black identity in relation to the complexion of their skin; 1) Family perceptions of skin-complexion, 2) Self-perceptions of complexion and identity-preservation , 3. The missing middle, 4) Transforming stereotypes among various complexions, 5) The role of intellect on perceived complexions, 6) Dating men space. . Each theme addresses and uncovers different domains, affecting identity formation, through skin tone registers; beginning with family, at the cornerstone of identity for most. Gradually moving into perceptions of skin and self as this often plays a role in the degree to which people view their ability to gain access into a desired space. The study uncovers themes relating to a sense of non-belonging and identifies the impacts of this on identity. Finally, it explores the manifestations of potential relationships with the opposite sex. It would appear that the complexion of a black women’s skin, regulates perceptions of self in relation to others and further dictates the thoughts and impressions she has of herself as a black woman in urban society. Identity formation is an integral part of this study. In other words, our identities are formed by our experiences in life, both positive and negative. Who you are, no matter your skin tone or shade of black, as a black woman, you are defined by what society deems acceptable or not; pretty or not pretty; better light skinned or dark skinned; and the unfair and inaccurate assumptions made about your intellectual abilities based on your blackness or lack thereof.

Keywords: *Skin- complexion, Identity, Yellow bone, Cultural Capital, Intersectionality*

Defining terms

Skin-complexion: is the tint or colour of skin that a person has been genetically given and at present continues to be both a sensitive and pervasive subject in the black communities (Robinson-Wood, 2016).

Yellow bone: Yellow-bone: a popular slang term or expression used in pop-culture and media to describe the lightest skin-complexion of black women in a community and are often assumed to be of mixed race, or with some Caucasian decent within their family line (Nkwadi, 2016). The term yellow-bone is also known more colloquially to describe black persons with light in complexion skin-registers.

Cultural Capital: encompasses the social strengths or qualities of an individual, for instance, their education, language, appearance, etc. These qualities advance social movement in an otherwise divided society and aim to maintain power and social status (Bourdieu, 1986).

Defining the term black

I acknowledge that the use of the term Black is universal and in the South African context encompasses Coloured, Indian, Asian and African racial groups. However, for the purpose of this research, when addressing Black women, it is important to note that the word Black in this study refers exclusively to “individuals with origins of African ancestry, who self-identify as black or are identified as Black by the larger communities in South Africa” (Bhopal, 2004, p.443)

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The background of the research is based on black women's experiences of their skin-complexion; and my own experience as a light skinned young black woman; with freckles. Black women have faced a multitude of challenges, that relate not only to their features and attributes but to their skin or pigmentation. Society largely dictates what is presumed to be normative standards for blackness, by highlighting attributes like skin, hair, linguistics and demeanour that categorise you as either belonging to or not belonging to. The assumptions and perceptions created from looking at the external features of a black women are not universal to all, however are made to give people the perceptions that these are specific to the black race. It appears that black women who are non-identifiable by what is typical of black people (i.e, linguistically, facial and physical features) run the risk of being pushed out of the black community and ostracised based on a lack of blackness. Although many people of colour around the globe have managed to overcome the overthrows of racism, segregation, and colonialism (Hunter, 2007); the shadows of racial discrimination have been and continue to be a point of contention and pervasive dilemma in the South African context. People of colour experience both implicit and explicit acts of discrimination largely based on their racial characteristics as a group but also on the levels of class and gender, in spaces of education, social interaction and corporate South Africa. Generally, the assumption from previous studies has argued for the fact that discriminatory acts create stronger bonds between members of the same race, with such bonds forming greater resilience among group members (Turner et al., 1987); agreeably this stands true in particular contexts. However, the influences of colourism and its role in the discrimination and stratification on same-race individuals, have taken 'racial discrimination' to heightened levels of conflict. Colourism in and of itself is a social construct designed by society and perpetuated by interracial groups to further categorise, marginalise and assign unwelcomed identity to persons experiencing both the ¹white plight and ²ideologies of beauty within the black community. The concept deriving from the notion that true beauty and opportunity in society, goes hand-in-hand with success and is directly linked to not only skin complexion but the physical aesthetically pleasing attributes of an individual facial and physical features.

¹ The systemic advantage, that separates from one's level of income, social standing and effort by means of the colour of their skin (Collins, 2018)

² The desirable features, facial asymmetry and preferences attributed to a particular individual (Welling et al., 2015)

The issues with colourism, particularly with reference to black women, is that (barring hair) it has become one of the more noticeable attributes of black people, before anything else, people recognise the complexion, the texture, and contrasts of tone in the skin. Introductions to and initial interests in black women, have often depended on the perceptions and aesthetics of their complexion and skin, amongst other attributes. This is problematic in the sense that perceptions of skin and its desirability often distort societies idea of the person, i.e. their personality, interests, talents, skills sets, competencies, etc and creates a sensitive dynamic that generally only permits a certain level of engagement to occur or tensions that allude to a power struggle within or between groups of people.

This study branches from the before mentioned in its investigation of the capacity for colour to further marginalise an already marginalised group of people, namely black women in South Africa and the diversity in which skin-tone is presented. It will attempt to uncover the subtleties and impact of colourism within the black community on various levels and discern its effect on the already complex identity of a young black woman forming her identity. Utilising the theory of intersectionality to unearth the dimensions and scope of an individual's way of being is crucial to understanding the innermost workings of identity formation. Furthermore, this study explores the various means by which black South African women are informed on how or whether or not to engage in particular spaces, thus debates concerns for how identity is then constructed on the basis of skin-tone. The study debates the conditions in which skin colour is decided as acceptable or not, for individuals with varying degrees of skin-tone. Moreover, it attempts to understand it not only from a historical point of view but from modern societal and cultural viewpoints, which have seldom been explored in research at present. There is also an importance to acknowledge the rapid changes occurring in the 'new age' South Africa that contribute to the freedom of self-discovery and identity formation and also to be conscious of the pervasive behaviours that add to internal conflict and frustration, as is experienced in spaces like university as the two contend with one another. Theoretical underpinnings of Frantz Fanon (1963) and Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1984a) will be referenced in order to ground the research in forming an understanding for the enactment and use of skin-tone within different contexts; alongside the employment of intersectional works from feminist studies in order to gain an understanding of the levels and intersections at which black women negotiate spaces.

Research Aims and Outlines

The aim of this study is to investigate how young black women in Braamfontein, negotiate their 'blackness' in relation to the various complexities of skin-tone and skin colour complexion. Furthermore, to uncover how complex issues of skin-tone and skin-complexion influence the ways in which young black South African women living in the city perceive themselves amongst other black women in society and their willingness to enter various spaces because of this. The study will allow me to highlight the various dimensions that construct black women's identity as well as the societal classifications that play a role in how they negotiate these constructs.

Research Questions

1. How do young Black women living in Braamfontein construct their identities with regard to various skin-complexion and skin-tone complexities?
2. How do young black women living in Braamfontein construct and navigate their everyday social relationships and movement in the city based on their skin-tone?

Research Rationale

Research, with respect to racial hierarchy and colonisation, has primarily focussed on power dynamics between marginalised groups of colour and European lead social constructions of beauty, with European standards of beauty dominating the hierarchy. At large the emphasis is placed on comparisons of beauty between white and black women. However, the voices of feminists such as Zimitri Erasmus, Margaret Hunter, Jessica Murray, Amy Wilkins, and Yuval Davies bring to the fore and highlight several hierarchal dilemmas within race groups, and issues of classism currently existing between women experiencing identity conflicts with respects to the ideologies of beauty and addresses the various misfortunes that have transpired from the ongoing years of oppression and stigmas of racial beauty (Erasmus, 2000, Hunter, 2002, Murray, 2010, Wilkins, 2012, Yuval Davies 2008).

Research on colourism and skin-complexion has been investigated quite extensively in the African American context (Maxwell et al., 2015), however, researchers have focussed primarily on the internalised experiences of racism and skin-tone discrimination, with little consideration for how black women's embodiment of skin-tone and skin-complexion play a role in the potential to occupy space and how skin-tone registers present to members of society at large currently occupying spaces. This research aims to highlight the latter in order to promote an understanding of how black women with varying degrees of skin-tone and skin-complexion negotiate their identity, firstly with the concept of blackness in the construction of

their identities and secondly how they navigate various spatial environments thereafter. The study hopes to uncover other social constructs of skin-tone related to dark-toned women, that due to the focus primarily being placed on light-tones, have been neglected and undiscovered in totality. To give room for the focus of varying skin-tone perspectives, using a narrative methodology to explore inductive evidence of lived experiences. The rationale for using a narrative methodology is that it allows the research to take on a storytelling perspective that relies on the spoken and sensemaking words of black women. It permits for an in-depth focus on the individuals lives through their lens and as told from their unique experiences and allows the researcher to make meaning of the phenomena, from a small cohort of participants (Mitchell & Egudo, 2003). Each participant has the freedom to share, tell their story. The use of Narrative allows the researcher to gain knowledge and insight into the memories and experiences of each participant and in doing so, have an deepened understanding of how black women make sense of their identity.

Not all black individual's experiences and identity construction is solely based on the plight of racism, that cannot be definitively proven. However, much of the identity contentions faced by black people is largely due to the fact that the environment they grew up in was predominantly if not exclusively racist and the community with which they experienced blackness encompassed various cultures, origins of people and ethnicities (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2012). The term culture is often used to make sense of and explain a compilation of customs, traditions, history, origin, language, and family (Matarasso, 2001). Within a culture, there is race, which is said to provide information about a group of people who may share features like facial and physical (Cross Jr, 1991). Culture and race, construct parts of a black individual's identity and with it, merge salient experiences that continuously occupy the intricate schema of the black individual.

In this research both culture and racism play a significant part of skin-complexion discrimination and experiences. They are not only related, they are integrated. For example, how black women are perceived and treated within their own communities, depends on the complexion and pigmentation of their skin, light or dark, and even how their skin is impacted by the sun. People in underdeveloped communities often hold the belief that the success or failure of their daughters largely hinges on how dark or light skinned they are (a generational perception that is long-standing within black communities), both in corporate work situations and in their interpersonal relationships with others, and men. With the underlying belief that light-skinned women stand a better chance in both circumstances.

“Skin tone discrimination can be either interracial or intraracial” (Banks, 2009, p. 213). Banks (2009) explains that individuals belonging to the same race, might experience a different form

of treatment than others based on Afro-centric features, that is a dark complexion, button or wide nose, fuller lips. She postulates that people with such features are privy to experiencing harsher judgment and scrutiny than others in their group. The prevailing theme in society continues to be that individuals with Eurocentric features experience less judgment. To date, there has been little research shown speaking to the diversity of skin-complexion within the same race groups. Research as tended towards linear ways of reflecting results and tend to highlight the stark differences between black and white, light and dark-skinned people. It makes one wonder whether individuals with light skin and seemingly Afrocentric features experience the same treatment as those with darker skin-complexions, for instance, light-skinned women with naturally wider noses and fuller lips, smoother hair, and curvier figures. The mould of what is widely accepted as beautiful presents differently for women with said features.

The justification for opening up the research is that black women of varying skin-complexions; particularly dark and light skinned black women, are afforded significantly and vastly different opportunities based on their skin-complexion. This is further exacerbated by the stereotypes about the intellectual capabilities of different skin toned women. This is evident in the interview that were conducted with these women.

Chapter outline

The **second chapter** forms part of the literature that is related to theoretical foundations with respect to skin-complexion and the bearing that this has on Black women. It provides details about the various dimensions of skin-tone complexity that have played out between women from different racial groups, and further outlines the impact of societal normative standards (pre- and post-apartheid) of beauty on the identity of black individuals in various contexts. Moreover, the use of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and intersectionality aid in the understanding of how individuals negotiate space in the eclectic inner city of Braamfontein.

Chapter three addresses the methodology used to deepen the investigation and aids in the interpretation of each participant's unique narrative regarding their identity formation and experience in Braamfontein. Both the process and approach are critically explored from a Qualitative lens. Taking a qualitative approach allows for flexibility and encourages depth. The process of analyses occurred through a type of thematic analysis, that is, Line-by-Line Narrative analysis; which occurs in seven stages and to a large degree enables the researcher to combover each detail of the participants' interview process.

In the **fourth chapter**, a discussion about the narratives of each participant is unpacked in-depth and outlines a number of themes that speak to transformation, identity conflicts, space accessibility and perceptions as a black woman living in Braamfontein, among other themes. Each theme is extensively unpacked. In **chapter five**, the final chapter of this research attempts to complete and summarise the entire works of this paper through reflexivity and a brief discussion of the major discoveries in the research. Lastly, considerations for future research are included to conclude the paper.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

To promote and gain a sense of understanding for the issues of skin-complexion and its complexities within black female communities in how they experience different environments through this lens. The researcher intends to implement the psychological frameworks of Bourdieu and Fanon by working through the psycho-social dimensions of blackness and the avenues with which individuals negate with the self and the various social classifications underpinning this, particularly for the embodiment of race and complexion and alongside Pierre Bourdieu's (Bourdieu, 1984a) distinctions of cultural capital and the advantages or disadvantages that transpire from the various uses of capital that mobilise an individual as they pursue the unattainable. Both are needed to unpack and promote an in-depth understanding of the topic in question. Additionally, the researcher plans to further broaden an understanding of the process through utilising Frantz Fanon's theory of 'blackness' (Fanon, 1963a) by uncovering the ways in which different psycho-social consciousness schemas of human social experience impact a black female's individual understanding of herself as a black person in society, herself as an 'object' in society, herself as 'black' in a society praising whiteness and lightness; as well as her perception of how she understands her place in other spaces.

With the support of these psychological frameworks and literature from feministic perspectives, the researcher will navigate through the ways that black females with varying degrees of skin-tone and skin-colour complexion come to form their black identities within the black community and how social interaction with one another is influenced. Feminist Psychology is centred around social structures and gender. This form of psychology highlights and provides a critical lens of the historical psychological research previously done by a male perspective, which holds the view that males are the norm (Crawford & Unger, 2004). Feminist Psychology takes into account the values and principles of feminism, and furthermore speaks to gender as an identity, gender as hierarchy, and locates the individual within the social and political aspects of society (Worell & Johnson, 1997). If male views are perceived to be the norm in society, this excludes a large part of the population, with the South African black female population being no exception. Male dominant perceptions of females, further perpetuates the notion that light skinned black women are more acceptable, appealing and resilient in their blackness, which ostracises an already excluded population of individuals.

The assumption that skin complexion is a form of cultural capital is not an assumption as such. It is practiced in several black cultures where just as a family attains a higher lobola an

educated daughter, they get a higher lobola for a light-skinned daughter because of all that is attached to light skinned e.g. cleaver, more accepted in the corporate world, thus more likely to earn higher salaries and more likely to succeed in life; similar sentiments are shared within the Indian culture (Karan, 2008).

The relevance of Fanon (1963) and Bourdieu's (1984) theory will allow the researcher to answer 'how' questions on the impact that colour stratification has had on identity formation within same-race groups; by unpacking a deepened understanding for the various ways (how) in which skin-tone (colour) is both embodied and enacted in certain contexts and what this then means for black women when moving in and out of different spaces. Bourdieu's (1984) theory opens up discussions around the utility of skin-tone as cultural capital, whilst Fanon's (1963) theory provides crucial investigation into the phenomenological and political realms of the depths to which racism and colourism influences a persons lived experiences.

In this study, the term "intersectionality" will be defined as "the simultaneous experience of categorical and hierarchical classifications including but not limited to race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality." (Cole, 2017, p. 2). Crenshaw (1989) who originally coined the term, describes intersectionality as a system of power that impacts people who are most marginalised in society. She states that intersectionality appears in various social stratification, for instance, through one's gender, race, class, age, culture, and sexual orientation, etc. The theory itself intends to identify how the above categories overlap and intertwine with one another during identity formation and takes into great consideration its impact on both social and political justices (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality, stated by Cole (2017) further refers to the fact that "what are often perceived as disparate forms of oppression, such as racism, classism, sexism and xenophobia are mutually dependent and intersecting in nature and that together, form a unified system of oppression" (Cole, 2017, p. 12), thus any beneficial outcomes that individuals enjoy, and that which they are discriminated against subsequently occur by an individuals' placement in society, therefore by virtue of social classification an individual's unique identity is already spoken for and the manner in which an individual experiences the world is influenced by social positioning, as is with young black females and their affiliations with skin-complexion. The use of intersectionality theory in this study is important to understanding that when describing and using the term 'women', this encompasses all facets of a woman (roles, selves and identities) as a multifaceted individual (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008), who experiences categorisations of race, class, gender, etc as intersecting and interdependent at any given time and in differing contexts of disadvantage and benefit; rather than the layman's understanding of the word. Therefore, aspects of this study will be guided by an underlying theme of Feminist Psychology.

Women and black do not exist independently of one another. Each informs the other, and often creating complex convergence of oppression. For instance, Black women, faced with multiple forms of oppression, earn less, and for and compared to their white counterparts, male or female; as well as compared to their black male counterparts.

In conjunction with Cole's (2017) definition of intersectionality, Bourdieu (1984) describes the enjoyment of benefits as an 'economy of cultural goods', a form of "cultural capital" and elaborates on this by illustrating how language (and the meaning attached to language) is used to create power dimensions that recognise certain dynamics of culture, which influence the way an individual constructs their identity. Bourdieu argues that the act of participating in cultural practices such as "reading, museum visits and concert-going" is narrowly influenced by an individual's "social origin (home background)", exposure to "formal education" and their "social class" (Bourdieu, 1984, p.14), all of which permit certain persons to engage in the world at a particular level of social prestige. Thus, emphasising the succeeding assumption that black females with light skin-complexions tend to enjoy greater privileges due to their exposure to better opportunities and societies' easy acceptance of their characteristic's, as opposed to black females with darker skin-complexions, where society is less receptive and opportunities are far and few between.

The human experience is lived on two levels, the internal and the external, however within each level The-self³ experiences multiple levels of consciousness to which an individual shifts through during interactive participation with society and various intragroup activities, i.e. a 20-year-old black female university student is not only experiencing herself as a women or female but also as black, as youth, as a student/learner', the various self-identities that are given to her by virtue of societies experience of her external attributes, intersectional prescriptions that she is expected to assimilate to.

At several junctions in their life black females are faced with situations where they are challenged with questioning their position in society as individuals; a form of pressurising awareness of reality based on not only the complexion of their skin but their gender, womanhood, age, culture, beliefs, socio-economic status and level of education to name but a few; where experiences take on a meaning of their own and reside as not their own due to social scrutiny. For instance, at the level of class and gender, and what Crenshaw (1991) calls a type of Structural Intersectionality; in the context of spousal abuse, countless black women who live in poverty are presented with the difficulty of grappling with childcare, few job

³ This is defined as "the organized, consistent set of perceptions and beliefs about oneself". The self is the **humanistic** term for who we really are as a person. (McLeod, 2014). McLeod (2014). Carl Rogers. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/carl-rogers.html

prospects and seeking shelter, which due to the already discriminatory nature of gender, race and employment only compounds the existing issues relating to identity and social oppression. Crenshaw (1990) further argues that this renders them unable to access basic legitimate resources like housing and job opportunities because they are marginalised based on being black and a woman in lower-class society (Crenshaw, 1991). The above is also recognised as a 'triple oppression' that exists for black women (Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Lynn, 2014). The intersections of a black woman are not neatly packaged in the ways that 'fit' the 'race' and 'gender' categories, but rather they are intertwined (Crenshaw, 1991). In the context of skin-complexion, to some degree the issue of skin-tone is subjective to individual experiences, furthermore, studies show that when perceiving job opportunities, black women (especially with dark skin) perceive that part of their inability to obtain a desired job is due to a preference for their lighter-skinned counterparts and similarly lighter-skinned black women perceived this as a way for white people to push out people of colour, be it that they are light or dark in complexion (Bowman & Ifatunji, 2004; Landor & McNeil Smith, 2019). Subsequently, creating the perception that she is of the 'other' in society. A study by Fernandez and Fernandez (2006) show that, where networking and hiring opportunities are concerned, it is more difficult for persons of colour to find networking opportunities that lead to employment than their white counterparts. Furthermore, results show that in some contexts, the interview process appears to be slightly skewed in favour of individuals who are of white or European origin than those of colour (Fernandez & Fernandez-Mateo, 2006). However, the above findings are not exhaustive to all job contexts and need take into consideration screening process and policies.

In his chapter *The fact of Blackness* Fanon (1963) states that the development of schema in which a Black individual exists, and how these schemata exist differently for each person. He describes this as an experience of racialisation schema, which takes place at three levels of existence; 1) The bodily schema; which comprises one's own physical body and the world, where the two engage and the body begins to exist within the world as a physical entity. 2) Historic-racial schema and racial-epidermal schema; which constitutes various narratives and discourses surrounding one's race, some which are true and certain, while others not (Fanon, 1952). The historical-racial schema is in existence because of the layered history of racism. Furthermore, because of this schema and the context which it developed, a black person cannot then solely exist in physical bodily form, therefore there is no single bodily-schema and the two exist in dual form. 3) The epidermal schema intertwines with the bodily schema because black individuals are not seen solely for their bodies, rather seen as a representative of their race and historical context (Fanon, 1952). Through the process of these schemas is where an individual initially experiences his/her world as a third person (an awareness of body and space) to identify themselves as a triple person (responsibility for own body and

characteristics'). The above is relevant in this study. I argue that a black female not only experiences herself as a female in a black body but also her experiences of blackness will be varied based on society's perceptions of her skin-complexion. Thus, navigating the realm of space and identity, can be most trying and is not necessarily in her control. Identity for this reason becomes complicated and, in some ways, invasive as she attempts to both acknowledge what is her physical body and interpret, through her own mind and societies standards who she is or where she belongs. From the outside looking in, some would go as far as to say the black culture experiences somewhat of an identity crisis throughout in all facets of their life.

Literature Review

Theorising the city

Johannesburg stands as the most advanced commercial city in South Africa ("City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality," 2018) and acts as both the social and economic hub of Gauteng, which comprises of several major suburbs (inner-cities) such as the Central Business District (CBD), Berea, Hillbrow, Newtown and smaller cities Yeoville, Bertrams, Troyeville, Braamfontein, Jeppestown, Fordsburg and Pageview (Murray, 2008).

The city of Braamfontein in Johannesburg represents both the downfalls of apartheid and triumphs, post-apartheid. In previous studies, researchers have alluded to the notion that the 'battle wounds' and 'scars' that remain prominent in areas of the city such as increasing tensions of racial discrimination, prejudices of culture and sexual orientation and violence against members from LGBTI communities have been the result of an unavoidable outcome and legacy left from the continuous dissemination of suffering from apartheid, which Nuttall (2004) described as "over-determination by the reality of apartheid" (Nuttall, 2004, p. 732) in other words, the occurrences of apartheid have been reported on in such a way that what has been left behind has now become South Africa's legacy. Nonetheless, through the development of urbanisation and the allocation of property to newly emerging black business enterprises, cities in Johannesburg have since been successful in their attempt to relinquish some of the strains of apartheid, and have attracted people of all races, sexual orientations, cultural backgrounds, from all walks of life to city life. Post-apartheid, the city is described as consisting of "highly differentiated, and heterogeneous spaces that reflect a great diversity of experiences, activities and lifestyles" (Murray, 2008, p.284).

The inner city of Johannesburg has become a popular, universal and exciting place for people of diverse races to reside and earn a living .(Olufemi, 1998) With respects to Olufemi's work,

the city in its modern state embodies a cacophony of urbanity, identifiable by its discerned characteristics of space; vibrant space where individuals and particularly youth of all racial identities, cultural backgrounds, and religious affiliations congregate and where most, experience their first impression of freedom; space where one can observe life unfold for both the middle class and the indigent, who in the 21st century remains marked by the ruminations of past apartheid. The appeal of malls, museums, cafés, nightlife and social engagement are the few aspects that draw individuals from far and wide to central Johannesburg.

The purpose of cities is to provide a convergence of advanced thinking, job opportunities and a “better” way of life. People go to cities to increase their chances of employment, to further their studies and hopefully improve their livelihoods and that of their families at home. The city of Johannesburg was created on the backbones of the early mining industry. Traditionally black men left their families in the rural areas to move to Johannesburg to earn a living, often staying away from their families for extended periods of time in order to save on travel expenses. They would send money home to support their families. The participants I interviewed also migrate from their homes, townships and communities to find work opportunities in the city and to also further their studies.

South African history: Colonialism and apartheid

Concerns for racial discrimination and colourism have largely been the focal point in South Africa’s history, within the nation’s society and its economy, as a result of European colonisation (Lever, 1982). South Africa remains a convoluted mixture of race, cultures, ethnicities and languages. In the 18th century, racial segregation was introduced, by the Dutch Empire. The emergence of minority ruling in the colonisation of indigenous people forced the separation between black South African’s and other races and was later enforced by political laws and land constraints (Thompson, 2001). The British took reign of the Cape of Good Hope and segregation continued (Lever, 1982). It was here, during informal colonisation in the 1940s that the concept of race became an apparent anomaly amongst South African people (Nengwekhulu, 1986).

In the rule of the British Cape Colony in the 19th century, policy and law for the permanent division of racial groups were firmly placed with the primary aim of oppressing black South African people (Thompson, 2001). During the apartheid era government introduced one of the first legislative laws for racial classification, called the *Population Registration Act (No. 30 of 1950)*. The premise of this Act was to separate race into three categorical groups, namely, White, Natives (now known as Black or Bantu people) and Coloured people, identified in South Africa by seven subgroups, “Cape Coloured”, “Malay”, “Griqua”, “Chinese”, “Indian”, “Other

Asiatic” and “Other Coloured” (Erasmus, 2007, p. 3); these groups then further divided by “appearance, acceptance and descent” (Erasmus, 2007, p.3).

The use of racial classification paved the way for political gain, particularly for members of the White race. White individuals were given voting rights, state security and access to protection; moreover, white individuals were advanced economically through greater job opportunities, land and other major resources of benefit and privilege, over and above the reserved grounds for public transports, hospitals, universities and schools etc., all of which were granted by the *Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953* (Wilkinson, 2000). Black individuals were afforded much less in terms of the beforementioned and subsequently even lesser alongside Indian and Coloured individuals. The *Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act* of 1949, as well as the Immorality Act of 1950, were two such additional laws that played a role in enforcing the illegal act of interracial sexual relations and marriage (Jacobson et al., 2004). Not only was political gain reason enough for racial divide, but it also presented as the catalyst to strained issues of racial and colour segregation amongst members in the black community.

City space and identity

The bonds between an individual and place indissolubly mingle and overlap one another. Both co-occur in the process of identity formation as an individual begins to identify with particular living areas, people and environments that simultaneously shape identity and influence personal experiences. The meaning that an individual attributes to a place contribute to the manner in which they engage with the cultural practices, social interactions and political positioning (Gieseeking, Mangold, Katz, Low, Saegert, 2014).

Who, where, what, why and how a person enters space rest on the prospects of positive or negative associations that either aid in the creation of identity or destruction thereof? Individuals do their best to protect and preserve their identity through modes of dress, language, and physical appearance, etc to affirm their self-identity, within uncharted space, whilst simultaneously trying to determine where within the city they fit that pose the least amount of threat to identity. Subsequently, individuals will transform themselves to assimilate into the new space and its people, with the goal to become one within the realm of diverse belongings. Moreover, the space that a person chooses to enter, is indicative of their sense of centeredness. Often individuals will transform physical space in order to feel ‘at home’ in areas of unfamiliarity; Mitchell (2004) provides an example of this in a group setting, where emigrants plant indigenous trees or ‘architectural ornamentation’, that are significant to their original home environment, in order to establish some kind of rootedness in their new home (Mitchell, 2004). In tandem with social psychology’s theory on individual and group belonging; the

importance of space for an individual entering the city hinges on the need to feel as though one has 'roots' in the world. Individuals strive for rootedness by entering city space and becoming a member of a group or being part of a community where ones' various categorisations of identity are congruent with others within the space and recognised by others as salient, promoting as well as achieving a sense of belonging for the individual (Turner et al., 1987).

Branching from the above, it is within the various dynamics of city space that individuals experience collective identification i.e. "to be is to do and to do is to be" (Simon, 2008) where the individual (as a member) and other members of the group engage and identify with one another through shared interests pertaining to value systems and upbringing, cultural practices, religious beliefs, and political association, etc all of which reaffirm individual identity (Simon et al., 2008) and solidifies the need to belong.

The influence of space on identity

For individuals who have lived in the city for some years, negotiating the city and determining where within the cacophony and social milieu of society one belongs, presents itself as a daunting task during one's construction of identity. The experience of the city can be a shock to the system; faced with multiple threats to the self that challenge and provoke feelings of angst and duress in an individual. The city can also present itself as a space where one is given the freedom to discover and freely express their authentic self. Places create a platform for memories to come alive. Thrift (2006) postulates that space is largely created by human beings who through the exertion of power, "establish a hierarchy of opportunities and limitations" (Thrift, 2006, p. 1339). He also says that space offers people the opportunity to get a sense of an era through 'reading' its changes through time by gaining visual evidence of the existing space and that it is important to be aware of the various ways which people and groups read space (Thrift, 2006) because meaning and interpretation of a space is unique to them. He continues his argument by making example of a historical and biblical space like Jerusalem; where individuals of Jewish faith perceive the space differently than Christian, Muslim people, tourists or Israeli people (Thrift, 2006). The space holds different historical meaning for each religious group, parts of which are more sacred for some and a point of great conflict for others.

In his research *Mapping the black queer geography of Johannesburg's lesbian women*, Canham (2017), observes that in a city like Johannesburg, some spaces but not all, invite the exploration and freedom of all forms of identity including sexual orientation, while others exclude and boundary already marginalised individuals _ such is the case with black lesbian

women. His research shows that Johannesburg has been both liberating and constricting, even threatening to their sexual identities as black women navigating the inner-city of Johannesburg and that, even in the celebration of gay culture, class and race are visible, and furthermore create spatial othering and controlled access to otherwise public spaces; through fencing, meaning or at their financial expense (Canham, 2017). For example, black and white pride are embodied vastly differently from one another, there is an exclusiveness about celebrating white pride that automatically others black lesbian women from engaging if they desired (Canham, 2017).

In South African urban context, it has been crucial for certain groups of South Africans to reengage with urban space. For example, in Cape Town, coloured residences' have experienced adversity with the Land Claims Commission – the number of urban claims for restitution, outweighs the number of rural claims by a large margin (Jackson, 2003; Mesthrie, 1993). A significant element of the antiapartheid era was a fight to secure control of urban space (Mesthrie, 1993). In a study of space and identity, conducted by Jackson (2003) the coloured community have made fierce attempts to reclaim the once treasured land of District Six; an urban location that holds 'spatial' and 'symbolic' context that differs vastly from the townships, satellite cities and suburbs once planned for the inner city (Jackson, 2003). For the coloured community, District Six represents rich land, purpose and space for their families that has previously embodied and expanded both social and civic activity, not to mention forms of identity (Jackson, 2003). District Six was previously part of apartheid's 1960's relocation process of Coloured and African people to separate township zones, and thus crucial for this community to reclaim (Jackson, 2003).

Proshansky (1978) used the term place-identity to explain the manner in which the city permits individuals the physical space to identify with environments that align with their feelings, both explored and unexplored ideas, a place of preference and space that grounds their values systems and enriches their skills (Proshansky, 1978). Space in the city allows individuals to create a sense of rootedness as well as form psychological gratification, that recognises identity and particular environments within that space as connecting to various dimensions of the self (Lalli, 1992), which is subsequently accompanied by feelings of centeredness.

The meaning that individuals place on a particular space, as well as the ways in which the space is utilised either encourages or discourages the growth and trajectory of their self-identities (Proshansky et al., 1983) for instance, should an individual attach value to a religious space, the assumption is that this space will affirm a part of their value system and religious identity that is congruent with their existence as a human being (Proshansky, 1978).

Colourism and racial discrimination

The term 'cultural capital' is salient to our understanding of how race, gender, age and complexion are portrayed and utilised in certain contexts (Bourdieu, 1984). When Bourdieu (1986) speaks of the embodied state or embodied cultural capital, he is referring to cultural capital as "the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (Kraaykamp & Van Eijck, 2010, p. 210). In the embodied position, the formation of cultural capital is narrowly connected to development, which assumes a long-lasting process of embodiment or assimilation that requires personal effort and is, thus, largely bound to an individual body, and is inclusive of the brain and identity (Kraaykamp & Van Eijck, 2010). According to Bourdieu (1986) embodied cultural capital is "external wealth converted to an integral part of the person, into a habitus," and therefore "cannot be transmitted instantaneously (unlike money, property rights, or even titles of nobility) by gift or bequest, purchase or exchange." (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 244-245). Rather it is accumulated in a lifetime of socialisation and is unconscious in its process.

Being black and a person of colour, can be visually detected with the eye and one can experience their own skin-colour as "the enemy" (Gbadamosi, 2016, p. 106) simply on the basis that historical biases and visual constructions (i.e. media) have shown black people to look at themselves that way (Gbadamosi, 2016). A black individual understands the perceptions society has of their skin-complexion and evaluates their value relative to the hierarchy; furthermore through a 'colourist gaze' (framed by society) they are able to recognise the actions and perceptions of others through this classification, specifically in the way colour shades operate to measure the individual's value (Fleetwood, 2011). In a study conducted by Hunter (2002), results showed that woman described with light brown skin-complexion faced less difficulties attaining and completing their education than dark-brown or tanned skinned woman with similar background descriptions. The same study found that women with light brown complexions seemingly earned better income per year than women with similar background who are perceived as dark in complexion (Hunter, 2002). Another study by Monk (2019) showed that among the black American community, middle-class light-skinned men and women, are less likely to be incarcerated for crimes, than those who are darker in complexion with similar background characteristics (living in the same community, earning similar income brackets, middle class, etc).

Racial discrimination in the apartheid era brought with it the rise of colourism, otherwise termed by Harrison (2010) as "the light versus dark skin issue" (Harrison, 2010, p. 68), traced back to the years of slavery. Workload and occupation were delegated to the enslaved on the criterion of skin-tone (Hunter, 2002a). Black dark-skinned slaves were allocated more labour

intensive work; situated outside, in fields, whilst lighter skinned-black slaves were seemingly awarded the 'privilege' of occupying coveted work; situated inside, housework (Keith & Herring, 1991). Consequently, the overt division of skin-tone started a rife of animosity between slaves as perceptions of greater and lesser-than thou began to occur as dark-skinned slaves perceived light-skinned slaves as more fortunate than themselves (Ross, 1997). Thus, colourism became and continued to be a social construct to which the treatment of non-white individuals was held on the value that others placed on their skin-tone (Jones, 1999).

Commonly the concepts of racism and colourism are seen to be one-in-the-same with respect to discrimination among Black women. However, skin-tone discrimination is a rather distinct feature of classification with reference to the physical appearance of black women and holds additional deep-rooted angsts in instances regarding occupational, educational and social status within the Black race (Hughes & Hertel, 1990); "with colourism, it is the social meaning afforded one's colour that determines one's status" (Jones, 1999, p. 1497) The uniqueness between skin-tone discrimination in relation to that of racial discrimination lies in the argument that with skin-tone; persons sharing the same ancestral origin, that is race, can be and are discriminatory towards each other (Harris, 2008) on the basis of their tone of skin, for example, Black women with dark skin-tones may completely ostracise Black light skin-toned women on the basis that their lightness in spaces where being Black is salient, does not constitute as being 'black enough', therefore are not although are considered black by race, are not afforded the status of being black, however, in the corporate space, light-toned Black women depreciate dark toned women based on ideologies of beauty and the assumption that dark tones are unappealing or undesirable. The same concept, black dark skin toned women, although are black by race, are not afforded the status of beauty. Skin colour and race are commonly confused, due to the fact that skin-colour is often used as the determinant of a racial categorisation (Jones, 1999).

The colonisation of indigenous people and the division of racial groups further created skewed views in the manner in which black people perceived themselves and each other within the larger community. In sectioning black people away from white, coloured and Indian people, and treating them as both unfavourable and deleterious beings, white people were able to reaffirm their status as the elite and favourable and simultaneously create perceptions of inferiority among black people. The enforced divide between white and non-white groups, along with the overt oppressive expressions of white superiority through policy, law and rights (suited to their race), ingrained a legacy of entrenched inferiority in the minds of black people. Fanon (1963) addresses the construction of inferiority by making comparisons between Sartre's *The Anti-Semite and the Jew* (1948) and the interaction between black and white people during colonisation (Fanon, 1963b); he argued that it is the racist being himself who

creates inferiority and feelings of “otherness” that black people perceive themselves to be, through deliberate acts of superiority that socially construct these perceptions. Thus, it is not necessarily black people who define themselves as inferior but rather the superior acts forced against him that formed the ‘inferiority complex’. Branching from the above argument, the existence of colourism has provided greater room for the capacity for already marginalised groups to discriminate against one another and make inferior based on the tone of their skin, through catastrophised ideologies of beauty and attractiveness.

Colourism and interracial discrimination

The operation of racial discrimination and colour in the context of black individuals is distinguishable on two levels; that of race and that of colour (Hunter, 2007). The first (race) is the generalised discriminatory nature of racial category inclusive of Black, Coloured and Indian people, which irrespective of skin-colour variation individuals of this race fall privy to various types of bias, stereotype (i.e. gender) and classism (Hunter, 2007). The concept of race and racism at this level encompasses both ideologies of blackness and social consequences in the use of social capital (Coleman, 2000). The second refers to the operation of colourism with respects to skin-tone, ranging from light to dark-skinned individual's; in spite of the fact that Black individual's experience racial discrimination collectively as a race, the degrees to which they experience discrimination due to their skin-tone varies drastically with respects to the intensity, frequency and the resultant outcomes of experience (Hunter, 2007), in tandem with the beforementioned example; in spaces such as the workplace both light and dark-skinned black women may experience racism by virtue of their categorical association of the Black race in comparison to their White colleagues (Hunter, 2007), however, in the same context light-skinned Black women may have better experiences of the workplace than that of their darker-skinned counterparts by virtue of the ideologies of beauty associated with skin-tone and visual appeal.

In a different context, dark-skinned Black women may experience greater levels of belongingness among ‘their own’. In a community of Black women, due to likeness of skin-tone that identifies them closely to being part of the Black race; dark-skinned women experience a sense of rootedness and appreciation for blackness that light-skinned Black women tend not to (as a consequence of their fair skin), this rootedness comes with the commonalities, similarities and memberships of ancestral pride that dark Black women experience with regards to ethnicity and the traits attributed to Blackness. Thus, although both race and colour co-exist in the same spaces, one cannot dispute the interwoven nature which these manifests in different contexts.

The discrimination of colour should not be seen purely at the level of skin-tone, but rather as an intersectional relationship of several categorical domains of which Black women experience their identity, for instance, at the level of gender, race, and skin-tone (Harrison, 2010).

Intersectionality and beauty constructs

Let us not make the assumption when addressing gender, race, and class that the intersectionality of these constructs is simply the amalgamation of various identities embedded separately within an individual (Yuval-Davis, 2006), rather than during the process of identity formation and negotiation, these intersections operate in tandem with one another within multiple contexts and experiences of oppression, marginalisation and dilemmas of social hierarchy, in not only shaping the identity of an individual but also in guiding the manners which they embody qualities of the self. When I speak of these constructs, be informed that identity is a complex concept composing of various active operations within itself (ego distinctions, characteristics, etc.) therefore it would stunt the research to treat it as though it can be viewed as divisible. Women are still and have been marginalised to a large extent, not only for the biological nature of being female and the consequences thereof, being prescribed the roles of 'house maiden', 'child-bearer', 'obedient wife', 'caretaker', etc, but simultaneously for their cultural obligations and racial affiliations; particularly in matters pertaining to 'whiteness' and the pressures that permeate from this, albeit societal influence or self-identity construction. The rigidity, force and emphasis on race and racial hierarchy through colonialism that the development of apartheid created for women has grossly influenced and played a role in the formation of ideologies of body type, race, skin, class and beauty (Richardson, 2013)

Women continue to, not only be under multiple umbrellas of scrutiny for their womanhood from broader social communities, but also continue to face additional scrutiny, judgment, discrimination and prejudice from media and one another for the beauty or lack thereof of their skin-tone and the historical ideologies of race and beauty that continue to shadow these; demonstrated through dynamics of power, the utilisation of cultural capital and social classism; over and above this, identity for women of non-white race seems to undergo constant episodes of flux and angst where in some instances one's identity is recognised as salient and owned (sense of pride), and in other instances, dominated by the historical baggage (Erasmus, 2000) and the power relations still remaining from the era of apartheid, oppression and slavery with the pressure to subject to a seemingly 'higher power' by relinquishing certain identity constructs in order to attain what is more salient at the time; with this, in mind, it becomes clear that one cannot conclude that race and female beauty are simply internalised (Murray, 2012) but rather is accompanied by a range of offshoot components stemming from the

historical to societal perceptions and creation of female beauty and body image. The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM)⁴, founded by Steve Biko and Mamphela Ramphele; played a significant role in identifying the constructs of beauty for black South Africans. The BCM encouraged the idea that black people can both define and determine their own fortune through forming an identity of their own that is rooted in black consciousness (Hadfield, 2017). BCM encouraged black people to adopt an attitude and mindset that interrogates and rejects values and systems that ostracise them in their own origin of birth; it further encourages black people to build their own value systems that are defined by self and not by others, and in doing so to take back their dignity and humanity that was once stripped by the frustrating experiences of comparison to white people and the imposed normative standards of whiteness as beauty (Hadfield, 2017). Zama Ndlovu, a guest blogger on Africa Monitor, recalls that during her childhood she was told that whiteness was the benchmark for success; for the majority of her upbringing she gravitated towards things that were considered white in order to achieve resources that are her constitutional right (Ndlovu, 2011). Now she embraces 'black consciousness by celebrating the colour of her skin, her bantu language and even hair; thanks in part to the writing of anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko.

Hair is one of the many forms of embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984a) that women utilise in order to both reject in totality or assimilate to society's normative standards of beauty. Erasmus (1997) argues for this by stating that the "marks left from historical racial hierarchies and colonial racism are reflected in the relationships women have with their hair" (Erasmus, 1997, p. 13) Hair is salient and has remained salient for the identity of black women through the 1965 -1975 Black Power Movement (Bell, 2008). The act of styling i.e. perming, relaxing⁵, braiding, weaving or dreadlocking the hair on one's head sends a strong message about the identity of women and the way she chooses to enact that part of herself through various spaces.

Class and association

Many women of colour live oblivious to the abnormalities and impact that white supremacy has imposed on their everyday way of being, on their blackness. They have been indoctrinated into thinking and believing that attending a white school, learning to speak English and living in an affluent suburb, would afford them the privileges and opportunities that they would

⁴ A grassroots anti-Apartheid activist movement that emerged in South Africa in the mid-1960s out of the political vacuum created by the jailing and banning of the African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress leadership after the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 (Sibeko, 1976)

⁵ Relaxed hair: A relaxer is a chemical treatment designed to permanently alter the hair's natural texture into a straightened state...relaxers straightens curly hair by breaking down the bonds in the hair shaft (Sandeem, 2017).

otherwise lose out on if they remained in their communities. Research conducted by Lewis, Robkin, Gaska and Njoki (2011) illustrates that black women strongly consider and encourage the use of skin-bleaching to improve their way of life. Results showed that their lighter skinned peers have a higher level of status, better income, opportunities to education, job prospects and popular social circles than their darker counterparts (Lewis et al., 2011)

The need to develop a strong sense of self and identity remains a bone of contention for many women, moreover, conflicts of blackness and experiences of skin-tone embodiment in the ever-present race to achieve 'whiteness' continues to be a pervasive phenomenon that reinforces the cycle of racial hierarchy and the ideologies of beauty in the psyche and behaviours of women. Adding to the complex negotiations of gender, race, and identity is that of the perception of society. Irrespective of whether or not black women internalise racial understandings of beauty, society too has its place in how women are received in the spaces they find themselves. The ability for women to occupy space in an environment, hinges on the perceptions that society hold of what true beauty is, for instance, the notion that "if you're light, you're alright" (Hunter, 2002), here the argument brought forth by Hunter (2002) illustrates that women with light skin-tones are shown to have greater opportunity for success and development in society due to the fact that lighter skin-tones are interpreted as beautiful and aesthetically pleasing by society (Hunter, 2002), therefore, any other skin-tone that falls short of this is rejected, often displeasing.

In tandem with these perceptions, people in society behave positively towards women with lighter skin-tones than they do towards women with medium or darker tones. Societies' ill feelings of beauty towards darker toned women are demonstrated and practiced in the form of space boundaries (access to certain spaces) and ostracization, which strip such women of the agency to negotiate identity in the throes of society. Identity is formed by the constructs that society develops of women with particular gender, race and class, thus, a woman's own self-identity is not entirely in her control but rather the control of society and what it deems as acceptable to be.

Black authenticity

"Commodifying realness in black authenticity refers to the construction of limitations for what is accepted as legitimately "Black" within a market context and how forces at this level perpetuate particular, accepted representations of Black authenticity" (Nguyen & Anthony, 2014, p. 771). Crucial to understanding the psyche behind matters relating to blackness and skin-complexion; particularly consolidating the perpetuation of white norms and ideals, within the identities of black South African women, an investigation of the two dimensions which the

commodification of blackness occurs is explored. 1) The othering of Black culture and identities and 2) White Ideals versus the black body (Nguyen & Anthony, 2014).

The first (othering), refers to the oppressive nature in which a superior group, defines another by portraying their stereotyped social injustices (gender, race, class) as common and almost acceptable in everyday societal interaction, subsequently resulting in a false representation of the already highly racialised oppressed group (Nguyen & Anthony, 2014). The general manner in which this is portrayed occurs through the controlled and managed release of imagery in the media and advertisements, which portray skewed representations and half-truths of what it really is to be black. The release of this imagery, limits the true symbolisation of Black culture, as it shows only what the superior deems acceptable in the representation of Black. The relevance of the images in their ability to initiate control over the oppressed is that they are based on historical relevance, thus are perceived as acceptable and salient, therefore, they easily shape and normalise the injustices (Schwalbe et al., 2000). Response to these images is depended on the individual, their culture and personal experiences (Nguyen & Anthony, 2014), nonetheless, the constructions of black authenticity in its attempt to portray 'realness' are upheld by false standards of white being, in essence "turning subordinates into commodities" (Schwalbe et al., 2000, p.423).

Black women are almost double marginalised and objectified as a result of the negative stereotypical nuances broadcasted in media and television, that represent inaccurate imagery of what it means to be black and women; first on the level of general stereotype for being black, and second on the level of stereotype for being women and the characteristic's that emanate from these. This in-turn catapults the superior white race into higher regard for favourability and attainment.

The second, White ideal versus the black body: "commodified controlling images also present ideal Black identities, maintaining ideals associated with White standards of beauty and personality traits." (Nguyen & Anthony, 2014, p. 772). Similar to 'othering' images are controlled for gender, class and race purposes. The portrayed imagery complies with that of normative standards of acceptable and favourable whiteness by both appealing to the perceived superior group and simultaneously constructing limited representations of what ought to be authentically black (Sutherland, 1997); for instance, television and magazine advertisements, that appeal to white ideologies of beauty will emphasise fair skin, blushed cheeks and thin lips in an otherwise Black celebratory figure, by removing dark pigments and lightening skin-tone (Hazell & Clarke, 2008). Maintaining normative standards of white beauty through the use of strategic marketing (Collins, 2004). Herein, lies Fanon's (1963) notion that

the black man, aside from developing the perception of problematic blackness, is also pressurised into keeping up with efforts to achieve a more white self (Fanon, 1963b).

Labelling skin-complexion: a cultural lens

In the context of South Africa, terms used to describe skin-tone are widely expressed throughout various black communities. The term yellow-bone seems to be most commonly used among young black individuals (both men and women). In South African cultures such as isiZulu and Sesotho, words to describe women with dark skin tones are referred to as “mnyamane” (darkie in Zulu) and “dark dindi” (Sotho). In the siSwati culture, darker-toned women are referred to as “nkhwishinga” also meaning darkie; the tone at which this is expressed is important as it carries the intended connotation expressed in the feelings of disapproval and impurity that is behind dark-tones. In the same culture, the term “silomo” is used to describe lighter skin-toned women and is associated with an old mealie’s advertisement, wherein the more yellow and bright mealie was more sought after for its taste, over the darker mealie which was not as palatable. Names used to identify dark skin-toned women are quite pejorative and imply ill-fated destiny. Culture in itself plays a role in how black women perceive themselves within these labels; further solidifying the social constructs of beauty that black women are bombarded by in the media.

Irrespective of the social constructions of beauty held by society, two women in Johannesburg, Lerato Mbangeni and Nokuthula Mbatha have striven to demolish the negative connotations that accompany dark-toned women and eradicate the prejudices held against darker tones in general (Moyo, 2017). The two women have created a photo project named *D(h)ark* with the aims of celebrating the richness and beauty of deeper toned women and uplifting all women with varying skin-tones (Moyo, 2017). Through the project both Lerato and Nokuthula focussed on emphasising the beauty of their dark skin through photo imagery of themselves, posing in modern cultural attire with empowering stances that exude confidence and power.

Noted from Lerato and Nokuthula, not all dark women perceive themselves in the way society portrays in media. Campaigns such as *Unfair and lovely* launched on social media to challenge and deter the belief that light skin is better than dark (Pandey, 2016). Pax Jones, a 21-year-old Black South Asian student created a series of photos that featured her sisters and classmates accentuating their dark complexions in the open, the significance of doing so publicly was to boycott being told by parents and society to stay out of the sun to avoid getting darker (Pandey, 2016). Pax Jones sought to encourage dark-skinned women to overcome colourism and the exclusion of women of colour by asking women with dark skin-tone all around the world to share photos of themselves on social media sites such as *Facebook* and

Twitter (Pandey, 2016). The name of the campaign was inspired in direct defiance of a popular Indian skin bleaching product called *Fair and Lovely* (Pandey, 2016).

Media and Skin-bleaching

Thompson and Keith (2001) argued that black Africans frequently comply with westernised standards of beauty (Thompson & Keith, 2001, as cited in Tate, 2015); this stemming from post-colonial oppression, where European countries with people from the Aryan⁶ race were perceived as more attractive, physically appealing and pleasing to the eye, than those not of Aryan race. In African nations such as Ghana, Tanzania, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Mali, both men and women have strived to achieve lighter skin with the belief that lightening one's skin promotes better socio-economic status, cultural and aesthetic capital and heterosexual marriageability (Tate, 2015) all of which hold value with respects to social class hierarchy.

“For women, light skin colour is closely associated with definitions of beauty” (Hunter, 2002, p. 178). The impact of media on the colour of a women's skin has been a subject of address even in years prior to modern social society, as Tate (2015) states that it (skin) is the ‘matter from which identifications emerge in the to and fro of relationalities’ and subsequently guards as “the flow between body surfaces” (Tate, 2015). Skin lighteners were first introduced to South Africa in the 1930s by a company called *Keppels* in Cape Town. In 1945, *Keppels*, which was white-owned, produced an advertisement for *Freckle Wax*, directed at ‘coloured women’ which “promised to restore pristine skin-colour and texture” (Tate, 2015), however, the implied message with the release of the ad was said to appeal to a target market of individuals (women of colour) and enforce within an already hierarchical racial structure, that certain distinctions of skin colour were preferred over others. Preferences of lighter skin than darker.

Social media and the phenomenon of pop-culture have played a large role in influencing both positive and negative perceptions of skin-complexion and skin-colour pigmentation for women in the black community. Between the years 2011 and 2014 the prevalence of skin-bleaching became a huge frenzy amongst popular black South African social figures, such as Kelly Khumalo, a local musician and gospel singer Lindi. Local South African media magazines *Drum* and *Move* published articles where the before mentioned figures were suspected of

⁶ Racial grouping: used to describe people (light-skinned Aryans) who speak Indo-European languages (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2017).

using skin-lightening techniques as a way to correct the darker tones of their skin-colour and lighten their complexion, in order to achieve a more aesthetically pleasing and attractive look (Nkwadi, 2016). Thus, although significant parts of a young black women's identity are formed around the make-up of her entire womanhood and the multiple facets that encompass this, skin-complexion has remained a salient feature of black female identity.

Studies have shown, a black woman's ability to distinguish her place in the world and her decisions to take membership in a particular group, rely closely on her perceptions of self-worth and self-esteem and the manner which she internalises these, thus it is important to account for the self-concept and its "connections to the external world" (Brewer, 1991). *Light Skinned Women*, one of many accounts created on the popular social media site *Instagram* (*Light-Skinned Women (@light.skinned.women)* • *Instagram photos and videos*, n.d.), promotes posts of women with lighter skin-tones as beautiful, sexy and irresistible. Images that young black women are encouraged to aspire imitate and view as adding to their social capital (not said so plainly).

Similar to the *Instagram* account, a Facebook account called *Yellow bone vs chocolates* posts images of young black females with both light and dark skin-complexions, from different parts of South Africa *Mzansi* and around the world. The title gives the impression that there are competing characteristics of skin colour amongst black females ('Yellow bone vs chocolates', 2017) and that one may be better than the other, which begs the question, how does skin-complexion influence the way black females construct their identities amongst others within the black community.

Not all women have perceived their skin-complexion as adding to their social capital, rather, Moraga (1983) commented that had she not continuously asserted her culture that "whiteness" would become the "bleaching" agent that could rob her of her culture, language, and Chicana identity (Moraga, 1983, as cited in Hunter, 2002).

The dilemma in Blackness and skin-complexion

One would assume that issues of socio-economic class, race, colour, gender, etc discrimination would be minimised by societies nature to maintain group preservation, unity and belonging amongst its people because matters relating to group relations are primarily dominated by interactions between members from within-groups and out-groups; matters extending from racial stereotypes, socio-economic class and fairness, to racial discrimination, language bias and violence. Simon and Brown (1987) argue that threats of stereotype and discrimination, with regards to intergroup interaction, often create tighter bonds of

homogeneity between intragroup members as the need for group survival and preservation becomes a more salient matter than issues stemming from within (Simon & Brown, 1987).

The above-mentioned acts as a defence mechanism used to shield social comparisons from members of out-groups to members of in-groups. However, what happens to an individual's identity construction when the threats and social comparisons occur between members of the same group? Studies have shown that individuals' identity is closely linked to their affiliation with a group. In addition, Goffman (1963) argues that the manner that individuals identify with a particular in-group is dependent on the context in which he/she finds himself and whether this (in context) is "stigmatising or empowering" (Goffman, 1963, p. 31). Goffman (1963) continues by stating that "skin-tone stigma is heavily influenced by context", thus the various complicated identity concerns of skin-complexion that black females negotiate with are 'relative' and therefore context-driven.

A complete contrast to Fanon's (1963) approach where he speaks of the individuals experience of racialisation in society; determined not by group membership but through one's awareness of and responsibility for himself, which is brought to the surface by societies experience of an individual in his state, thus determining his/her identity.

With the use of the *skin colour Questionnaire (SCQ)* measurement tool, researchers Bond and Cash (1992) were able to measure skin-tone satisfaction among light, medium and dark-skinned African women. They found that there were no preferences of skin-colour, individuals satisfaction with their skin-tone was weighted more on their levels of self-confidence and the ways which they applied self-regard to their overall identity (Positive or negative) (Bond & Cash, 1992), thus black women in this study, with darker skin-tones may have similar skin satisfaction levels to black women with lighter skin-tones. Nevertheless, some results showed idealisation for lighter skin-tone (Bond & Cash, 1992). When using the same measurement tool (SCQ), Coard, Breland, and Raskin (2001) discovered that on average women with darker skin complexions showed higher skin colour satisfactory levels than women with lighter skin, however, the same dark-skinned women showed low self-esteem results. This brings emphasis to the intricate complexities of skin-tone and that not necessarily all dark skin-toned women are in conflict with their skin-tone, the levels of self-esteem may be attributed to external factors such as media.

Contrasting studies show that lighter-skinned black American women illustrated higher levels of self-esteem which follows the conclusions of current literature that light-skin is the preferred physical characteristic to achieve beauty and acceptance in society. Although this reflected seemingly negatively, studies show that black men have a preference in taste for darker-skinned women to that of light-skinned black women.

In conjunction with Bourdieu's (1984) theory of language use as a form social capital to influence one's prestige, Giles, Reid, and Harwood (2010) concur that "Saying certain things in certain ways makes people more or less aware of groups that you belong to" (Giles, Reid, & Harwood, 2010, p. 1), subsequently, what is said and the response to this identification, either draws one closer to a grouping social-economic class or subjects them to another (affiliation or not), by means of social categorisation. The same concept applies when individuals look a particular way. Within an intragroup context, particularly pertaining to members who share the same racial affiliation. Members of the group who differ in complexion and tone, if placed in the same context, may be treated completely differently by others in the same group i.e. The group may experience two women from the same racial group differently based on their complexion (social capital), and due to group perceptions of skin-complexion, they themselves experience life differently, making them either desirable to a certain social-economic class or foreign altogether. Initiating comparative, conflicting feelings about and for the colour of one's skin.

Skin as a cultural identification

As is theorised by Bourdieu (1984), the skin is and can be utilised as a form of cultural capital, for the means of advancing an individual's social standing in society and desired communities. There is very little if any theoretical information regarding the use of one's South African culture as a form of cultural capital to progress in spaces that are perceived as favoured. The term culture is often confused and misused in different contexts. Culture in this sense will be used tentatively as there is much debate about the meaning and flippancy use of the term to generalise across a vast majority of people in the African and European continents (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2012).

In the traditional sense, the term culture has been used to describe the beliefs, customs, behaviours and traditions of a specific group of people and how they live (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2012). Groups like Zulu, Xhosa, Pedi, Setswana, etc all embody particular forms of practice that are unique to them, and even within those, there are micro-groupings from different locations on the South African continent that do not quite resemble the otherwise generalised population. For example, there is the Sotho 'culture', and in the Sotho culture there is North Sotho and South Sotho, each tribe with its own practices and customs unique to them, therefore it would be difficult to use skin-complexion as a way of identifying the culture of an individual and utilise that as a way of othering or accepting them into any space. Research shows that there are wide-ranging factors that play a role in the perception of and

negotiation of a person's identity, although a very subtle culture appears to be more impactful than people acknowledge.

There is a hypothesis in sources, such as forums that work with the idea that there is a mutual relationship between skin-complexion and culture somewhat negate access to social spaces and engaging with different types of personalities (Pan, 2020). As a given, people respond to and change according to how the world treats them, skin complexion is no exception to that, in other words, the colour of one's skin has come with it many forms of treatment, depending on what side of the scale you fall. Culture and treatment occupy a contending space, for instance in the Indian community, persons with light complexions are perceived to be privileged with wealthy backgrounds, whereas those with dark complexions are perceived to in the opposite way (Paul, 2016; Vaid, 2009). But, with the various cultures that exist in the Indian community one question if certain types of Indian cultures are identifiable by skin-tone and skin-complexion registers and how treatment manifest within these micro-groups.

It is not abnormal for people to surround themselves with those who bear resemblance to themselves, and to adopt the dominant norms of that group. Nor it is strange for those who do not share common resemblances to exclude and other each other. In her blog, Pan (2020) says to "be careful to avoid drawing causation between skin-colour and aesthetics or fashion sense", the point here is that being Indian with a particular complexion is not mutually exclusive to culture and to assume so would be an overgeneralisation and form of othering that perpetuates already existing issues between diverse populations.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

3.1.1 Research Design

For my research, I conducted a Qualitative research method of study, which acknowledges the unique qualities of individuals and the personal accounts of their lived experiences and furthermore, minimising any risks for generalising the participants involved (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Approaching my research in a qualitative manner allowed me to adopt an exploratory role by placing focus on the lived experiences, unique to the participant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), rather than making use of methods leading towards statistics and quantitative methodology. By its very nature, qualitative research is investigative, and therefore allowed me to use one-on-one in-depth interviews and further explore the unexplored domains that arose in interviews. This was crucial to the process because gave me the opportunity to address other layers of persons experiencing these phenomena during the process of interviews. I found that this made the content richer and added value to my research as more could be explored with the participants.

In resemblance with qualitative research, my aim was to understand individuals from their personal reference points, however, in order to achieve this, it was important for me to set aside my own perceptions and preconceived ideas on the subject and enter the space with as mutual a mindset as possible, so that the information could be interpreted objectively and purely from that of the participants eyes (Taylor et al., 2015); as in thinking about the information as it occurred with the belief that it provides sufficient insight and understanding as developed from themes and patterns that arise during data analysis (Taylor et al., 2015).

Intersectionality theory and Fanon's (1963) psychosocial dimensions of blackness both align with qualitative research in this study, as I try to investigate and utilise my curiosity to uncover and unpack the various social constructions regarding skin-complexion, beauty and identity in the lives of black South African women living in Braamfontein. Moreover, as I attempted to unpack this, it was important to integrate Bourdieu's (1984) theory with respects to the use of cultural capital, because he makes illustrations of how women may use their social assets with the purpose of gaining access to certain spaces (Bourdieu, 1984b), justifying its purpose in my research. Narrative analysis became useful during the study because it allowed participants to tell their stories about skin-complexion within the city of Braamfontein, from their frames of reference. Parallel to Bourdieu's statements about the salience of cultural capital in one's life, anthropologist Plummer (1995) says this: "[S]tories, in anthropology, are seen as the pathways to understanding culture...furthermore, in psychology, they are the

bases of identity...in psychoanalysis, they provide 'narrative truths' for analysis" (Plummer, 2002. p.396). In essence, each participants account of their experience, provides unique emotion, personal beliefs and ideals about skin-tone registers and relates these to how space is navigated and used in the environment in which they roam. I found this to be a helpful and useful way of approaching my research as it placed less pressure on me to fulfil an 'expert' role, I became a partially silent participant within each interview session and in turn, encouraged each participant to freely and comfortably express their stories at their own leisure.

3.1.2 Paradigm

My engagement with the research occurred by employing an interpretivist paradigm mindset. An interpretivist paradigm aligns with my own thought process with regards to social constructs and its complex role in the lives of people living through various phenomena. The interpretivists paradigm assumes the position that reality and experience can be accessed through investigating the social constructions of society (Myers, 2013) which encouraged me to critically observe and interpret each persons lived experience or event and furthermore allowed me to make meaning of the information while matching pieces of information and make sense of the data (Aikenhead, 1997). An interpretivist paradigm emphasises the importance of understanding the world as perceived from subjective accounts of individuals (Reeves & Hedberg, 2003), which speaks to the very purpose of the study as qualitative.

Kaplan and Maxwell (2005) explain that embracing an interpretivist paradigm enables the researcher to make use of subjective meaning and experience to explain social action (Kaplan & Maxwell, 2005); which further justifies this study because in the lived experiences of young black women in Braamfontein South Africa skin-complexion continues to be a salient and perpetuated theme between them that is somehow contracted into the opportunity or lack thereof to occupy spaces in the city.

This type of research paradigm invites the researcher to employ line-by-line narrative analysis. The use of this is befitting to interpretivism because it forces the researcher to explore and interpret the data with the most accuracy, as it appears for the participants' unique experiences and narratives. Moreover, it promotes an appropriate thematization of the data during the interpretation of language use and investigation of multiple power dimensions between young black women and how these are used to construct their black identity.

3.1.3 Cohort

The make-up of participants consisted of 9 females from various residence buildings on the main campus of the University of the Witwatersrand, all between the ages of 19 – 32 years of age. It was important to capture data from different residencies on main campus as each building is located in various areas of the campus and individuals living in residence, have a more intimate access to the city of Braamfontein (i.e. the community, popular locations, daily interactions within the city) and the surrounding people whom are from diverse backgrounds and contexts. Participants engage with this part of the city more frequently than day students, who come in and out of the university on a daily basis, and typically leave for home before the day ends.

The age range is large between participants and is quite important because it offers rich information pertaining to the quality of the data received in all facets brought into the interview. Furthermore, young participants born after the apartheid era may carry a different kind of self-concept and identity in relation to those born during its era.

For this kind of research, I used a purposive sampling technique or judgemental sampling, to ensure that the participants that volunteered for my study possessed the appropriate characteristics required for the interview process, such as race, gender, duration of residence and place of residence on main campus. For my study participants needed to be black female residence at the University of the Witwatersrand, who were living in one of the residencies, for longer than three months. The length of residency was important because it gave me an indication of their familiarity with Braamfontein and the possible frequency of interaction within the city.

In conjunction with Purposive sampling, I used the Snowballing collection method to gain participants. However, it appeared that word of mouth did not gain as much traction as expected, therefore, I created a brief pamphlet with the relevant information and contact details of my study and stood at each place of residence to hand these out to occupants leaving the building. Furthermore, with the permission of course co-ordinators in the Humanities faculty I was able to send out an electronic version of my pamphlet through Sakai, where all students had access to information regarding their courses and studies occurring in the university. These additional methods prompted an adequate response of respondents volunteering to participate in my study and they were able to communicate these to others in their res buildings. Participants included young black females with varying degrees of natural skin-complexion, by natural I mean without make-up or any other cosmetic enhancement of any kind. I received a response from six different places of residence on campus, namely 1)

Sunnyside Hall, 2) Rennie House, 3) Braamfontein Centre, 4) Wits Junction, 5) Noswall Hall, and 6) Reith Hall. Each participant has taken residence for over 3 months, except for three, who were not comfortable disclosing this information.

3.1.4 Data Procedure

Before any data could be collected, I received ethical clearance from the Human Research Ethics committee (HREC Non-medical), who permitted me to continue with the research. Once participants were identified through the pamphlet and snowballing technique, those who saw interest and volunteered to participate made contact with me through either email or telephonically and plans to meet at a time and location most convenient to them were scheduled. Once participants agreed to be interviewed, to ensure that they read and understood the subject matter at hand, they were given brief but informative synopsis of the study and were free to ask any questions or convey any concerns that they may have had before signing a two consent forms, one for consenting to be part of the study and another to consent to knowledge and permission of the audio recording.

The number of participants selected was appropriate to the qualitative research being conducted because the quality of each individual's narrative was more important to the research than the numbers involved. The data was collected through a semi-structured interview process with each interview approximately 40 to 60 minutes in length depending on the discloser of each participant. Semi-structured interviews were selected because it is suited to the explorations of the "perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enabled probing for more information and clarification of answers" (Barriball & While, 1994, p. 330). Furthermore, such interviews appreciate that certain expressions of words and the context in which they are used do not always hold the same meaning for all interviewees (Barriball & While, 1994).

Consideration for where the interview takes place is important to both interviewer and interviewee as it can potentially create power dynamics between both parties that may alter the responses or contributions of participants and their comfortability and openness to engage with the research (Ecker, 2017).

Location was an important factor in accessing participants. As students who reside on campus, much of their interactions and time is spent in and around the university premises, for instance, class schedules varied and time was literally of the essence with each individual, among other things, therefore in order to create easier accessibility with minimal

inconveniences (transportation and costs), interviews were held in the Emthonjeni Centre on the main campus at the University of the Witwatersrand, during participants most convenient times. The choice to hold interviews at the Emthonjeni centre was a deliberate one; participants were aware of the whereabouts of the building, thus able to comfortably get there. For most participants, the building was a walking distance from their place of residence or class.

The interview room was located in a quiet area, away from possible distractions or noise pollution. It was important for me to build rapport with each participant prior to the interview, to foster a sense of comfort and trust for both parties so that participants may feel free to express their story openly, thus time was set aside to communicate to participants my passions and interests in the study (McGrath et al., 2018).

An audio recording device was used during each interview session, the contents of which were later transcribed and analysed. The device used to record each session was a professional voice recorder; this was to ensure that sound quality was as accurate as possible so that I could account for pauses, emotional queues, such as a change in breath or hitch in the throat, etc and tone of voice on the transcript; important for interpretation in the analysis process.

3.1.5 Trustworthiness

This study steers away from quantitative approaches to research, through its focus on understanding and making meaning of how it is that complexion continues to be prevalent and perpetuated today not only amongst different racial groupings but within the same race communities. The use of qualitative research digresses from using measurements and statistical procedures to interpret information, rather it attempts to make sense of phenomena and encourages critical reflection and thought of data (Golafshani, 2003).

The trustworthiness of data for qualitative research is often debated and placed into various terms of use because it is obscure in nature. Thus, it has remained salient for qualitative researchers to ensure that their findings are credible, dependable and transferable (Statistics Solutions, 2019).

Beginning with credibility; this describes the researcher's confidence in the findings of her research data and answers the question 'how you know your findings are accurate and truthful' (Statistics Solutions, 2019). It speaks to the honesty in which the data has been presented (Smit, 2002).

Secondly, dependability answers the question, if another researcher were to repeat the study, would it generate similar findings? And questions the consistency of the research study (Statistics Solutions, 2019).

Finally, transferability shows how the researchers' findings are applicable in contexts other than that which is being studied. For instance, in other communities, settings, populations outside of the one in the study, or other phenomena similar to this (Statistics Solutions, 2019). However, in qualitative research, the concern for transferability could be argued as highly subjective because of the uniqueness of both the phenomena and participants involved as data is determined by each individual's lived experiences and points of reference, which one cannot necessarily generate exact findings.

3.2 Data analysis

3.2.1 Line-by-line Narrative analysis

For my research, I used a line-by-line narrative analysis. This type of analysis allowed me to pay close attention to emerging themes and the salient, implicit narrations of the participant. This type of analysis acknowledges the importance of the 'narrator's self-evaluative comments, meta-statements, and the overall logic of their narrative' (Berger Gluck and Patai, 1991, as cited in (Fraser, 2004), therefore little focus is placed on the accuracy of questions, rather the narrator has the advantage of leading their own stories, which the free association narrative interview schedule promotes.

Furthermore, the appropriateness in utilising this type of narrative analysis aligns itself with my study's aims to understand the social constructs of skin-complexion and race that occur in the black identities of South African women, and lends itself to the extraction of any additional information that is highlighted but has not been asked in the interview schedule; but that may arise through the participants natural process of disclosure during the interview, in terms of addressing other constructions of skin-complexion and race.

Line-by-line narrative analysis is used in both large and mid-scale studies in order for the deconstruction of particular discourses (Fraser, 2004). The precise data that results from this type of analysis and its labour-intensive analysing process, permits for no more than 50 participants at a time, therefore, the range of participants for this study is relevant. The following phases of line-by-line narrative analysis produced by Fraser (2004) act as a guideline to the manner in which it can be approached and achieved.

Phase 1: Hearing the stories, experiencing each other's emotions.

This phase was quite important because it encouraged me to immerse myself in each participant's story and experiences by listening actively to and with respect to their emotions during the interviews. By completely diving into their stories, I was able to identify the kinds of emotions that went into each response and take note of their body language and the feelings that they had expressed, both implicitly and explicitly. When participants expressed their feelings, it gave me an indication of what their experience was like and how they made meaning of it. After each participant's interview, I made a note of how they felt because I got the sense that it impacted the trajectory of the interview.

Phase 2: Transcribing the material

Transcription of the interview is imperative in this style of analysis because it allowed me to keep a record of the interviews, where memory and note-taking make fall-short. Furthermore, it was important for me to transcribe the interviews to begin to analyse the data line-by-line, highlighting and emphasising points where particular discourse is used, emotions that were expressed that may have meaning, etc (Fraser, 2004).

What was different in this stage, in comparison to traditional forms of transcribing, is that this type of analysis allowed me the freedom to 'clean up the speech', which means, I was able to remove any unnecessary commentary I made and remove any repetitive or incomplete statements made by the interviewees, except where it brought meaning to the process (Fraser, 2004). The most important process during transcription was to familiarise myself with the data through reading and re-reading each story and fully engaging with the individuals' unique experiences post-interview.

Phase 3: Interpreting individual transcripts

Phase 3 involves identifying the direction of stories as well as contradictions that arise from participants trying to give a 'rehearsed' version of their story. Researchers may identify contradictions through the manner in which the story is being told, for instance, a participant's body language and tone of voice may come across as dramatic or animated. This was difficult to detect at times, some participants told very brief stories and taking the whole story into account was important as there were no significantly noticeable contradictions. Each participant appeared to be genuine in their storytelling and took the time to think about their own experiences as opposed to a version constructed by society. I could tell that some

participants spoke more about what they have learned through lectures and textbooks and how they felt about readings, which at times felt disingenuous and regurgitated, however, it was relevant to their lived experience.

Interpreting the stories may be difficult as some participants may speak aimlessly about a story that may not be relevant to the primary narrative that they began with, i.e. where a participant starts out with one story and abruptly stops in order to begin another that they felt more interested telling. The beforementioned certainly occurred with three participants, often changing from one story to another with seldom a breath in between, which made it difficult to ascertain the relevance of each story and truly identify the beginning and end. It became important to use the transcripts to make better sense of the story. Fraser (2003) advises that a way to overcome this is to segment the story into recognisable sentences, by deciphering where each story begins and ends.

In order to achieve the above, I numbered each line of the transcript and marked each place where the participants' story began and ended, which made it possible to determine each person's story and identify by line where it began and ended, removing what was irrelevant. Numbering the line of each sentence string allowed me to keep track of the whole story and the sequence of events that occurred moreover assisted with identifying common themes amongst each participant, main points and the significant meanings of stories.

Phase 4: Scanning across different domains of experience

It is important for researchers to "scan stories for different domains of experience" to prevent from generalising participant's experiences (Fraser, 2004), particularly in studies that aim to "unearth insights about how people interact with different dimensions of their environment" (Fraser, 2004, p.191).

Making distinctions about each participant's intrapersonal, interpersonal, cultural and structural aspects of their story. This phase accounts for the uniqueness's of participants experienced stories, which is slightly or completely different from the other. Separate from common themes.

Phase 5: Linking the personal with the political

During this phase, the researcher is concerned with determining the references that are given to particular popular discourses (Riessman, 2005) which includes deciphering the ways in which "dominant discourses and their attendant social conventions constitute an interpretative framework for understanding the stories" (Coates, 1996, Hyden 1994, Reissman, 2005 as

cited in Fraser, 2004, p.193). During this process of one-to-one interviews, I noticed that participants would frequently use the word *woke*, all in similar contexts in their narratives. The term *woke* holds a profound meaning, especially in the context of the university context. The use of the word is described as having an awareness of issues relating to social justice, construction and racial justice that urges individuals to remain aware of their blackness and positions in society (Garofalo, 2016). The way that someone tells their story 'shapes' the manners in which the researcher can accurately interpret it, thus it is important to recognise the discourse that participants use whilst telling the researcher of their experiences (Riessman, 1993). Participants, especially dark-complexion woman used the word *woke* when telling an evolutionary narrative of skin-complexion and the manner in which for them the topic of skin-complexion had either changed, been perpetuated or remained consistent. For these participants, the term brought on a whole new meaning, when trying to understand their position in certain contexts and remaining woke was crucial to the formation of identity and the perceptions of skin-tone and complexion, both their own and others. Being someone who is woke, is perceived as positive because it spoke to a consciousness about blackness that when used in spaces or context where discrimination and oppression take place, can be powerful and deter such oppressive attitudes.

Phase 6: Looking for commonalities and differences

This phase is the title presents. It surrounds actively seeking similarities and differences between participants' stories. The similarities and differences should become more apparent once the researcher has numbered and named the lines and stories of participants. The connection of themes, statements and events that occurred across the stories can be used to create clusters of difference and similarity.

In order to achieve the above, it was important to physically and different colour codes, highlight any similarities and contradictions from each participant's interview, only that which seemed relevant to the narrative. Identifying these then allowed me to, under each theme, identify any subtle and stark differences and commonalities between participants in each theme.

Phase 7: Writing academic narratives about personal stories

The aim in this final phase is to ensure that the researcher writes up their final conclusions in a manner that reflects the true sense of participants' stories with coherence and credibility that retains the raw findings stories. All of the findings in this paper were discussed in a separate chapter, Discussion.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

Family perceptions of Skin-complexion

Family members represent the initial and often crucial beginnings of identity. The discriminatory speech and emphasis of skin variation made within black family communities create a host of internal tension for an individual attempting to negotiate his or her identity (Tummala-Narra, 2007). A member of the family is often valued or devalued, glorified or perceived as flawed on the basis of their skin complexion; for some this perception is tremendously important and has the potential to solidify one's position within the family (Fortes de Leff, 2002). This theme aims to explore the issues of skin-complexion and skin-tone registers within family units and its prominence between black minority families. The attitudes of greater society regarding skin-complexion have been for the better part, discriminatory and conceived from elitist groupings and cultures in South Africa. Allport (1995) describes this attitude in his statement "that perception can be regarded as nothing more nor less than a discriminatory response" (Allport, 1955, p. 53). Agreeably the beforementioned viewpoint can be seen as subjective and determining the actions of those engaging in discriminatory behaviour, be it in the form of ridicule, othering or ostracising persons who appear outside of the norm. Keeping in mind that societal norms form part of the constructions from past contributions to segregation and power, with the aim of creating the ideal. People who 'do' the discriminating are often of the notion that anything outside of what is portrayed as the norm is therefore abnormal, thus feel justified in their words or actions thereafter. This includes individuals of the same ethnicity and race. However, individuals on the receiving end interpret the same as devaluing and shameful to the self.

Racism and colourism are longstanding origins for inequality and segregation amongst people of colour (Landor et al., 2013); in particular in a context as diverse as South Africa. Parents, guardians or parental figures are the conveyers of socialisation for children in the first crucial years of their lives (Simons et al., 2004) and specifically for children in South African cultures. Here, parents and grandparents, in particular, are the driving force to how children perceive themselves in the family system and which ultimately extends to perceptions of self in relation to others, either alike or different to them, in society. The age, weight, hair, facial qualities and gender of a child more often than not dictate the manner in which a parent responds to him or her (Mandara et al., 2010). Arguably the very same can be said for skin-complexion. Skin-

complexion discriminatory behaviour can also be a form of racialisation within family contexts. Perceptions of skin-complexion among family members determine what is viewed as normal and what is abnormal within the household.

Researcher: Could you share some of the experiences you have had where skin-tone/complexion was an issue?

I don't know, I have come from a family that has never, like marginalised me or anything. I have always grown up with my mom telling me, 'you are beautiful'. I came from a family that really affirmed me in that way so I [stutters] believe that I have that confidence that I think I am beautiful and I see myself as beautiful... [Participant A, Self-classified: Medium-complexion]

When asked in what contexts she has ever felt treated differently because of her skin-complexion Participant A explained that the perception of her family and mother, in particular, helped her gain confidence about her own dark-skin and in this way feels seldom affected by societies notions on her darker skin. She felt that her family played a positive role in her ability to self-affirm and assure herself of her beauty, which in turn promoted a positive sense of self for her identity. Her experience appeared to be a continuous and consistent one, with little negativity. Participant C shared a similar experience:

In my family, it (skin-complexion) was never a thing especially cause in my family there's more diverse skin-tones and everything so it was like never a thing or something to be proud of or ashamed of... [Participant C, Self-classified: Light-complexion]

Similarly, Participant H experienced positive affirmation from her mother for her skin-complexion.

Researcher: Have you ever felt self-conscious or insecure about your skin-complexion?

The thing is when I was younger when I was growing up, I think my mother did a good thing like by telling me to be confident in myself because it even got to a point where she bought me brown dolls there were like black dolls, you know those baby dolls, she got me black ones as well. It wasn't a situation where I looked at my skin and felt unhappy with it or it was ugly, I just felt it was my skin. [Participant H, Self-Classified: Dark-complexion]

The degree to which parents lay emphasis or highlighted the complexion of their own skin-complexion or that of their children, often determined whether the child recognises it as a disadvantage or not. Furthermore, the manner in which this was articulated or portrayed and whom it came from influenced the child's perception of self and identity. A study conducted by Wilder and Cain (2011) found skin-complexion biases in families was the primary "learned, reinforced and in some cases contested within families" (Wilder & Cain, 2011, p. 1), which

made children feel either confident or discouraged at the sight of their skin complexion. For instance, participant B tells the story of how her grandmother treated her mother.

Researcher: Tell me about a time where you felt that you were treated differently because of the complexion of your skin?

Back home it was negative actually, my grandmother, my grandmother is light-skinned actually, she is very light-skinned and then she gave birth to my mom and uncle who are very dark-skinned cause their dad is dark-skinned and umm, so I and my dad is not dark-skinned, he is fair, he is like me and umm I remember this one time, cause my mom has been dark-skinned all along, and I remember this one time my, my grandmother bought her this lightening cream and you know things to use on her face to lighten her skin and I asked my mom why she took them, and I asked but you've always looked like this all along why do you want to change now ...and she was like 'well I don't know, your grandmother just wanted me to do the same thing' and I have faced the same thing with her [grandmother] also, umm the same thing, when its winter I get darker and she would say 'take this cream and use it so you can get lighter'... and it's always been like that back home I get a lot of that, from my parents directly I don't...[Participant B, Self-classified: Medium-complexion]

Participant G experienced the above in the manner that members of her family made comparisons between herself and siblings. These perceptions impact the way people make meaning of their own identities and that of society's perceptions of our complexions. At times family seem to be the anchor to perceptions of blackness and identity, where black identity is a salient teaching within the unit, however, often these are overcrowded with hierarchical intrusions by what is and is not authentic blackness.

When I was younger, I felt like I wasn't good enough in a way, because in my family my mom is light-skinned, my dad is sort of light-skinned but he is not too light-skinned and then I have like four siblings and my sister and I are like the darkest in the family. My sister is like eve darker than me so I'm kind of like better than her... we are the darker kids in the family, that is how we were identified. And you know like sometimes when they [family] see you as siblings it's like "ooh this one is so much prettier". Especially my older sister, we look the same but she is like just a very light version of me and people would always compliment her, that she's very beautiful, that she's very what-what and for me, I just like "oh ok just another 'oh okay you must be like your dad' type of thing, but my dad wasn't dark though, so it always felt like you know I was a second class citizen in a way because my skin-colour was a little bit different, less attractive child compared to the other siblings. [Participant G, Self-classified: Dark-complexion]

Comparisons made between siblings and cousins further reinforce the perceptions that particular skin-complexions are preferred over others and perpetuate discriminatory behaviour among members with families. Furthermore, it appears that between female siblings the rivalry for 'better' is intensified by the generational perceptions of what is known and deemed to be normal and acceptable which is similar to that argued by Erasmus (2001). The beforementioned is grounded by Wilder and Cain's statement as cited in Thompson and Keith (2001); "skin colour is more important as a predictor of self-esteem among women than among men; lighter skin tones are positively related to higher self-esteem, particularly for women with lower socioeconomic status" (Thompson & Keith, 2001; Wilder & Cain, 2011, p. 581).

Self-perceptions of Complexion and identity-preservation

The perception of the self-comprises an integral part of this discussion as it investigates the importance or lack thereof that persons place on the complexion of their skin-tone register. Keeping up appearances and first impressions seem important, especially for students attempting to integrate into the social space of university and Braamfontein life. While some students glorify and idealise their complexion, others shy away from it and feel a sense of shame. In this theme, we explore the impact of skin complexion on self-perception, even confidence and unpack the impact this has on identity.

In a lecture on the Black Schema, Dr. Lwazi Lushaba makes references to psychologist Noel Chabani Manganyi, 1973 edition of *Being-Black in the World* (Manganyi, 1973). He argues that an individual's perception of self is developed in two forms. Initially, at a very young age, the Personal Schema develops; which represents our subjective perceptions of self, and the second, called the Sociological Schema, which hinges on societies constructions and stereotypes of how one should exist in the world. Furthermore, Lushaba's argument derives from the notion that for Black people, this is a salient point of contention because for us, the Sociological Schema was created in such a way that it dictates how our Personal Schema operates (Lushaba, 2017); in a sense creating an impossible set of standards that one cannot live up to. In society, the Sociological Schema is created in the image of the white man, thus anything different from that is viewed as 'other', 'them' and/or derogatory by social normative measures.

In some ways the same could be said for, Participant D who appears to have difficulty accepting her own complexion as acceptable, her personal Schema appears to be in conflict with that of the preferred sociological image of white people. Although she states her acceptance and comfort with her complexion, in her final statement it is clear that she

continues to question her appearance and attempts to preserve this by remaining aware. Parts of herself are in question, although aware that she is a black woman; she is in constant reflection and interrogation of this because of societal standards.

Researcher: how do you feel about your skin-complexion?

I didn't really like my skin-tone and always felt like I could change and become lighter than I am but then I think because you grow-up, you get to appreciate the skin-tone that you have and I don't really have much problem with it anymore, but it's a work in progress...umm I'm still conscious of my skin-tone but then I'm trying to work on being comfortable with it and accepting that the skin that I have is me and it can never be anyone else's [Participant D, Self-classified: Medium-complexion]

Manganyi (1973) denotes that "man is always in a situation. He is always in constant dialogue (relation) with his lived-space" (Manganyi, 1973, p. 52); a kind of dialogue that questions African individuality. He further postulates that dialogue is crucial to 'being' in the world as a black African and promotes a sense of relating to one another as interdependent persons that brings narrative historical purpose to each individual in the African culture (Manganyi, 1973). The concept of 'ubuntu' is an important aspect of African culture and identity formation thereof. The true identity of a black individual is a 'dynamic engagement' and unearthing of shared identity and shared dignity (Forster, 2010), often we see this in the first stages of identity development with black families and communities, family is the first indicator of identity formation, elderly share their historical narratives with younger generations and community is entrenched in this sharing. However, through major intrusion (colonialism) that consumed the rights and culture of African people, the development of blackness or black identity has been undermined, thus the spaces that identity should have been developing were surpassed by a greater more European dialogue that currently overshadows the African narratives carried through ancestral generation (Manganyi, 1973). We see this in today's culture of black identity, the experience of an African person, is not only experienced through 'togetherness and brotherhood', but through individual existentialism that gnaws at the spirit of a black person.

Researcher: how do you feel about your skin-complexion?

At first, I didn't notice it but after noticing that a lot of lighter-skinned girls would only be around me because we're both light-skinned girls or it's that thing of umm let's say I'm in a situation with a friend who's maybe of a darker skin-tone and we need help, whoever, we're talking to would actually just talk to me and like kind of isolate the person I'm with... [Participants C, Self-classified: Light-complexion]

For the above participant, during her primary school years, complexion was not a feature that she focussed on, or cause for concern, until she entered high school (where her perception changed) and began to be associated with peers who felt shared similar complexions. It almost felt a forced socialisation. Participant C felt a sense of brotherhood (Manganyi, 1973) within her peer groups and recognised herself (blackness) amongst friends of likeness, using her complexion as embodied cultural capital, she was able to access and succeed socially with women like herself. However, one could argue that not noticing the complexion of her own skin, could be attributed to the fact that that she falls nearer to the image set by sociological schema, which praises persons with her complexion, even as a black female, thus this may not have been made salient at the time.

The very same participant found that societies labelling of her light-complexion has placed her in an awkward position. One that doesn't align with her own perception.

It's a problem, um a lot of the time it's frustrating because you kind of expect the stereotypes of being light-skinned are just to make pretty babies, probably get married to someone lighter...if you're light-skinned people make assumptions that you're mean or rude or whatever and sometimes I kind of have to be, ugh I don't know, sometimes I feel like I have to work harder to prove those stereotypes wrong, but its tiring. [Participant C, self-classified: light-complexion]

Felly Nweko Simmonds, a black woman in academia describes her embodied experience by stating that "The world I inhabit as an academic is a white world...in this white world I am a fresh water fish that swims in sea water. I feel the weight of the water on my body" (Simmonds, 1997, p. 227). Her statement is profound in that it expresses the personal impact of marginalised black women and the deep experiences they are faced with when navigating between spaces of difference in the education sector (Mirza, 2015). Colourism denotes similar kinds of nuances and dynamics for black women in the Braamfontein academic space, where the world of colour and complexion are highlighted, skin-care companies advertise and encourage the use of creams, lotions and skin-care routine on campus and communicates messages in favour of lightness, which seems counterintuitive on a campus that appears to be woke and encourages authenticity in all its forms. Black female students are complimented and perceived in positive light by their white counterparts or even lighter fellow black women for embracing particular skin products and following particular social media pages that allude to bright skin, those among the popular, kinds, are L'Oreal. How one perceives and identifies themselves within this context and what their take is on their own colour is relative to social gain, desire to access groups and spaces, and how they perceive their complexion as a form of capital.

“Since the beginning of my career I have been in the precarious position of defining and defending my professional identity because of my race and gender.” (Harris, 2007, p. 57). As an academic with a Doctorate, Harris (2007) has faced challenges with navigating her femaleness and blackness irrespective of achieving her accolades; and although she has observed her white students disrespect and ill-treatment of her (race and gender), she perceives herself as an equal in the context of academia and as such insists that her students acknowledge her not by first name but by title (Harris, 2007).

The above complexity can be seen in participants’ responses to how they feel about their complexion. Participants felt that their self-perceptions of complexion influenced their identity in some but not all instances of social interaction, as this is in part a marker of who they are and affects the manner in which they respond to particular social settings. Initially, it appeared that participants seldom viewed their complexion as problematic, unless or until it was highlighted explicitly through projections of skin-complexion as portrayed in the media, by society, and in social circles. For some, learning about the various discriminatory biases and stereotypes of their particular complexion, opened a chest of questions and perplexities that created a pressure to metamorphose into the image better suited for or closer to that of the Sociological Schema.

I mean it does make me feel a bit insecure because in our society it’s like problematic to be very dark-skinned, so I’m always looking at myself like, am I that dark-skinned. Then I’m like no, I am medium, I’m cool. [Participant A, Self-classified: Medium-complexion]

Participant A is revealing two parts to her narrative, a) that she often questions her own complexion and finds herself conflicted by societies influence on her perception of skin-complexion and b) she identifies and views complexion, different to how society has identified of her, she feels she is medium in complexion, where society has marked her as being darker. Convincing herself that her complexion is acceptable the way it is proving a difficult task.

The manner in which participant F tells her story, is significant to the way that society attempts to prejudice the complexions of black females by accusing light-skinned black females of identifying themselves as white (Erasmus, 2000). In her social context Participant F found it uncomfortable and derogatory to be labelled a Yellow-bone as she perceives her complexion vastly different from that of the societies defines of her. However, she counters this accusation by relaying that her experience of complexion is and has been subjective, until she was exposed to a greater social context and began to question her place in spaces that affirmed her skin, in a way that assumes she is white.

I honestly didn’t think about it. I never actually had to think about my skin- tone in that way, but I can’t say I’m not, I’m unhappy to be the skin tone that I am...then I realised that when

you light-skinned, you referred to as “yellow-bone”. But I didn’t see myself as yellow bone because of my family experiences of being light-skinned, although I might look light-skinned. So, whenever people are like “you very light” I’m always like in debates in conversations whether I’m really light or not. So, it’s my own subjective, like how I see myself. I can never consider myself light-skinned but I know I’m more accepted and with my friends as well, I know I have like darker-skinned friends who would say something like “You have it easy” so with that people refer to my skin tone as being white. [Participant F, Self-classified: Light-complexion].

Even the term Yellow-bones appeared to be an imposition that for her felt like an attempt to cause separation from her own racial group, which she refutes time and time and time again. In a similar statement

For years lighter skin-complexions have been the most sought after for millions of black women; furthermore, extreme measures such as using bleaching creams and pigmentation lotions have been taken to achieve a lighter and “attractive” look (Dlova et al., 2012). In a statement by Findlay (1982) black people strived to achieve brighter skin, by preventing their exposure to the sun in an attempt to avoid a dull, drab or scaly surface (Findlay, 1982). However, in recent years there appears to have been a shift in perceptions of skin-complexion between light and dark. For some participants, a darker complexion is not a contentious topic and is perceived rather as a protective measure that guards against the ills of society’s expectations and limitations of complexion; these participants find solace and confidence that they will remain safe from scrutiny. As such, participants with darker complexions have perceived and experiences their complexion as positive.

I love it, I love it because I feel like, umm, because there is a stereotype like if you are too dark, you are not beautiful and if you are too light you are too beau...I don’t know, but I feel like I am in between those two shades and umm, basically, I don’t know, it doesn’t come with any benefits because I don’t know I feel like I can work with many colours, you know when I wear clothes and you know I can work with colours that are suited to dark girls, dark-skinned girls and for like light-skinned girls so yeah I feel like I am very relieved. It’s a good skin-tone to be in. [Participant B, self-classified: Medium-complexion]

Participant E shares a similar story, however, hers is based on the fact that society has brought about a positive awareness for darker skin-complexion and in this way has brought a sense of relief and protection from scrutiny, which in turn preserves the personal schema, created in early childhood. This finding concurs with results shown in Brown, Ward, Lightbourn and Jackson’s (1999) study where it is stated that “Dark complexioned students value darker skin tones to a greater extent than their lighter counterparts” (Brown et al., 1999, p. 4).

Researcher: how do you feel about your skin-complexion?

I feel proud of being this skin-complexion...there's a lot more representation now for dark, for people who are darker in the media, so I think that it's made me feel a bit more prouder about my skin. [participant E, self-classified: Medium-complexion]

In tandem with the above participant, participant I had this to say about her complexion.

People that look like me have sort of become praised in a way right, so now we find your 'darkie thots' who are extremely dark-skinned models who are big on fashion...basically now it's sort of becoming a trend to be uhm dark-skinned right. In a sense now it's better than what it was like. [Participant I, self-classified: Dark-complexion]

She implies perceiving her dark-complexion in a positive light because the media in the fashion industry has brought to the fore the advantages of having a dark-complexion like her own. Both participants appear to have had positive perceptions of their darker complexion that have been enhanced by positive reflections of their skin through social media. However, one must question what both participants E and I's perceptions were prior to the exposition of complexion portrayed by media influences. Furthermore, dark complexions in these contexts only seem to be perceived in positive light because social media have in some ways made room for this and have depicted it that way, however does that mean that there is a genuine appreciation for one's own complexion, say for instance if media were not a factor influencing perception of complexion. Thus, one cannot assume that what feelings the above participants have about their complexion is genuine, given the impact that media has on the significance of positive perceptions of skin-complexion.

The Missing Middle

The middle; a place that occupies simultaneously between nowhere and everywhere. A minority within the minority. A group of black women who do not feel that they can identify with any complexion in the black community, the so-called unidentifiable or 'mixed' race. The middle ground status that some black people occupy has led to the derogatory, negative and harmful associations towards the group by society. Terms like "yellow-bone", "banana" This theme addresses young black women who feel some confusion about their skin-complexion or have been made to feel like they are non-identifiable by groups that represent black people.

It is difficult, in fact, impossible to ignore the impacts of past apartheid on identity, in the manner, it has privileged some and marginalised others on multiple levels, be it racial divide, socio-economic injustices, or complete exclusion from spaces by virtue of the beforementioned. The intense emphasis of complexion within the black community in South

Africa is a reflection of the exclusion that has taken place for particular groups. The term 'yellowbone' has its origins in South African history, for its purpose of othering and was initially aimed to represent people who are not representative of the 'typical' black skin register, as opposed to a person who appears black (Spencer, 2009).

Researcher: So, do you think that your complexion influences how people treat you and in what ways?

As much as I'm dark, but like again, I'm not dark enough to be like "you can't have this" or "you can't be associated with us". It's sort of like being able to get through certain things. You don't get instantly, but then again you don't not get it so it's kind of like, in the middle. The 'missing middle' if I can put it like that [...] it's just there and it's floating. [Participant G: Self-classified, Dark-complexion]

In the similar ways that the connotations underlying the coloured identity include features that are attributed to Caucasian roots and values different to that of the African kind, claims to being in the middle of racial hierarchy along with the undesirable racial stereotypes that mixed individuals are hybrids resulting from the unlawful engagement of the white and non-white races exist for black females who feel misplaced and criticised (Adhikari, 2006).

Some of my friends are very light-skinned and some are dark-skinned so I have, I'm actually the in-between [giggles]...when I'm with some of my dark-skinned friends I get approached a lot, and when I'm with my light-skinned friends, the opposite happens so they [men] approach them, not that I have a problem with it but it's just something that I see often and I'm like, okay this is how society thinks [...]yeah so I'm treated differently in a way because sometimes I don't fit the spectrum of, you know, being beautiful and sometimes I do, yeah, that confuses me, every time that I am treated differently. [Participant B: Self-classified, Medium-complexion]

Transforming stereotypes among various complexions

Not only related to the typical stereotypes heard in society at present. This theme pertains to the various stereotypes that speak both towards darker and lighter-skinned black women from a different perspective. The word transforming is used intentionally because there appears that through time a change in stereotypical behaviour has or is occurring in the black community where complexion and skin-tone registers are concerned.

Decades of researchers have primarily focussed on conducting research that compared stereotypes between women of colour to that of Caucasian women; most of which alluded to notions that one could detect a females social position or surmise the value of her capital based on certain patterns of behaviour and characteristics attributed to her race that appeared

to be founded on empirical evidence supported by history. Furthermore, certain women are assumed to hold a higher social economic status that increases their social capital among society above others who are deemed less fortunate. Although some evidence has been found to support the beforementioned, it appears little mind is paid to the influences that similar stereotypes have had on the identities of women in the very same racial group. Research conducted by Donovan (2011) found that “the most frequent traits chosen for Black women were loud, talkative, aggressive, intelligent, and straightforward.” (Donovan, 2011, p. 460) with intelligence being a most interesting trait as it conflicts with the narratives shared in this study. A study conducted by Landrine (1985) investigated societies views of racial characteristics between Black and White women by rating adjectives on a Likert-type Scale; results illustrated that Black women are perceived as significantly more hostile and superstitious than White women, who were seen as warm and passive (Landrine, 1985).

This theme attempts to investigate if similar stereotypes play a role in how black females view themselves and each other based on the completion of their skin. Results show similar findings with that found in studies comparing Black and White women. However, this unfolds between light and dark complexions. It becomes clear that conflicts between societies perceptions and one’s own views conflict with one another; moreover, the pressure to conform to what has been the norm appears to be ever-present in the schemata of young Black women and prompt discussions about what is said out there and what is believed to be true within are continuously negotiated.

Researcher: What do you think are some of the stereotypes that others have of you because of your skin complexion?

Participant E: That I am loud, that I have an attitude, which is just the opposite of who I am...umm that I’m not supposed to go through things likes anxiety, like umm...I feel like there’s the narrative of a Black woman having to be strong like why is it, like how is it, how are you going through like depression or like anxiety, it’s like the two can’t co-exist.

Researcher: Can you describe that more to me, in terms of that stereotype... can you elaborate on that?

Participant E: I think I umm...like in families like we grew up with I feel like we don’t really show that, or we don’t really express that we’re going through things, like I know like my mother, she won’t show, or like if she is going through like a depressive episode, or like if she’s going through anxiety, I feel like she’s like that’s how I’m supposed to be perceived, like as a strong Black woman like how I see my mother cause she doesn’t show certain things.

Researcher: so, there's loud, attitude, that Black women are supposed to be strong but that, that this is the opposite of your personality, so let me ask actually how would you describe your personality, opposed to those stereotypes.

Participant E: I'm quite introverted and quiet. [Self-classified, Medium-complexion]

While sharing their subjective experiences, participants revealed varying spaces in which they felt stereotypes occurred, most of which appeared to influence their ability to enter into space. In these instances, they felt as though they were under scrutiny and given the impression that certain capital i.e. skin-complexion, was salient to possess in order to 'survive' within the space and preserve ones' position.

Researcher: what do you think are some of the stereotype's others have of you because of the colour of your skin?

Participant G: When you are a dark girl there are certain things that you don't deserve to have. There are certain things that are only reserved for certain people. Because you don't fit the criteria for that specific something. Especially when I grew up in the township, so it's very different like now. Cause I know now we are from different places, and we think a little bit differently and a little bit more open-mindedly but like when you grew up in the township there's something like "oh but you're too dark to be working as a tv person" or "you too dark to be an air hostess" or "you too dark to be working at a certain store because if you look at people from there you look like this and this, and this, so you don't deserve that so, don't even try to cause you just not going to get it. It's not for people like you" [Participant G: Self-classified, Dark-complexion]

In her experience, society has continued to imply that she can only access particular things if she is a certain shade, colour. In her narrative, a statement like "it's not for people like you" reinforces the perpetuated historical oppressions imposed on Black people which communicate that there are prerequisites to engagement and opportunity, prerequisites that by virtue of characteristics are unattainable to her.

Similar stereotypes imposed on Participant F were highlighted, however in this instance there appeared to be a rejection of this from the identity she has formed. Although, aware of the expectations and perceptions that society hold of her light-complexion, her experiences have been based on skill and educational background. The same sentiments are shared in an article, however from the other side of the coin; Lerato and Nokuthula share that not all dark women perceive themselves in the way society portrays in media (Moyo, 2017)

Participant F: They [society] like I'm going to get jobs easily, like literally like that has come up actually quite a number of times. Actually, this year particularly they 2 res people that I stay

with have mentioned that being a lighter-skinned person you don't have to worry about whether you going to be taken for a job or not because you light-skinned. You don't have to compensate by working on your wardrobe because you light-skinned, like, someone was actually telling me at res, that particularly...so I was asking her "you always buying clothes, I don't understand", and she's like "no, like, it's because you don't have to...we have to make sure we look extra good because of our darker skin complexion". So, the assumption that I don't have to put in much effort to how I look just because of my light skin complexion. Also, the job market thing and also the physical appearance. How I tend to my grooming is not as intense as somebody with a darker skin complexion.

Researcher: And do you believe that?

Participant F: No, I really don't [Participant F: Self-classified, light-complexion]

Additional impositions that were highlighted, continue with participant I. In her experience, the social construction of beauty when challenged by individuals such as this participant, who embody it differently than expected appear to cause discomfort in the psyche of people. The kinds of responses and language used to describe 'her type' of beauty imply that there ought to be an explanation as to why things appear different. By attempting to make sense of it and emphasising her features while reassuring her that her skin is, in fact, beautiful without make-up, society resolves the discomfort by shifting all accountability from themselves to the individual as opposed to accepting what seems to be overtly beautiful. There is an underlying assumption that females with dark-skin who wear make-up are overcompensating for a lack of beauty and because of this need to be affirmed.

I like make-up when I have to go somewhere, my mom likes make-up so we use it, and people will always be like "oh you're so pretty, but you're more pretty without it, your skin is just so beautiful and then I'm like ten other people are wearing make-up here and me wearing make-up has nothing to do with me feeling not comfortable with my skin or how I naturally look... so there's sort of...people wanting to make sense of everything [Participant I: Self-classified, Dark-complexion]

The role of intellect on perceived complexions

The theme speaks to ways in which black women with various skin-tone registers are perceived as either having greater intellectual capacities or lesser, depending on the appearance of their tone and even the facial features. Assumptions are made about a black individual's educatedness by reference to the media and determining this based on what social figure or what kind of person is being represented out there currently.

In the education system, particularly where apartheid was concerned, education was considered to be a type of cultural capital in its institutionalised form that was utilised as an identifier to surmise an individual's class, socioeconomic status and skill set; which was said to afford them the right to particular opportunities. Intellectual capacity at the time played a role in the kind of authority and ability one could command in any given social space. Bourdieu made the argument that capital created a foundation for the kind of social lifestyle one could live, and furthermore determined an individual's position in the social hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1986). The argument he made was that the greater the social capital that one possesses, the greater their social standing in society; moreover, one's association and with a certain social class, also alters their position in society (Bourdieu, 1986).

Participant A as a dark-skinned female, feels confident in her skin, despite the historical prejudices about her complexion, portrayed in the media and fashion industry. In spaces like university and lectures, she experienced “wokeness”⁷; which allows her to stay aware and be conscious about the social hostility surrounding and concerning race and especially colourism. The following extract was said by participant A:

Researcher: So how do you think that being a black South African woman with your particular skin-complexion influences how people view you?

You know the image of wokeness and the image of the intellectual strong black woman is the dark-skinned woman...maybe it's because I have never befriended a lot of light-skinned people but I've never met someone who has felt that strong [about her complexion] and they are light-skinned, but I think that, umm especially when I speak uhm I just have that presence of a dark-skinned woke 21st-century woman. I'm taken a little bit more seriously especially because I don't think that I am overly attractive, whereas usually with light-skinned people and because boys see them as more attractive, there's this sense of less taking you seriously, more of wanting to flirt with you? I think it's like, advantages, I guess people attach more power to a dark-skinned black South African woman. [Participant A, Self-classified: Medium-complexion]

By being ‘woke’, participant A has been perceived as an intellectually strong black woman amongst her peers and even with men. It was, this that has helped her gain ‘status’ as a black woman and, that which she feels sets her at an advantage because she's taken seriously as a female, in comparison to her light-skinned counterparts who because of their complexion and its relationship to the construction of beauty, aren't taken as seriously especially by men.

⁷ A political term derived from African Americans that describes an awareness of issues relating to social justices, construction and racial justice and urges individuals to remain aware of such issues and their constructions on the world at large. (Garofalo, 2016)

The very term 'woke', appears to have been associated with a strong intellectual black woman with darker skin complexions. This is further explained by the same participant below.

Participant A: And it's kind of like not their image [light-skinned women], like if you look at the woke women, I mean the famous Nigerian writer Chimamanda, she's like dark-skinned woke women, that's the image, that's what you see if you look at your Viola Davies, uhm who else is like a strong activist [ponders], like Lupita Nyong'o... when they speak about melanin that's the image now so it has its advantages but do you get what I mean, because of that image, I am sort of that, like not as dark-skinned as them but because I'm dark-skinned, because I am not overtly pretty I...perhaps I'm taken a little more seriously. [Participant A, Self-classified: Medium-complexion]

Researcher: So what you're saying then is being woke or a darker-skinned woke black women has actually helped you or put you at a slight advantage in the sense of being perceived or taken more seriously, rather in comparison to lighter-skinned women who, because of their skin-complexion and the idea of what beauty is, aren't taken that seriously.

Participant A: [nods head]

In this instance wokeness and the value it holds in cultural capital, as it assumes that one is intellectually strong; creates social advantages for dark-skinned women that would otherwise not have. Furthermore, this advantage is compounded by the recent rising of popular American celebrities in American television, that black women in South Africa are perceived to have a higher social standing than light-skinned women.

Participant I found that one needs to be strategic about the people they associate with and think about their influence on your ability to enter into certain spaces freely. She explains that associating yourself with those who are liberal in their thought process, who understand the psychology of people, is easier to spend time with and seldom follow the otherwise linear thinking that society has constructed over the years. Finding it difficult to relay her point, she gives comparison examples of the mindedness in students from certain faculties to put this into perspective. However, the abstract below gives rise to her sentiment.

Researcher : So, the current spaces that you navigate, what are they like? Would you describe them to me?

Participant I: Well I hang out with like umm...okay I'm a politics student so I hang out with people who are now seen as public work...I hang out with artier people, people who are into arts, I hang out at theatres, I hang out with photographers and painters, yeah so those are the people I hang around wit. It's easier there because those are people that read books, we understand the behaviours. We understand which behaviours to unlearn. We sort of

understand the new leases of life, you read, people that take the effort to understand (so this is what that means) this is...let me give you an example, this is a patriarchal society. What does that mean for us? What are the different things that we have to do? What are the behaviours that are within us that are inherently patriarchal? How do we unlearn them? So those are the people I hang around with. I think it's a bit different there because people know that if I'm light-skinned I have the privilege if I'm a heterosexual being I have the privilege and this is how I navigate spaces from other people differently... as much as I've come to this place of knowing that this is what we call colourism and we have a word for it and the person doesn't know that, they don't read the books I read, they are doing Engineering, they don't understand. [Participant I: Self-classified: Dark-complexion]

Females with darker complexions feel that they are in a position of power because, in spaces like a university, where the mind is valued more over physical appeal; the pressure to be exceedingly beautiful or attractive isn't placed at the forefront of success or failure to thrive.

In contrast with the above, participant E holds a completely different perspective on this issue. In her narrative, intellect has nothing to do with the complexion of one's skin, but rather that it's an issue of discrimination against people of colour that ultimately impacts their social position. That by virtue of being black, it is assumed that you are unintelligent and therefore fall short of any opportunity to progress in the social hierarchy; as it was during apartheid. The following extract reads:

Participant E: I think in certain instances I may not be viewed as smart I guess, like let's say in a groups project when I have like the different races and like I contribute something or like give my opinion and then like maybe it won't hold as much weight.

Interviewer: What types of spaces would you say that happens?

Participant E: I would say when I'm just hanging out with people, and I think in classroom spaces, yeah.

Interviewer: Could you describe that more to me, or elaborate on that, please?

Participant E: It would be a thing of when we're sitting and we're all discussing and we're giving our ideas but certain ideas won't be really taken into consideration and I'm not really, I'm not sure if it's based on my skin-tone but I've thought about it before.

Interviewer: Okay, and when you say umm earlier that there are moments where certain ideas are not regarded, who are you pertaining to, who are you referring to and what ideas are you talking about?

Participant E: specifically, like, uh the black people in the group or the darker people in the group, it's not just me, like I find that someone else will be giving an opinion in the group then it wouldn't help or hold that much weight.

Dating men space

This theme unpacks the dating space and how black women who live in Braamfontein access the society of dating and engaging with individuals of the opposite sex. It investigates if complexion plays a role in their ability to date and be seen as someone who is dateable.

Research regarding this topic is, for the most part, scattered; with different findings for the relationship between or impact of skin-complexion in the dating context (dating of the opposite sex).

Women may use their complexion as a form of embodied cultural capital to gain access into various spaces of privilege and literature has illustrated how these same spaces, ostracise people who fall short of the standard and almost render them unable to do the same (Bourdieu, 1984a). Because women with dark skin complexions are often othered from these privileged spaces, they are almost expected to acknowledge their position, accept it and thus be grateful or humble themselves at any opportunities that occur. Participant H gives us her impression of this:

When it comes to guys, they start thinking ok because you're dark, you're desperate for male attention. And whatever they say you will say ok it's fine cause you desperate. So, they think oh they can say whatever they want to say, do whatever they want to do, and you just have to accept it because you don't have any alternative people offering themselves to you. Coz there's this idea, I don't know if I can call it a fetish, of skin-colours that they have. Then there's the whole thing of lighter people being seen as the more attractive and beautiful and the darker ones are not ad beautiful. So, then they think that maybe cause you, that their perception, because of your darkness you're ugly. And you know the whole stereotype of being ugly you don't get to choose whatever males you want. They just have to take whatever is left for them to have. [Participant H: Self-classified, Dark complexion]

Quite similar to the experience of participant H, Participant C has experienced backlash for dating a man who is perceived as too dark for her complexion, from other men. The perception is that her dark-skinned partner is being used as a token, in order for her to fulfil her role as a 'true' black person or been seen as an authentic black woman; without this, the perception is that she is actively denying her blackness. However, her attraction to her partner has less to do with the complexion of his skin. The manner which other men have perceived her dating 'pattern'; strips away other qualities of authenticity more important to her.

I'm dating someone darker and a lot of the time I do get approached by others who are like why are you with him, are you trying to be black, are you trying what, what you trying to get your roots back or something like that, so I'm still attacked for it which I think is ridiculous [Participant C: Self-classified, Light-complexion]

Some women, who are considered dark in complexion, feel as though they are second best to their lighter counterparts. Participant E has experienced multiple break-ups in her past and has understood this to be due to her partners' preference for lighter-skinned women, however, this was never disclosed by any of her previous partners. Previous studies have shown that when given the choice, men (no matter their complexion of skin) did not show any significant preference for the desire to either light or dark-skinned women (Brown et al., 1999). Rather much of their preferences lie within the physical attributes of women such as figure, dress and socio-economic status (Brown et al., 1999). Complexion is not the sole salient attribute to a woman's worth in the dating world.

I'd have to say it [dating] became an issue for me after my first break-ups, umm the person I was with was cheating on me but with people who are lighter than me so I, in my mind I was like 'oh okay maybe, maybe that skin-tone is like the only one that's attractive {Participant E: Self-classified, Medium complexion]

In contrast to participant E's experience, Participant A feels that dating is a lot more difficult for her because men and male friends have been quite vocal about their opinions and preferences for the type of women they would like to date.

I must say when it comes to boys and relationships, I have a log of guy friends, I've got cousins who are guys and they always like no I want like a light-skinned girl so I have always thought about it, like sometimes like maybe...people, like, guys won't find me attractive because I'm not light-skinned, they always want the thick light-skinned girl, in my personal experience. [Participant A: Self-Classified, Dark-complexion]

The research on dating is limited to observations between people of white and black race. Much of it is inconclusive and where significant, the information is brief and left to interpretation. Dating as a black woman with either light or dark skin seems to be quite a sensitive endeavour (Hunter, 2002; Richardson, 2013). Apart from navigating the general space of attraction and chemistry, the interactions between different sexes seems tainted by societies perceptions of what should and should not be a suitable companionship or match. It seems black women are highly scrutinised and criticised for what kind of companion they choose and their blackness interrogated (Wilkins, 2012). In general, when it comes to dating, black people seem to be at the bottom of the scale (Ross, 1997). There is also a pressure for black women to prove their blackness by dating a male within the same colour-line and to

some extent, some black women use their skin-complexion as a form of embodied cultural capital in order to portray a certain kind of appeal that renders them of greater value to the eyes of the opposite sex. To the participants in this study, skin-complexion has not been as prominent and salient a factor when dating other of the opposite sex, until it is highlighted by someone else, a person whose opinion they value; at which point the complexion of their skin becomes an invasive topic for them and others who explicitly comment on it. The subject or importance of complexion seems emphasised by others attempting to make sense of or question it and inadvertently their identities.

A study conducted by Brown., et al (1999) illustrate that when black women were asked to consider if they would date a white man, there was a definite disinterest particularly from Very Dark and Dark in complexion women. The notion here is that although the dominant race, in this case, white, is perceived to be the most attractive, idealised and one of privilege, that black women of darker complexions are not necessarily attracted to and do not agree nor conform to the status quo. Arguably, participants with lighter skin-complexions are not necessarily interested in only dating within the same colour-line, and do not always consider men with the same complexion as them as suitable partners. Despite subtle changes in perceptions of complexion; with a move towards appreciating darker complexions more, there is still a large tendency towards lighter in complexion individuals as being more attractive than darker complexions.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

This study addresses issues relating to identity and colourism and takes into account the impact of post-apartheid on youth in South Africa. The prevalence of the terms related to skin-complexion such as 'yellow-bone' has very much been constructed by society at large. Over many years the use of various terms that discriminate against and marginalise groups of black South Africans have created and highlighted the differences between a person of same-race groups and only formed greater divides within an already othered community of people. However, there seems to be some movement towards recognising and acknowledging this divide and the kinds of discourses that encourage the pervasive gap. Young black women appear to be paving their own way and forging a path for their identity that actively diverges from the normative standards of beauty or ways of being that society has for decades deemed 'right'. For instance, being in control and in a sense fierce about their choice of fashion, make-up, social circles/media following and mannerisms. For some, this has been much easier said than done because of the overarching theme 'white is right' that screams overhead.

Young black women do not inevitably self-identify with terms like yellow-bone, redbone or -mnyama, rather these are terms labelled by society that women are made aware of and understand the deeper meaning of through their own process of 'wokeness'- a process that is encouraged within the university space. The university space appears to be quite an important one during the process of identity formation. It is the place, away from home, that tends to challenge and confront an individual the most; it is the space where social positioning, outside of the small pool of higher education is made crucial, it is the space where for some choice and freedom are a first and 'wokeness' becomes part of identity. As their identity forms and intertwines with other parts of themselves the complexion of skin is not necessarily what is salient to being, but rather the conscious awareness of its impact on positioning, hierarchy, and standard in nuclear communities/societies, i.e. class, social gatherings and relationships is what challenges 'black authenticity'.

There is truth to Fanon's (1963) emphasis that being conscious of the dominant presence that attempts to oppress and exclude marginalised groups of people from sharing in power is of utmost importance; he asserts that it is crucial to make sense of and understand themselves within environments that perpetuate and highlight race, racism, and oppressive discourses. In doing so, there is a sense of power and appreciation for knowing one's own historical knowledge, self-knowledge and culture, which form parts of identity negotiation and unique being (Duncan, 2004).

Cultural capital is illustrated in how language (and the meaning attached to language) is used to create power dimensions that recognise certain dynamics of culture, which influence the way an individual constructs their identity. The term Yellowbone is an issue in itself. Although it provides a position of power to those with light-skin complexions, it also strips away at their black identities and subjects them to continuous scrutiny and question over their authenticity as a black woman. The evolving movement in perceptions of complexion is progressively changing the previously dominant theme; 'that light is better', from a position of power to a position of other and it appears that black women with more melanin and darker-complexions are better treated, respected and able to navigate spaces within their peer groups, social groups and university better than their counterparts. In this instance, cultural capital seems to take on a different form.

Yellowbone is in some contexts used to create a certain power dimension, that recognises dynamics of whiteness (Bourdieu, 1984). However, the movement towards dark-skinned complexions being praised more so now than it ever has, in-turn others and tends to marginalise women of lighter complexion for not being black enough or genuine to their blackness. Sticking to Bourdieu's (1984) argument that formal education, social class and social origin all form part of a person's engagement in the world at a particular level of social prestige; one would then understand how some black women see no missed opportunities or social obstacles as threatening to their ability to access any spaces they desire, irrespective of the gatekeeping that occurs, but that most of this would hinge on how they experience family, how they learned of identity and where this development occurred.

Reflexivity and future considerations

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) make mention that “reflexivity is the very process which researchers engage in critical reflection of both the type of knowledge that is produced and how the knowledge is then generated” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 274). The importance of reflexivity enables the researcher's active engagement in what Watt's (2007) states are an “on-going dialogue with themselves through journal writing” (Watt, 2007, p.84). Methods such as Journal writing allows the researcher to reflect her, feelings, emotions and thoughts with regards to multiple factors of the research, for instance, choice of topic, methodology, data collection process, choice of analysis, etc, all of which plays a part in how the research is formed and subsequently, speaks to the kind of researcher conducting the study. Moreover, it allows her to give thought to the limitations, oversights and considerations for future research.

For this type of research (qualitative), it was crucial to use critical thought to approach the research not only from the black perspective but also from a perspective that allows me to view the women in all aspects, that is, taking into account their gender, age, culture, accent, etc. Therefore, the use of intersectionality is important. Intersectionality takes into account the various aspects that form a person's identity and how they embody theses in various spaces in life. This forms part of my methodology and encouraged me to think about the individual beyond their race, and rather investigate from a wider lens. By looking at the various intersections of the black women's identity, I was able to understand that identity is not linear but rather a merging of different identities that are embodied by the individual who when placed into various contexts, experience complex fusions of othering, discrimination, dilemma and social hierarchy; which in turn mould their identity and furthermore, somewhat dictate their mannerisms within those contexts and can determine their social standing in spaces (Bourdieu, 1984a).

The use of Fanon's (1963) psycho-social dimensions of blackness further helped me grasp the concepts of social constructs that address skin-complexion. It deepened my understanding of the intricate complexities of the black schema and the negotiations that occur which form part of the identity of black individuals. Moreover, both Fanon and Bourdieu's theories, alongside that of intersectionality transcended my thinking about my participants as wholistic beings who each come with their unique experiences, emotions, and beliefs about skin-tone registers and paint a picture of how space is used. Altogether a narrative is formed.

Fanon's theory provides what I believe to be some of the most extensive information about the black schema, however, it was necessary to investigate the dimension of cultural specificity especially within the South African contexts and explore how culture impacts the

black women's access into certain space. Although Fanon did not seek to engage within a cultural context it should be brought into conversation with the use of other conceptual and theoretical tools. The South African nation comprises a multitude of cultures, each with its own distinguished tongue, traditions, and customs; as quickly as our differences in culture are highlighted, so are the individuals who do not neatly present theirs are ostracised, frowned upon and questioned, add skin-complexion to this and it further complicated the matter. In addition, in the same way, that history has perpetuated issues of race between black and white groups; culture has been perpetuated in much the same way. Women from different cultures discriminate, identify with and distinguish one from the other based on initial encounters with each other. This encounter seems to be an important one as it appears to give away one's cultural background and later defines their position in a group context. Fanon's (1963) theory helps us understand Black schema and identity in all its complexity, moreover paired with this information, it was essential for this study for readers to gain insight into the intricacies regarding cultural differences/diversity and how this plays out in black communities, to deepen our understanding. For example, the degree to which individuals are 'woke' about their blackness provides insight into the awareness of their history and perception of culture and positioning in society. To not be 'woke' about your history and culture as a black person in South African, is to not take up your position and wave the flag that contests the discriminatory biases and stereotypes that perpetually plague society today. In the aforementioned statement, respect is given to those who fiercely refute the imprisonment of colour defined capital.

Choosing to conduct this type of study was very personal to me. I have been intensely interested in investigating issues related to skin-complexion and have wondered what about complexion defines someone's position in a setting, ability or inability to take up space, particularly within same-race communities. I was acutely aware of how my own narrative plays a role in the vested interest in this type of study and even more so when hearing the narratives of my participants, that we might share similar sentiments about colourism in society. On the other hand, also aware of the contrasting views and beliefs regarding this topic. With each interview, I realised that I myself am exploring and journeying through my identity, which partly made me feel anxious as each participant moved, pushed and pulled me in different ways that were unexpected and bewildering.

Both my parents are black siSwati people, who grew up fairly darker in complexion than myself, thus looked like the 'right' kind of black person. However, even in my infancy, my mother experienced recoil from other black persons in her community, which implied that she had had indiscretions with her white male employee. People in her community would refer to me as "ingane kabasi" which translated means "bosses' child ". Thus, I began to recall the

continuous names I was called throughout my upbringing; namely, 'coconut', 'banana', 'mlungu', 'albino' among others, etc. Most of my difficulty with these terms is that I do not regard myself as any of the above, instead 'I was born this way'. In the community that I grew up in, people were proud of their dark skin complexion and regarded those with lighter skin as being part of the problem "the enemy", the white ones", as if I had chosen to be 'this way'. For a long time, I wished to be dark-skinned and to be accepted and seen as a black female. Other aspects of my being only heightened the scrutiny further, such as my accent. Having grown up in Cape Town, my initial introduction to language was English and Afrikaans. When we moved to Johannesburg this made for a lot of confusion and ridicule from my peers.

I felt after each interview that it would be important for me to keep a journal or note down points afterward that spoke to my feelings about the process. I realised that I would become particularly irritated with lighter-skinned women who would assume that I identified with them and their statements by using statements like 'you know what it's like' or 'women like us'; it was clear that in my appearance they saw a likeness to and assumed I shared similar if not the same sentiments about light skin-complexion.

Various power dynamics were at play during the interview process, especially during rapport building; namely:

I am at a higher level of education, meaning that I may be perceived as somewhat of an 'expert'. As a Master's student, the majority of the cohort comprised of undergraduate students, and prior to the interview, it appeared that participants were nervous and uncomfortable in the space. I was cognisant that it may be due to the education gap. However, I felt it may benefit the process of building rapport as well as the interview process if I held a brief conversation prior to starting the recording, asking about general things surrounding university student life. 2) I have a very eloquent English-speaking accent; from the type of education, I have been exposed to. Many of my participants had accents that made it clear that English was not their first language and it appeared that to some degree they felt I would not understand them. I became perplexed when one of my participants initially narrated their story in her vernacular and then quickly switched to English. I wondered if she was truly expressing her narrative the way she might have if she were to speak in her language and what might be lost in the interview now that she had not. In hindsight, it would have benefited her and the research more if I had held the interview in her language because often that which is expressed in English does not translate into the same vigour as is expressed in the vernacular tongue. 3) I had lighter-skin than even the lightest participant. This seemed awkward because to lighter-skinned women, I was 'just like them' whereas to darker-skinned women, the implication was that I did not and would not understand their experience, and

would appear to defend their stories more so than lighter-skinned women. Implying that they are not unsure about their darker complexion but that they are made to feel like they should be through the way others comment on their choice of fashion or make-up.

Accessing participants was a fairly easy process, however, I was cognisant that some may have taken a liking to my research for various reasons. I was cognisant of the fact that first-year students are awarded a certain amount of academic credits should they participate in a number of research studies. This may have influenced participant response initially, at the same time participants were very specific about what research they liked and wanted to be part of. I was able to introduce students to my research by placing posters near residencies and handing out flyers where I could to groups of women leaving their residence.

Some students felt that the research spoke to their experiences and wanted to share this in the hopes that their story would be read and published on greater platforms and so were genuinely interested in taking part. All interviews were held on main campus for the convenience of those living in. Participants would communicate their availability to me via email and schedule a time that did not clash with their class timetables. The venue was held in the Emthonjeni Centre, which for students seemed convenient because they would be able to walk a short distance from class to the building. This process was quite flexible to the needs of the student and seldom disrupted their routine.

It was a peculiar thing when I received a multitude of responses from black male students wanting to be part of my study. There was something to be said about this. Black males are often overlooked when it pertains to topics regarding skin-complexion and my assumption is that they would not be as interested or easily accessible as females. In hindsight, it would have been beneficial to interview black males as well, in order to gain a richer interpretation of identity formation for this cohort of individuals and part of me sorely regrets not doing this.

During the interview process, I made use of a complexion scale (see Appendix E). When asking participants to choose a complexion that they identify with, there appeared to be a few issues with the scale. There is a lack of representation for darker complexions, therefore, I found that participants who may feel that they are darker in complexion, had difficulty choosing a shade; they picked what was relatively close but not quite right, which I realised may have been another form of othering. The facial features that represent each complexion resemble that of a Caucasian woman, shaded in different tones, which speaks to the normative concepts of beauty i.e. 'sharp nose, small lips. I had not noticed this until well after my fourth participant interview and did not think that it would be ethical to change the scale as it may have skewed the results of the process. Lastly, words such as "normal", "native" and "exotic" are a few of

the identifying titles for some of the complexions which I felt have very specific, possibly negative connotations.

The use of reflexivity was helpful during the research process because it encouraged me to be aware and cognisant of my own ideas and thoughts surrounding complexion. Furthermore, I was encouraged to continue to have an awareness of self and the feelings that influence my thinking through each interview. I gained insight into my own perceptions of complexions and at times felt a sense of catharsis through journaling and noting down various feelings and thoughts. On the whole, although difficult, the process of reflection was necessary.

Future considerations

In hindsight, it may have been useful to further explore this topic from the perspective and narratives of male students. Due to research that makes reference to issues of colour and complexion for both male and female genders; particularly in the dating space, there is a possibility that gender may have played a more important role in different contexts and spaces than issues of skin complexion. Valuable information may have been neglected or lost in this instance and it is, therefore, crucial for future research to account for both sides and to consider the intersectionality that occurs through the process of male and female identity negotiations.

It may have been useful to conduct focus group discussions, one group with a diverse group of black women and another with black men with skin-complexions ranging from dark to fair, or to conduct a focus group with both genders. Discussions around skin-complexion and identity may have then yielded different results.

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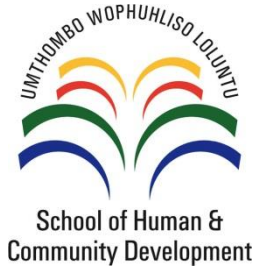
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Appendices

Appendix A: Free Association Narrative interview Schedule (provisional schedule)



Psychology

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Free Association Narrative Interview schedule for Black South African females negotiating identity and space through skin-tone registers.

Observations and background information

- Age
- Length of stay in Res and Braamfontein
- Skin-tone classification (identification)

Interview:

1. How do you feel about your skin-complexion?
2. Do you think that your complexion influences how people treat you? In what ways?
3. How do you think young black women who have different skin-complexions, treat one another?
4. How do you think that being a black South African woman with your particular skin-complexion influences how people view you? Can you think of an example?
5. What do you think are some of the stereotypes others have of you because of your skin-complexion?
6. Tell me about a time where you felt that you were treated differently because of the complexion of your skin? (positive or negative) _narrative experiences.
7. Could you share some of the experiences you have had where skin-tone/complexion was an issue?
8. In which contexts is your skin complexion important for you?

Thank participants for their time.



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Appendix B: Participant information sheet

Dear potential participant

Good day, my name is Siyanda Msibi and I am currently completing my Master's Degree in Community-Based Counselling Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my Masters research, I am interested in exploring Black African women's negotiation of their identity and space in the city of Braamfontein, as a result of their skin-complexion and how this manifest into the social spaces they engage in. Although racial identity has been extensively investigated in several contexts, very little is known about how different experiences of skin-tone/complexion influence the manners in which identity is constructed and women negotiate various spaces within the South African context. Within the Black African community, various women occupy different positions of hierarchy socially and culturally and are stereotyped accordingly. This study aims to explore your narrative experiences of skin-tone registers as an individual living in the city space and identity formation in relation to the complexions of other women. Please take note that no personal information is required for this study, nor will your identity (name) be exposed, therefore confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained. Your participation is voluntary and should you wish to be a part of this study a consent form will be provided on the day of interviewing. A suitable time and venue will be arranged with you as soon as I receive your communication on agreement of participation. There are no risks or benefits associated with participation in this study. However, should you feel uncomfortable at any stage of the interview; you are free to withdraw at any time. Participation in the study will involve questions on your experiences of the city as a woman with a particular skin-tone/complexion register. The interview should take approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes to complete. I would greatly appreciate your possible participation and interest in my research. If you are willing to be a part of the study, please contact myself or my supervisor using the detail below. After participation, if you would like to access the findings, you can contact me or my supervisor using the details provided below. Please take note that the transcribed data for this study will be kept in a safe place where only myself and my supervisor will have access to. Once your responses are analysed and interpreted for this study, data will be kept for a period of three-five years and thereafter destroyed. If participating in this study leaves you distressed or traumatised, there are free off-charge counselling services at the Career and Counselling Development Unit (CCDU), and the Emthonjeni Community Psychology Clinic. Details below:

CCDU

011 717 9140

Kind Regards

Siyanda Msibi

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Appendix C: Informed Consent Form for Black African women with varying skin-tone registers



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Consent Form (Interview)

I, _____, consent to being interviewed by Siyanda Msibi, for their study exploring Complexities of colour: Black women negotiating space and identity in Braamfontein through skin-tone registers. Please tick relevant boxes. I understand that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary. ☐
- I may refrain from answering any questions. ☐
- I may withdraw my participation and/or my responses from the study at any time before the research report is examined. ☐
- There are no risks or benefits associated with participation in this study. ☐
- All information provided will remain confidential, although I may be quoted in the research report. ☐
- If I am quoted, a pseudonym (Participant A, Respondent B etc.) will be used. ☐
- None of my identifiable information will be included in the research report. ☐
- I am aware that the results of the study will be communicated in the form of a research report or journal articles. ☐
- The research may also be presented at a local/international conference and published in a journal and/or book chapter. ☐

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Audio-recording device consent Form for African Black women with varying skin-tone registers



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Consent Form (Recording)

I, _____ give my consent for my interview with
Siyanda Msibi, to be audio recorded for their study. Please tick the relevant boxes. I
understand that:

- The audio-recordings and transcripts will not be seen or heard by anyone other than the
researchers and/or their research assistants. ☐

- The audio-recordings and transcripts will be kept in a password protected computer. ☐

- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report. ☐

- Although direct quotes from my interview may be used in the research report, I will be referred
to by a pseudonym. ☐

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Table of participants

Name of participant	Age	Place of residence	Length of residency	Skin-complexion classification
A	18	Sunnyside Hall	Not specified	Medium
B	18	Rennie House	Seven months	Medium
C	18	Braamfontein Centre	Seven months	Light
D	18	Sunnyside Hall	Eight months	Medium
E	19	Wits Junction	2 years	Medium
F	23	Noswall Hall	Not specified	Light
G	32	Noswal Hall	Nine months	Dark
H	20	Reith Hall	Three years	Dark
I	19	Sunnyside Hall	Not specified	Dark

Participant themes

Participant A

- Continuous battle between self and societies perception of skin-complexion
- Does not perceive complexion as dark as society does
- At time conflicted about black identity
- Refutes societies perception of self and beauty
- Dating hierarchy and preference
- Parental influence positive affirmation of complexion promoted confidence to enter various spaces irrespective of men and societal perception of her skin
- Dark/Black beauty statements minimise identity (only considered beautiful if features are similar to Caucasian)
- Exception to the “dark is ugly” rule
- Implicit passive aggressive behaviour among females of different complexions (Othering of darker complexions)
- Darker-skinned females perceive self as “woke” and possessing greater intellect than lighter-skinned females because they don’t have to use their physical appearance to access spaces.
- Taken more seriously by society/other black women = perceived as more intelligent
- Light-skinned females viewed as easier to approach due to perceived levels of attractiveness/beauty and less intellectual
- Feels confident in darker-complexion because she is an intellectual and “woke” = appreciated for her intelligence unlike light-skinned females

Participant B

- Positive perception of skin-complexion
- Clothes and colour are suited to her complexion and experiences the best of both worlds
- Able to access different spaces depending on association of social group.
- Experiences different kinds of treatment by men specifically because she is neither too light or too dark in complexion.
- Observed that females are “cut-throat” based on the suitedness of clothing and colour schemes.
- Exception to the rule of females originating from Limpopo because the perception is that black Limpopo women are always dark in complexion and she is lighter.
- Happy medium = experiences less discrimination for her complexion
- Other female interaction with social group are positively experienced.
- Outside of social group space females are very judgemental
- Family negative perceptions of darker complexions negatively influenced her confidence
- Complexion is important because she is the perfect complexion to be received well by others in various spaces and allows her to socialise with the “cool squad”
- Wishes she could be darker-skinned and not lighter because she fears that her blackness will be compromised = society questions her black identity.

Participant C

- Complexion was never an issue until high school she became aware of her differences.
- Frustrated with complexion and feels she needs to work harder to disprove societal stereotypes of light-skinned women.
- Feels stereotypes are imposed on her
- People only associate themselves with her because she is light-skinned.
- Considers self as black by race and not by complexion as society does.
- Feels society has high expectations of her, to be beautiful always which is not congruent with her identity.
- Perceptions that light-skinned females are rude and mean, thus treated as such and is non-approachable.
- Received positive affirmation from family about skin-complexion, thus confident in skin.
- Darker-skinned females belittle her as a light-skinned female based on stereotypes.
- Observed darker-skinned females being treated negatively by society
- Feels that this is taken out on lighter-skinned females = resentment from other females for being light-skinned.
- False perceptions of her skin-complexion caused othering
- Females invalidate one another in the workspace = to gain competitive edge
- Feels compared to, judged and criticised by darker-skinned females.
- Sometimes feels she experiences privilege and opportunities because of light-complexion.
- Work space she is viewed positively but in social spaces is perceived negatively.
- Treated by men as trophy goal.
- Judged for dating darker men because she is expected to aim higher in hierarchy (lighter-skinned men)
- Assumed to be a Gold Digger and Narcissist

Participant D

- Perceives self as second best in comparison to lighter-skinned counterparts
- Feels she is in the middle of the hierarchy but second best to lighter skinned women. However, is able to navigate social spaces easier than darker-skinned females because she is not considered “ugly”.
- Not as influenced by societies discrimination of dark-skin because she falls in the middle.
- Does not feel pressure to conform to societal standards of beauty or attractiveness.
- In social spaces she at times feels the need to negotiate space among lighter-skinned females, however the opposite is true when surrounded by black females darker than herself = easier to navigate space.
- Finds relief for skin-complexion because her experiences of discrimination by other females are not as severe as they are for her darker-skinned female counterparts.

Participant E

- Perception of self (positive)
- Cosmetics and media influence
- Respect for colourism
- Othering of skin-complexions
- Intellect versus beauty
- Perceptions of the strong black women
- The dating space and other men

Participant F

- Family relations influence confidence in skin-complexion
- Weather conditions affects complexion of skin and changed experiences with society
- Fashion: clothes and colour for skin-complexion deems suitable for her complexion
- Job opportunities and experience
- Educating people on colourism is important for her complexion
- Receive unwanted and positive male attention because of complexion
- Not relating to other light-skinned females
- Implicit experience of treatment
- Self-esteems influencing perception of complexion
- Skin-complexion is used as a commodity rather than viewed as individual identity. i.e. film industry.

Participant G

- Maturity influencing identity and perception of complexion
- “Second class citizen” in comparison to other complexions
- Family perceptions of complexion influencing identity
- Varying degrees of colour in family
- Sibling comparisons of complexion
- Observation of other black females’ negative experiences with complexion influencing space negotiation
- The missing middle
- Disrespected based on darker complexion
- Feeling lesser than light-skinned counterparts
- Not part of IT group
- Society determines worth of skin-complexion
- Skin-complexion not dominating theme among females
- Difficult to date because of complexion

Participant H

- Passive aggressive from others
- Implicit responses to her
- Black beauty minimises identity
- Skin is important
- Clothes and colour for skin-complexion (what is deemed suited for complexion)
- Lighting in photographs influence complexion “weather ‘sunset’
- Maturity influencing perception of complexion
- False perfections of the angry black woman and intimidation based on dark complexions
- Dating is difficult
- Family perception and feedback influences identity

Participant I

- Strong personality matter (assertive)
- At times feels she needs to overcompensate
- Intellect as cultural capital is important for social mobility
- Able to access most spaces easily, but prefers to associate with intellectuals in the arts field
- Identity is based on creativity not skin-complexion
- Feels advantaged because of dark-skin, and extroverted versus introversion
- The exception to the 'dark and ugly' rule
- Others attempt to make sense of her beauty through affirmations and compliments
- Females comparisons and competitiveness of complexion
- Views university space as liberal and social space to explore identity in a positive light
- Home and culture are rigid in its perception of complexion
- Dark-skin complexion used as trendy and fetish for commercialisation of cosmetic products
- Media provides platform for dark-skinned women to express, explore and feel comfortable in own skin
- Viewed as approachable and nice in comparison to light-skinned female counterparts
- Dating is difficult = treated as stepping stone for males to access and meet lighter friends.