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Black women's discourses about their representation in popular media

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This report is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Social and Psychological Research in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

MASPR/18/006/IH

September 2020

Declaration

I declare that:

Black women's discourses about their representation in popular media

is of my own, unaided work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated by means of complete references. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts in the field of Social and Psychological Research at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.



18 September 2020

Kholofelo Nyamah Date

Dedication

Samuel and Nomalady Nyamah

Acknowledgements

To my heavenly Father, thank you for all that I am and for equipping me with all that I needed to cross this finish line. You are truly the God who comes through. Glory be to God.

To my mother Nomalady, without which none of this would've been possible, thank you for supporting me financially and emotionally through my later years as a student. Your unfailing love has kept me going, I hope to have made you proud.

To my dad Samuel, thank you for your encouragement every step of the way and for wanting to help me with the write-up even though you have no knowledge of this subject matter. You have always believed in me and that alone has helped me complete this journey more than you know.

To my brother Montsho, thank you for listening to my every complaint, disappointment and progressive report. Thank you for also pushing me to do better every time I took one step back. Look at us now, all those steps forward have finally led us here, we made it!

To Kwanele, you have helped me out with this report in more ways than one, thank you for reminding me when things got hard or uncertain that 'it be like that sometimes.'

To Vuyo, Zodwa and Nokhetho, thank you for your encouraging words, suggestions, advice, lending me your ears and being my "me too". Your enthusiasm for this report revived me in the times I had lost mine.

To the rest of my family and friends who have been rooting for me since day one, thank you. Your love does not go unnoticed.

To my favourite person, David, you have been such an integral part of the completion of this report and I am so blessed to have met you. Thank you for your prayers, input, support, for keeping me going and redirecting me when I had lost my way.

To my supervisor Prof. Garth Stevens, thank you for taking an interest in my idea when it was just a seed. Your insight and expertise as well as your support, patience and encouragement have been paramount to this report. It has been a pleasure learning from you.

To my participants whose contribution to this study have been invaluable, thank you for your time.

Many thanks to you all. May the good Lord bless you abundantly.

Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the discourses embedded in the talk of Black women about their representation in popular magazines. Representations of women have been disproportionately adverse in their accounts of Black women throughout history. However, alongside these representations, pockets of counter-normative representations also always existed. Post-apartheid South Africa has seen a rapid development and advancement of Black women. This advancement has contributed to greater counter-normative representations that contest the aforementioned ones. The duality of representations that demonstrate both positive and negative constructions of Blackness and women, demonstrate the fluidity of Black gendered subjectivities. Though Black women's representations have shifted significantly, the underlying pervasiveness of their adverse representations remain. So far, however, there has been minimal discussion or account of how Black South African women receive these images. The participants comprised of 17 Black women who were either in second, third or Honours year between the ages of 18-26 studying towards a degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. Four focus groups were conducted to capture their accounts and the embedded discourses. Parker's Discourse analysis was used to extrapolate the meanings that arose from the discourses present in talk. The findings demonstrate that the participants both reproduced normative constructions of Black women that essentialised Black femininity in addition to producing counter-normative constructions that offered a number of alternate subjectivities available to Black women. The findings of this study have implications for uncovering how Black women contest and reproduce these representations, revealing different ways in which Black women experience themselves as being both raced and gendered in contemporary South Africa.

Key words: Black women, discourse, representation, identity, body, mind, popular media, decolonial theory, intersectionality, habitus, South Africa

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Chapter 1: Background, Rationale and Aims

1.1 Background

A large body of literature has investigated the construct of race globally, that works to either advance or oppress certain groups of individuals across time and context, based primarily on physiognomic features. Of importance to this study, is the representation of Black communities – where historically Europeans were interested in the body of Africans and frequently characterised them as 'beasts' (Barthelemy, 1999), 'dark strangers' (Waters, 1997) or less than human, justifying practices such as slavery (Frazier, 1957). Historically, Blackness has been synonymous with inferiority, 'Otherness' or strangeness (Barthelemy, 1999). Alongside these normative constructions was the pro-Black movements which occurred in various parts of the world. The pro-Black movement's goal was towards the freedom of Black people and anti-racism (Slate, 2012). In the United States of America (USA), these movements included the anti-slavery movement, Pan-Africanism (Slate, 2012), the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s (Gordon, 2000) and one of the most well-known Black power organisations the Black Panthers in the 1970s (Slate, 2012). Slate (2012) further states that, in South Africa, anti-colonial movements such as the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), were in parallel with other movements happening in other parts of the globe.

Apartheid and its lens through which Black people were viewed reinforced a poor self-image on the oppressed (Gqola, 2001b). In response to this, pro-Black movements served to rewrite and/or redefine these, emphasising positive images of Blackness (Gqola, 2001b). As such, these movements generated new ways of describing what it means to be Black. This implication is notably not unique to the South African context. In recent years, the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement in the USA (Rickford, 2016) further creates a counter narrative of Blackness, one that transcends the body of the African with its references to inferiority, illustrating the mental capabilities of the Black community and the political will to advocate for change and social justice. The duality of representations that demonstrate positive and negative constructions on Blackness and the Black community, demonstrate the fluidity of Black subjectivities.

Consequently, South Africa's history is wrought with inequality due to the apartheid regime and is thus a prime example of the implications of racial hierarchy. During apartheid, psychologists positioned the intellect of the Black population as inferior to that of the White population (Laher & Cockroft, 2013). Laher and Cockroft (2013) further state that this positioning thus legitimised the apartheid system. These dominant discourses of inferiority have very imminent ideological

implications for Black people and remnants of these implications still function today. The Black community experiences disproportionately higher levels of poverty (Iqani & Kenny, 2015) post-apartheid. As a consequence, we see that "[r]ace remains a factor in shaping economic inequality, social division and exclusion among South Africans" (Erasmus, 2005, p. 15). However, more Black individuals are joining the middle class – often negatively referred to as 'coconuts[1]' or 'clever blacks' (Kitis, Milani & Levon, 2018) as if improving one's socio-economic standing in life can be equated with a drive towards Whiteness. The commonality of these international and local racial discourses "is that each still views Black people as a 'problem people'" (West, 2017, p. 263). Consequently, this study is concerned with the manner in which Blackness[2] is discussed in relation to its representation by exploring the discursive devices used that work to align or challenge these constructions.

Similarly, gender as a social construct has stimulated much debate in the literature. This study focuses on the perspectives and subjectivities of women who historically have been (mis)placed in the gender hierarchy as the result of the patriarchal system. Traditional discourses positioned women as nurturers, sexual objects and passive subjects (Jerald, Ward, Moss, Thomas & Fletcher, 2017). Comparably, Nielsen (2004) conducted a study and found that the 'exposed girl' reigns supreme as the dominant bodily discourse. As such, there is a need for a study that discovers the ways in which women contest their representation.

South Africa is no different from the rest of the world in the gender debate. During apartheid, women were defined by their place in the home (Hassim, 1991). Since then, media discourse positioned women as the sexualised 'Other', passive and vulnerable (Sanger, 2008). A study

[1] "Refers to individuals who are lacking in, or confused about, their African heritage, including language" (de Coninck, 2018, p. 164).

[2] Originating from a social classification system of race during apartheid, discursively, there was not a singular way in which 'black' was used during this era. Those within its categorization were first known as Native, then Bantu, then blacks and finally African (Christopher, 2002). This is the way that these terms were used in apartheid South Africa by the state. In resistance movements such as the Black Consciousness Movement, Gqola (2001a) states that the term black became a racial and unifying signifier for the racially oppressed (encompassing Indian and Coloured races), which is contrary to the apartheid state whose labels were divisive. In post-apartheid South Africa, some of these continue to be used for employment equity purposes (Christopher, 2002). In other instances, some people reject these labels while others embrace them. Evidently, racial identification in a democratic South Africa is fluid (Gqola, 2001a). In the context of this study 'Black' as it relates to the target participants, refers to all those who would historically be classified as African in the apartheid era who today would be considered to be in some quarters Black African and are nationally South African. They are those who are the numerically dominant African population (Christopher, 2002) and thus distinguishable from other racial groups. Although this is not a homogenous view, I am holding this view in this study.

conducted by Glapka (2018) found that participants were reproducing yet resistant towards sexualised patriarchal discourses of the male gaze. Evidently, "the body appears to be a central battlefield between new subjectivities and old gender discourses both outside and inside young women today" (Nielsen, 2004, p. 21). Even though the above discourses construct a passive woman, Nielsen (2004) observes that even in the face of agency and expression of internal attributes the focus remained on the body. It should be acknowledged that our bodies are the initial and primary way in which we engage with the world but the researcher argues that attributes that transcend the body's physical presentation should be acknowledged.

Given that the trajectory of history of discourses as they pertain to the race and gender of the target participants in this study, were outlined, it is important to understand these in order to understand the intersectional discourses regarding Black women. This is due to the notion that each discourse (raced and gendered) forms a new layer onto previous discourses (Heugh, 2011) which inform the constructions, subjectivities, experiences, and livelihood of Black women today.

'Black' and 'woman' respectively have been positioned negatively and passively with bodily discourses as the main point of reference. Black women have had to negotiate both racial and gendered discourses which have mainly been to the detriment of their livelihood. The intersectionality of Black women's subject positions by virtue of these discourses have resulted in the continuance of their low level position in society. As such, Black women's constructions have been reduced to oversimplified discursive rhetoric, as a consequence of slavery (Jerald et al., 2017). Therefore, the primary focus of this study is to investigate the discourses young Black women use to explore their representations and subject positions in South Africa.

Although the pervasiveness of the mammy, jezebel and sapphire[3] constructions of Black women continue to flood public discourse, many Black women are responding in opposition to this representation (Muhammad & McArthur, 2015). Hypervisual Black women living in contexts such as Korea have expressed issues of discomfort and marginalisation (Bento, 2018). Evidently, Black women continue to carry and experience their racial and gendered history in a post-colonial society. However, in contrast, other women have used their history to their advantage by participating in a naked protest towards political change (Xaba, 2017). In this way, we see that although the Black female body receives various demeaning labels placed upon it and

[3] West (1995) characterised the mammy stereotype as a Black woman who spent long hours doing domesticated 'work', the jezebel was a promiscuous woman while the sapphire was a hostile woman notably marked by her anger.

sexualisation from the gaze, these can be taken up and used as ammunition in the fight towards social change. This in essence sees a counter-normative construction of Black women as powerful as opposed to its former construction as passive.

Racial and gender-based disparity is a marker of South African society with Black women bearing the brunt of this. In particular, the BCM (Black Consciousness Movement) was focused on a singular form of oppression that united all those oppressed while negating other forms of oppression within the Black community (Gqola, 2001b) and thus reproducing an essential notion of Blackness characteristic of colonial discourse. In its pursuit to unify the Black community it fostered and validated a certain experience of Black oppression (Gqola, 2001b) one that is masculine in orientation. As such, feminist writers and critics of that period commented on the dearth of Black women in the movement in addition to their active and equal participation (Gqola, 2001b). Gqola (2001b, p. 14) further argues that language was also used to perpetuate the masculine ideology of the BCM with the well-known phrase, "[B]lack man, you are on your own." As such, the BCM and other pro-Black movements whose leadership consisted largely of men (Gqola, 2001b), were pro-Black male movements. Although the movement attempted to provide a positive image of the Black community and Blackness, it was centred around creating a positive image of the Black male subject, thus indirectly oppressing the Black female subject. This is another justification for why it is important to focus on the intersectionality of Black and women today.

Black femininity is exoticised and hypersexualised in juxtaposition to that of normative White femininity (Sanger, 2015). Through the social mobility of Blackness and womanhood post-apartheid, "a conscious reconstruction of gender practices is now on the agenda in Southern Africa" (Connell, 2000, p. 14). Artist Nandipha Mntambo is one of the individuals working to reconstruct gender practices as she challenges and disrupts heteronormative Black feminist discourse with her pieces that reconstruct Black women in non-heteronormative discursive ways (see Sanger, 2013). These alternative discourses provide new subjectivities for Black femininity. Consequently, although essentialist constructions of women persist which negate the complexities of her identity, Black women are contesting these constructions.

It is these stratified experiences and constructions that mark the discourses of Black women today. Discourses that are to be uncovered and revealed in this study by adopting Parker's (1992) discourse analysis. In the main, the origin of these discourses reflect the phenomenon that, "members of more powerful social groups and institutions, and especially their leaders (the

elites), have more or less exclusive access to, and control over, one or more types of public discourse" (van Dijk, 2001, p. 356). As outside discourse originates from opportunistic agents who mean well (Heugh, 2011), by targeting Black women, this study aims to uncover expressions of agreement, agency, assertion and counter-normativity as post-apartheid South Africa gives rise to new forms of subjectivity and embodiment.

1.2 Rationale

Historically, the representation of Black women in the literature and popular media has been riddled with various inferior images and dismissive identities. In African American literature for instance, Black women were observed to be categorised within three dominant identities, the mammy, matriarch and welfare mother or queen (Collins, 2002). Black women were also sexually objectified and dehumanised. This is also seen in the literature on African American slave women and their continuous accounts of rape by colonisers (Collins, 2002). Additionally, the account of Saartjie Baartman, a South African woman who was reduced to that of a spectacle in Paris is indicative of this dehumanisation. Young (1997) states that this 'othering' of the Black woman is indicative of the ways in which the Black body was differentiated from its 'lighter' counterparts. This is thus indicative of how the Black body has been seen as a spectacle, an avenue that this research aims to explore further, using media as the lens through which this phenomenon will be looked into.

On the contrary, in the midst of the Black power movements which valorised a masculine form of Blackness over the feminine, some Black women solidified their participation in the freedom struggle which positioned them outside of discourses that reproduced sexist notions of their femininity (i.e. mother, wife and girlfriend) (Gqola, 2001). Women such as Albertina Sisulu, Lilian Ngoyi and Winnie Mandela provided positive representations of Black women during the freedom struggle of Apartheid (Schwartz, 1987). Across the globe, women such as Rosa Parks were at the foreground of the Civil Rights Movement (Clarke, 2000). Although their ratio in these movements paled in comparison to that of men, they demonstrated that the voice of the Black woman matters.

The fall of apartheid signalled the rise of the urban Black population (Sisk, 2017). There is now a growing middle class potential in the socio-economic sphere (Iqani & Kenny, 2015). Black South Africans have become more prominent and are at the forefront in many aspects of society namely; politics, education, the economy, governance, etc. (Kitis et al., 2018). However, although the ways in which Black people now navigate the world largely differ, Woodard and

Mastin (2005) maintain that Black women are still depicted in a stereotypical manner in mainstream media. Studies conducted demonstrate that the body is maintained as the focal point for societal engagement with Black women in the media (see Motseki & Oyedemi, 2017; Peterson, Wingood, DiClemente, Harrington & Davies, 2007; Sanger, 2015; Schooler, Ward, Merriwether, & Caruthers, 2004). Similarly, Nielsen (2004) acknowledges that there is too much fascination with the body. The literature on women has remained, in the main, disproportionately adverse in its accounts of Black women throughout the ages. Noticeably there is a need to shed light on the representation of Black women, Blackness and femininity (Pilane & Iqani, 2016) that originates from those it constructs which this study aims to do. Notably, although representational devices are an element of this study the object of inquiry in this study is the discourses embedded in the discussion of those representational devices. In light of the above focus on Black women, the researcher argues for a shift from the site of construction as this oversimplification limits the subject positions she is capable of occupying.

Post-apartheid has however seen a rapid development of Black women in society that counters this negative representation. So far, however, there has been minimal discussion or account of how Black South African women receive these images. This is because of "South Africa's particular history of privileging some voices over others…[which] has particular effects in terms of the discursive structure" (Pauw, 2009, p.135*)* that has coloured the literature on Black South African women thus far. In the effort to minimise the gap of Black female voices, several studies have investigated the identity constructions of Black women (Mophosho, 2013; Taylor, 2017) but few have done so through a discursive lens (see Kiguwa, 2014). Similarly, a number of international studies have investigated how Black women respond to their representation in popular media (Adams-Bass, Bentley-Edwards & Stevenson, 2014; Hall & Smith 2012; Muhammad & McArthur, 2015). Jerald and colleagues (2017) undertook a similar study using quantitative research. However, quantitative research lacks the ability to capture such significant subjective experiences and perspectives. All these studies found that participants rejected their representations. Despite these findings, which highlight the insidious nature of the representation of Black women, very little is known about how Black women in South Africa respond to their representation in popular media using discourse as a methodological tool. A high consumption of media is observed amongst Black youth (Jerald et al., 2017*).* As such, in light of South Africa's historical past, and racial composition, it is worthwhile to undertake such a study because of the upward shift in society that Black people and Black women more specifically, have embarked on as the present discourses may differ from both older ones and those existing internationally.

Consequently, this study serves to add to the marginal yet progressive discourses that represent and reflect those it speaks about.

Discourses are known to construct social subjects, the world around us and the mutual relationship between the two. They also work to reproduce or contest existing ways of being and beliefs in society (Parker, 1992). As a consequence, the study is interested in how the prevailing discourses come to construct Black women. This is important as discourse affects how Black women may act, behave and think about each other and about themselves as individuals. How Black women either reproduce or contest these representations is in itself discourse. Notably, discourses in this context will occur at two levels; firstly, discourses will occur in the talk of Black women about their representation. Secondly, their reflection on their representation and construction, through the use of popular media as a symbolic representation is essentially a form of discourse. As a result of these layers of discourse at play throughout this study, discourse analysis is important. Consequently, the findings of this study will provide implications aimed at uncovering how Black women contest and reproduce these representations, revealing different ways in which Black women experience themselves as being both raced and gendered in contemporary South Africa.

1.3 Research Aims

Given that discourse constructs social identities the overarching aim of this study was to explore the discourses embedded in the talk of the representation of Black women in popular media. It has been shown in the context of feminist epistemology that magazines play a pertinent role in the social constructions and processes of gender identities (Pilane & Iqani, 2016). More specifically, it is widely known that Black women engage in media (Jerald et al., 2017). As such, it is these notions that drive the use of this popular medium as a departure point for the discussions and elicitation of discourse that (re)produces subjectivities of Black women. Therefore, this study examined how Black women read and receive these representations. Because discourse allows one to discover what is going on in society, the study also aimed to identify what these discourses reflect about the ideologies surrounding Black women who exist in the broader social context of South Africa. Considering that historical discourses function to advance or supress the livelihood of certain social identities, the study attempted to examine the functions of these discourses in a South African society. In view of this, the researcher arrived at the following research questions.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the discourses embedded within the talk of Black women when discussing their representation in popular media?
2. What do these discourses reflect about the broader social context in which Black women in South Africa are located?
3. What are the functions of these discourses in maintaining and contesting the constructions of Black women?

1.5 Significance

This is an important study because it will contribute to ongoing theorising about feminism globally and more specifically, in the context of South Africa where new forms of Black feminism are competing with feminism internationally. As such, this study will enhance our understanding of Black women's bodies, minds, emotions and their contradictions. A modern way in which we engage with Black feminism may be arrived at by highlighting the one-dimensional manner in which Black women have been discussed which has real implications for how they have been and continue to be treated in society at large. In paying attention to replicated and differentiated discourses expressed in this study as Nielsen (2004) suggests, we will be able to understand the processes of cultural and social change across temporal and spatial contexts that may work to differentiate Black femininity in South Africa from the global landscape.

1.6 Chapter organisation

Chapter 2 provides a literature review on the most pertinent research relevant to this study. It comprises of a timeline of constructions of Black women throughout history. Followed by studies conducted on the constructions of their body and mind. It argues that Black women have predominantly been reduced to their physical bodies in literature while acknowledging the dearth of studies on their internal attributes intellectually and emotionally. Subsequently, theoretical resources underpinning this study are discussed, namely, Decolonial theory and its connection to representation, Intersectionality, as well as Habitus and its ties to performativity. These main resources have been supplemented with relative theories to highlight and address the intricate, nuanced complexities of Black women and their constructions and experiences. The chapter concludes with a discussion into previous studies and discourses of Black women.

Chapter 3 describes the methodological foundations of the study. It details qualitative analysis as a necessary means of engagement with the subjective and intricate constructions of Black

women. In addition, it argues for and illuminates the use of discourse analysis as a suitable analytic tool in uncovering and critically engaging with the discourses present amongst Black women and how these discourses speak to and against broader societal discourses. The chapter begins with the aims and research questions of the study. These are then followed by a discussion of the data collection process, procedure and data analysis. It is then finalised with the researcher's reflexive contributions to the study.

Chapter 4 presents and critically explores the findings of the data by eliciting the discourses that are present while discussing what they reflect about the location of Black women in the broader social context and their function in the constructions of Black women in South Africa.

Chapter 5 concludes the study with a summary of the research findings. Additionally, a brief discussion of the study's limitations as well as possibilities for future research are addressed.

Chapter 2: Literature review and Theoretical Frameworks

2.1 Historical constructions of Black women

To understand the discourses present in the talk about Black South African women we need to understand the historical mapping of how these discourses may have emerged. A considerable amount of literature has been published on Black women. Black women have been characterised and constructed differently over time. While an attempt was made to systematically map the constructions of Black women, these are in no way exhaustive of the constructions that are in existence globally.

2.1.1. Antiquity

Literature debates the positioning of Black women in African cultures, however, a significant amount agrees to the lack of sexualisation of their bodies or sexuality that characterises later periods, but rather ascribes value to the embodiment of healing and fertility (Badejo, 1996, as cited in Razak, 2016). In West Africa, the body of Black women symbolised beauty, power and sacredness (Razak, 2016). Bigger bodies and women with children were constructed as possessing female power and fertility (Badejo, 1996, as cited in Razak, 2016). In society, they were positioned at the top of the social hierarchy as 'queen-mothers', queen-sisters, princesses, chiefs and occasional warriors (Sudarkasa, 1986) in addition to goddesses, priestesses or ancestors (Razak, 2016). The manner in which they were positioned in relation to others in cave paintings (Lhote, 1959, as cited in Razak, 2016) may have indicated their status (Razak, 2016) and construction as 'great mother' (Jeffries, 1992, as cited in Razak, 2016) due to her figure painted significantly larger in contrast to those drawn around her. Evidently, mothers were held to a high respectable standard. The jewellery in which she would often times be adorned illustrated this too.

In Egypt, Black women were depicted as queens with their beauty linked to a slim waist and bigger thighs, while jewellery worn symbolised material and spiritual power (Hawass, 2009). As such, Hawass (2009) suggests that Black women held high status in Egypt too. Scholars have attempted to erase Black women from Egyptian history (Razak, 2016*)* as Drake (1991, as cited in Razak, 2016, p. 128) states "[r]ock paintings in the Sahara and pre-dynastic artefacts in Egyptian tombs reveal a keen awareness of difference in physical types, but what meanings were attached to them—aesthetic, erotic, mystical or status allocation—we have no way of knowing." However, Lhote (1959, as cited in Razak, 2016) is certain about his identification of race in these paintings pointing out that the nature of the Black body is a significant marker and was thus,

exemplified in the paintings. Is it no wonder attempts to erase Black women from such prestigious positions in societies were made, positions that were not ascribed to during colonisation. Taken together, African cultures celebrated and revered their women, positioning them as holding prominent places in society due to what Razak (2016) postulates as their social, cultural and spiritual powers.

By contrast, in Europe, Black women were regarded as the 'fantastic Other', someone who was physiologically different from the appearance of Europeans (Niebryzdowski, 2001). Seroto (2019) notes that travel journals containing descriptions of Black South African people, for the most part, were negative during the 16th and 17th century. Later during the late eighteen and nineteenth century however, Black South Africans were allegedly likened to classical characters in celebration of their difference and beauty by European writers and painters (Glenn, 2007). All things considered, Black women were previously constructed in positive, powerful positions whereas, through the gaze of Europeans, their construction for the most part was juxtaposed to their own, i.e. differentiated from themselves. In this way we see that, Black women from a non-Western lens were praised while through the Western lens, they were 'Othered'.

2.1.2. Colonialism and Apartheid

During colonialism, African American women in art were sexualised and represented as servants (Gilman, 1985). Visually, Blackness was always painted in juxtaposition to Whiteness. It was during this period that Baartman represented the essence of Black women in South Africa and many parts of the world. Domestic work also characterised the labour, construction and position in society of Black women during colonial years globally (Gaitskell, Kimble, Maconachie & Unterhalter, 1983). This construction was cited as the 'mammy' who was a docile woman tasked with taking care of White households (Taylor, 2017). Similarly, Black women during apartheid were constructed as powerless under law. However, there were pockets of resistance as they fought tirelessly to reclaim their freedom (Alpeni, 2012) during anti-racist movements (Gqola, 2001b). Although literature provides a linear narrative of Black people as oppressed we should acknowledge the counter-normative discourses of bravery that existed in the fight against inequality (Reddy, 2018). Even in the face of resistance from all women during this period, two of the most prevalent images of Black women during slavery are oppositional sexual narratives, the asexual mammy and the hypersexual jezebel (Roberts, 2010; Taylor, 2017). Accordingly, Black women possessed no legal authority or autonomy over their existence in the world (Smith, 1983) or their narratives. Irrespective of the fact that these constructions are polar opposites, they both share the role of servitude to the White population which defined their lives in society.

2.1.3. Contemporary

In contemporary film, Jerald and colleagues (2017) note the limited representation of African American women, as passive, nurturing and sexual objects. In contrast, in post-apartheid South Africa, Black women are often constructed as educated, urbanised and belonging to the middle class. However, Black women in sport, such as Caster Semenya, are depicted as masculine (Miller, 2015), a juxtaposition to the aforementioned characterisations. Apart from moments of non-normative representations mentioned above, Black women have however predominantly been in service of the needs, or entertainment to, their European counterparts – thus demonstrating the inferior position they held in society. This inferior position is prevalent in Zimbabwe as Black women, post-colonisation still bear the brunt of control as they are represented as uncultured and in need of governance in terms of their attire by men (Settler & Engh, 2015).

Artists like Betye Saar and Murry DePillars have contested the normative images of the mammy and have (re)presented her as "resistant" against the docile narrative in terms of which she has been constructed (Jackson, 2010). This action provides counter narratives to the ones created about Black women by others. Jackson (2010, p. 45) notes that "often the narratives that get told about Black women are exclusive of our memory and experiences." Consequently, this highlights the need for alternate constructions of Black women that are more inclusive, varied and non-linear regarding their subjectivity, embodiment and place in society. Additionally, what is needed is a speaking back to problematic identities and constructions of gendered Blackness in addition to the power relations that make it possible for such constructions to be (re)produced. Although normative constructions seem to seep through periods of time, Black women continue to challenge these constructions by writing their own narratives and presenting alternate subjectivity.

2.1.4. Recent years

In recent years, Black women are portrayed as prone to crises, unmarried, gold diggers, problematic characters and suffering due to interpersonal ills resulting from a man (i.e. physical, verbal and emotional abuse, infidelity and sexual assault) (Tounsel, 2015). Notably, these media constructions limit possibilities of alternate ways of reading, understanding, knowing (Tounsel, 2015) and relating to Black women.

While the mammy caters to White families 'the strong Black woman' caters to her Black family and community (Nelson, Cardemil & Adeoye, 2016). This discourse offers a counter to the

normative and oppressive construction of the mammy but has been argued as equally problematic (Nelson et al., 2016). Woman rappers and singers who have been deemed as equally problematic use their music to communicate their autonomy and sexuality (on their terms) (Taylor, 2017). Because Black women are seen occupying multiple professions that were previously reserved for White individuals, this is a testament to the progress and freedoms, they now enjoy in society without law guiding the way in which they conduct themselves and the occupations they select.

The New South African Woman (NSAW) representation arose in line with the upward social mobility of the Black population (Gqola, 2016), thus making it possible to imagine and construct new identities and subjectivities. As a result, the NSAW is agentic, hard-working, career orientated, heterosexually coupled, aesthetically pleasing and sophisticated with her construction produced and perpetuated by multiple forms of media (Gqola, 2016). Gqola (2016, p. 122) characterises her as "existing in an ambivalent relationship to historical [both colonial and apartheid] femininities: simultaneously challenging and re-inscribing them." This representation although seemingly positive and multidimensional in comparison to the former historical constructions, remains contentious as she continues to be objectified and subject to a man. Black women have more agency as they now willingly participate in the normative representations in popular mediums (Morgan, 1999) and/or choose to challenge them. Even though they are seen to perpetuate these problematic constructions they do so on their own terms (Taylor, 2017).

Subsequently, current images of Black women are embedded in beliefs about Black females that appeared centuries ago (Collins, 2002). As such, this indicates the pervasive ideologies that traversed through time to present themselves today. Shaw (1990, as cited in Jackson, 2010) points out that Black people themselves are vehicles and complicit in the perpetuation of the diminishing narratives and discourses that circulate society. For example, Tyler Perry, a well-known black movie director, is known for perpetuating these constructions in his films (Tounsel, 2015). Evidently, the construction of Black women across time indicates a fluidity in representation where Black women occupied both positive and negative representations. In recent years however, more Black women both internationally and locally have made considerable strides to cultivate the depth of their identity (Kitis et al., 2018), but the underlying pervasiveness of their physical appearance and how it is received by the Western world remains. It is for this reason that this study aims to explore the ways in which South African women use discursive practices to understand how our society is shaped by and through these representations.

2.2 Constructions of the body

2.2.1. The body

There has been a tendency to rely on particular kinds of Black feminist writers in feminist research. A fair amount of work on Black feminism has come from North America, the Caribbean and parts of Europe. By and large, Black feminist work has come from North America. Although there is a universal brand of Black feminism which looks at the ways Black women challenge and manage various oppressions (Norwood, 2013), Black women are not monolithic (Mupotsa, 2010). This is based on the grounds of diversity due to social identities including class, geographical, cultural and national location. As such, this study serves as a means through which we see that differences in social contexts shape and influence the ways in which elements of Black feminism manifest themselves uniquely in a social context like South Africa.

One of the focal points of Black women that results in debate, objectification and misogyny is the body (Taylor, 2017). Claims about the body by Western society include beauty, ugliness and sexuality (Erasmus, 2000). Feminist scholars characterise 'the gaze' as experienced in relations of power between the oppressed at the hands of the oppressor (Taylor, 2017) i.e. slavery and patriarchy. Baartman's dehumanising narrative serves as an exemplar of 'the gaze' and demonstrates how policing, treatment and perceptions of Black women are linked to the appearance of their bodies (Miller-Young, 2014). Because of this, we see that "the gaze" determines ideologies, and by extension, how others are treated. Consequently, it explains the treatment of Black women's bodies in American media (Miller-Young, 2014), global media as well as everyday lived experiences, e.g. femicide. It is clear that the appearance of Black women works to "produce discourses that reflect the ways in which women's physical bodies operate as sites of oppression…where they seem to have little agency in presenting themselves differently" (Sanger, 2015, p. 6), even though considerable strides have been taken towards this (see Gallego, 2016).

Previous studies found that the contemporary ideals of Black women in the media tend to influence the minds of young Black women (Jerald et al., 2017; Peterson et al., 2007). A recent study by Motseki and Oyedemi (2017) found that South African celebrities perpetuate the dominant ideals of beauty in society, through having a slimmer body, lighter skin and wearing weaves. Adherence to these ideals was shown to affect the mindset of the authors' adolescent Black sample. This demonstrates that dominant constructions of Black women reflected in media may align (or dis-align) with self-constructions of many young, Black women. Similarly,

Littlefield (2008) observes that African American women's self-perceptions are significantly impacted by the dominant imagery of Black women in the media.

In contrast, studies conducted by Puoane and colleagues (2005) and Okop, Mukumbang, Mathole, Levitt and Puoane (2016) exploring the perceptions of body image amongst obese middle-aged women, found that a fuller figure was associated with positive attributes such as confidence, beauty, dignity, respect, wealth and strength. This finding opposes the ideal body image of Black women in mainstream media and demonstrates that dominant constructions of Black women can be contested. This difference may arguably be caused by age. West (1995) asserts that power, prosperity and attractiveness are associated with thinness in the media. However, as evidenced, normative ideals of the Black body do not neatly align across generations, culture or contexts.

Even within sports media, a space where celebratory discourses dominate the different ways in which Black women are accomplishing feats, "[t]acky and inappropriately sexual" was media's response to tennis player Serena Williams' tight-fitting catsuit during her tennis match at the 2002 US Open (Schultz, 2005) marking her body's construction as deviant (Thomson, 1997). In contrast, Anne White, a White woman who wore a similar catsuit in 1985 in the Wimbledon tournament received positive commentary from the public such as, "it's attractive" (Nittle, 2018). Similarly, Caster Semenya a highly publicised 800m South African track and field Olympian also faced scrutiny from the media (both locally and internationally), society at large and the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) board due to her muscular physique. Many have expressed outrage due to Semenya being allowed to compete and proceed to win athletic games but, according to tweets by disgruntled South Africans, question why the same controversy had not followed the likes of Jarmila Kratochvílová, who is the current 800m world record holder (Citizen Reporter, 2018). Evidently, "[i]t seems that the better a [B]lack female athlete is, the more likely it is that society will question her gender" (van der Klashorst & Safarikova, 2018 p. 652) or the appropriateness of her outfits. This phenomenon underscores the pervasiveness of Black women's bodies as problematic and sexualised and as Schultz (2005) points out, located within racialised discourse. Furthermore, this is indicative of White bodies which have been adorned with beauty while Black bodies are marred with ugliness (Erasmus, 2000). It is notable to mention however that questions were raised regarding Jarmila Kratochvílová's appearance (McClelland, 2011, as cited in Weiser & Weiser, 2016). However, these questions did not result in the testing and suppression of her natural hormones as it did Semenya. This does however raise awareness of the phenomenon that falling outside of societal

norms of femininity results in suspicion and disbelief. As such, although some Black women are accepting of their bodies even when they fall outside of the acceptable body type (White femininity), the media continues to present images that work against counter-normative notions of what the Black body should look like and how it is to be received.

Society and sociocultural practices that govern our relationships are largely skewed to a particular set of identities. The work of Mupotsa (2010) cautions against knowledge production that negates a large group of people. As such, Mupotsa (2010) provides a critique of heteronormativity because it normalises ideologies of gender, sexuality and their expressions interpersonally. Therefore, it is important to highlight the pervasiveness of heteronormativity as "[f]eminist spaces in particular, [which are]…sites of struggle, intended to be sites of safety, instead conjure isolation amongst sisters" (Mupotsa, 2013, p. 118). Because this study seeks to go beyond normative representations of the body it is, important to consider these non-heteronormative sexualities that also exists alongside other forms of Blackness.

Mupotsa's (2010) critique rests on the notion that normalised and adequate citizenship in a nation rests upon, and is shaped by one's conformity to heteronormative practises of society, i.e. within romantic relationships and familial relationships. However, by doing so, she argues that this normalised presentation of gender neglects a large part of the population who do not subscribe to these notions and/or sit outside of predetermined practices of sexuality. For example, because Black women such as Semenya, are constructed in masculine ways (Miller, 2015), we understand the surveillance and 'othering' of Black women's bodies, gender and sexuality in this way because they are viewed through this heteronormative and essentialist lens which assumes a monolithic presentation of gender and sexuality. By virtue of the existence of women like Semenya and many others, we know this to be a fallacy. However, through the normalised and aspirational display of heteronormative relations by dominant societal institutions, we see how power relations and the way in which gender, sexuality and the body stem from patriarchal ideology (Mupotsa, 2010). The concentration of the body as the point of departure for the discussion of the representation of Black women is not to retell and perpetuate the unjust, oppressive ways in which Black women have been discussed, studied and experienced. This study on the other hand, seeks to critique, uncover and perhaps shed light on ways in which other avenues of representation of Black women have been neglected (that goes beyond the obvious externalities).

2.2.2. The hair

Hair in the Black community is a very provocative and important subject (Erasmus, 1997). Some scholars believe that the experience of Black women in South Africa is unique whereas others believe their counterparts globally share in the complexities of Black hair. One thing is for certain, the texture of Black hair affords one the unique ability to craft and mould the hair into different styles (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014) such as braids, perms, dreadlocks or relaxed (chemically treated) hair (Erasmus, 1997). Descriptions of hair types as 'good' and 'bad' stemmed from the pencil test under the Population Registration Act of 1950, during the apartheid government which resulted in the classification of races by the hair (Madlela, 2018); if the pencil was caught in the hair the individual was classified as Black due to the coarse texture.

Consequently, the manner in which a Black woman wears her hair is believed to reflect cultural and political issues as women who wear their hair straight i.e. closer to White standards are viewed as privileged (Banks, 2000) while others who wear their hair natural (i.e. not chemically treated) are viewed as underprivileged. Subsequently, the identity of the Black woman is unambiguously linked to the relationship with her hair (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014) in addition to gender, race, and culture (Madlela, 2018). Evidently, colonialism has left lasting effects on their ideals of beauty as 'good' hair is seen as straight, whereas 'bad' hair is kinky (Erasmus, 1997).

In line with the literature, Motseki and Oyedemi (2017) found amongst their adolescent sample that weaves were considered a marker of beauty, unlike natural hair which was found to be a nuisance to maintain. Similarly, Madlela (2018) conducted a two-part study, which initially investigated the ways in which Black hair is viewed in advertisements about hair relaxers and then explored the perceptions of Black women in reference to these advertisements. Although the framing of natural hair (i.e. difficult to manage, dull, ugly and displaying Black pride) and relaxed hair (epitome of beauty) differed, Black women justified hair relaxing as a maintenance practice and not an ideal of Whiteness and/or privilege. Additionally, Majali, Coetzee and Rau (2017) conducted a narrative study on African hair and found that 'good' hair and 'bad' hair do not reflect the known descriptions in the literature but is rather attributed to strong or weak hair within the Black community. Although they move between Western and African styles of hair, it is characterised by personal choice rather than a desire to attain Whiteness. Furthermore, a study in Kenya found that Black women relaxed their hair to make it easy to style, more manageable and consequently save time (Etemesi, 2007). Seemingly, Black women relax their hair for various reasons with all contesting the dominant narrative that relaxed hair is a pursuit of

privilege. Also, the literary constructions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ hair do not apply in the everyday lives of Black women today as they did in years past.

The natural hair movement has emerged as a response to European standards of beauty (Erasmus, 1997) towards self-acceptance and the maintenance of hair **(**Johnson & Bankhead, 2014). In a study conducted by King and Niabaly (2013) Black women with natural hair insightfully expressed that those who relax their hair do so under the misconception that relaxed hair is easier to maintain than natural hair. It could be argued that the inability to manage natural hair was caused by never learning how to care for it in the first place as most Black women were born into a home that relaxed and modified the natural hair from childhood, as they learnt from their mothers. Black women did not learn what hair products to use that made the hair more manageable and easier to style. This knowledge only came after, with the natural hair movement. Contrary to popular belief, natural hair can be just as easy to maintain, depending on how you style it as some styles can be kept for several days at a time. It is noteworthy to mention that those who chose to go natural in King and Niabaly’s, (2013) study, say that they did so as a personal choice rather than as a political statement as discourses surrounding natural hair include ‘outspoken’ and ‘Afrocentric.’ As such, this illustrates how spatiotemporal circumstances influence our choices.

During this era of freedom and acceptance of hair types that were not previously embraced, famous Jazz musician Hugh Masekela refused to be photographed with Black women who did not have natural hair (Madlela, 2018). Hair in the African community during antiquity was a symbol of status and religion (Byrd & Tharps, 2014) thus indicating its significance. Therefore, it is not surprising that Masekela felt so strongly against women with relaxed hair as African hair was celebrated. King and Niabaly (2013, p. 6) assert that “[d]ue to the context of oppression in which it was created and promoted, it is understandable to view hair relaxers as alienating [B]lack women. However, relaxers have evolved to be part of [B]lack culture and do not necessarily equal self-hatred anymore.” Therefore, it is important that we do not participate in alienating Black women based on their hair choices as this contributes to their continued oppression within the Black community. Instead, Black women should rather embrace, accept and celebrate the diverse ways in which women celebrate their Blackness because these contest the normative discourses on relaxed hair (Thompson, 2008).

Not only are Western standards of beauty and acceptance socialised but also institutionalised as King and Niabaly (2013) note that the state of hair determines whether you gain employment

and/or entry into school. Although this occurrence opposes the aforementioned call to embrace diverse expressions of hair, it points to the ways 'good' hair continue to perpetuate society. In 2016, Black school girls at the Pretoria Girls High were warned by White teachers to relax their natural hair (Ngoepe, 2016). Therefore, not only is natural hair discriminated against but policed where failure to comply was threatened with a banning of school examinations (Madlela, 2018). In response to this, the pupil and the public who shared her views protested against the schools' discriminatory demands which garnered widespread attention from the media while placing a spotlight on the discriminatory school policies (Alubafi, Ramphalile & Rankoana, 2018). This incident is not unique to South Africa but a similar incident occurred in the USA as a young girl in Florida was almost expelled due to her natural hair (Fox News, 2013). It is clear that when Black women take the opportunity to speak (as it is not freely given) they position themselves as agentic beings that provide alternative ways of being.

Hazlewood (2014) conducted a study on the internalisation of perceptions of African American women's hair in the workplace. She found that the participants believed natural hair decreased their chances of employment thus internalising negative connotations of natural hair, even though these were never expressed outwardly by employers and fellow employees. In the working environment straight hair is believed to be perceived as professional while natural as untidy (Thompson, 2009). Consequently, "[i]t is very difficult to find natural hair professional when professionalism is defined by the dominant majority in power" (Hazlewood, 2014, p. 58). These examples as well as Masekela's significant act indicate that along with the discrimination and policing of Black women's hair from others, the Black community continues to perpetuate these normative discourses on hair, even in the face of much needed non-normative discourses. It also illustrates the racialising of what is considered as professional hair. Taking this into consideration, it is no wonder Thompson (2008) advocates for an acceptance of diverse styles, especially when those that are deemed as 'bad' hair (i.e. natural hair) negatively impact the schooling environment and working opportunities of Black women.

All things considered, hair is powerful and of great importance to Black people as it determines how one may think of themselves and how others perceive and treat them (Thompson, 2009). Due to the social upliftment of the Black community as a whole, women are spoiled for choice in terms of how they want to style their hair. Hazlewood (2014) asserts that with the range of styles available to Black women they need to unlearn the former connotations of Black hair, whether relaxed or natural. Currently, choices in hairstyles are more so about freedom of expression which creates the space for alternate discourses that positively and progressively speak to the

different styles of Black hair. This enables a comprehensive representative view of the hair of Black women in all aspects of society. However, we cannot escape the fact that hair care in the Black community is a contentious subject to navigate (Madlela, 2018). This is because Black hairstyles are never synonymous with comfort and ease, whether one wears their hair naturally or straightened, race is always underlying these styles whose discourse is rooted in Western and essentialising notions of Blackness (Erasmus, 2000).

2.2.3. Colourism

A considerable amount of international literature exists on colourism (Monk, 2014), less so in the South African context. Colourism which originated from slavery (Hunter, 2002) is a system that privileges lighter pigment over dark (Keith & Herring, 1991). This distinction has permeated modern society, with Black people of lighter skin being considered beautiful, due to its proximity to Whiteness (Hunter, 2002) as the epitome of beauty. Phoenix (2014) experienced this first-hand through a Twitter search of the words 'dark girls' which brought up a fair amount of harmful comments.

In a similar way that there is a hierarchy of race when it comes to racism, there is a hierarchy of colour when it comes to colourism, with darker skinned women largely experiencing the perils of colourism in the media. For example, Lupita Nyong'o appeared shades lighter in Vanity Fair (Daily Mail, 2014) while Beyoncé also seemed to be significantly lighter (Eriksen, 2012) than her natural light shade. These images both caused controversy and magazines were criticised for their altered images. Implicitly, the messages in these images convey that light skin is desired in the media (Phoenix, 2014). Alexandra Shulman, a British Vogue editor, shares these sentiments by stating that according to research, White cover girls seem to sell better than Black cover girls (Fox, 2010). It is no wonder colourism continues in society, as media supports the ideology, leaving little room for alternate forms of beauty.

Evidently, colourism can be used to understand the lack of representation in media regarding the diversity of shades of Black women, and their misrepresentation. Zoe Saldana, a woman of Dominican and Puerto Rican descent, was cast to play Nina Simone in the biopic *Nina* (Chilton, 2013) which incorporated makeup to resemble the appearance of Nina more realistically (an Afro, prosthetic nose and darker foundation) (Bull, 2012). This led to an outcry from the public (Phoenix, 2014) as they felt she was not the most suitable candidate for the role. Not only does this example illustrate the colourist hierarchy effectively but "[t]these casting choices [also] help to perpetuate the marginalisation of women with dark skin by rendering them invisible even at

times when people with darker skin are being represented, and should, therefore, be seen" (Phoenix, 2014, p. 103). Seemingly, the colour of privilege and/ or the privilege of colour works to foreground lighter shades even when the character they portray is of a darker shade and/or ethnicity.

While colourism is embodied in the media it also exists in smaller but significant spaces. A number of studies found that lighter skinned women were more privileged and contained social capital (i.e. better spousal status, income and education) than darker skinned women (Glenn, 2008; Hunter, 2002). Another study conducted by Viglione, Hannon and DeFina (2011) found light-skinned women received lighter prison sentences than their darker skinned counterparts. Furthermore, in South Africa, a study conducted by Mbatha (2017) demonstrated that reports of colourism in line with the literature were experienced by her sample within their friendship, familial and academic contexts. It is noteworthy to mention that the participants themselves acknowledged the internalisation of colourism in terms of the partners they wanted to date or how they felt about themselves in relation to their darker siblings. Participants further expressed that they had grown out of this mindset and realised that the difference in skin shade has no bearing on who the person is. These examples illustrate that colourism exists in a range of social contexts and more significantly that we can unlearn normative ideology in favour of self-acceptance.

Conversely, in a South African study conducted by Dlova, Hamed, Tsoka-Gwegweni and Grobler (2015) a survey of hospital patients found that 33.3% said that they used skin lightening products for the purpose of brightening the skin as opposed to attaining a lighter complexion. On the contrary, Thomas (2012) suggests that the use of lighteners was to improve one's social and societal prospects as the colour of one's skin is known to impact on social and economic opportunities. This and other examples support the notion of colourism and the advantages light-skinned women appear to possess over dark-skinned women. These disadvantages and discrimination against darker skin and natural hair have resulted in self-esteem issues (hooks, 2005, as cited in Phoenix, 2014*)* which in turn drives women to bleach their skin or wear straight hair to fit in and improve one's social standing both within the Black community and the social community at large, as evidenced above.

At the extreme end of the colour spectrum within Black communities, Burke (2015) notes that those with albinism do not enjoy the advantages of a lighter pigment. Those with albinism are observed to be disadvantaged beyond that of dark-skinned individuals as they are killed for their

body parts due to misconceptions and connotations around witchcraft (Burke, 2015). Evidently, not all light shades are privileged. A more inclusive representation in popular media would help to dispel these beliefs. This is due to the occurrence that 'odd' and 'evil' are often dominant descriptions in the media discourses that surround albinos (Burke, 2015).

More recently, darker shades and more generally, Black women of all shades have become more represented in the media, illustrating the many shades of beauty that Black women embody, as seen in music videos, movies, series and beauty pageants with examples from Zozibini Tunzi (Miss Universe 2019 from South Africa). Her renowned speech given during the Q&A session displays how Black women are contesting and tearing down the walls of colourist ideology by stating, "I grew up in a world where a woman who looks like me, with my kind of skin and my kind of hair, was never considered to be beautiful. And I think that it's time that that stops today" (Bhengu, 2019). Colourism illustrates how the appearance of Black women is disproportionately scrutinised (hooks, 2005, as cited in Phoenix, 2014). Even though it is psychologically difficult for Black women to navigate a world (Phoenix, 2014), Black women are constantly challenging, contesting and providing counter discourses to the detrimental ones already in existence.

Similarly, Hassan (2018) conducted a study into the manner in which African American women make use of hashtags on Twitter to contest colourist ideals of beauty. Hassan (2018) found that Twitter is a tool that is widely used to celebrate and validate the beauty of darker skinned women even though the women did report that the dark skin 'movement' may be insignificant as it brings up other issues including the essentialisation of dark-skinned women. Even so, majority found it necessary as a counter to the colourist discourse on dark-skinned women. Evidently, Black women are active in using their voice, in countering devaluing discourses as Tunzi encourages women "…to take up space. Nothing is as important as taking up space in society and cementing yourself"' (Singer, 2019). Phoenix (2014) suggests that in countering normative narratives of colourism one should not merely reproduce terminologies but provide alternatives, an attempt that was made by Twitter users in Hassan's (2018) study with hashtags such as '#blackisbeautiful'. In the same way, this study aims to illuminate the mono representation while exploring the multifaceted dimensions of Black women that is absent in the literature.

Consequently, considering these studies of the bodies of Black women, not only are Black women marginalised by Western standards of beauty but within the Black community itself. This particular engagement with Black women's physical appearance raises questions; why this fascination with the Black female body? Are they not more than their physical appearance? Due

to the effects of colonialism that continue to permeate society, Black women have been socialised to pay attention to the physical differences that have led to the overbearing scrutiny of the body of Black women. In critiquing societal and literary engagement of the body this research illustrates just that, and how pertinent it is to represent Black women outside the norms and gaze of the Western world. In many instances, the representation of Black women by Western standards has been fallacious. Conversely, not only are Black women observed from a Western gaze as 'exotic' as raced beings and objectified as gendered beings, they are stripped away of anything beyond the site of the body. Furthermore, a comparison often occurs between Black bodies and White bodies regarding issues of beauty evident in the studies above. As a result, the body of Black women becomes a site for the reproduction of race, gender and differences in both gender and race.

Until now, Black women have been represented in a predominantly passive manner that is in accordance with a Western gaze of beauty and Blackness. On the contrary, there are also alternative representations where Black women use their bodies in very proactive, progressive and agentive ways. For instance, in post-apartheid movements such as FeesMustFall (FMF), Black women mobilised to challenge political activism characterised by men at the forefront of issues affecting Black people (Dlakavu, 2015). As such, Black women led a protest in the fight for free education and to end the exploitation of Black outsourced workers (Dlakavu, 2015). Similarly, a 'nude' protest which involved three Black women standing bare-chested between the line of protesting students and armed police in the attempt to end the violence that prevailed during the FMF protest, occurred (Ndlovu, 2017). It is the site of the Black body that continues to bring about attention, dialogue and change even in the midst of violence and chaos as the courageous act accomplished its purpose. It is a site that Black women use to enact their voices and a bold feminine response to resistance (see Xaba, 2017). As such, the body is not only there to be gazed upon in a salacious or exotic manner, but it is also a place where women have mobilised for themselves.

There are also other instances of contesting representations where Black women do not have the desire to fit into a narrative of acceptable Black femininity. Particularly, Mupotsa (2015) observes this in her account of Black brides and the disruptions that occur at various sites of the body including, its shape, dress colour, and dress shape that is reminiscent of the ideal 'White wedding' that characterises modernity. Not only do these acts demonstrate that Black women are in charge of their ideas but essentially the body is the main device used by women to resist Western ideals of being Black and woman (see Gqola, 2016). These examples also illustrate that

irrespective of one's body shape, hairstyle and pigment, Black women readily and willingly join together to draw attention to and take steps towards eradicating the issues that affect all Black women unlike the previous narrative which seemingly pits acceptable and desirable Black femininity against the unacceptable. Although it is problematic that Black women remain objectified and critiqued on their physical appearance, Black women themselves use this site of femininity to promote change. Evidently, the body garners the attention of others to not only take note but consider the social or political issues being raised. As such, the body actively challenges the largely passive narrative that was described previously in favour of one where Black women are capable authors of their own destinies, representations and experiences. It is this resistance to oppressive and limiting systems that illustrate the determination of the Black woman's fight against inferiority (King, 1988).

2.3 Constructions of the mind

The research to date has tended to focus on the physical attributes of Black women and the way that this has been portrayed through a Western lens. While there has been a focus on the body which is a site of both progressive and regressive constructions, there is less of a focus on her mind. This may be a result of the colonial gaze. Yet, even when there has been a focus on the mind, it is one-dimensional. In particular, Black women have been represented mainly, as caregivers and domestic workers (Collins, 2002; Gaitskell et al., 1983). These representations serve particular kinds of functions and demonstrate a particular level of competence intellectually and emotionally which has real implications in the world. For example, women in academic and employment institutions are underrepresented and disproportionally so (Mabokela, 2003; Moore, 2017). Topics that widely dominate the literature regarding the experiences of Black women in academia include lack of career advancement and challenges to equal opportunity (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Accordingly, power, gender and race work to influence the academic experience of the Black woman (Moore, 2017) as she is immersed in a space that is dominated by White intellectuals (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Hull, Scott and Smith (1982) assert that the intellect of Black women is regarded as inherently inferior by White intellectuals as a consequence of belonging to these two categorical groups, i.e. Black and woman. If this line of thinking is still in play today, it is no wonder Black women are struggling to advance in their careers.

Kiguwa (2019) observes how exclusionary practices within the academy present themselves as racialisation. She questions, "[h]ow do we engage denigrating moments of representation of our bodies by others – in a context that does not allow us to be individuals, or understood outside of

racialized tropes?" (Kiguwa. 2019, p. 11). Evidently, the academy and institutions like this present spaces where Black bodies are not welcomed, and where dominant practices and narratives work to reproduce themselves. Kiguwa (2019, p. 12) describes her experience in the academy as (re)producing an alienated space, "…whether it is the infantilisation, dismissal, disregard of my competence and capacity as an academic and researcher" which is arguably the experience of many Black women in the workplace.

In a particular South African study conducted by Jaga, Arabandi, Bagraim and Mdlongwa, (2018) it was found that although the implementation of the Employment Equity Act sought to redress the imbalances of labour relations and access to the workplace post-apartheid, which was previously reserved for White males, a participant disappointingly stated that "nothing has changed" (p. 1). Keeping in line with transformation, gender quotas have been credited for the increase in representation of Black women in political spaces in the government, however, representation does not equate to significant participation in decision-making (Myeni, 2014). Such practices demonstrate the inequalities and unyielding political, cultural and social barriers that affect Black women today even when much 'change' has occurred. It is the inability to participate in decision-making that feeds the historical dominant constructions. As stated by Hull and colleagues (1982), the only documentation of Black women's intellectual experiences which arguably contest the above-mentioned intellectual capabilities of Black women, has been by Black scholars; arguably, without these vital scholars the body would largely remain at the centre.

The strong Black women who arguably can be accredited for changes that have come about in advancing women to the positions and spaces they are now able to occupy in modernity, is a contested construction both praised for her resilience and rejected for her characterisation of strength. Conceptualised in several ways, the strong Black woman refers to physical strength and labour during slavery as well as coping with emotional distress (Nelson et al., 2016). As a result, this phenomenon often leads to a rejection of depression and its existence amongst Black women (Edge & Rogers, 2005). This drive to overcome has and is believed to prevent Black women from expressing their needs which are often times ignored as a result (Nelson et al., 2016). It is this silence that arguably contributes to the underreporting and underdiagnosing of mental illness in South Africa (Matlala, Maponya, Chigome & Meyer, 2018).

In the South African context, the strong Black women construct is evident in the frequently used Zulu phrase, 'wathint'umfazi, wathint'imbokodo,' which translates to 'you strike a woman, you

strike a rock' (Mojapelo, 2019). Mojapelo is critical of this famous phrase as it normalises adversity, the need to be resilient and to overcome while negating vulnerability. However, Black women should feel safe to seek guidance or assistance if needed. We should not equate strength to the ability to withstand pain and emotional trauma while negating the emotional and psychological effects this may create. In a study conducted by Nelson and colleagues (2016), Black women both agreed and contested the essentialisation of a Black woman's strength, raising concerns for the way in which it continues to be conceptualised, especially when its description has real implications for how Black women are treated and cared for. Consequently, it is very clear that there are complex representations around the body and mind of Black women as they have been shown to produce both positive and negative constructions respectively. Although these constructions are contested, it is clear that normative constructions are weaved into representations of Black women beyond their body. Consequently, this study aims to seek whether these constructions exist within the discourses present amongst the target sample and how they connect to broader ideological discourses about Black women.

2.4. Constructions of the social position

Blackness in a post-apartheid South Africa means grappling with having your blackness interrogated, contested, essentialised etc. As history serves, not only do the Black population contend with the White gaze which has legalised and institutionalised discourses that categorised and constructed the Black subject, but also contend with the Black gaze (Canham & Williams, 2016). According to Canham and Williams (2016, p. 29) the Black gaze "monitors the transgression of class boundaries and established and accepted norms of [B]lack behaviour." It is through this gaze that we see the, "derogatory labelling of some [B]lack individuals as 'coconut' in the South African context [which] is another example of how some subjectivities may transgress prescribed constructs of [B]lackness in this instance and come to be positioned as '[O]ther'" (Kiguwa, 2014, p. 80).

Because there is a racialisation of language, accent, body type, hair texture, and skin tone, the surveillance of Blackness occurs when individuals appear to possess traits that mimic Whiteness. A study conducted by Canham and Williams (2016) found that Black professionals experience both the constraints of the White gaze which serves to reinforce the position of Whiteness while the Black gaze works to police their Black authenticity. Under this gaze, the Black middle class is believed to have given up their Blackness in exchange for Whiteness.

Given the upward mobility of the Black population and Black women, as evidenced in the previous section, we see how further compounded the experience of the Black individual. She is scrutinised not only by her White peers through the questioning of her intellect (Kiguwa, 2019) but by her Black peers too, who question her loyalty to the Black race. Therefore, not only are Black women at the bottom of the gender and race hierarchy but those who fall outside the boundaries of what it means to be Black, are at the bottom of the intra-racial hierarchy. By understanding Blackness and the ways in which it comes to be understood more broadly, we may understand the ways in which the identity of Black women is experienced in different social contexts.

Despite the entry of Black women into the professional sector that has moved Black women from lower paying jobs associated with Black femininity to higher paying jobs associated with White masculinity, Black women are still met with barriers and challenges. The constructions of the raced and gendered identities of Black women continue to be undermined. This is evident in the way that 'woman' together with 'work' remains abnormal (Pauw, 2009). Additionally, traditional gender roles are reproduced in the work place. As such, femininity is constructed as incompetent (Chisholm, 2001). It is no wonder women report receiving less respect than men (Morrison, White & van Velsor, 1987). Therefore, in the same way that Black women report a lack of career advancement due to their race and gender (Davis & Maldonado, 2015), sexist notions of the feminine hinder the career advancement of women in the workplace (Pauw, 2009). The workplace and those who have access to it continues to be racialised post-apartheid as higher unemployment rates are observed in Black women in comparison to Black men and both White women and White men (Pillay, 1985). Evidently, the social mobility of Black women is undermined by their interpolation into colonial and patriarchal discourses (McRobbie, 2009).

The maintenance of gender roles and the division of labour in the home continues to be reproduced in everyday discourse (Shefer et al., 2008) and media discourse (Azeez, 2010). In a study that investigated gender identity of men and women living in South Africa (Western Cape), Shefer and colleagues (2008) found that traditional gender roles that mandate the division of labour and patriarchal notions of masculinity and femininity in romantic relationships were reproduced. In this manner, we see a reproduction of heteronormative relations that work to normalise certain relationships over others (Mupotsa, 2010). Contrary to this reproduction, participants also produced constructs of masculinity and femininity that contested gender relational ideology as women were constructed as breadwinners and men, staying in the home. Consequently, although there is a maintenance of gendered and heteronormative ideology, new

ways of imagining and practicing gender relations exist. Even though participants in Shefer and colleague's (2008) study were reported as hesitant towards this change (due to the undermining of masculinity and upliftment of femininity) this is reflective of many shifts that have occurred in South Africa since the 'fall' of apartheid.

In light of the above literature, Black women's social positioning appears to be in a continuous tension between progressive constructions that free her from the Western ideology of her Black femininity and regressive constructions that thrust her back into the normative notions of Black subjectivity. These areas of Black women's lives are so inextricably linked and tied into their identity as Black women. As such, we see how "race [and gender] remains a source of division, mobilisation and exclusion" (Erasmus, 2005, p. 15). This is what makes the positioning, experience and navigation of the world of a Black woman unique from other raced and gendered beings (Collins, 2002). They are never just Black, never just woman but always in any space, both.

2.5 Key Theoretical Resources

2.5.1. Decolonial Theory

Decolonialism and the decolonial turn was birthed in Latin America with leaders such as Maria Lugones and Aimé Césaire. Decolonial theory provides a critique of colonisation and coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2011). According to Fanon, Satre and Farrington (1963) decolonisation is the departure point of the colonised person. Decoloniality recognises the problems with colonisation and highlights the importance of decolonisation that arguably has not yet been fully actualised (Maldonado-Torres, 2011). Dietze (2014) notes that decolonial theory is agency-centred and looks at exposing epistemologies that were stifled during colonisation, towards a new look on modernity that moves away from the Western view of the world. It is important to note that modernity as it is understood today by decolonial scholars is the face of coloniality under the guise of progress within discourse (Giraldo, 2016). In understanding the decolonial turn in society and in the South African context specifically, we see that, "[d]ecoloniality [is] only made necessary as a consequence of the depredations of colonialism, but in [its] intellectual resistance to associated forms of epistemological dominance [it] offers more than simple opposition. [Decolonial theory] offers…the possibility of a new geopolitics of knowledge" (Bhambra, 2014, p. 120). As such, decolonisation brings to the fore and argues against the notion of the silenced subject through discourse (Kynčlová & Knotková-Čapková, 2017).

On the ground, we see how the student protests that began in 2015 countered the notion of the silenced subject as they aimed to disrupt 'Whiteness' in response to the current curriculum which promotes a stereotyping of Africa as well as White supremacy and dominancy (Heleta, 2016). It is arguable that the media also tends to present a narrow view of Africa, its knowledge systems and the constructions of Black women which Heleta (2016) argues as unrepresentative of Black South Africans, their knowledge systems and their lived experiences. Because the current curriculum does not cater to indigenous knowledge systems, Heleta, (2016, p. 1) calls for South African universities to "completely rethink, reframe and reconstruct the curriculum" as they remain rooted in colonial, apartheid and Western epistemology which continues to maintain the poverty stricken status of the Black majority.

Notably, Fanon (2008) describes the processes of the development of the inferiority complex and the psychological effects of racial oppression. Arguably, it is this very complex that may plague Black students whose learning material does not reflect the way they navigate and experience the world. Fanon (2008) also moves towards the construction of self and rejection of an identity imposed by the White world. As such, decolonial theory works to reveal self-constructions of the Black woman and non-normative narratives that work to depict her in a light that went unnoticed during periods such as apartheid – where she is celebrated rather than vilified.

On the other hand, Du Bois (2008) conceptualised double consciousness as a notion that African Americans contain two contrasting identities, one that is African and the other, White American. These identities are in constant conflict but result in a dominant view of oneself through the lens of the White American. It is this lens that Fanon and colleagues (1963) seek to disrupt and change. This theory provides an insight into the lived experiences of Black women during colonisation and the lasting effects that remain post-colonisation. In particular, Phumla Gqola, a postcolonial scholar, brings to the fore the manner in which slave memory is performed in post-apartheid South Africa (Boswell, 2012). As such, the manner in which the representations of this study are received will rest upon these memory formations. It also provides the importance of an identity that works to empower women rather than work to return them back to the oppressed individuals they fought so tirelessly to leave behind.

In contemporary South Africa where there is a call to rethink decolonisation, subsequently, there is a call to rethink particular theories of the self and other, which will enable a construction of subjectivity that incorporates the experiences, representations and discourses of Black women in this moment, through the use of decolonial theory. Scholars such as Crenshaw (1989) challenge

Fanon and other male scholars as they do not adequately address the experiences of the colonised female subject (Black women). In addition, these male scholars do not address the work we need to do to unlearn essentialising the female subject during modernity. While the oppressive hardships of Black women's Blackness are identified, those that describe her gender are erased, even though this erasure is a substantial site of subordination that characterises the experience of being both Black and woman. It is for this reason that Lugones (2007) argues that through the expressions of gender, race and sexuality it is possible to understand modernity better as it pertains to the female subject. It should be noted that these articulations of gender, race and sexuality are in no way an attempt to provide an alternate or feminist view on coloniality but rather a rereading of it from the awareness of these social identities that come to characterise its current works in this context (Bhambra, 2014).

It has been noted that when the gender of Black women is made visible, the media tends to exoticise women's bodies (Kynčlová & Knotková-Čapková, 2017). For example, Giraldo (2016) is amongst those who critique the use of the female body in sexually suggestive ways during protests. She argues, that rather than a sign of empowerment this is an example of coloniality at work as women reduce themselves to the sexualised 'Other' that characterised their existence for a millennium. In doing so, Giraldo (2016) further argues that this reinsertion returns them to their normative representation once more. As such, the body's reading in this way, takes away from the agentic and empowering action that is arguably the significance of the act in an attempt to bring awareness to the social issue at hand.

The significance of a feminist voice within decolonial theory points to the fact that both feminism and decolonisation share commonalities, including and not limited to ways of representation, agency, essentialisation, domination, oppression, marginalisation, resistance and the freedom and/or lack thereof to the embodiment of individual subjectivity (Kynčlová & Knotková-Čapková, 2017). As such, decolonisation makes visible the underrepresentation of those formerly marginalised by giving and creating the space for them to speak. As a by-product of apartheid, we continue to see a monolithic representation of Black femininity in the media, leaving no room for alternate ways of being or being seen by others, reflecting modernity that has come to characterise the experience of Black women today. But with more representations that unsettle the notion of Black women such as Saartjie Baartman, ideologies should begin to change as the discourse around these changes too. Because decolonial theory argues for equal power relations in the distribution of knowledge, this enables a broader representation of knowledge systems, and theories of the self that work to counter these sites of oppression and

navigation during this current moment. In the same way that a feminist lens on decolonisation works to account for the experiences of Black women during modernity, intersectionality works to uncover the multiple sites of oppression and navigation that characterises the experiences of belonging to undervalued raced and gendered identities.

2.5.2. Intersectionality

Grounded in Black feminism and Critical Race theory, intersectionality is an interdisciplinary analytic tool which focuses its attention on the multiple layers of gender, race and class, in relation to contentious power dynamics among Black women and the oppression they experience (Crenshaw, 1989). It was later extended to the power dynamics among other categories of marginalised groups of people (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013). Although the term was invented by Crenshaw (1989), the concept was referenced by earlier writers including, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Tubman amongst others (Jordan-Zachary, 2007). Intersectionality was used both as a means through which we could understand Black woman's positionality and experiences as oppressed beings but also as a framework through which these Black women could be liberated (Jordan-Zachary, 2007). Intersectionality therefore demonstrates how identities are infused with other identities in relation to power dynamics to create and produce a single subject. It is these sites of intersectionality that make the experience of a Black woman challenging.

Many scholars denounce the theory of intersectionality as a valid and applicable theory and method for understanding social phenomena. Xaba (2017) characterises intersectionality as a framework for Black feminists. Because of this, critics question whether it can be applied analytically to other intersectional social groups besides Black women (Cho et al., 2013). Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays and Tomlinson (2013) counter this by suggesting that it has been successfully applied to various intersecting social categories with regards to sexuality, ethnicity, disability and nationalities amongst others. Other critics further this narrow-minded critique by claiming that its applicability has been towards certain sites of intersection while negating other privileged sites (Cho et al., 2013). However, these scholars may have misinterpreted intersectionality as it relates to power relations and not just the identity in isolation; therefore, it rightfully focuses on marginalised groups in accounting for their experiences.

Because intersectionality enables us to understand the differences that exist between groups and within groups (Crenshaw, 1991) it prevents us from essentialising differences (Jordan-Zachary, 2007). This points to the notion that identity is not uniform and that differences occur within the

identity of a group of people. Gouws (2017, p. 25) points out that essentialisation works to "render invisible nonconforming experiences, creating a hegemonic 'right way' of being members." Contrary to what critics believe, intersectionality speaks against essentialism (Gouws, 2017). Instead, Gouws (2017) further states that intersectionality reveals how varied forms of oppression within groups result from imbalanced power relations due to the intersection of differing identities. Motloung (2019) points out that this is because race intersects with other identity categories which in turn creates these varied experiences of Blackness and sites of oppression, within the Black community and specifically in this study, Black women. For example, a heterosexual Black woman and a Black woman belonging to the queer umbrella may have differences in experiences and modes of oppression because of the difference in their sexuality.

Jordan-Zachary (2007) critiques the conceptualisation of Crenshaw's (1991) intersectionality by refuting the use of the term "interlocking" of identities as she proposes this makes the assumption that these identities can become separated from one another. She suggests that for future conceptualisation and understanding of intersectionality we need to be careful of how we portray the way in which oppression occurs within these multiple avenues. As such, Jordan-Zachary (2007) argues that we should rather indicate that each system of oppression alters the other as opposed to defining it as a point at which they converge which implies that there is a possibility for divergence later. Davis (2008, p. 75) presents the argument more clearly with her usage of imagery, "[t]he image of a crossroads which is associated with intersectionality seems applicable to nearly any context, providing a useful way, for visualising how differences intersect within a particular person's identity or in a specific social practice or location." Evidently, there is no possibility for the separation of various social identities.

In contrast, Gouws (2017) suggests that this notion may lead to the "interaction" of identities and the interplay of different types of oppression as a hierarchical system where one identity takes precedence over the others. Bilge (2010) responds to this by arguing that intersectionality should consider the history in the interplay of power within those identities it seeks to investigate, which in turn would bring about a hierarchy of identities within the intersectional space. Gouws (2017) demonstrates this by presenting examples within a South African context. By virtue of South Africa's apartheid history, on a daily basis we are witnessing, especially regarding the high rate of social ills including gender based violence, unemployment and poverty, intersecting ways oppression manifested in the Black population. These ills significantly affect the Black population over other populations with Black women disproportionally affected as compared to

other raced, gendered and classed identities (among others). Consequently, the effects of apartheid (and colonialism) continue to plague Black people in reference to the construction of race, class and gender that normalises the experiences that Black people face (Motloung, 2019), especially Black women. Although strides have been taken to mitigate their experiences, it is still on a large scale.

A hierarchy of identities was observed and embodied as Black female students foregrounded their race in solidarity with Black men in the #RhodesMustFall protest which called for the removal of the Cecil John Rhodes statue in the fight to decolonise institutional sites of knowledge (Gouws, 2017). Gouws (2017) continues to observe that gender in addition to race and sexuality was foregrounded on a separate occasion in the upsetting incident where one Black female student was raped by a fellow male student of the protest which led to the #EndRapeCulture protest. This indicates that its meaning is continuously negotiated. It is however arguable that the identities in question (i.e. race, gender and sexuality) were always 'visible' but their visibility was dependent on the observer. Therefore, where Black women saw 'Black' as the solidifying marker for solidarity and comradery, Black men saw 'women' which modified the intersection of oppression for them. This may have led to the rape as it is widely known that Black women are the most affected group in relation to gender-based violence. King (1988) observes that the interconnected identities of Black women as raced, gendered and classed beings that results in multiply avenues of oppression is referred to by some as 'triple jeopardy' and by others like King (1988) as 'multiple jeopardy' due to the multiple effects each has on the other and the notion that these identities are not additive but interdependent.

The use of intersectionality as presented by Gouws (2017) speaks to its usefulness as a political tool for the dismantling of power by those who are at the unfortunate receiving end. It holds political ties as pointed out by Jordan-Zachary (2007) who states that this element is often missing in studies which include intersectionality as a theory. She does also state that the act of theorising is a political tool in and of itself. Gouws (2017) suggests it has an explanatory aim but is more than just understanding the lived experiences of intersectional identities, intersectionality is and should be used as a vehicle for change as it identifies issues that should be rectified (i.e. imbalances in power, injustice etc. amongst oppressed identities). Gouws (2017) further states that this highlights the need for something to be done about the oppression being experienced by a group of people from multiple sites simultaneously.

Because intersectionality is a framework that looks beyond the single axis of discrimination to incorporate the myriad of issues that plague the differential experiences of its subjects, we see how this analytic tool speaks to the representation, treatment and experiences Black women face. This is due to her belonging to different categories where power dynamics, oppression and unfair treatment are found, namely in gender, race, class and culture. This in part speaks to what other theories fail to account for when applied to Black women as they speak to one fragment that constitutes their identity and not the mixture of fragments that characterises their entire lived experience.

Therefore, intersectionality accounts for the representations we find today regarding Black women because of their embodiment as a gendered, raced and classed being. Through this we can understand why they are represented and spoken about in certain ways, while negating others. Consequently, intersectionality effectively addresses the representation and discourse of Black women and may account for the contestations to representations and Western ideals discussed above. It will also aid in understanding the way in which Black women re-inscribe themselves to normative discourse as opposed to offering alternative ways of being. Intersectionality evidently incorporates theories such as representation (Hall, 1997) and Black feminism (hooks, 2000) which, inclusive of its own layers, appropriately addresses the complexity of Black women's subjectivities in a matrix. In the same way that intersectionality works to construct marginalised subjects, habitus accounts for the subordination of Black women and the mechanisms in which they navigate and embody their identities post-apartheid.

2.5.3. Habitus

Some of the central tenets proposed by Bourdieu include habitus, field and *illusio* (Harrington, 2017). For the purpose of this study, the researcher will focus on habitus, as it is the most significant in accounting for the development and maintenance of identity formation. Furthermore, habitus accounts for the ways Black women orient themselves in society because the discursive practices they will use, are a by-product of these. Habitus defined simply, is a set of dispositions (Bourdieu, 1996). These dispositions present themselves in the way the body moves and occupies space in and across social contexts (McLeod, 2000), and by extension "expressed through different ways of standing, speaking [and] walking" (Reay, 1995, p. 354). It is also a set of practices that work to categorise us into certain positions in society (Bourdieu, 1977). For Bourdieu, class as a social identity is the main distinguishing factor between the experiences of different groups of people (Silva, 2016). Therefore, class determines the different ways in which people develop ways of thinking, speaking and behaving, not only amongst

different groups of people but within the same group of people as well. For this reason, habitus is a suitable way of understanding the different ways in which Blackness is produced and experienced within the discourses. Furthermore, habitus is appropriate for this study because it will enable an understanding of relations between dominant and dominated groups in society (Reay, 1995) such as Black women, who remain at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Central to habitus is the body and its expression and reproduction of practices that reproduce the habitus in which it was socialised (Rooke, 2007). Habitus shapes the way identity is produced because it remains on the body (Rooke, 2007). Similar to Bourdieu, Butler (1993) also places importance on the body in the production of identity but argues for this production as a performance. Butler (1993) argues that, like discourse which works to construct or explain a set of norms about a particular subject, performativity works to construct a set of norms that are revealed in the acts of a gendered being, as a set of behaviours. This is to say that we physically perform the gendered roles that are imposed on us by society. Akin to Bourdieu, these acts are intrinsic to the nature of individuals, the way we think, act and conduct ourselves in society (Butler, 1993). Therefore, performativity provides an account for the embodiment of the Black woman as a gendered and raced being. On the other hand, while habitus similarly provides an account that is both raced and gendered, this concept prioritizes class in how a woman navigates her way through society, whether she succumbs to societal ideals of Black women as mentioned in the studies above or contests these in favour of a more natural and accepting ideal of feminine identity in the way she styles her clothes, hair and so on. In this manner, it is evident that unconscious acts work to identify an individual in the same way that the notion of habitus works to create an individual.

Habitus is acquired through the internalisation of early social practices within the family or immediate group (Sallaz & Zavisca, 2007*).* Thereafter, secondary habitus results from experiences in educational institutions and the workplace (Wacquant, 2016), although it's understanding is inadequate (Harrington, 2017). Therefore, habitus describes how socialisation shapes us into who we are and become. The individual experiences circumstances that reinforce the habitus, and due to its circular nature, habitus remains unconscious and inaccessible to us (Bourdieu, 1977). Because habitus is the product and producer of social structures (Lee & Scott, 2017), it works to enforce and reinforce the practices we learn. Consequently, actions are reproduced and recur under the conditions within which they were produced. In this manner, habitus is an accumulative layer of dispositions continuously reproduced that results in the solidified embodiment or performative nature of an individual in a social field. Consequently,

there is no sense of agency in the habitus as these norms are imposed on us objectively which we then internalise as our own unique perceptions and framework of the world (Bourdieu, 1996).

At first glance, Bourdieu's theory appears to overly emphasise the unconscious nature of the norms and practices within habitus that work to shape the individual through the interaction with the social world. In fact, critics such as McLeod (2005) argue that it is rigid and deterministic in its account of social identity. This is no surprise as Bourdieu believes gender is connected to the 'sexed' body (Silva, 2016) thus reproducing binary, heteronormative notions of gendered identities while negating their embodiment in our current social world (McLeod, 2005). In so doing, Bourdieu neglects the performative nature of the body's ability to transgress the natural gender order (Lovell, 2000). As such, critics believe that habitus does not account for how socio-historical developments influence the way women occupy and are changed by social fields or structures (McLeod, 2005). Although dispositions can be gendered, critics like Butler (1993) challenge this determinism by arguing in favour of performative agency that transgress these gendered practices by providing alternate ways of being (Clarke, 2000). Furthermore, this alludes to another critique that habitus does not account for social change (McLeod, 2005).

In response to this critique, Clarke (2000) observes that critics misunderstand Bourdieu's conceptualisation of agency. Adams (2006) echoes this by declaring the existence of agency and autonomy within habitus. Adams (2006) further states that these are however bound by social structure, norms and laws that govern the habitual practices. Consequently, there is room for improvisation but it is determined by the learned dispositions (Carter & Spence, 2014). In her discussion of habitus Clarke (2000) demonstrates how Rosa Parks was able to embody an agentic identity by resisting her former schema as a subordinate Black woman on the back of a bus in favour of a resistant one. Clarke (2000) further argues that Parks was able to use both her primary habitus (upbringing as a pastor's daughter) and secondary habitus (involvement in the Black movement and attendance at a teacher's college) to speak up for herself. These dispositions allowed her to embody her class privilege (relative to other Black individuals) while resistant scripts in the Black movement made it possible for her to position herself as an equal. In this manner, it is evident that certain class cultures make it possible for subjects to transgress the limitations of one's social field if another field authorises it. As such, this reveals the nature of agency within habitus thus demonstrating the focal point of class and how it affords one the ability to transgress fields and characterise the differential experiences individuals within the same social group possess. This account disproves critics regarding its inability to account for social change and the progress of women's positions in society and their varied subjectivities. In

addition, the intersections of class with other social identities such as gender, age, context and race provide a more comprehensive account of reality and change (Silva, 2016).

Accordingly, habitus is adaptive in new environments (Reay, 2015). This notion accounts for the identities Black women adopt today. Black women are predisposed to the oppressive and demeaning practices that exemplify their negative experiences in contemporary South Africa. Black women are all born into predetermined roles of a society that describe her as the 'Other' and seek to diminish and negate her. It is no wonder Black women are described as 'angry' (Childs, 2005); undeniably there are a plethora of issues to be angry about as evidenced in the previous studies discussed above. But in the same vein, Black women are also born into a society where opportunity is available, celebration is welcomed and the drive to resist and counter heteronormative narratives and identities of the self are on the rise.

Although Black women in the past have fought to be recognised as counterparts in society, now more than ever, Black women are seen to be taking ownership of their rightful positions in society, demonstrating that habitus allows for heterogeneous representations of Black women in society; from once navigating the world as subjects of inferiority to demonstrating a more dominant presence. Black women also enjoy the act of deciding to a certain extent the nature of the habitus that they occupy. This is viewed in the defiant acts expressed by the various social movements discussed above in attempts to bring about transformation in the treatment of women and groups like these. It is this performativity of gendered acts which exemplify the nature and way women think, act and conduct themselves in society (Butler, 1993), that characterises habitus. Because habitus offers a historical account of human behaviour, group interactions and the workings of a mutual relationship between individuals and external structures (Lee & Scott, 2017), it is suitable in understanding the perspectives of Black women in this study and how they experience and navigate the world. It demonstrates that one's choices are the result of an intricate interchange between the individual and their social world and that the way in which they talk about the representation of Black women and their own experiences as such, need to be understood as a "manifestation and reinforcement of social class, cultural traits, lifestyles and upbringing" (Lee & Scott, 2017, p. 8). Though we have shifted from largely dominant representations that categorise Black women as passive to those as active, we remain subjects of sexual discourse. It is through habitus which characterised the earlier experiences of Black women as detrimental that fosters the transformation and change we see more of today.

2.6 Other studies

A survey of literature studies conducted indicates that Black women fall into several fields including medical, business, social, and media. Of importance to this study is media and the talk about the ways in which she has been represented in popular media, which may very well give rise to other areas of discussion as a consequence of the type of representation present herein. The body of Black women in particular ('Othered' by Western standards) has dominated both public and literature discourse with a large presence in the media (Sanger, 2015) with alternate subjects around Black women considerably explored post-apartheid.

In particular, Pilane and Iqani (2016) conducted a study into the frequency of images of Black women present in South African magazines, paying close attention to their body and hair type. The study found that only 30% of the women in the magazine were Black while the way in which they were represented closely resembled idealised White femininity (i.e. thin body with long straight hair). Pilane and Iqani (2016) highlight the problems that misrepresentation cause, as it excludes the majority of Black women who do not fit this mould. By identifying idealised Black femininity which is approximate to idealised White femininity they argue that these findings reflect a racialised post-feminist moment where notions of Whiteness pose as a marker of beauty and aspiration. They further argue that this is the presentation of idealised femininity that poses more profitable potential over Blackness. As such, it would be worthwhile to explore the ways Black women discuss these constructions discursively. In light of a need for the continued critical discussion of Black women's representation as expressed by Pilane and Iqani (2016), this study seeks to do just that.

Given that the study by Pilane and Iqani (2016) undertook a quantitative approach, there is an absence of detailed and in-depth mechanisms needed to understand and comprehensibly make sense of these findings in light of South Africa's racial history, which the scholars acknowledged. The current study does answer the call made by the scholars to deepen the understanding of such findings by discursively exploring the perceptions of Black women about their representations within popular media in the attempt to uncover the maintenance or challenge to this status quo. Nonetheless, the study does show the pervasiveness of historical constructions of idealised femininity that evidently continue to permeate society today. As such, this indicates the source of discourses that have transcended through the years while the current study aims to explore the implications of these for Black femininity in the event that the study participant's embodiment does not conform to these Western ideals of beauty.

A rise in the presence of Black academics in the research field gave rise to research that incorporated subjective accounts of Black individuals and their perspectives on their representations in media platforms. A South African study by Motseki and Oyedemi (2017) which furthered the previous study above by incorporating the responses of Black female participants, investigated adolescent interpretations of representations of popular Black women in the media through thematic analysis. Within these accounts, popular Black women in the media continue to maintain normative ideals of beauty which the participants also supported. These findings saw popular Black women reproducing a Western ideal of beauty, having long straight hair (i.e. wearing of weaves), a slim figure and a lighter skin (through skin lightening for some of the women) while Black responses reproduced the ideology of this presentation of femininity as beautiful. However, one popular Black woman was seen to challenge this Western ideal by wearing her natural hair, thus, Black femininity was maintained by a minority. As such, we see how the misrepresentation of Black femininity leads to the internalisation of idealised Black femininity (which is closer to whiteness).

Correspondingly, Taylor (2017) investigated the reception of 'Beyoncé feminism' (someone who embodies the ideals mentioned above) among young American Black women using narrative analysis and found that her treatment of gender, race and class promote the cognisance of the Black female identity. Taken together, these studies raise concerns for the way in which society views Black women (Adams-Bass et al., 2014) and more importantly how Black women view themselves. It is for this reason that other studies like Arjona (2018) contest Beyonce's Black femininity and believe her songs contain a misrepresentation of Black woman's bodies coupled with moderately sexist lyrics. As such, in the study by Taylor (2017), there is an absence of a critical engagement that would account for these new subjectivities available to Black women that Beyoncé advocates. Therefore, the study takes cognisance of the Black female identity that is emerging and supported by other Black women. However, unlike this study, the present study will unpack critically the relations of power in the reproduction and/or contestation of this type of Black feminine identity as well as the ideological origins present herein.

In many studies such as Sanger (2015) and paintings, Whiteness is juxtaposed to Blackness. In these instances, we see a differential treatment of Black women in relation to her White female counterparts. Sanger (2015) interrogated the ways that patriarchy inscribes a 'hyper*hetero*sexual' representation on women in mainstream South African magazines, which are disguisedly marketed to a masculine audience. She argues that White femininity is normalised while Black femininity is 'Othered'. Within the representations although both groups were unmistakably

sexualised, constructions of Black women were found to be even more so. It is these types of constructions of Blackness as hypersexualised and 'Othered' that brings about resistant discourses that exist in other studies in response to these constructions. Given that this study identifies the racialisation of women, revealing the reproduction of the broader ideology of patriarchy, colonialism and its existing influence on the representations of Black women, the present study aims to further this study by providing voices that may challenge such representations while potentially speaking to alternate ways of being Black and feminine outside of the body.

Other examples of Western norms include a study by Adams-Bass and colleagues (2014) who conducted a study into the perceptions of Black youth about popular media images in America. The participants contested these images as the normative themes included the sexualised Black woman, the angry Black woman, the strong Black woman and the nurturing Black woman. Although the participants touched on the lack of positive representations in popular media, they unanimously expressed that these images are circulated "too often" (Adams-Bass et al., 2014, p 93). Similarly, Nelson and colleagues (2016) raised awareness of the limiting constructions available to and/or for Black women. While there is a clear identification of the type of representations Black women occupy post-colonialism, there is an absence of highlighting racist undertones and discussion on the impact of power relations and how these work to sustain or challenge the status quo that a discourse analysis provides.

Several studies investigate the subjectivity of Black women in her representation and navigation through society. Azeez (2010) investigated the perceptions of Black women in reference to the meanings underlying their representations in Nigerian films. They argued that the reading of these constructions was influenced by social factors such as gender, age, education etc. Although the sample comprised of a variance in gender and other characteristics, within the accounts, both confirmatory and resistant discourses were expressed amongst the sample, with films stereotypically constructing Black women as submissive, passive and housewives. Furthermore, the accounts identified differences between men and women as well as educated and uneducated women. The men supported the sexist depictions of women in addition to the uneducated women while the educated women challenged these depictions. By splitting the focus between men and women even though the focus of the study identified women as its target participants, the study identified how traditional gender roles are both reproduced and challenged. The study findings suggest that the submissive Black woman demonstrates how ingrained ideologies inform media practices and their implications for interpersonal discourse. Similarly, the present study focuses

on the participant's accounts of their representation in popular media, examining the ways their discourse works to reproduce and contest ideological notions of Black women in the South African context. Additionally, by furthering the types of media platforms and investigating Black women in a different geographical context, this study can demonstrate whether the pervasiveness of submissive Black women for example, exists across the media landscape in addition to other geographical contexts outside of Nigeria.

A study by Gallego (2016) examined the ways in which women in three novels made use of the female body to challenge racialised and sexualised historical images imposed on them by reclaiming their bodies in various, complicated and contested ways. This investigation provided a more agentic and self-representation of Black women in the embodiment of her femininity and sexuality. Contrary to heteronormative constructions, their stories of empowerment and healing provide alternate subjectivities to the weak and submissive norms that were identified in the previous study. Although there are some critics who would challenge the use of their sexuality by arguing against the use of the Black female body in this way as it only plays into coloniality and the patriarchal gaze, Gallego's (2016) study does provide alternate forms of subjectivity where Black women are in charge of their bodies even if they are sexually positioning themselves. Similarly, the present study seeks to uncover alternate forms of subjectivity that counters heteronormative discursive practices that surround Black women today.

A few of the studies that venture beyond the constructions of Blackness outside of the physical body include Mophosho (2013) who conducted a thematic analysis on the identity constructions and experiences of being a Black woman in university. She found that gender, race and class are affected by the attainment of cultural capital through education which also results in the existence of various identities of Black women. Similarly, a study on the self-representations of Blackness within a Black university sample was conducted by Kiguwa (2014) who used a discourse analysis as one of her analytic tools. This study found that limitations to race continue to be produced and maintained through their self-construction of Blackness. Although both Mophosho (2013) and Kiguwa (2014) account for the experiences of Black women, which is what this study intends to investigate, it does so in an educational environment. The present study intends to broaden the landscape of self-representations of Blackness by examining its (re)presentation and construction as shaped by other contexts. Furthermore, a study which explored gendered discourse in the workplace found that varying and contradictory discourses support ideological notions of femininity while giving room for contestation (Pauw, 2009). This

research study aims to further these discourses by exploring various spaces in which notions of femininity and Blackness are (re)produced.

Therefore, more studies are needed that account for alternative discourses of Black women than the ones that have evidently continued throughout the years. Although previous studies have been conducted within the pool of Black women and representation, a few have investigated the way Black women talk about a wide spectrum of their representations, including ones that extend beyond the body, through discourse analysis. Studies such as these make it possible for a variety of discourses, meanings and identities to be brought (re)produced and contested. This is the gap that this study seeks to fill as it aims to provide a comprehensive account of Black women that adequately speaks to the intersectionality of their identities in society at this present moment. As such, this study serves as a microcosm for the wider discussion of Blackness, feminism and identity.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Research aims

Given that discourse constructs social identities the overarching aim of this study was to explore the discourses embedded in the talk of the representation of Black women in popular media. It has been shown in the context of feminist epistemology that magazines play a pertinent role in the social constructions and processes of gender identities (Pilane & Iqani, 2016). More specifically, it is widely known that Black women engage in media (Jerald et al., 2017). As such, it is these notions that drive the use of this popular medium as a departure point for the discussions and elicitation of discourse that (re)produces subjectivities of Black women. Therefore, this study examined how Black women read and received these representations. Because discourse allows one to discover what is going on in society, the study also aimed to identify what these discourses reflect about the ideologies surrounding Black women who exist in the broader social context of South Africa. Considering that historical discourses function to advance or suppress the livelihood of certain social identities, the study attempted to examine the functions of these discourses in a South African society. In view of this, the researcher arrived at the following research questions.

3.2 Research questions

1. What are the discourses embedded within the talk of Black women when discussing their representation in popular media?
2. What do these discourses reflect about the broader social context in which Black women in South Africa are located?
3. What are the functions of these discourses in maintaining and contesting the constructions of Black women?

3.3 Research Design

This research was framed by a qualitative approach. Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2013) describe qualitative research as the study of phenomena through the lens of the participant. This type of research allows for a more interpretive and naturalistic approach to phenomena and focuses on the perspectives of the research participants (Neuman, 2013). Moreover, this study undertook an exploratory cross-sectional design as it aimed to explore the ways in which Black women constructed themselves and others. Qualitative research does not attempt to code and quantify data but observe and understand it (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, qualitative research will allow for subjective understandings of Black women to be revealed in a manner that resembles casual conversation. Consequently, this should increase the

amount of information shared amongst the participants and the richness of the data collected in investigating the discourses present.

The critical paradigm was adopted for this study. Researchers acknowledge its characteristics and influences which include, feminism, Marxism, materialism and other sociological approaches (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Neuman, 2013; Scotland, 2012). This demonstrates its appropriateness in this study because the participants talk about Black women through a feminist lens. The critical paradigm aims to not only observe society (Scotland, 2012) but is also concerned with the positioning of individuals socially (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017) by challenging reality and confronting historical, ethnic, cultural, gender, political, economic and social structures that have oppressed individuals (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The paradigm also aims to defend and empower marginalised individuals in society in addition to facilitating the transformation of society, generating a more accepting and inclusive context for previously stigmatised groups (Neuman, 2013).

Furthermore, it seeks to uncover the power relations within society. Scotland (2012) acknowledges that the attempt to transform these societal structures may be ambitious and not ideally actualised, but suggests that a more representative society may emerge from this activism. Therefore, this paradigm will assist in providing a thorough framework that will allow for a critique of the discourses that emerge of Black women in popular media. It will uncover the social structures and power relations at play in the maintenance or rejection of these constructions as well as how these representations work to influence the identity of young Black women. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) state that the critical paradigm operates under a methodology in which data is collected through conversation. This further highlights its application as discourse between participants is central to this study.

The critical paradigm is useful because it is interested in understanding in a critical way the nature of being both Black and woman, which are highly differentiated categories. They are categories along which there are factions and social challenges. These categories are highly contested, where power operates at the point of being Black or being woman, being White or being man etc. As such, power and ways of wielding power are stratified. Due to belonging to two categories that exist on the lower end of the racial and gender hierarchy respectively, it is useful to use a critical paradigm because it enables the researcher to unpack the way that power is being (re)produced and constructed discursively. Consequently, this lens will aid in examining how their talk works to construct the social world as experienced by a Black woman. This is

important because there is no universal navigation of the world for individuals who are women and Black.

Given these assumptions, a qualitative approach together with a critical paradigm intends to uncover the discourses regarding the manner in which Black women have been represented and represent themselves, paying close attention to the ways they (dis)align with these and whether alternative representations and constructions come to the fore. Because critical discourse analysis is a well-known tool within the critical paradigm (Asghar, 2013), this study employed Parker's (1992) discourse analysis to explore the discourses and what they reflect about the social world and illuminate how they function.

3.4 Participants

Prior to accessing the sample, ethical clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand's ethics committee was obtained (see Appendix A). Due to the nature of the study, certain criteria had to be met in order to ensure that the research questions and aims of the study were achieved. Two techniques were employed to recruit the sample. Purposive sampling was the first technique adopted as it describes the selection of particular traits that best suit a study (Patton, 2002). Initially, the targeted participants comprised of Black women who were psychology students at the University of the Witwatersrand. The researcher emailed the course coordinators of second, third and honours year psychology students respectively, asking that they forward an email of invitation to participate in this study to their students and requesting that students respond to the email if interested. Snowball sampling was the second technique employed to augment the sample, as the number of responses to the initial email was insufficient for the required data collection to take place. The researcher asked confirmed participants to be accompanied by an acquaintance if they so wished. But as the research progressed, the researcher decided on the additional inclusion of students outside of the psychology department to further augment the sample. The expansion and recruitment of the remainder of the sample (which followed the first sampling technique) occurred by approaching students between their classes on campus and briefing them on the nature of the study and its aims, ending with an invitation to participate. The final inclusion criteria included the following, Black, female, student at the University of the Witwatersrand studying towards a second, third, or honours level degree and roughly between the ages of 19 to 24. As a result, those excluded were first year and Masters level Black female students at the University of the Witwatersrand, in addition to those in the desired year of study (i.e. second, third or honours) who significantly fell outside of the age range. The age range was pertinent to this study as it consisted of those who Tanner and Arnett (2009) believe are highly

influenced and shaped by events around them. Additionally, the authors suggest that those in this age range have been found to be expressive of their opinions. It is these young women the researcher believed would provide essential and critical insights into their reception of the images that characterise this investigation as they have more of an understanding of their identity and yet may be inspired by those who represent them.

During recruitment of the participants, each student was questioned on her age and year of study to make sure that only those who met the criteria for this study were included. This ensured a smooth data collection process. The data were collected solely by the researcher and conducted on the Witwatersrand campus. A total of four groups were held. The students in each varied in number and degree type. The initial focus group comprised of five humanities students who were studying psychology as one of their electives. The second focus group contained three students who belonged to the science faculty. The third focus group accommodated five humanities students and one student from the science faculty while the last focus group comprised of three students, one belonging to the humanities faculty studying psychology as a course while the other two belonged to the commerce, law and management faculty. Therefore, a total of 17 students made up the data corpus. The focus groups were conducted in English but due to the bilingual nature of the participants, their respective home languages were uttered sparingly. In some instances, when they were uttered however, to the researcher's benefit, they did manage to relay the utterance in English accommodating any participant who did not understand it. In other instances, minimal code-switching occurred without an English explanation. In these instances, an English translation was provided by the researcher.

Although the sample is relatively homogenous in race and gender, diversity exists in degree, age, socio-economic status and class which allows and broadens the range of discourses while reducing the issue of having a "limited number available of discursive repertoires" (Pauw, 2009, p. 135). As such, a range of Black women exist allowing their talk to comment on Black women, discourse and popular media broadly – as they differ in how they view the world, navigate it and experience themselves and others alike. It provides the space for accepting and contesting discourses to become evident amongst themselves and within the data.

The final sample comprised of 17 Black[4] women either in second, third or Honours year between the ages of 18-26 studying towards a degree at the University of the Witwatersrand (see Appendix B). The relatively small sample was due in part to the fact that potential participants

[4] Although majority of the sample was South African, one participant did express having roots in Central Africa.

confirmed their willingness to participate and their availability on the set date of a focus group. However, on the day of said focus group they did not arrive. It should be noted that although some focus groups did not meet the desired quota the data elicited made up for this small size. Additionally, as is the nature of qualitative research, a smaller cohort is desired in order to understand and deeply explore the discourses as compared to quantitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) which aims to code and quantify data allowing for generalisability of the findings. These women were selected because they represent the demographic the researcher intended to investigate and have adequately addressed the representation of women who resemble them in a meaningful manner.

3.5 Data collection procedure

A focus group involves the discussion of a topic in a group setting, facilitated by a moderator (Neuman, 2013). This procedure was used to collect the data for this study. Ritchie and colleagues (2013) postulate that data here are produced through the discursive interaction between participants, thus allowing for the naturalistic observation of the manner in which opinions are influenced by the opinions of others. Consequently, focus groups provide a space where the opinions and constructions of Black women can be voiced, agreed upon, contested and emerge in a way that enriches the data. This therefore, allows for both complementary and opposing narratives which leads to the emergence of both normative and non-normative discourses. Kitzinger (1995) argues that it is the occurrence of an interaction within a group setting that influences this open dialogue. Furthermore, this type of interaction directs the research into unanticipated avenues (Kitzinger, 1994) further colouring and texturizing the data.

A further benefit of conducting a focus group for this study is that this open dialogue is further augmented by the shared intersectionality of gender and race identities between the participants and researcher. This provides a sense of comfortability and familiarity in the expression of their discourses while removing the fear, shame or embarrassment that may be associated with a focus group whose members and moderator belong to different gender and race categories. The implementation of focus groups for feminist research has the potential to be consciousness-raising (Wilkinson, 1999) as it brings awareness to social and political issues that Black women face. Furthermore, the interactions that occur in a focus group transfer the power from the researcher to the participants as they are given the freedom to interact amongst each other, pose questions to one another and negotiate their perspectives and opinions on a topic from their point of view, on their terms (Wilkinson, 1999). This transference and freedom indicates the appropriateness and advantage that focus groups bring to this study.

The disadvantage of group dynamics however, is that opposing opinions may be inhibited (Kitzinger, 1994). Similarly, Smithson (2000) suggests that group dynamics increase the likelihood for the reproduction of normative discourse, thus, limiting the various ways in which the women are constructed. Kitzinger (1994) argues that we should not assume this disadvantage reduces the efficacy of groups in disclosing opinions relative to the individual interview. Depending on their group size, focus groups have in fact been found to support the discussion of censored or otherwise contradictory information as dominant voices encourage the quieter ones (Kitzinger, 1994). Kitzinger (1994, p. 112) further states that even though a group context can lead to the inhibition of difference, this does not undermine the data elicited as "people do not operate in a social vacuum". Therefore, although the participants may have been inclined towards the formulation of complementary discourses as agreed upon by the group, this formulation mirrors the way in which we formulate our own ideas, relative to others. If anything, focus groups highlight the naturalistic conversations that occur in everyday life and therefore should not be discredited for doing so.

Calder (1977) states that the number of focus groups held should continue until the discussions can be anticipated, which usually occurs by the third or fourth group. Accordingly, a focus group will enable the discourses of the representation of Black women in popular media to evolve and demonstrate how this may be influenced and enriched by a group of individuals from different backgrounds. This was achieved with four focus groups in total. The focus groups were guided by a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix C) which promoted discussions on constructions of Black women in popular media, their subject-positions in society and experiences as Black women.

Paired with a critical paradigm lens and a qualitative framework, focus groups demonstrated how Black women critically engaged with their constructions, experiences and identities in deeply meaningful and insightful ways. This space allowed the participants to voice their opinions where they were challenged but more importantly celebrated. Although a challenge may possess negative connotations the expressed oppositions were not fuelled by discrimination, or the Western gaze but rather worked to promote a sense of positive criticism and indicated the ways in which Black women could be better represented.

During the data collection process, focus groups were arranged around the availability of a set of participants (3 to 6) and their schedules. Upon confirmation of a suitable date and time convenient to this set of participants respectfully, two focus groups were held in a vacant tutorial

room and the remaining two in the Masters research room of the psychology building on the University campus. Prior to this, confirmed participants were emailed the necessary documentation containing an information sheet (see Appendix D) and consent forms (see Appendix E and Appendix F) with the purpose of familiarising themselves with the nature of the study and the consent forms. This email gave participants the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the study and their participation beforehand. Once all participants arrived at each focus group, they were given the consent forms to read through again (or for the first time) and sign as an indication of consent. The focus groups were audio-recorded, as such, consent was required to participate in the discussion as well as towards the recording of the discussion. Once consent had been granted, a sheet with a register was sent around for demographic purposes.

This was followed by welcoming all participants to the discussion, reminding them of their voluntary participation, as well as the constraints of anonymity and confidentiality. A set of ground rules was then detailed which allowed the discussion to flow more freely and clearly. The researcher then asked the participants to introduce themselves with a brief 'fun fact' about themselves to build rapport and comfortability amongst the group. The last focus group however, was asked to share a characteristic that they liked about themselves. The researcher then presented four magazines to the group and asked that they each select an image of a Black woman they wanted to discuss. The magazines included those that exclusively targeted Black women (i.e. True Love and Drum) and those that targeted all women (i.e. Elle and Cosmopolitan). The intention was not to compare and contrast the differences in representation between these sets of magazines but rather to be inclusive of the scope of representations of Black women present in popular print media today. Following this, the researcher then began the discussion guided by a semi-structured focus group schedule (see Appendix C).

Adams (2015) states that semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to probe further into the open-ended questions they pose. Adams (2015) further reveals that it is beneficial in the exploration of phenomena as it facilitates an in-depth discussion of these. Therefore, the use of this in this study is highlighted as its focus is to conduct an exploration into the discourses of Black women rather than confirm those that are in existence. It should be noted that an interview guide (focus group schedule for this present study) "should still be considered a work in progress" (Adams, 2015, p. 499). As such, the phrasing of questions during the focus groups differed from group to group. The schedule evolved from a discussion of the representations of Black women they specifically chose, followed by general and broader constructions of Black

women in popular media, to subjective constructions and experiences as Black women in society and concluded with their perceptions of how they are treated by others as Black women.

Due to the nature of focus groups and the semi-structured schedule, the participants themselves adopted the position of co-researcher as they posed questions to each other, asking for clarity, and gaining understanding on issues of Black women they had not been aware of. Additionally, in this group dynamic, Black women's identities and experiences were negotiated by all members. In this way, they were constructed, co-constructed as they spoke about their experiences relative to others and reconstructed through the influence of others. Therefore, the advantage of focus groups comes into play as it taps into facets of knowledge and understanding that no other method of enquiry can do (Kitzinger, 1995). Its appropriateness paired with discourse analysis, which explores language use, is highlighted as Kitzinger (1995) notes that the interaction in a focus group uncovers the ways in which members make use of language (their vocabulary) to explore and talk about their perspectives. It is these perspectives and subjective language use that will be investigated in *Chapter 4.*

The duration of each focus group varied and ran between 53 to 111 minutes. During the discussion, each participant was asked to show their selected image to the group as the initial questions surrounded these (see Appendix G). Prompts have been highly praised by feminist researchers whose concern is to place the focus of the research on the participants and their own agenda as opposed to maintaining it in the hands of the researcher (Speer, 2002). Similarly, it has been well-known to direct the discussion in focus groups (Kitzinger, 1994). As such, focus groups are important for this study because it gives voice to the participants and allows them to articulate their own position. This is aligned to a feminist epistemology because it empowers women to have a discussion in their own terms. Given the nature of this study, its usage is suited to enabling the discussion of Black women amongst a group of women who are able to speak and use language on their own terms.

The discussion opened with questions surrounding the particular constructions about the images they selected. It then moved onto general representations of Black women and the historical change of these representations. The researcher also probed into a discussion about whether alternate representations that did not conform to what they had previously observed in the media, existed. The discussion then concluded with their subjective experiences as Black women. More specifically, their self-constructions and how their social and navigational experiences construct and experienced them as raced and gendered beings. Before concluding the focus group,

participants were asked whether they had any further information to share regarding the representation of Black women or their experiences as such. Participants were then thanked for their willingness to engage and contribute to the research.

The recorded focus group audio was then stored on the researcher's password protected laptop. These were then transcribed verbatim by the researcher into English and stored on the very same laptop. During the discussions, notes on the identity of the relevant speakers respectively were taken to ensure that each utterance accurately corresponded to the appropriate speaker. This was done to ensure transcription accuracy. Additionally, notes on the overall procedure of each focus group were taken after the fact, reassessed and any oversights were modified for the following focus groups. This allowed for a more detailed exploration of discourses.

3.6. Data analysis

Discourse focuses on talk in action and how language constructs the social world. There are different forms of discourse analysis and in our terrain, we think about them in three main ways. The first is discursive psychology. Here, psychology, its constructs and the way it has been traditionally spoken about are analysed further and transformed into an investigation on how these constructs act (Edwards, 2005). As such, the focus is on how psychological issues within a social (inter)action are done and talked about through language. The second is Foucauldian discourse analysis. In contrast, Foucault, who birthed many discourse analysts from his ground-breaking work, regards discourse as existing everywhere in society (i.e. social practices) (Edwards, 2005). Discourses also come into being at specific points in time historically (Edwards, 2005). Foucault (1980, as cited in Edwards, 2005) notes that discourses reveal power relations within society through a myriad of levels throughout society, which highlight subject positions. In so doing, discourses indicate how people navigate the world through their subjectivity. The third is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In the same vein, what constitutes as discourses for these analysts include text, speech, and 'communicative events' (Edwards, 2005). The function of discourse here is to address social inequality by uncovering and demonstrating how language and its devices employed by speakers (re)produce dominance and social power (van Dijk, 1993). Consequently, CDA is akin to Foucault in the uncovering of power in speech but differs in the way power relations are used to address social inequality.

Similarly, other critical discourse analysts who actively take a stand in an effort to eradicate inequality (van Dijk, 1993) include Parker (1992) who demonstrates how categories of language within a text correspond with broader categories that exist in society (Edwards, 2005). Therefore,

CDA and critical approaches to discourses focus on how language works to produce or enact power on those negatively affected by it. With all things considered, discourses seek to speak to the workings of 'systems of inclusion and exclusion'. In describing the different discourse analyses, we see that each works to define discourse differently and focuses on different aspects of the way in which language is used to construct the social world accordingly. Common among them all however, is the notion that discourses do something in the world. Taking this into consideration, we now turn to Parker's discourse analysis as it is best suited to addressing the concerns of this study. This study undertook Parker's discourse analysis because he is concerned with the way language within a text correlates to language that exists in the broader context of society (Edwards, 2005), and this is one of the aims of the study. Additionally, the study seeks to explore how Black women work to align or dis-align themselves in relation to the representations they will discuss. This aligns with Parker (1992) who states that discourses work to reproduce or contest existing ways of being and beliefs in society (Parker, 1992). Therefore, these discourses will reveal how Black women come to be constructed. Although Parker is a derivative of Foucault's work he is a formidable analyst in this field.

Discourse Analysis (DA) refers to the study of the production of texts and their contextual functions (Parker, 2004). The purpose of DA is to undo the workings of the text (Parker, 1999). At its core, discourse is a network of statements that produce objects (Parker, 1992). It seeks to provide an account of the manner in which subjectivity is produced in society by deconstructing the way meaning is constructed through text (Parker, 2004). DA further reveals how reality is contrived (Parker, 1992). In this manner, this analytic tool is important in uncovering how Black women are constructed, the meaning behind these constructions, their functions and what they reveal about reality. Akin to Foucault, Parker believes that language reflects power relations and consequently structures ideology (Parker, 1992).

Notably, tensions exist among analysts regarding the strict usage of the steps proposed to conduct a discourse analysis that Parker provides (1992). By his own account, Parker (1999) cautions against their strict usage as this limits the understanding of complex and multifarious meanings present in the text. He asserts that of importance is the ability to be considerate to the language over and above outlined steps in conducting an analysis that is authentic to the text. As such, the researcher did not strictly adhere to the order outlined by Parker (1992) below. There are seven criteria outlined with an additional three that enable the discourse analysis to occur. Coupled with these 10 criteria are 20 'steps' that further this process along and detail the specifics of each criterion. For the purpose of this study, the researcher has made use of all of

them to some extent as they are significant to understanding how these discourses reflect the broader social context. According to Parker (1992) the criteria are as follows:

> "1) a discourse is realised in texts; 2) a discourse is about objects; 3) a discourse contains subjects; 4) a discourse is a coherent system of meanings; 5) a discourse refers to other discourses; 6) a discourse reflects on its own way of speaking; 7) a discourse is historically located; 8) discourses support institutions; 9) discourses reproduce power relations; and 10) discourses have ideological effects" (pp. 7-16).

DA goes beyond the identification of themes and the overall descriptive picture that a thematic analysis would provide to interrogate and reveal the ways in which Black women today navigate society and their representation herein. This analysis is fitting as it allowed for sufficient analysis of the discourses embedded in the focus groups, thus providing answers to the research questions stated above, particularly revealing the reflection of discourse on the ground in comparison to the broader social context and the meanings they serve (i.e. why Black women were constructed in these ways, both by others and themselves). These constructions should reveal the power relations and ideologies determined by micro and macro societal structures that circulate within society regarding the representation of the Black woman and whether these representations mirror societal engagements of Black women on the ground. Furthermore, because Parker (1992) aims to uncover the frictions within discourses, this type of discourse analysis is suitable for this study because the way in which Black women have been constructed to date remains largely inappropriate, constraining and damaging to her livelihood. As such, DA has been used to reveal the ways in which the participants resisted and contested these images in favour of progressive alternatives.

As we now turn to a description of the particular steps undertaken in this study, the researcher initially coded and categorised the data into themes in order to ensure the completion of the dataset and the adequate text needed to present an argument. This step aligns with criterion one, "a discourse is realised in texts" (Parker, 1992, p. 7). Similar themes were then combined to form larger themes, with the largest themes arranged hierarchically as overarching themes coupled with subordinate subthemes (Kramer, 2019). This was followed by the naming and description of the themes and subthemes. This also allowed the researcher to view commonalities (e.g. The sexual objectification of the Black woman's body: "*Is this a thirst trap*?") and differences (e.g. 'Reclaiming' the sexualised body: "*Owning words like 'slut' even*") across the dataset which was important for the contradictory ways language can be used to describe the objects it constructs

(Parker, 1992), which was significantly observed in the study. This naming was a back and forth process between the text as the researcher had to constantly, (re)read, (re)listen to the audio recordings and (re)code the transcripts to finalise the themes. Consequently, this process was underpinned by a thematic analysis in the formation of themes and subthemes. This was followed by the identification of objects and subjects within each subtheme and the ways in which they were constructed. As such, these steps align with criteria two and three of Parker's (1992) discourse analysis. Taking the particular subtheme Disavowing your femininity in the service of the professions: "*Macho businesswomen"* as an example, the object of enquiry identified here was gender and the subject that was constructed as a result of this was the Black woman who disavows her femininity in favour of masculinity. The researcher then identified the referent discourses (criterion 5) within the theme. As such, within the example gender made reference to race. The researcher then identified the reproduction of power relations within the discourse (criterion 9) and found that the power resided in the act of women disavowing their femininity in favour of masculinity, thus reproducing the gender hierarchy in the workplace. In line with Kramer, (2019) the analysis culminated by linking the discursive utterances found in the dataset to those existing in the larger socio-cultural context. This step also identified the ideological effects within the discourse (criterion 10). In this detailed example, the discourse worked to undermine feminine characteristics and legitimise masculine traits in the workplace, thereby reproducing sexist notions of gender. It should be noted that during the analysis and discovery as well as the naming of discourses present, the researcher moved back and forth between steps to finalise the discourses and how they both reflect society and function. This back and forth also encompassed the identification of personal lived experiences and what these say about ideologies in existence today.

3.7 Reflexivity

As a researcher, I understand the importance of reflexivity which Macbeth (2001) suggests deconstructs the inherent connection between the text, author, other, and society. He further states that reflexivity maintains the inclusiveness of a multitude of interests, agencies and positions in an analytical setting, such as this study, allowing for a number of positions to exist and, as a result, a number of readings. Reflexivity also affords one the opportunity to position oneself both as the outsider and the insider in the ways interpretation and interaction with the text occur. As such, no matter how much researchers strive to remain objective and unbiased, an acknowledgement of this only seeks to strengthen the justification in the reading of one's subjects in a particular way. The audience can also attempt to understand how those subjects

were created and perhaps reflect on alternate subject positions. It is with this in mind that I reflect upon my positionality in relation to this study.

Growing up as a young Black girl, I had a relationship with popular media. My mom would buy magazines, most of which were used as prompts in this study. In flipping through their pages, depending on the particular magazine, I would wonder why Black women were not present enough or why a specific type of Black woman was represented and not others. As such, I was exposed to issues that plague Black women regarding their representation from a very young age. As a millennial Black woman, I continue to engage with various forms of popular media paying close attention to conversations that surround Black women. I find interest in knowing the conversations that are expressed regarding women who share my identity. In all my years of reading I have found our physical attributes to be the most debated in popular media by all members of society, globally. Consequently, I am aware of the discourses embedded in these representations and the debates regarding colourism, hair and the body of Black women. Given that most of my reading and known discourses come from an international perspective I wanted to investigate how these representations are spoken about in South Africa.

Prior to the data collection process and in the initial stages of writing, I was made aware that this international lens with which I was familiar affected how I read and presented Black women in the South African context. I realised that I was reproducing normative historical constructions of Black women that did not fit the context in which I am living through today. I had mistakenly constructed the subject. Upon a chance encounter with a lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand, I was told that going into research with a set notion of the subject was biased and takes away from the many possibilities the subject is capable of being. Black women are no longer as vulnerable and docile as we were led to believe or presented to be. As a researcher, I provide a counter-normative construction but yet failed to express this in my research at the time. Upon this realisation, I widened the spectrum of the constructions of Black women. It was through this awareness that I learnt to be cognisant of my former mistake throughout the research process and checked in with myself continuously to ensure that I was not presenting a single view or American view of South African women especially during the data collection process.

As a researcher, collecting the data proved to be challenging. Due to my introversion, I had to step outside my comfort zone and approach others. Given that traditional methods of data collection may find it more difficult to recruit participants (Wood, Griffiths & Eatough, 2004) as

opposed to online data, I experienced a binary challenge, based on method and disposition. I overcame this by gaining support and encouragement from friends.

Bearing in mind that I have a personal relationship to magazines, their use as prompts as a methodology for data collection in this study was influenced by my history. It is further supported by Speer (2002), who asserts that prompts provide a non-hierarchal and empowering setting for the research subjects by turning the space into a participant-led discussion instead of the contentious researcher-led conversation all qualitative analysts try to shy away from. It is a concern that I tried to factor in in the manner in which I conducted the focus groups. However, Speer (2002) found that her influence had to be exerted in her study as she directed the participants according to her research agenda. Likewise, I experienced this exact occurrence when I directed the research in my focus groups. I was concerned with relinquishing control and power over to the participants paying careful attention not to impose my own constructions, onto the participants and their prompts, especially when their constructions and reading of the images differed from my own. However, in relinquishing control participants in one particular focus group spent too much time discussing initial questions, speaking over each other and speaking on matters that were outside of the scope of this study. Although ground rules were governed with regards to turn-taking in this study, the overlap in talk, unfortunately, resulted in the loss of opinions that may have been of particular interest to the study. This was due in part to my own introversion. It was only when I exerted my position as a researcher that turn-taking resumed, and we began to move through questions at a quicker pace and with clearer speech. Speer (2002) observes that when researchers position themselves as outsiders the discussions held are influenced whereas when they position themselves as insiders the responses made may be of no relevance to the research. It is this tension that I experienced and found to be challenging, arguably mitigated by only directing the participants once they had gone out of scope. However, they were left to converse when it was in line with the scope of the research. As such, data collection occurs within a co-construction of meaning making between the researcher and the researched (Speer, 2002).

Since I am a young Black woman, I feel this insider position has allowed for an unrestricted, less judgmental and open discussion of the representations of women and the experiences they have faced which I believe has enriched the data. Participants were found to be more expressive because of our shared identity. Some participants even stated that they felt they had been speaking for too long. This is arguably because not only did they share an identity with myself but with fellow members of the focus group. This led to a shifting of power between us. This

position is also dualistic as it allowed me to identify with their narratives because of my experiences as a Black woman. Despite that, this identification makes the assumption that I was familiar with their narratives when they failed to elaborate on them. Even though I possibly knew, my thoughts may not have equated to what they failed to convey. Although we share this intersectional identity, my experiences and knowledge may differ due to my upbringing, age and socio-economic status which may be the point at which their meaning and mine diverge. Lastly, this position allowed me to understand the minimal code-switching that occurred in the discussions which enabled the meaning of the utterances to remain intact for the analysis.

Even though my insider position allowed the free flow of conversation in some focus groups, my outsider position as a researcher inhibited discussion in other focus groups as I found participants to hold back, causing me to ask more follow up questions and encourage others to participate. Additionally, due to the kinds of themes and discourses I am aware exists in the Black community, I do acknowledge the subjectivity I have carried into the focus groups. I acknowledge that this may affect the outcomes of the study but have to the best of my abilities remained open to receiving a full range of responses from participants. During the data collection, I was cognisant of not limiting the scope of the research by allowing discussions that occurred around constructions or popular mediums that I had not otherwise focused on in the literature, leaving room for unexpected narratives and discourses.

It should be noted that no data are devoid of bias as researchers seek to answer specific questions that require a specific eye (Potter, 2002). Parker (1994) supports this by stating that one can never be objective, the manner in which we conceive of the subject creates a particular type of subject. Although researcher bias can never be removed fully, it is something we as researchers need to acknowledge but more importantly accept. As a Black woman, I am personally invested in the reception of these discourses and their effects for us now as possible messengers. In writing this research I came to the realisation that I was discovering my own Black feminism. As such, I understand my orientation to the study and the way in which I conducted the data analysis.

During this process I found it challenging to not fix my gaze on the negative constructions of Black women as gendered people. This in part may have been challenging due to our position and experiences as females. I was cognisant of this throughout the analysis and made sure I was not imposing my own constructions and meanings by continuously asking myself what the participants were saying versus what I think they said. This exercise served as a vehicle to

unearth an assortment of constructions that are not widely represented or received as such in popular media because media serves a particular function. Although I attempted to remain outside of the data as much as possible, this act reflects my reading and interpretation of the talk. But in reflecting on this and my position as a Black woman I hope to have provided a window into the motivation behind the data being read in a particular way.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct this research study was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (Protocol number 18/006/IH) (see Appendix A). Due to the nature of the study, there were a number of ethical considerations that were adhered to – all of which coincide with the standard ethical practices. Notably, this study did not deal with a vulnerable and sensitive sample. As such, no participants were exposed to any risks physically or psychologically. However, counselling services and details of the Emthonjeni Centre were included in the participation information sheet if needed (see Appendix D). These services were not used by any of the participants. There were no issues of deception as transparency of the research was maintained in the disclosure of the nature of the research, its aims, the requirement for participation as well as a reminder of the nature of the research during the focus groups to all participants. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study, the right to refrain from answering any questions during the discussion and the voluntary nature of their participation. No participant withdrew from the study. The other ethical considerations included in the information sheet were, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, within the limitations of qualitative research.

Due to the nature of qualitative research, these considerations respectively were only partially guaranteed, with the use of pseudonyms for the participants as well as the assurance of internal anonymity amongst the participants themselves. Participants were asked to not disclose any identifying information about their focus group members with others, ensuring further confidentiality. Since participation in this research required that participants participate in a focus group discussion and allow the discussion to be audio recorded, the names of the participants were mentioned in the focus group and appear on the audio recording. However, these names were replaced by pseudonyms in this report. The original data elicited from the focus groups was only available to the researcher. Upon transcription of the audio recordings these were made available to her supervisor with pseudonyms in place of the names of the participants. These data will not be destroyed but stored under lock and key in a password protected laptop for five years ensuring data integrity. Participants were also advised that a short

summary of the findings would be made accessible to them upon request. These ethical considerations were explained to potential participants and, once understood and agreed upon, consent was granted in the form of a signature on both the consent form to participate in the study (see Appendix E) as well as the consent form to record the discussion (see Appendix F), both of which were signed by all participants.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Upon completion of the data analysis it was evident that the key ideas that emerged were inclusive of a diverse range of representational systems about Black women and their intellect, body, and the way they are treated by their fellow Black women and men. These key ideas resulted in the following five themes and their respective subthemes, The working woman: Post-apartheid femininity discourse, Beauty and sexuality: The body discourse, The difficulties of being a Black woman: Post-apartheid discourse, Normative constructions of Black femininity: Essentialising discourse, and Non-normative constructions of Black femininity: De-essentialising discourse. However, it is important to note that these themes and their associated discourses all weave into each other and speak to each other. This demonstrates that discourses speak to other discourses, yet are differentiated by the way in which language is used to construct subjectivity. Because the participants had a particular stake in certain discourses as Black women, they were seen to position the representations they spoke of and themselves in ways that made it possible for them to either negotiate, resist or take up certain identities.

4.1. The working woman: Post-apartheid femininity discourse

I think they kind of represent like the age we're in now (P17).

In discussing constructions of Black women in our current terrain, participants reproduced and positioned Black women akin to Gqola's (2016) New South African Women (NSAW). According to Gqola (2016, p. 125) the NSAW has been described as "…a specific portrait of idealised post-apartheid femininity". What constitutes the working woman is the way her body has been represented and how her embodiment has come to occupy different spaces, places and subjectivities. This is echoed by P17 as these spaces were not readily available to most South African Black women during apartheid. Although progressive discourses colour her subject position, regressive ones work to inhibit her from fully releasing the shackles of discrimination and injustice. For example, the participants identified agentic and independent as well as subordinate constructions of femininity. These constructions fell under the following, The 'emergence' of the Black woman professional: "*These careers are not our career*s," Disavowing your femininity in the service of the professions: "*Macho businesswomen*" and Maintaining the status quo in gendered relations of the workplace: "*To support the Black man.*" Despite the existence of differences across generational constructions of Black women, many of the participants engaged in discourses that essentialised gender by juxtaposing women to the constructions that they were allowed to hold in relation to their male counterparts in the workplace and in the home. It is these subject positions that make some scholars wonder whether

feminism will ever be achieved (Gqola, 2016). In contrast, some participants were able to provide counter-normative constructions of gendered and raced discourse that seemingly offers a progressive way of being Black and woman post-apartheid.

4.1.1. The 'emergence' of the Black woman professional: "*We've also been stereotyped to be quite slow"*

Right now she's [Bonang] got a lingerie line Distraction, for Woolworths. (P1)

So she's a pilot okay, some people would question how. I mean firstly she's a woman, secondly she's Black because we've also been stereotyped to be quite slow…these careers are not our careers. So it means that your race and gender cannot stop you from achieving what has been stereotyped to be not yours. (P11)

And for me it's a Black woman, ordinary Black woman, breaking barriers in a predominantly White industry…basically in the entertainment industry…not from being in front of the camera but behind the camera production wise…It's mostly predominantly White and male. She's the first Black woman to have her own show…created by her and produced. (P8)

Contrary to unrelenting salient constructions of the mammy and the intellectual inferiority of Black women as previously stated by White intellectuals (Hull et al., 1982) the kind of subject participants have observed and constructed here is the Black woman whose career resides within the professions. As such, the object of enquiry through which this construct was produced is race. In doing so, participants have racialised the professions with P8 who outwardly expressed this by commenting on the fact that women are occupying career spaces that were previously reserved for White individuals, thus demonstrating the significance of this type of subjectivity in these spaces. The concept of 'woman' and 'work' remains in some way irregular or non-standard (Pauw, 2009). This concept is further exacerbated when you place 'Black' in front of the word 'woman'. Therefore, Black women who were not afforded these opportunities in the past are no longer confined to sociocultural expectations of Black women by existing in these spaces. The majority of participants responded positively to this construct as it represents progressiveness, while others stated they had not seen these constructs in popular media before. The subject described is one who has access to and is actively occupying social positions within a formerly White space. This is reflective of the Black middle class and the advantages that this affords them post-apartheid. As such, by reproducing notions of class, power here lies in the ability of

Black women to use their middle class status and its advantages to access historically inaccessible spaces.

P8 is herself an articulation an extension of this specific construct as she is a science student who expressed the drive to "*break barriers*" in her own field, noting that the presence or lack thereof, of Black women in this field is concerning. This concern makes reference to habitus and the embodiment of one's racial experiences in spaces. P11 comments on the absence of Black women previously in these spaces and what negative meanings these impose (*stereotyped to be quite slow*), thus highlighting the existence of Black women in these spaces as intellectually competent and capable. Contrary to Sanger (2015), who found that even when the profession of Black women was emphasised, they remained sexually constructed, this study found that Black women were solely professionally constructed in the images selected. This construction indicates a generational shift of South African Black women in business as there is a move away from the appearance and or sexualisation of her body towards her position in society as she is afforded better participation in the labour market (Mosomi, 2019).

Considering that masculinity is associated with competence and femininity with incompetence (Chisholm, 2001), it is evident why others would question her occupation and race. These constructions also draw on feminist discourse that makes it possible for Black women to defy both raced and gendered historical constructions that confined Black women to labour that was characteristic of servitude and a domesticated environment (Collins, 2002). As such, the Black intellect was believed to be inferior and incapable of existing and equally participating and contributing intellectually towards historical White male work spaces. Therefore, this subject demonstrates that Black women are also intellectual beings in the same way that White individuals have always been constructed. In so doing, participants have positioned this subject as capable intellectually to participate in spaces that were not created for her race and gender, which is consistent with the sentiments shared by Davis and Maldonado (2015), who posits that Black women are dominated by White intellectuals in academic spaces. These statements don't all reflect academic spaces but it is clear that historically White careers are not dominated by other raced and gendered identities. This makes reference to intersectionality by illuminating the multiple avenues in which Black femininity was subjugated.

The construction of this type of subject works to challenge normative representations of Black women as the domesticated mammy, while underlying the pervasiveness of the normative discourse on Black people and their perceived lack of education (Richardson, 2007). The very

production of this subject dispels concerns related to the societal positions of Black women in society. It allows for new subjectivities to be imagined and occupied by other women who read these representations, rendering previously held notions of the Black intellect invalid (Laher & Cockroft, 2013). This construction works to produce subjectivities that were not easily accessible to the Black community years past. In having this occupation, she is seen to be pushing against this normative narrative that many Black women in the working world including scholars such as Kiguwa (2019) experience, due to belonging to both subordinated identities of Black and women, thus challenging and countering the normative sexist and colonial constructions while providing ones that shed light on her capabilities. This construction identified can be likened to the academic space in which Black women operate, as it remains clear that "[t]he larger narrative trope of the [B]lack academic [and/or working professional] as an anomaly remains unchallenged" (Kiguwa, 2019, p. 12). The discourses the participants drew on here work to position her as previously incapable, while simultaneously speaking against racialised and gendered discourses of intellectual inferiority of Black femininity. It is these constructions of inferiority that reflect the historical past (Motloung, 2019). In the same vein, the production of this subject buys into the ideology of class and highly educated Black professionals as consumerist (de Coninck, 2018). Black professional women are therefore distanced from the larger Black population who are arguably living in poverty and are by extension closer to Whiteness as middle classed subjects.

4.1.2. Disavowing your femininity in the service of the professions: "*Macho businesswomen*"

…what I see is…the whole powerful woman, the drill sergeant who is just you know focused…so that's the depiction I get of Black women…completely untouchable and stone cold. (P16)

Black women are portrayed to be you know, macho businesswomen. (P13)

… I can see that she has no ring so it means that her mentality was not most because in some cultures kwamele, you have to get married and then you've fulfilled your standard. You know? And now she went out of that and just you know focused on her career and herself. (P11)

…the other one you showed us with the one in the blue blazer…suit thing…maybe she's a business woman and she's like very serious about her work. (P17)

I think I'm a mix of professional and human because I won't lie I do conduct myself professionally like even with my friends. I'm not too chummy. I'm not friendly. (P16)

While this section at first glance continues from the previous one, what we glean from taking a closer look is that participants have engaged in discursive practices that constructed the subject as a Black woman who is not feminine. Consequently, she is disavowing her feminine identity and replacing it with a masculine identity. Participants thus drew on gender discourses to achieve this. Despite the clear appraisal of femininity in masculine spaces in the previous section, half of participants contested this image while the remaining participants either praised or felt indifferent towards it. Only one participant personally aligned with this construct. This was to be expected as they constructed a subject who disavows her femininity in favour of masculinity in said spaces in order to be accepted and or respected as (P17) suggests "…*the more I think about it especially for Black women cause I feel like maybe you need to have a certain image about you just to be taken seriously amongst your counterparts.*" This statement was similar to statements expressed by participants in a study conducted by Pauw (2009). This highlights the necessary trade-off between femininity and masculinity in order to occupy these spaces. This belief is contrary to some of the participants in a study conducted by Pauw (2009) as they valued remaining feminine while acknowledging the 'bitch' subject. The 'bitch' who was positioned as a woman who is not feminine in her pursuits of success, mimics the findings of this discourse. Pauw's (2009) participants on the other hand vehemently distanced themselves from this type of subject and prided themselves in remaining feminine.

Evidently, this construct demonstrates how Black women come to occupy these spaces. This has significant links to Bourdieu's concept of habitus as it accounts for the ways in which Black women were socialised through the internalisation of both the primary and secondary habitus that made it possible to adopt and embody this social identity. Although the maternal occupation of the participants was never explored, the social practices described by the participants do suggest that male dispositions in the workplace were imparted on during their upbringing and upbringing of other Black women as habitus implies.

According to the participants the disavowal of femininity was communicated through the subject's facial expressions (P16), clothing (P11 and P17) and behaviour (P16 and P13). It is through these moments that participants drew on gender discourses that made it possible to produce a masculine subject. By identifying these forms of masculinity, Black women became reflections of men in the workplace as these are associated with the masculine. In particular, P16

described images she's seen as adopting masculine behaviors and emotions, (i.e. "*drill sergeant*" and "*stone cold*"), while P11 noted that the subject in her chosen image lacked the associated marker of femininity, a wedding "*ring*" thus distancing her from the normative notion that women are groomed to be wives. P17 described an image that was found by another participant as wearing a suit which is associated with masculinity while P13 identified the behavior of the constructed subject as "*macho.*" Lastly, P16 vehemently contested this subject in her focus group yet ironically positioned herself within this discourse through her narrative as she juxtaposed her characteristics as both "*professional*" and "*human*." 'Professional' here was seen to denote a cold and distant demeanor when adjacent to the word 'human' which is more warm and caring. These adjectives represent all the forms through which masculinity was performed. In P11's quote the Black woman who is not feminine was able to achieve a level of patriarchal status through the description of her singleness and self-centeredness in the pursuit of her career which are traits afforded to men, because historically men focused on work while women were confined to the home. This finding is in line with Kramer (2010) who found that in the negation of femininity, women were able to adopt masculine subject positions that afforded them a level of patriarchal status.

Because this discourse is rooted in masculinity as these spaces were not previously occupied by women let alone Black women, the negation of one's femininity in this space also makes reference to the discourse of race which is an important thing for intersectionality, because we can see that the discourses are drawing on both the idea that the individual constructed is woman and Black. As such, her successful navigation of this space is doubly if not triply challenged. Therefore, Black women also became reflections of Whiteness in the workplace as these spaces were associated and created for White individuals. Notably, Benschop and Doorewaard, (1998) assert that femininity is not associated with success, and in so doing, underscore the association between the ideal professional, masculinity and race. Yet, akin to a double-edged sword, the power of this construct resides in the fact that women are able to disavow a certain part of themselves, their femininity. In other words, they are able to adopt idealised cultural capital behaviours that make it possible for them to succeed in this space. Evidently, the manner in which Black women have been constructed illustrates a co-option into masculinity to maintain their position and garner respect while defeminising and desexualising themselves. The function of this subject works to undermine feminine characteristics and the identity of women. As evidenced, Black women appear to be seen as Black first, women second (Jangara, 2011) and/or more appropriately, masculine second. As such, Black women blur the line of the rigid gender

dichotomy (Magalhães, 2005) between traditional masculinity and femininity. P16 expresses the blurring of the rigid dichotomy in her account by adopting both masculine ("*professional*") and feminine ("*human")* traits. Therefore, gender and the social construction of gender is not as rigid as it suggests (Kramer, 2010).

In the remaining quotes (e.g. P13 and P17) masculine overtones are heightened in the ability to occupy these spaces, while distancing themselves from the feminine. In this instance, the discourse is reproducing a particular kind of notion of the female professional that is more closely akin to the White female professional, who is more closely related to the White male professional. Accordingly, this works to reproduce notions of Whiteness and gender heteronormativity. This sort of talk reproduces the very things that Black women try to reject. Ultimately, this illustrates how the dominance of Whiteness and the dominance of masculinity continue to weave their way through society post-apartheid and reproduce and/or reinforce the gender hierarchy. This places importance on decolonial theory and the rethinking and unlearning of damaging and exclusionary thinking in these spaces, where these identities and ways of being are favoured and privileged. The constructed subject also challenges the notion of the successful professional by the mere embodiment of this subject as a Black woman, even though the performative nature of this success and respect in the workplace mimics that of White masculinity.

4.1.3. Maintaining the status quo in gendered relations of the workplace: "*To support the Black man*"

We're moving forward but we're still stuck on certain image of what a Black woman should be like or what we're comfortable with Black women being. (P9)

We're happy about media saying, "we wanna focus on Black culture" but the Black culture that they're focusing on is a patriarchal side. They're not looking at strong female leads. I don't know they just silencing us in a way to say, "this is what you're only good for, to support the Black man." (P13)

They weren't on the same level as the Black Panther himself at least the daughters were portrayed as warriors. (P14)

A movie like Hidden Figures, where you're seeing women who are I mean extremely intelligent and they're the ones who solved all the mathematical problems for NASA. (P9)

I had a boyfriend who cooked for me and my friends they were like, "you are a bully." Kere [I said] when I cook for him it's okay then when he cooks for me then I'm a bully kanjani [how]? (P2)

If you're not a bully umloyile [bewitched him]. (P3)

Although years after the women's 'liberation' movement, some of the participants consistently identified regressive constructions in the ways that Black women were positioned and experienced in relation to their male counterparts. As a result, the object of enquiry here is gender while the subject constructed within this discourse is the supportive Black woman. Evidently, the quotations above demonstrate that when it comes to relationships in the workplace, be it in media or romantic relationships, their role is to solely support a man. This support even exists when her position is one uncharacteristic of a subordinated subject as described by P14 and P9.

In this instance, we can see that gender makes reference to race as the woman's Blackness in the construction is associated with the subjugation of the Black community. This is important for intersectionality because of her embodiment as a raced and gendered being, which is coupled with the multiple avenues that a Black woman is doubly discriminated against, compared to that of Black men, White Women and White men. In other words, she is subordinated because she belongs to both raced and gendered identities that remain at the bottom of their respective hierarchies. Interestingly, the mention of "*Black culture*" by P9 alludes to the discourse of media that favours Western constructions of Blackness as opposed to African, or Black representations. Above we see the heteronormative constructions of the Black woman in the display of her femininity, while an identification of counter-heteronormative constructions in P9's utterances of Blackness links to notions of decolonisation within the media and the respectful way in which the Black female body is represented. The supportive Black woman is rendered powerless because she has been constructed in line with heteronormative constructions of Black femininity, and her position in the normative power relation between men and women is therefore maintained. These findings echo a discourse produced in a study by Pauw (2009), who found the reproduction of gendered structures in the workplace and the home.

This construction of the supportive Black woman functions to reinforce patriarchal notions of heteronormative masculinity that renders the rightful place of a woman by the side of a man, as his subordinate as opposed to his lead in film or romantic relationship. In addition, it also reinforces patriarchal discourses about femininity. This finding is in line with media discourses

identified by Sanger (2008) that positions women as passive and vulnerable. This was emphasised further as femininity, which is deemed as weak, was juxtaposed against masculinity which is connected to strength. This therefore, reinforces the patriarchal gender hierarchy and by extension, according to Jangara (2011), legitimises women's rank in the patriarchal gender hierarchy. Not only does this position reinforce the gender order, it works to reproduce racial notions of Blackness and femininity in the racial hierarchy of South Africa by buying into the essential feminine subject as inferior. The quotations by P2 and P3 demonstrate that when women challenge the status quo, they are demonized for it.

In contrast, the intelligent Black women in P9's statement attempts to challenge colonial notions of Black intelligence and Black femininity by resisting essential racial discourse of the intellectually inferior Black individual. However, although these constructions described by P14 and P9 seemingly challenge patriarchal heteronormativity, as they counter positions of femininity as conservative and weak, by women physically working alongside men in the same field, in historically White or male dominated spaces, they inadvertently reproduced and maintained the status quo. The women in *Hidden Figures* (P14) solved mathematical problems for their male superiors while the warriors in P9 supported their male superior, the Black Panther. This reinforces the very ideologies they seek to critique. Therefore, this construction is in line with McRobbie (2009), who asserts that there is a co-option of the feminine subject back into patriarchal discourse through an emphasis on a performance by supporting the man.

Subsequently, "[a]s a form of resistance, patriarchal ideas of women…may be co-opted and re-appropriated in complex ways that challenge the patriarchy" (Jangara, 2011, p. 48) but work to reinforce it at the same time. This phenomenon speaks to all the constructions of Black women that were produced in this theme. It is these textual contradictions that mirror incongruences in the efforts to uphold femininity and challenge a patriarchal society (Fiske, 1987). Additionally, this overall finding mirrors the characterisation of the NSAW by (Gqola, 2016) who both reproduces and challenges colonial notions of femininity. In this way, we see that the overall theme speaks to the 'advancement' of Black women in the workplace while their positionality within this space is undermined. They are both revered for the titles they now hold and at the same time, remain objects of domination as their femininity and Blackness is undermined. Myeni (2014) supports this by stating that although gender quotas have contributed to the increased representation of Black women in government spaces, this does not equate to participation in the decision-making processes. Although the participants contested this construct, it reasserts Black women's position in society. It is evident that blurring the lines of gender roles continues to be

met with resistance in the 'new' South Africa and the notion of the subordinate Black woman is continually reinforced even when ostensibly challenged. As such, we see how Black feminist work is peculiar to the South African context. This finding is reflective of the ongoing construction of Black women who both reproduce normative subjectivity and produce counter-normative subjectivity.

4.2. Beauty and sexuality: The body discourse

Beauty is what women aspire to while sexuality and the sexualisation of the Black female is something that Black women are highly criticised on and experience on a daily basis. This section discusses the ways in which the Black woman's body has been discursively constructed. The Black woman as a (hyper)sexualised being has a long history rooted in colonial misconceptions about Black women as hypersexual. These misconceptions became crystalised over time and continue to manifest themselves in the ways that Black women are understood, perceived and treated in society not only by others but by themselves. In both instances, beauty and sexuality are both concepts tied to the Black feminine subject, in limiting and disparaging ways. Beauty is racialised with the ideal beautiful individual as White while sexuality is gendered with the privileging of men's sexual interests over that of women. The subjects produced in this discourse include the sexualised and sexual Black woman. These constructions fell under the following, The sexual objectification of the Black woman's body: *"Is this a thirst trap?",* and 'Reclaiming' the sexualised body: *'Owning words like slut even'.* The remaining subject produced is the Black woman who is susceptible to media representations and fell under Effects of the media on Black women: "*I've already internalised what Black beauty looks like*." The two former subthemes speak to the ways in which sexist ideology as well as patriarchal and colonial notions of Black femininity manifest themselves in Black women today. The latter speaks to the impact of these ideologies on the ways Black women perceive and think about their beauty, body and subjectivity due to dominant and repetitive constructions of Black women. As a result of this, these subjectivities begin to influence and impact the self-concept of Black women even in the face of progressive representations that exist today.

4.2.1. The sexual objectification of the Black woman's body: "*Is this a thirst trap*[5]*?"*

I also feel like women are objectified a lot in media. We're reduced to their bodies, mainly Black women. (P3)

[5] Refers to the deliberate posting of provocative images/s of yourself to social media in attempt to receive attention.

And someone once said ukhuti [that] if a thick[6] girl wears leggings and a crop top…[people asked] "is this a thirst trap?"…oh is your butt the only thing that's important about you?" If you're thin no one is going to be like, "hawu[7] sisi,[8] why are you wearing leggings?" But the moment you're thick it's "oh really, why would you wear leggings in public?" (P1)

If you see a Black woman there she's either wearing some booty short or swimming costume and we're being overly sexualised. (P13)

And it's like, from my personal experience the way you dress up men think you dress up for them…You know because you even get a White man looking at you with the assets and everything- you're sexualised. You get a Black man looking at that. (P11)

Black women's bodies have been the focus of the male gaze since colonisation. Evidently, this phenomenon continues to be the case. Notably, the position of the sexualised body has changed overtime. During slavery Black women were eroticised, exoticised and dehumanised as expressed in the account of Baartman who represented the very essence of Black femininity. As such, she held no human rights and was often described using scientific jargon akin to the classification of plants and animals (Jackson, 2010). In the current postcolonial terrain, Black women are now afforded the spaces, statuses and subject positions that were strictly reserved for Whites. It is the result of this change, in the reframing of the Black body as human that enables Black women to be positioned in this way. Consequently, "[t]he same sign that is understood in society as a racialisation of [B]lack women's sexuality is used to humanise [B]lack women's social position" (Richardson, 2007, p. 797).

The object of enquiry here is sexuality while participants have positioned Black women as the sexually objectified subject. In line with a study by Sanger (2015) who determined that media tends to hypersexualise Black women, the participants in this study constructed a similar subject, both through the representations they came across during the focus groups as well as in their own daily lived experiences. This is to say that the participants observed how they themselves were sexually objectified by men and how producers of representations of Black women in the media sexually objectify them (e.g. P13). As such, the majority of the participants contested this construction and questioned why the ideal and acceptable standard of Black femininity

[6] A body type that resembles an hourglass figure.
[7] An expression of surprise.
[8] A respectful form of address to a woman.

comprised of a subject constructed within this discourse. This finding echoes a study by Adams-Bass and colleagues (2014) who found that Black women self-reported a belief in the sexualisation of Black women in the media. In this instance, we see that the participants are both raising objections to their sexual objectification and simultaneously caught in the ideology of sexism. This is to say that Black women cannot acknowledge a certain part of themselves, their sexuality while those who gaze are welcome to make her the object of their sexual desire.

The (re)production of this subject in this study highlights the pervasiveness of beliefs about Black women centuries ago (Collins, 2002). "Here we see how the legacy of colonialism and racism that pervades the discourses of much consumer media produced in the [W]est is translated into local media content" (Pilane & Iqani, 2016, p. 129). In this way, we see how the sexuality discourse refers to the intersectional discourses of race and gender as the Black woman's body continues to be a site for the voyeuristic gaze of the male onlooker. This is important for intersectionality and modernity in the duality of her oppression in this manner as a Black woman. The positioning of Black women in this discourse also calls into question the performative nature of bodies and the ways that they are evidently differentiated along sexual, racial, gender, class lines etc. (Gallego, 2016). We see this in the statement by P1.

Because the ideal beauty standard is thinness which is connected to Whiteness and White femininity (Pilane & Iqani, 2016), we see a shift from this normative construction as Blackness and Black femininity become sexualised even though the body of Black women leans more towards the heavier, side. Given that P1 compares the sexualisation and inappropriateness of a "thick" body in leggings to a "thin" body we see why the thicker bodied women is accused of sending 'a thirst trap'. This echoes Muhammad and McArthur's (2015) finding, as their participants also expressed the salience of body size as a marker of sexual objectification. Therefore, the body of Black women in this discourse is constructed as an object of sexual desire. By virtue of this understanding of the body of Black women as erotic, we see why the other statements in this section produce this type of subject, because the clothes expressed by P13 enhance the silhouette and/or exposes the bodies of Black women.

Taking into consideration that the heteronormative discourses concerning sexuality are gendered (Hollway, 1984), (i.e. the female as object of desire and male as subject who desires) the sexually objectified Black woman discourse reproduces the colonial power relations that renders Black women powerless and the male gaze powerful. During the course of producing this subject within the discourse, this subject serves to reinforce the focus of engagement with Black women

on the body. However, it is only through identification that we can then proceed to transformation.

Therefore, the sexually objectified Black woman discourse functions to reproduce heteronormative discourses around the desirability and sexuality of the Black body by reproducing the patriarchal and colonial constructions of Black woman. This discourse illustrates the continued focus on the body by preserving the jezebel rhetoric and colonial gaze of the Black female subject, as she is maintained as the subject of sexual discourse. This construct serves to justify the male gaze (Muhammad & McArthur, 2015) in addition to practices of rape (sexual assault). In sum, the liberated nature of the sexuality of Black femininity continues to be rendered invisible while her body by virtue of inhabiting the gender and racial identities of this subject, sexually available. Black women are no longer plagued by the former normative constructions of the domestic woman, but have transitioned into 'new' forms of subjectivity that continue to dehumanise her in a humanising way, thus reproducing notions of the acceptable Black woman under modernity.

4.2.2. 'Reclaiming' the sexualised body: *"Owning words like slut even"*

> *Also another thing is that, there is this whole feminist movement in reclaiming your body and everything you know, owning words like 'slut' even…I also stole this from a movie but like it got me thinking like are we really reclaiming our bodies or are we just making ourselves comfortable under the male gaze? (P14).*

In response to the previous discourse that devalues the Black female body by subjecting her to the male gaze, this discourse provides a counter to this position. Here, P14 made use of discursive devices that position Black women as sexually agentic by 'reclaiming' words such as "*slut*". The term 'slut', is a direct exemplar of sexism as men are afforded the privileges of engaging with a number of sexual partners unashamedly and without guilt or derogatory name calling while women who engage in the same kind of sexual activity receive criticism. By owning the word 'slut' Black women appear to take back ownership of their sexuality on their own terms, without the burden of guilt or pressure to be a certain type of way (i.e. not promiscuous). In so doing, P14 drew on gender discourse to achieve this. More specifically, she drew on the discourse of feminism that makes it possible to position women in this way. By positioning Black women in this way we see that Black bodies have challenged the ways in which they have been historically crystalised, by dismantling the appeal of the White body as the dominant norm through discursive self-representations and ownership (Gallego, 2016). As a

result, this construct also makes reference to race (colonial discourse) in the way that the Black female is now able to occupy alternate subjectivities as opposed to those that were previously imposed upon her. This journey is characteristic of habitus and the ways in which our secondary habitus, be it media, educational environments and the individuals we meet during this period of our lives, for example, inform and influence the new and alternate dispositions available to us in certain contexts.

Despite the fact that some of the participants acknowledged the existence of this type of subject, they did not directly reject it. In response to her feelings towards this construct P13 said "*we're not saying we're gonna bash a person who's not covered"*. Participants did not outwardly crucify women who exist within this discourse but at the same time they actively distanced themselves from it. Akin to this study, Gallego (2016) identified three novels that journey through the lives of Black women who were once existing in the previous discourse, and concluded their journey by reclaiming their bodies and their sexuality. In so doing, these women have been positioned as agentic beings, seemingly independent of the male gaze and the constructions that exist therein.

Given that P14 goes on to recount an interesting question she recalled in a movie about whether Black women are indeed reclaiming their bodies (as defined by themselves) or making themselves comfortable under the male gaze, this calls into question the tension that exists within this subject of discourse. The sexually agentic Black woman is seen to be in tension with two positions she seemingly straddles, one that exists within this discourse as she actively sexualises herself (i.e. reclaiming the body) while simultaneously and knowingly being the object of sexual desire akin to the previous discourse (i.e. being under the male gaze or more aptly in this discourse, comfortably under the male gaze). Many women appear to lack an awareness of these positions and the similarity between the two but operate as subjects of this discourse under the guise of feminism. Others knowingly occupy this position under duress in order to raise awareness for a cause, including women who engaged in naked protests (see, Xaba, 2017). These protests were held under the risk of sexual assault as a result of the male gaze. As such, there is power in being the object of desire (Hollway, 1984). By actively taking up this position and using the male gaze to her advantage, Black women can use their sexualised body to bring about political change (Xaba, 2017), and profit (Taylor, 2017). Regardless of the reason behind taking up this position, critics like Giraldo (2016) frown upon the self-sexualisation of women as she believes this plays into the sexualised subject characteristic of colonial discourse.

Taking the above into consideration, although this subject provides a counter to the vulnerable asexual Black women described in the previous discourse, it is undeniable that this type of subject works to reproduce, broader colonial discourses of the jezebel and sexualised 'Other'. The sexually agentic Black woman constructed in this discourse operates under the guise of reclaiming, reformulating and refashioning her sexuality and expression of her body independent of the gaze that operates within patriarchy. However, this subject inadvertently feeds into heteronormative notions of femininity and Blackness under patriarchy. Although Black women take up 'alternate' subjectivities, through this lens we see that they are consumers of colonial discourse, producers of colonial discourse, resisters, co-opted and interpolated into colonial discourse and patriarchal positions of femininity, knowing and unknowingly. This is characteristic of the continued gender disparity in South Africa and the high levels of femicide. This is not to justify acts of rape but points to the ways that the male gaze works to enforce its dominance over Black women, by virtue of their respective subject positions as Black women, they remain as sexually objectified. Subsequently, this is the work of habitus in the way that these sexuality dispositions are internalised and embodied by Black women, therefore interpolating them into the very discourse they aim to critique.

4.2.3 Effects of the media on Black women: "*I've already internalised what Black beauty looks like*"

But the damage of what I've seen growing up and like, the portrayal of women and not feeling gorgeous…putting up women who's plus-sized and is putting up a title like, 'she's gorgeous too' doesn't make me feel gorgeous. In fact, I just look at her and I compare her directly to the one, model-type woman who's always been expressed as beautiful and I just can't see what other, plus-sized or different side of women as beautiful because I've already internalised what Black beauty looks like. And even now when you bring different things, I don't see them as beautiful, if that's the effect for me it doesn't work. (P4)

In media…everything revolving around woman especially is made to make us feel as if the way that we are there is something wrong. If it is not my skin it is my weight. If it's not my weight, it's the way that I dress. (P6)

But it's like as much as we know that all this drama is because of soapie but does it not still influence the way we think and view Black women? Does it not make us just feel as if we're hectic, dramatic people you know? And just I don't know speak to our lives and the way we now become…I mean it's a soapie it's expected that's normally what they do. But

as much as we know that's what they're doing it still affects our emotions, it still affects our subconscious…we might know that it's not like that all the time but it still impacts our subconscious of how we view ourselves and other Black women and the life of a Black woman. (P16)

In this section, participants reflect on the way that constructions in the media work to influence and affect those it represents. The discursive devices adopted by the participants produced a type of subject who is susceptible to media representations. As such, the discourse that was used to achieve this was media because this subject was constructed through its influence. By drawing on this discourse, participants position themselves both as outsiders (objects) and insiders (subjects) of the discourse.

As a consequence, Black women who engage in media, internalise these idealised and heteronormative representations which then affects their very being and livelihood, and by extension the ways in which the world at large interacts with them. Therefore, these subjectivities have been popularised and crystalised into the ways in which we as consumers of media expect Black women to look, feel and behave. In this instance, magazines and the media serve as a tool in the identity formation (Pilane & Iqani, 2016) of Black South African women. Similarly, in her study, Littlefield (2008) discovered that the self-perceptions of African American women were considerably affected by normative depictions of Black women in media. We see this discourse active on the ground when we look at the ways in which South African Black women have gravitated towards joining the natural hair movement by wearing their hair natural, even at the risk of expulsion from school (Ngoepe, 2016). This demonstrates how Black women and other racial identities are affected by the representations of Black women in the media as idealised (White) femininity attributed to relaxed hair (Madlela, 2018) among Black women while natural hair has become recently prominent in popular media and thus more desirable to consumers of media. As such, this influence reflects the ways in which identities can be imposed on as a result of apartheid. The very workings of this discourse signify habitus and the process of socialization into the ways we walk, talk, think, act, behave and wear our hair as Black women.

P4 reflects on how the use of media representations of Black women construct our subjectivities and the way we perceive others. This demonstrates the very workings of discourse analysis and the investigation of this study, as her sentiment aligns with Ferguson (1983, as cited in Pilane & Iqani, 2016) who states that magazines define a woman's identity and her position in society. As

such, P4 positions herself and Black women who read magazines as affected subconsciously by these constructions, and the magazine as a mode through which her secondary habitus may be learned. This points to the implications of constructions in the ways that people view and treat Black women. Despite the widespread inclusivity of Black bodies found and discussed in this study, P4 who fits into the "thick" body type as described in The sexual objectification of the Black woman's body*: "Is this a thirst trap?"* discourse, is a prime example of how the normative representation of the beautiful Black woman have worked to colour the way she views herself. Although her body type is sexualised and sought after by many women because it is desirable, she does not perceive her body as remotely appealing or sought after because prior beauty standards and those who were sexualised possessed a slim-figure.

The above demonstrates how the favouring of one representation over the other works in tension with Black women who read it. The discursive practices adopted here work to position herself as a non-normative construction of Black woman, because she does not compare to the slim idealised body that was set years ago. By representing Black women in magazines this creates the space for us to visualise certain types of identities (Branston & Stafford, 2010), and doing so, as observed in P4's account, impacts us psychosocially. It illustrates how idealised femininity is ingrained, even though more women of all shapes are now being represented and celebrated in the media. This occurrence points to the importance of representation and its weight on the identity of Black women "…because power is exercised through forms of communication, which become solidified and naturalised through repetition in discourse" (Pilane & Iqani, p. 130). Contrary to this study, Okop and colleagues (2016) found that although their sample did not fit the idealised body construction, participants celebrated their fuller figured bodies, associating them with beauty and confidence.

P4 and P6 draw on discourses of idealised Black femininity, in order to discuss the ways in which representations have worked to characterise their own subjectivity as unacceptable and "wrong". In this instance, we see that media discourse makes reference to gender in the way it has constructed the subject operating within the discourse. In this way, we see a reproduction of the notions of femininity as weak and vulnerable (Sanger, 2015), characteristic of sexist ideology. As such, their vulnerability opens the door for negative outside influence which impacts how they see themselves. In the same vein, media has also been described as influencing the lives of Black women and those who read these representations. By doing so, we see how this discourse also makes reference to psychology in the process of identity formation. This is evident in the way P16 engages in discourse that accounts for the underlying nature of media,

while P6 identifies the damage of media in stirring up feelings of inadequacy. P16 problematises negative constructions in the way Black women come to perceive themselves and others, which speaks to the damaging ways in which representations work to speak for a group of people. Her statement further demonstrates how negative representations result in negative notions of the self, Blackness and Black subjectivity.

Taking the above into account, the relationship between media and the individual demonstrates the direction of power, as media shapes and influences idealised and problematic notions of Black femininity, and in doing so, alienating those who fall outside of these demarcations. As a result, media possess the power to essentially demonstrate that Black women exist only within the confines that it places them in. These responses raise concerns for the types of representations circulating society about Black femininity, and the dangers that an idealised and fixed identity has on Black women. As such, this discourse serves as a discursive exclusion of other forms of subjectivity. This discourse feeds into heteronormative notions of beauty and Blackness. Additionally, it highlights the intersectionality between Blackness and femininity. However, the construction of particular kinds of notions of Blackness has shifted. The notion of Blackness has shifted from one that was not considered to be sexualised to one that is sexualised on particular terms. As such, this Blackness then intersects with notions of femininity which has been framed particularly within this discourse. There has been a continuous reproduction of the strong Black woman trope. However, this trope is undermined in this discourse due to the reproduction of traditional and normative notions of femininity as weak and vulnerable (Sanger, 2015) as the participants succumbed to idealised notions of beauty and subjectivity which informed their own self-concepts and identities. As a result, the fundamental consequence of the above is that Black femininity is seemingly constructed as a mimicry of White femininity. Evidently, the dominance of one version of femininity results in the erasure of imagining alternate forms of beauty and self-worth (Pilane & Iqani, 2016). In this way, we see how and why Black feminism is manifested uniquely within the South African context.

4.3 The difficulties of being a Black woman: Post-apartheid discourse

> *Like everything, every like hardship is inexplicably linked and we are feeling the most…the most pressure from it (P14).*

The injustices of the past with regards to both race and gender, have a significant bearing on the lives and the ways Black women construct themselves and others living under the appearance of liberation (Smith, 1996). In other words, the apartheid regime, which was patriarchal in

orientation, has left traces on the lives of Black women today. These constructions tend to reflect the relations of power and the way they operate at the intersection of race, gender, class and other social identities to affect the way Black women position themselves. As such, as expressed by P14, these relations of power are linked and traced back to the intersectional relations of power experienced by virtue of Black women's inferior gender and raced positioning in the social hierarchy. In light of this, the following discourses produced include Black women and the inseparable reality of a struggle: "*You can't have it all*, "The Strong Black Woman: "*You shouldn't cry*" and The downside of feminism in the home: "*You are a bully*." Participants are seen to draw from discourses of gender, race and media as they negotiate their representations and subjective identities. Even though we live in a democracy where new subjectivities are on the rise in terms of the social positions we are able to occupy and the older ones are seemingly being left behind, Black women are still, whether it be through media or a lived experience, tied to the realities that former generations were plagued by.

4.3.1. Black women and the inseparable reality of a struggle: "*You can't have it all*"

...she's being abused there on Generations. Here's Goodness she took someone's man now she's struggling cause the man raped her…Even in things like maybe Being Mary Jane…She's so accomplished she can't love. She's so accomplished she's busy with her career and now she can't produce children. (P1)

...their lives fall apart. (P15)

This woman, actually she's fed up about Zola denying her baby. (P2)

I feel like you can't have it all. (P4)

...she was cheated on. (P6)

...you're this woman who's got a sick child and I just see her crying and maybe too in those uh dumpy places…she just lives in poverty. (P16)

Black women have never had it easy. The impact of colonisation and the apartheid system had on the lives of Black women by virtue of their raced and gendered identities continues to be felt, experienced and represented in media today. In response to a question about representations participants disagreed with, they began to produce countless instances of Black women who have experienced some sort of "struggle" or hardship in their lives. Some of the struggles, for example, as identified by P16 are the direct result of apartheid as the Black population continues

to experience a disproportionate level of poverty (Iqani & Kenny, 2015). Other "struggles" mentioned by the other women which are relational, may be influenced by the long lasting effects of patriarchy's insidious ways in which the system manifests itself in our romantic relationships today (e.g. cheating, denial of a baby, rape, abuse, being a single mother). As such, the advantages of being a part of a traditional home in this discourse are challenged as Black women are single mothers or childless and cheated on, and represent in many ways a broken home. This in essence challenges the traditional family structure of a two parent household (Day, 2013). In a study conducted by de Laat (2019), a similar finding existed. In the study de Laat (2019) found that heterosexual relationships were racialised along categories of race and gender, with Black female artists singing about infidelity at a higher frequency than White female artists. In addition, some "struggles" as identified by P1 arise due to Black women's mobility in society, especially in the labour market which allows them to occupy historically White working spaces and intellectually contribute as discussed in The 'emergence' of the Black woman professional: "*We've also been stereotyped to be quite slow*." The success and accomplishment of their careers over a long period of time leaves no room for a romantic relationship and as such, the viable age to fall pregnant and carry a child passes.

Due to the nature of the construction by the participants, the subject in this discourse is positioned as the struggling Black woman. Even in the face of accomplishments as described in the statement by P1 she still experiences some form of difficulty in her interpersonal life. The object this discourse speaks to is race, as the lives of the Black community historically have been filled with hardship, turmoil and grief. The way in which the "struggle" seems to be ingrained in the DNA of Black individuals and more specifically Black women, is indicative of habitus and the world in which Blackness has been received, treated, and experienced. It is no wonder P4 expressed that "*you can't have it all*". As raced and gendered beings, Black women remain at the bottom of the raced and gendered hierarchy, which is indicative of intersectionality as the systems of oppression and discrimination continue to colour the subjectivity of Black women in media and continue to essentialise her identity.

In describing this subject, race also made reference to gender, in the way that Black women have been described to disproportionally experience relational ills that have been inflicted on them by men (Tounsel, 2015). Although these difficulties were expressed as being overly romanticised, and dramatic depictions of Black femininity and subjectivity by the participants, these were highly contested by the majority of the participants. One agent who was equally contested for reproducing and circulating these problematic and limiting identities was Tyler Perry. When

asked why they had a problem with him P17 stated that "*all of his movies play into the stereotypes about Black women".* Even though Perry does not necessarily represent South African women, the participants still contested the ways he represents Black women. Given that media symbolically represents the identities of Black women, it influences the way others who read these constructions come to make sense of the subjectivity of Black women. By Perry claiming to speak on behalf of all Black women, this illustrates how Black individuals themselves perpetuate problematic Black identities. This belief mirrors that of Tounsel (2015), who observes how problematic to the Black female narrative these are. Thus indicating that discourses outside of Africa, affect those within Africa and how others perceive them. Because these constructions place men as the sole cause of women's lives falling apart, whether it be as a result of verbal, physical or sexual abuse (Tounsel, 2015), this indicates that violence against women follows them wherever they go, be it, in the home, or where people socially convene (Gqola, 2007, as cited in Jangara, 2011). The discussion about this construct in one of the focus groups, brought on a heated debate about the relevance of positioning Black women in this way. In the process one participant questioned why White women do not struggle:

P1: *But then look at White women, why aren't they struggling?*

P4: *Because maybe the reality is that they don't struggle, maybe- I don't know, I'm not White. But I'm just saying, White women relate to White women stories without struggle because they don't struggle in reality. I'm just saying I'm would- I'm not-*

P1: *No I get what you mean.*

P4 attributed the nonexistence of the performative nature of a White female struggle to the notion that perhaps it is not their reality. This in part may be attributed to the privilege they possess by belonging to a privileged race category but does not completely absolve them of a struggle story because of their gender. Upon coming to terms with the reality of this, P2 and P4 identified the possible cause of the way in which the Black feminine narrative is laced with a struggle element:

P4: *Is it true though maybe it's true, maybe we struggle. Or maybe-*

P1: *No but we can't keep representing that.*

P2: *Eya [Yes]*

P1: *So are you saying there's, there's not a Black woman who-*

P2: *Who can make it without the-*

P1: Iyah who's happy. We're always struggling with something you can't really have it all as Black women.

P2: Because like when it comes to the fact that like even when you are Black woman and not famous I mean you see Black women goes through the struggle to you it becomes like oh natural kore [it says] we are bound to be natural…we are born like this.

Participants finalised the point by coming to an agreement of the type of subject as negative towards the representation of Black women, despite this also being a lived reality for many Black women. It is clear that the issue is not the representation in and of itself, but the continued perpetuation of this construct even through acknowledgement of this as part of the Black female experience. Therefore, this struggle in many ways is related to the burden of inequalities that plague certain individuals by way of belonging to a certain race, gender and class identity. Similarly, a study conducted by Mophosho (2013) found that the burden of history still plagues Black women who continue to experience inequality (i.e. access to resources). The struggling Black woman, serves to (re)produce and reinforce patriarchy and colonial notions of Black women as weak, vulnerable subjects (Sanger, 2015) as well as poverty strickenness that essentialises Black subjectivity. As such, this discourse serves to reinsert Black women into essentialist discursive practices that were prevalent centuries ago (Collins, 2002). Similarly, this discourse also challenges the ideology of a committed relationship and/or nuclear family, which ascribes benefits to the involvement in a committed relationship as opposed to single life (Day, 2013). Therefore, because colonialism and patriarchy have caused great damage to the Black population, Black women will continue to reproduce non-traditional family structures because these have been habitually created and experienced through habitus. Given that Black women are struggling, it is no wonder the strong Black woman was birthed.

4.3.2. The Strong Black Woman: "*You shouldn't cry.*"

…she appears to be…courageous, strong. (P2)

I think I get what you're talking about, kind of the very strong woman able to withstand any kind of trauma and always powering through. (P17)

On the other hand, I'll be more emotional and that's a side that Black woman shouldn't have or I mean the way I was brought up is that a Black woman shouldn't be emotional,

you shouldn't cry, you should always be working, always be pushing forward and emotions are put aside and things like that. (P9)

We are…going through so much stuff we have to endure not only racism but sexism too. (P14)

Also the strong Black woman agenda they're trying to push. I feel like as much as people like complain they like I'm not sure of this is relevant to the topic, you know when they say uh "men don't cry." And now men are like "iyah because of those sayings" now men cannot like express their feelings…I feel like the strong Black woman, the one who can deal with everything, superwoman is also not good for the mental health of like an average Black woman cause you feel like you want to talk but then cause like there is this image that you feel you have to live up to you cannot like ask for help when like things are like too much. (P7).

The strong Black woman is a trope that describes women who are capable of overcoming and coping with emotional distress (Nelson et al., 2016). Akin to Nelson and colleagues' (2016) description, this subject speaks to that. However, upon taking a closer look, participants made use of discursive devices that constructed the strong Black woman as a woman who subverts her femininity in order to face and endure the perils of life unaffected. It is evident that the object of discourse the participants drew on was gender. The way in which gender or femininity is expressed however mimics masculinity. However, by virtue of this performance originating from women, this subject provides a counter to femininity that is weak and vulnerable (Sanger, 2015).

The particular subject constructed positions Black women as inevitably faced with challenges and hardships (as discussed in the previous discourse section). In doing so, this discourse makes reference to race as the Black community have historically been plagued with adversities that are unique to the Black experience as a result of the colonial past. In this instance, we see that this is important for both intersectionality, because of the dual oppression experienced by Black women as expressed by P14, in addition to class struggles. This discourse serves to shield Black women against the effects of the previous discourse (Black women and the inseparable reality of a struggle: "*You can't have it all"*) at the expense of their femininity. As such, her power lies in the ability to negate her femininity in favour of a masculine identity that does not feel or succumb to emotions.

In the statements above, participants positioned a feminine subject while drawing on discourse that negates normative emotional feminine traits in favour of ones that mimic masculinity, these include *"strong", "endure", "courage"* and "*emotions are put to the side*". Although most of the participants described modes of masculinity in the way she subverted her femininity, P9 embodied this disposition while narrating her formative years. This was produced through aggressive mannerisms by sharply hitting her fist against her open palm hand after each brief pause in her speech. Consequently, her hands served as a vehicle through which masculinity was observed. Because P9's characteristics were instilled during her childhood, we see how the primary habitus (that of her home) made it possible for her to develop the dispositions she embodied, and how the secondary habitus may have influenced her rejection of this construct as she no longer aligns herself with this subject. Despite the subversion of femininity, this construct is both feminised in the gendered trials faced and masculinised in the way she has to face these experiences. The duality of Black women in this regard appears to be intrinsic to the way her subjectivity is accepted, experienced and described.

Along with Mojapelo (2019) who cautions against romanticising the suffering of Black women, P7 expresses concern over this construction and its negative effects. In her framing of the strong Black woman, P7 draws on patriarchal discourse as she juxtaposes the construction with traditional masculinity that distances itself from the expression of emotions that are associated with femininity. The use of "*average*" directs our attention to the notion that this construct may be of no consequence when portrayed in popular media, but detrimental when adopted by women like herself. P7 is also seen as drawing on psychology discourse in challenging this construction by expressing a lack of seeking out assistance "*when things are too much*". Thus pointing to the notion that this construct is more harmful to Black women than helpful (Mojapelo, 2019). This discourse is in line with findings by Etowa, Beagan, Eghan and Bernard (2017). Their study found that embodying the strong Black woman negatively affects one's mental health. This problematisation however is in contrast to Smith (1996), who critiques and questions why we feel the need to highlight problematic Black femininity, yet leave the issue of power relations that are oppressive unchallenged. In this way, we see how this position may work to justify the poor treatment and care Black women receive in all aspects of their lives.

Evidently, the construction of the strong Black woman communicates the notion that Black women are conditioned into perpetual hardship under modernity and "*have to endure sexism and racism*" (P14), and in order to survive this navigation, one does so by subverting their femininity. This is reflective in the way that the famous Zulu phrase 'wathint'umfazi, wathint'imbokodo',

popularised during the apartheid struggle, continues to make its way into the lives of student protesters today, for example, #Mbokodoleads was the name of a WhatsApp group created by Black women protestors (Dlakavu, 2015).

Consequently, this discourse reflects those of broader discourses by reproducing normative patriarchal constructions of masculinity as courageous, strong and determined, while further oppressing the feminine. It also works to reproduce the systems that oppress Blackness and Black womanhood, by normalizing and legitimizing hardship in the Black community. Contrary to its damaging effects, this construct does provide a counter-normative notion by challenging sexist notions of femininity as weak, even though the women in this discourse drew on masculine traits. Furthermore, the strong Black women counters historical constructions of Black women as the mammy and jezebel tropes and thus provide alternative modes in which Black womanhood can be understood, albeit its damaging ramifications.

4.3.3. The downside of feminism in the home: "*Your feminism is a problem"*

It's like my sister, my sister…her marriage is on the rocks…cause her husband is like, she doesn't cook, she doesn't iron and put out my clothes and everything. And my sister is literally like, "ungazongibhedela unezandla [don't disrespect me, you have hands]." And then it became a big thing where the husband's family had to come report ekhaya [at home], saying, "the bride does not cook." And my sister is like, "when I get home I find him sitting, watching Supersport with his legs up. I'm just as tired as you." And my sister is like, "at least if beka irice [he cooked the rice][9]" you know?…So now the thing is what the in-laws are saying is "uZinhle[10] because ufundile [educated] she thinks she thinks she can behave nje ngomlungu [like a White person]"…So it comes back to the thing yokuthi [of], if you just deviate a bit from what is expected of you as a Black woman then you're angry and nje your feminism is a problem. (P1)

In light of the general shift in traditional constructions of femininity and masculinity, participants produced a type of subject who is seen to disavow her Blackness in favour of Whiteness. The object of enquiry that participants drew on to construct this subject is race and more specifically, Blackness. Because the construction of Blackness arising out of colonial ideology has a long history attached to domestic work, the performative nature of Blackness constructed in this discourse is believed to be questionable. Therefore, the subject of this discourse is co-opted into

[9] Direct translation means putting the rice on the stove but is colloquially understood to mean that he cooked the rice
[10] Name changed

Whiteness by 'neglecting' her traditional feminine and cultural roles that ascribe woman's rightful duties to her husband and home.

Her Whiteness is performed through the unfulfillment of her wifely and cultural duties which include cooking, cleaning, ironing and putting out her husband's clothes. This displays how Black women both counter normative gender roles by working outside of the home while being expected to be subservient in the home (Shefer et al., 2008). In this instance, we see how Blackness is juxtaposed to Whiteness. Whiteness in this discourse is equated to being educated and non-traditional in the way feminism affords Black women the opportunity to navigate and run a household, which opposes traditional Black notions of being a wife. This in turn brings about a desire for equality in the home where masculinity and its sexist notions of dominance are set aside. By contrast, Blackness is traditional and subscribes to patriarchal heteronormative gender relations and mandated labour roles in the home. In this discourse, the Black woman is progressive because she works outside of the home and thus lives up to feminist notions of equality. On the other hand, this feminist ideal is expected to be left outside of the home in favour of traditional gender roles that mandate a division of labour in the home. In this instance, we see a splitting of one's femininity, one that challenges sexist ideology in public while the other is subject to it in private. As a result, the feminism ideal is not fully actualised as it is stifled in the home, by the husband and in-laws. This finding is contrary to a study conducted by Shefer and colleagues (2008). In the study, they found that their participants reproduced traditional gender roles in the home. In addition, the study also found that participants acknowledged a redefinition of and/or doing away with gender roles in the home and this study sees a reproduction of that (even though there was contestation and unacceptance of this). The participant here, expressed how deviating from traditional gender roles results in the labelling of one as "*angry*" with the view of desiring equality in the home, problematic by others. In this instance, we see why participants in a study by Pauw (2009) distanced themselves from this construct. As such, even when a woman returns home from work after her husband, she is still expected to fulfil her duties at the expense of her tiredness. It is these instances, that concern women like Gqola (2016) who wonder whether feminism will be actualised.

The performativity of race in this discourse makes reference to gendered discourses that ascribe particular roles to men and women. In this instance, we see that women are caretakers to the household in which they live. It is a construct that has a set of fixed expectations (Pauw, 2009). As such, power here is wielded when Black women embody the ideals of feminism, and by extension, Whiteness. In this instance, we see that normative notions of femininity intersect with

counter-normative notions of Blackness to produce a Black wife who is more closely akin to a White wife. Evidently, this discourse works to co-opt Black women into Whiteness in the way that she embodies her gendered and raced identity. In light of the fact that Black women have historically been confined to the home and in service of others, what is concealed beneath this discourse is a subject that challenges this sexist, racialised and cultured notion of Black femininity. This is due to the above construction of Black femininity in this discourse which is, in addition to being co-opted into Whiteness, no longer reduced to colonial and patriarchal roles and duties that require her to serve her husband.

Consequently, the overall construction of Black women in this discourse works to replicate systems that oppress Blackness and womanhood by legitimising adversity in the Black community and amongst Black women more specifically. Though there have been instances of counter-normative constructions of Black femininity which has showcased her advancement, her strength and autonomy, these same constructions have thrust her back into normative notions that have reproduced her struggle, her loneliness and servitude. These counter-normative constructions have worked to redefine her femininity and Blackness. The normative constructions, on the other hand, have worked to re-inscribe dominant notions of femininity, and Blackness within a relational context. Evidently, the construction of Black women in this discourse demonstrates the traces of the apartheid regime that has been left behind and how they manifest themselves in the lives of Black women today.

4.4 Normative constructions of Black femininity: Essentialising discourse

This discourse speaks to the different ways in which Black women have been essentialised within the media. As such, Black women in this discourse appear as both representatives of their race and exceptions to their race, in the way media has produced notions of Black femininity. In the construction of these subjects, the participants drew on colonial notions of Blackness which both worked to reproduce and challenge Black femininity in this context. As a consequence of this discourse the following subthemes were formed, Idealised femininity: Racially ambiguous and its counter, The ‘emergence’ of the African woman: Racially unambiguous. The significance of the presence of these contrasting subthemes points to the transformation of the representation of Black femininity in the media landscape.

4.4.1. Idealised femininity: Racially ambiguous

…most you know platforms like propel a Eurocentric view of beauty (P14)

They also made like light skin like the standard also (P5)

My lady, I took her causes she's such a conundrum to me. I know she's called Black…is she really Black? But anyway I'm told that she's Black. You know? But she doesn't have any of the features that Black Africans have. Yet she is, you know she- you know she-like in mainstream she's is called Black. You know, cause we just have White and Black and then this is what like we aspire towards, to have like the perfect curly hair like, weave texture curly hair amazing lips, and like subtle olive skin and this is what Black is. And for me I was flipping through this magazine Cosmopolitan, international, and this is mostly the representation of Black women. (P4)

And I feel like that's how society like accepts when like they accept you only if you have like a weave, only if you wear makeup. (P10)

In this section, participants are seen to produce a kind of subject who is racially ambiguous in the presentation of her Blackness. This is seen in the way her skin, hair, and lips proximate White features. By constructing her in this way, participants are seen to draw on race discourse as they make use of adjectives that distance her from what we understand to be Black features. In particular, P4's statement illustrates her hesitation and uncertainty with even labelling the image she had chosen as Black. She also went on to conclude that this subject is the type of Black femininity represented in popular magazines. By circulating this type of Blackness we see how P10's statement seems plausible in the acceptance of Black women in society, if she is valued in media she is valued by everyone else. By contrast, this subject challenges colonial notions of Black femininity through the (re)presentation of Blackness that is closer to Whiteness. This type of Black femininity points to the misrepresentation of Black women and the implications of favouring certain bodies of women over others. In doing so, it excludes a diverse range of body types, skin tones and hair textures from what is considered to be appreciated and accepted (Pilane & Iqani, 2016).

Because women aspire towards the images we see in magazines, this type of subject promotes an unhealthy image and sense of self in those who do not resemble her features. Similar to these findings, a study conducted by Pilane and Iqani (2016) found that of the Black women who were featured in *Glamour* magazine, majority of the type of beauty they reflected was that of White femininity (thin body and a weave). The only marker of Blackness was their skin tone. Ostensibly, White femininity continues to be favoured and perpetuated in South Africa as celebrities also conform to these ideals of beauty (Motseki & Oyedemi, 2017). In this instance, habitus is at play as it reveals the internalisation of these beauty ideals in the upbringing of

young Black women, and over time cemented their ideals of beauty that favours Whiteness due to its continued perpetuation.

In the production of this discourse, Black women also drew on media discourse by highlighting the way in which it propels a certain type of beauty for Black women. As such, media possesses the power to include and exclude certain types of women from beauty standards, which has real implications for the way those who are excluded see themselves and formulate their identities around these ideas (explored in the previous discourse, Effects of the media on Black women: "*I've already internalised what Black beauty looks like*"). Participants of this study distanced themselves from this construct. One participant even mentioned that she battled to find an image of Black woman in one of the magazines, perhaps this was in part due to Black women who were present but racially ambiguous.

Evidently, this discourse functions to reproduce, reinforce and legitimise idealised femininity, which is that of White femininity. By using light-skinned Black women, this calls into question the idealization of Whiteness and the ways in which colonialism has determined the valuable and invaluable, desirable and the undesirable, beautiful and the ugly. In this way, we see that this discourse reproduces notions of colourism and the positive connotations that are coupled with having lighter skin (i.e. beauty, social capital), and by default the negative associations of darker skin. Hassan (2018) points out that the very word 'dark' is symbolically coupled with inferiority, savagery and ugliness. Therefore, light skin is not quite White but a palatable representation of Blackness whereas dark skin is too Black and too threatening. As such, this subject also reproduces acceptable notions of Blackness. Because Black women only possess value as aspirational in the market (Pilane & Iqani, 2016), i.e. market consumers, it is no wonder the image of a Black woman worthy of aspiration is closer to that of a White woman. In this instance we see that lighter skinned women thus possess the power to capitalise on their features due to the cultural and societal capital that their skin tone possesses (Glenn, 2008).

So, although magazines are displaying Black women in their pages, categorising them as beautiful, the type of Black women idealised is problematic as they possess little to no distinctive features that illustrate their Blackness. In the same vein, this discourse inadvertently questions the Blackness of everyday women who look like this, and are indeed Black. More specifically, P14 recounted a time where her Blackness was questioned as she stated, *Cause I might not be dark that does not make me any less Black than the person who may be next to me or whatever*. From this we see that, "[t]he problem with such absolute statements and rigid views is that they

serve to delineate who qualifies as a real African/Black" (Letshufi, 2016, p. 24). In light of this, it is understandable why there is a call for decolonisation in South Africa. Although we are called to decolonise institutions of knowledge production, we should also be called to decolonise Western notions of beauty in the pursuit to accurately represent Black women in celebration of their Blackness in all its shades. This subject also challenges essential notions of Blackness from colonial ideology through the use of facial and skin markers that oppose some of those under which Baartman was described as. The social movements of the anti-racism past worked to valorise the Black community (Gqola, 2001). In this way we see that Blackness was never idealised or considered beautiful or acceptable in society, not until it seemly approximated Whiteness.

4.4.2. The 'emergence' of the African woman: Racially unambiguous

Okay I have an image of a woman and she's wearing traditional African clothes that we'd wear to like weddings or like special ceremonies and stuff. (P10)

…because usually in the past when you would see a Black woman she'd be like racially ambiguous right? And she'd be defined as Black, she'd have you know a weave on. Here you're wearing natural hair, minimal makeup you know dressed the way she likes, representing her hetero self on a magazine cover without any changes to her normal appearance. (P8)

…typical Black girl modelling, cause I feel like all of them, well let me say it's a new wave, it's a new trend for most of them to be like really dark-skinned (P1)

Well the picture I have right now it's like she's very you know? The way she's being represented is very Afrocentric, true to African roots and everything, like proud of her blackness and everything. She does not have your weaves and you know other forms of bling. She chose to you know, you know dawn herself with you know African you know jewellery and she covered up her hair with a head wrap so yeah. (P14)

In stark contrast to the discourse discussed above, we see a shift in the way Black women have been constructed in the popular media. With this shift, participants expressed an appreciation for the ways in which Black femininity is now being constructed and Blackness embraced. All participants were found to celebrate this transformation while some participants felt that more of these types of women needed to appear in the media, and others felt that there was both a maintenance of Western standards of beauty as well as a return towards African notions of

beauty and Black femininity. What is pertinent to this discourse is the mere fact that Black women are being unashamedly and unambiguously raced. As such, participants drew on the discourse of race to produce a subject who is unambiguously Black. By doing, so the participants also drew on essentialist racial discourse that positions Blackness in juxtaposition to Whiteness. For many years, Black women have had to contend with being devalued and only being able to attain some sort of validation by adopting and conforming to Western standards of beauty, but it is evident that this is no longer the case. The title is so aptly named because Black as expressed in the previous discourse (Idealised femininity: Racially ambiguous), denoted a Westernised standard of beauty. The African woman as expressed by the participants who made use of this term to identify her Blackness as heightened and rooted in Afrocentrism in this discourse, is unambiguously Black. This was expressed in the way that P8 juxtaposed the White standard of beauty to the Black standard of beauty. It is a Blackness that is unfiltered, unmediated and uninfluenced by European notions of beauty.

This subject was often described as being proudly Black, exuding African pride as she dawned a smile on her face to signify this. The modes in which her Blackness were communicated include clothing, hair, skin shade and jewellery. In this way, contrary to modernity and remnants of colonialism, the significant features that make up this subject which are rejected by Western standards, are celebrated in this discourse. This finding is contrary to Motseki and Oyedemi (2017), who found that participants valued a propensity towards White ideals of beauty. Natural hair was another mode of Blackness that was embraced, even in the midst of the ongoing controversy that comes with the subject of Black hair. However, its natural state is moving into the realm of being loved, valued and desired. There is no longer a demarcation between ‘good’ hair and ‘bad’ hair (Erasmus, 1997), as natural hair continues to be embraced and represented in the media. However, this love for natural hair is still being challenged in educational and professional institutions (Ngoepe, 2016) where ideal Western notions of femininity prevail.

In view of this, the ‘emergence’ of the African woman illustrates the relearning of Blackness, a re-inscription of the beauty of Blackness and return to Blackness within the Black population. This was evident within the participants themselves. Most of the women were seen to align themselves with this subject as the dominant hairstyles worn in the focus groups included, head wraps, braids, and natural hair. Consequently, we are seeing a return to the African woman in South Africa. By producing this subject, Black women also drew on the discourse of media by contesting the normative representation of beauty.

The function of this discourse is to challenge notions of idealised femininity and dismantle the standard of beauty. This is done by removing exclusionary notions of normative femininity in addition to challenging the ideology of colourism and hair texture. Therefore, Black women do not have to adopt or distance themselves from their Blackness in all its forms (i.e. skin, hair and dress code) to be deemed as beautiful, but rather, accept and contest European beauty by staying true to themselves. This discourse therefore widens Black femininity and Black subjectivity by incorporating and shining a light on other neglected forms and shades of beauty. Evidently, the 'emergence' of this discourse also highlights the decolonisation of beauty standards that is on the rise, although they are not completely removed from performative modes of Whiteness, Black women have definitely taken strides to distance themselves from it by accepting themselves. On the other hand, this discourse inadvertently reproduces colonialist notions of essential Blackness and Black femininity that is completely in juxtaposition to Whiteness in every shape and form, and as a consequence, 'Othered'.

Taken together, the overall discourse sheds light on the internal ambiguities about what it means to be a Black woman. In this instance, we see how we both seek a doing away of race as Black women were constructed as racially ambiguous and at the same time, we continue to hold onto it as an essentialised marker of identity. In this manner, race as a construct is both contested and reproduced. In this discourse, we see that idealized femininity houses an identity who both reproduces idealized femininity which is a mimicry of White femininity while challenging colonial notions of Blackness as she appears racially ambiguous. On the other hand, Black women challenge this idealized femininity by reproducing colonial notions of essential Blackness because the Black woman is racially unambiguous. In some way or another, we see that Black woman are either a representative of their race or an exception. In doing so, this essentialisation attributes natural hair and skin tone to an authentic Blackness thereby confining the practices of Black culture "to the body and 'race' to biology." (Erasmus, 2000, p. 5).

4.5. Non-normative constructions of Black femininity: De-essentialising discourse

> *…people are aware of the fact that there's not a specific picture of what a Black woman is. (P17)*

Contrary to the aforementioned theme, discourses produced here draw on post-apartheid femininity that makes it possible to construct the Black woman in non-normative ways, which in turn highlights the possibilities for alternate subjectivity. This is expressed by P17 who asserts that there is an awareness of various forms of Black femininity. Consequently. this discourse

produced a de-essentialising construction of Blackness and femininity. As such, discourses of this nature include, Failure to meet the Black standard: "*You're not Black enough*" and Atypical display of Black femininity: "*You know not just loud and as they say ignorant."* These discourses were produced as a result of the opportunities that were afforded to Black women post-apartheid in addition to an acceptance of self, in an attempt to no longer conform to heteronormative societal standards of Black femininity that women have been subjected to for a millennium.

4.5.1. Failure to meet the Black standard: "*You're not Black enough"*

…that's what's most important, if you don't have a big butt you're not black enough. *(P3)*

If I can say that uh also being seen as a coconut (P9)

I was told by a lot of people many times that I do not act my race. Do you understand what I'm saying? So people perceived me as, cause I'm from a township so the people in my township and the people in my school who were Black would perceive, as someone who was trying to deviate from the traditional Black ways and I was crucified for it many times because of the way that I spoke or the way that I behaved because it didn't really fit the norm that they were used to especially for a township girl. So I was perceived as not proud of being Black which I hated. (P6)

…I went to a multiracial school it was high posh, it wasn't- but it was very multiracial one of the rules were though shall speak English…You not allowed to speak any other language because we're so multiracial. And I mean it was in the South so it wasn't posh but as a result a lot of the time when I'm with Black people because we've created this image of how a Black person is then I think sometimes people think I'm a snob. (P16)

In response to how the participants were treated by society as Black women from the understanding that media representation affects the way others perceive us, the participants reported being positioned as someone who is inadequately Black by other members of the Black population, while drawing on essentialising race discourses to do so. This positioning denotes a distinctive way in which Blackness is performed (Kiguwa, 2019). The discursive production of this subject is no surprise as the Blackness of Black individuals has a history of being critiqued with labels assigned to those who fall short as, fake, 'sell out,' not Black and/or African enough

(de Coninck, 2018). Contrary to this belief by some members of the Black population, the participants contested this positioning and expressed disdain towards these accusations. In line with being labelled a coconut and its distancing effect of the individual from the larger group (Kiguwa, 2014), those who labelled the participants 'coconut' did so in an act to distance them from the rest of the authentic Black population. Through this distancing we see how Blackness is limited to a particular way of being while ousting of other forms of Blackness. Nonetheless, the construction of the subject occurred discursively through body size, language, accent and behavior.

The statement made by P3 directs us to the way in which the Black body as we know it has come to be represented in all forms of media, dating back to Baartman as the epitome of the Black female body. As such, others who have been conditioned into this line of thinking feel that the absence of a markedly pronounced "*butt*" diminishes one's Blackness. Other statements expressed by P9, P6 and P16 denotes the way in which the assigned label is understood in juxtaposition to township and/or colonial expressions of Blackness, one being the use of the English language in P16's utterance and the way in which one speaks (accent) in P6's utterance. It is these productions that arguably speak to class differences, but in doing so, also speak to unacceptable forms of Blackness. Therefore, the inauthentic Black woman speaks English amongst her own racial group and speaks it with an accent whereas, authentic Black women do not. It is through this labelling that sees the work of Fanon (2008) enacted as those who provided the label appear to call out the performative nature of an identity in which they feel is imposed upon by the Western society. Evidently, this Black gaze stratifies the way in which Blackness of the middle-class comes to be understood as different from those in working-class (de Coninck, 2018). In a study by Canham and Williams (2016), a similar finding existed. In the study, Black participants reported receiving critique from the Black gaze and you see a reproduction of that in this discourse. The way in which their Blackness is policed centralises the second consciousness as theorised by Du Bois (2008), as the women are subjected to questions of authenticity from their own as if it isn't hard enough existing in a world that continually works to 'Other' them.

The production of this discourse demonstrates the implications of belonging to different classes, and the ways in which this has become racialised in South Africa and the world. As a result of this class racialisation, it is not possible to enact alternative forms of racial performativity because when you do, you are labelled a 'coconut.' The further one lies on the spectrum of Blackness the closer they are to Whiteness. The continued labelling of this subject in this moment demonstrates how the discursive construction of race (de Coninck, 2018) is highly

contentious and complex. As a subject of this discourse, it is undoubtedly difficult to navigate and negotiate one's identity under modernity. This highlights the lasting effects of apartheid and colonialism in the minds of the 'real' Black population, who take it upon themselves to define the Black identity, what it is and what it is not.

This discourse calls into question habitus and the way that stratification along class lines produce different performances and experiences of Blackness. It differentiates the Black identity that results in the different ways in which Black people as a homogenous group have been socialised into the several Black identities we see today. As such, this discourse draws on referent discourses of class and the way it has been racialised. Evidently, the Black gaze "inhibits class progress and the habitus of how [B]lack people occupy middle classness (Canham & Williams, p. 26). Similarly, we see the importance of intersectionality in the way that Blackness is differentiated, as race intersects with other social categories such as class to produce a type of Black woman that differs from the next.

Relations of power are seen in the way that colonial and apartheid notions of Blackness continue to re-enact themselves in the way that Black individuals police other Black individuals. As a consequence of this, this discourse works to reproduce colonial and essential racialising discourse on Blackness, behavior and subjectivity. As such, by being a Black woman who is inadequately Black, one is co-opted into Whiteness, through the 'removal' of the intersecting identities of women through the isolation and centralization of race. This act goes against the tenets of intersectionality and the way an individual should be understood. This centralisation conceals the Black experience of the inadequate Black woman by rendering her other social identities of gender, class, culture, sexuality etc. irrelevant. As such, "Blackness in this context becomes a contested marker of subjectivity characterised by contradictions, ambiguity, conflict and even disciplinary practices of self-surveillance" (Kiguwa, 2014, p. 101). However, by understanding these as working in tandem (i.e. race and class) we understand the differences of Blackness within the Black population (Crenshaw, 1991). Therefore, the production of this type of subject in this discourse disrupts and challenges intra-racial essential notions of Blackness, by accounting for their various expressions in the quotations and ways in which Black femininity presents itself post-apartheid. These multiple presentations thus curb the ideology held by the BCM movement of a monolithic Black population through their inability to acknowledge other oppressive avenues outside of race (Gqola, 2001b). In addition, Blackness here also demonstrates the effects that this colonial ideology has within the Black community.

4.5.2. Atypical display of Black femininity: "*You know not just loud and as they say ignorant"*

…because when would you ever see a Black female kissing another female especially when you look at background in terms of our culture or families or tradition or whatever, with a Black female kissing another female I feel like that's a huge step forward in terms of accepting people for who they want to be. (P6)

Looking at my picture she's not, what can I say, like the typical Black woman and how they dress. Like it shows that woman can also be you know quirky, nerdy, you know? We should be portrayed in like not just one way that women should be or Black woman should be portrayed. You know not just loud and as they say ignorant or you know? This is a woman who's successful, who's educated, whose quirky you know, witty. (P8)

And also I don't know, she looks more like people I meet on an everyday, like her smile, she actually looks a lot like my aunt. And ja, I don't know so it's not really big model everything. She just looks, looks normal I guess (P16).

So I feel like representation only works for Black women when they're trying to get something from us. (P1)

Following the previous discourse which centred on the essentialisation of Blackness, this section by contrast describes non-normative and non-heteronormative forms of Blackness and femininity. In view of this, participants produced a type of subject that is indicative of atypical Black femininity. By drawing on discourses of media, participants were able to construct Black women who are not the type of women who readily appear in popular media, because they fall outside the normalised Black femininity that is associated with being "*loud and as they say ignorant"* expressed by P8. Many of the participants noted the positive presence of the diversity of the women who are produced in the media. Others like P1, felt that diversifying the subjectivity of Black women in media was a marketing ploy as she stated "*we're the biggest market."*

Therefore, what is being communicated is the transition towards alternate representations of Black femininity and in doing so, disrupting notions of normative Black femininity, representation and identity. This finding is in contrast to a US study by Muhammad and McArthur (2015), who reported a significant number of normative constructions including the mammy, Jezebel and sapphire tropes. The difference in discourses produced in South Africa in

comparison to those globally, indicates that discursive practices from outside Africa lack the spatial and temporal subtlety to speak for women in Africa (Heugh, 2011). Evidently, the South African media landscape is visibly changing, contrary to findings by Pilane and Iqani (2016).

By identifying the diversity of Black women in this discourse, participants also drew on discourses of race and gender that make it possible to produce different kinds of femininities and Black subjectivities. This occurrence is indicative of intersectionality and the ways in which for example, gender, intersects with race and sexual orientation to produce a Black queer woman as expressed by P6. Therefore, power here lies in the ability to access advantages and privileges such as education and the acceptance of one's queerness for example, that was not available to the Black community and Black women more specifically, during apartheid and colonisation. Black women are not a monolith and the producers of media, as expressed by one of the participants are definitely attempting to debunk that colonial belief. This discourse works to counter normative representations of Black femininity by producing subjects that lie outside of essentialist notions of Blackness, femininity and sexuality. As such, the atypical Black women counters heteronormative notions of queerness in addition to normative notions of what it means to be a nerd, educated etc. However, because this type of subject is associated with White femininity and Whiteness, the atypical Black woman is co-opted into Whiteness.

Taken together, this discourse demonstrates the intersectionality between Blackness and femininity. Blackness here, has been constructed outside of its colonial origins. However, former constructions of Blackness have a tendency to not only be reproduced by the Western society but the Black community themselves. As such, we see that in some instances, this type of Blackness is challenged by Black individuals. In other instances, this construction of Blackness is embraced as it illustrates the diverse ways in which Blackness has manifested itself in post-apartheid South Africa. As a consequence, this Blackness is characteristic of intersectionality as its presentation is influenced by other intersecting social identities. Likewise, the production of femininity within this discourse has worked to challenge patriarchal notions of the feminine by identifying the ways in which Black women have drifted more towards a non-heteronormative characterisation. Through the identification of non-heteronormative femininity, the exclusionary practices of patriarchy are challenged. In both instances however, the Blackness of women constructed within this discourse is undermined because its orientation is one that is closer to Whiteness. Therefore, although she challenges authentic ways of being Black she inadvertently, is interpolated into ways of being White as these identities were historically reserved for White individuals.

4.6. Conclusion

In view of the reproduction of heteronormative constructions through gendered and raced discourses that facilitated the positioning of Black women as sexualised, the body continues to be a focal point of engagement with Black femininity. This was evident as the participants positioned themselves as sexualised objects, recounting moments of the male gaze. Other normative constructions of Black women as strong were maintained, by drawing on media discourses that continue to perpetuate this type of subjectivity.

By contrast to these normative constructions, alternate subjectivities were produced that saw a shift away from the sexualised body. The intellectual capabilities of Black women were produced by drawing on gendered and raced discourses. Interestingly, women had to disavow their femininity in order to be perceived as intellectually competent by their counterparts. Through the use of masculinised behaviours and clothing, which defeminises the female body, they were able to mimic masculinity which allowed them to be respected. As such, by disavowing their femininity, other aspects of Black femininity were produced and explored. In addition, the essentialisation of Blackness and Black femininity was challenged through the facilitation of racial discourses that produced counter-normative narratives of Black subjectivity. It is these alternate forms of Black subjectivity that move the obsession of the body of Black women to other aspects of her being, that characterise her existence and navigation of the world today. Given that the body is performative in its enactment of the various constructions produced in this study, it inadvertently remains the site of tension between old gender discourses and new subjectivities (Nielsen, 2004).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Summary of findings

The objective of this research was to discover what discourses were embedded in the talk of Black women about their representation in popular media. The discourses that were discovered, (re)produced both normative and counter-normative notions of Black women and Black subjectivity. Participants were found to align with and contest these respectively. Therefore, not only are Black women subject to the Western gaze, but they are also resisters to and challenge the ideological positions of Black femininity. The resulting discourses illustrated that subject positions Black women occupied were the product of the intersecting racial and gender discourses of the colonial and apartheid eras. These persistent discourses point to the unyielding notion that "members of more powerful social groups and institutions, and especially their leaders (the elites), have more or less exclusive access to, and control over one or more types of public discourse" (van Dijk, 2001, p. 356). The discourses the participants drew on included post-apartheid femininity, post-apartheid/colonial discourse of colourism and Blackness, essentialist discourse, counter-normative discourses and media discourses. Some of these discourses reproduced the notion of the Black woman as the heteronormative subordinate subject, the struggling woman, the jezebel (sexually objectified and/or sexualisation of the self), the strong Black woman, the problematic woman, and the ideal feminine subject. On the other hand, accompanied by the shift in the social positioning of Black women to middle-class status and its advantages, Black women were constructed as professionals, 'coconuts' and atypically Black. Although alternate forms of Black femininity existed, the effects of media discourse illustrated the implications of perpetuating idealised Black femininity, and by doing so, the need for alternate and celebrated notions of Black femininity.

In The working woman: Post-apartheid femininity discourse, participants relied on constructions of White men, the professions, women and Blackness to position the images and themselves. The subject positions occupied, contested colonial discourses that position Black women as incompetent, as expressed in The 'emergence' of the Black woman professional: "*We've also been stereotyped to be quite slow*." By existing in these spaces, the Black women were seen to counter this colonial notion of incompetence. But at the same time, this construct interpolated the subject into the ideology of class and consumerist notions of professionals. Interestingly, in the discussion of the successful Black woman in Disavowing your femininity in the service of the professions: "*Macho businesswomen*," women had to disavow their femininity in order to be perceived as intellectually competent by their counterparts. As such, the participants drew on

discursive practices that mimic masculinity, which serves to undermine femininity and legitimise masculinity in the workplace. This further maintains the gendered status quo. As such, by disavowing their femininity, other aspects of Black femininity were produced and explored (i.e. being a successful Black woman. Evidently, the way in which Black women were co-opted into masculinity echoes Connell (2000, p. 14) sentiments, who expressed that "a conscious reconstruction of gender practices is now on the agenda in Southern Africa." In Maintaining the status quo in gendered relations of the workplace: "*To support the Black man,*" the subject positions here, reproduced constructions of femininity that maintain broader patriarchal ideology, which constructed women as supportive towards men, even when the performative nature of her femininity challenged this heteronormative ideology (e.g. the warriors). In light of this co-option, it is seemingly impossible for Black femininity to exist successfully in White professional spaces and completely separate itself from patriarchal and colonial notions of its subjectivity.

In Beauty and sexuality: The body discourse, the subject positions that were constructed were deep-rooted in colonial notions of idealised femininity, heteronormative sexuality and the impact these have on Black women. Through the reproduction of the sexualised subject in The sexual objectification of the Black woman's body: "*Is this a thirst trap?"* and the subsequent reclaiming of one's sexuality and body in 'Reclaiming' the sexualised body: "*Owning words like slut even,*" Black women reproduced heteronormative colonial notions of Black female sexuality. In the sexual objectification discourse, sexually agentic undertones appeared to be stifled through the construction of Black women as objects of sexual desire. However, by owning one's sexuality and body, which brings a sense of self-identification, Black women inadvertently were interpolated into the colonial Jezebel trope which is not void of the male gaze. Whereas, Effects of the media on Black women: "*I've already internalised what Black beauty looks like,*" constructed a subject who is susceptible to media representations because normative representations of beauty and the body were observed to impact notions of the self, Blackness and Black femininity. As such, Black women seemingly understand themselves through the lens of these media representations. This internalisation of media constructions demonstrates the implications of idealised beauty, bodies and normative subjectivities of Black women. This is, therefore, evidence of the ways in which (re)presentations "…contribute to ways of seeing the world" (Jangara, 2011, p. 51).

Apartheid and colonialism continue to affect the lives of Black women in South Africa today, which is evidenced in The difficulties of being a Black woman: Post-apartheid discourse. The subject positions occupied in this discourse, such as the struggling Black woman, legitimises the

inequalities experienced by Black women, as a result of apartheid (lowest in the social hierarchy) and patriarchy (relational difficulties caused by men). In doing so, this subject also challenged the ideology of the nuclear family and its advantages because the struggling woman within this discourse is a single parent, for example. The reproduction of The Strong Black Woman: "*You shouldn't cry*" discourse, illustrates the fallacy of democracy. By subverting her femininity, she is better equipped to cope with the inevitable struggle. This said, Black women seem to adopt masculine traits as a coping mechanism to exist in previously White spaces and face a life plagued by a struggle. Although this construct challenges sexist notions of femininity as weak, by functioning under normative notions of Blackness as strong, this maintains the social positioning of the Black population, as it reproduces colonial notions of hardship within the Black community. In The downside of feminism: "*Your feminism is a problem"* Black women who desire equality in the upkeep of the home were constructed as disavowing their Blackness in favour of Whiteness. In this way, we see how colonial notions of Blackness as housewife and Whiteness as educated partner are reproduced. In the same vein, the discursive production of this discourse works to challenge traditional gender relations and racialised notions of femininity.

In Normative constructions of Black femininity: Essentialising discourse, Black women made use of discursive strategies that positioned women as racially ambiguous, and therefore, co-opted into White femininity. By doing so, this idealised Black woman raises questions to the legitimacy of her Blackness. Furthermore, she challenges essentialist colonial notions of Blackness, because of her proximity to Whiteness. In addition, participants also (re)positioned Black women as racially unambiguous, which is a construct that challenges colonial notions of idealised femininity. This said, the media and Black women themselves seem to be shifting towards an acceptance of the self, one that is less dependent on the Western gaze. This subject thus provides a counter-normative account of Black femininity that renders Blackness as beautiful. In the same vein, the Black woman who is unambiguously Black reinserts Black women into essentialising colonial notions of Blackness and Black femininity that is a stark contrast to Whiteness and White femininity.

In Non-normative constructions of Black femininity: De-essentialising discourse, participants relayed accounts of how their subjective Blackness was positioned as non-normative, while their constructions in the media were constructed as an atypical Black woman. Failure to meet the Black standard: "*You're not Black enough"* discussed Black women who were labelled as 'coconuts' and reproduced apartheid notions of Blackness that essentialises the Black identity and works to legitimise their position in the social hierarchy. This was expressed through the

surveillance of the Black gaze which renders Black subjectivity a contentious identity to navigate under modernity. Although this discourse essentialises Blackness, the different ways in which Blackness is performed challenges colonial and/or apartheid notions of Blackness and Black subjectivity. Given that Blackness in its various forms is the by-product of apartheid, this leads us to believe that race is dependent on history and not biology (Canham & Williams, 2016). In, Atypical display of Black femininity: "*You know not just loud and as they say ignorant,"* the subject was constructed as atypically Black and thus interpolated into Whiteness. In the same vein, this subject also works to challenge colonial and heteronormative notions of the Black identity that essentialises Blackness. In view of South Africa's history and in line with Canham and Williams (2016), this study demonstrated how the intersectionality of multiple social categories works to inform the various subjectivities, positions and perceptions of Black women, and how important it is to take these intersecting identities into account in the ways they work to maintain and contest the racial and gender status quo.

5.2 Limitations of the study

This study is limited in a several ways. The sample was inclusive of Black female students in their early to mid-20's. As such, the ways in which they constructed Black women and themselves, may have limited the possible constructions and subjectivities that may have been explored with a more diverse sample in age. Therefore, this age group made it more possible to reproduce normative constructions such as, the sexually objectified subject as opposed to the mammy. The next limitation pertains to the usage of focus groups as the data collection technique. Given that focus groups place emphasis on the interaction amongst its members, and how perspectives on the discussions and experiences are negotiated together, it inadvertently inhibited and limited counter-normative discourses and experiences emerging within the groups, even though this disagreement was encouraged. Another limitation is that, in an attempt to make sure all voices were heard during the focus groups, the allocated time made it difficult to delve into certain constructions and experiences from individual members, thus further constricting possible subjectivities. Finally, due to the nature of qualitative research, it is important to note that as a researcher conducting a study through a specific lens, the researcher was integrated into limiting the study through the lens in which the researcher interpreted the data. As such, the discourses presented in these findings are not exhaustive of the discourses embedded in their talk.

5.3 Future recommendations

In addressing the above limitations, future studies could extend the criteria to include Black women above mid-20s who are either unemployed, working full time or retired (i.e. not students) to compare findings and investigate whether constructions and subjectivities expressed, differ, as it is possible that this group of women may engage differently with the topic. To augment the data corpus and address the limiting nature of focus group data, future research could conduct a focus group followed by individual interviews with each of the participants where possible. This will ensure a further and detailed exploration of uninhibited perceptions of Black women, giving them more freedom and time to express their opinions, clarify and explore utterances not elaborated on. This augmentation would enrich the data. While this study gives voice to the target market of these magazines, as well as their perceptions in reception of Black women within these magazines, future research would benefit from a study that interrogates the rationale behind the representations media houses and producers actively perpetuate. This is due to the belief that this study has demonstrated how historical ideologies influence the treatment of Black women in media and society today.

5.4 Conclusion

This research aimed to explore discourses embedded in the talk of Black women about their representations in popular media. With the use of magazines as a starting point for this exploration and several of focus groups comprised of young Black women, this objective was achieved. By adopting a critical paradigm coupled with a discourse analysis by Parker (1992), participants oscillated between the (re)production of normative and non-normative discourses. These discourses constructed a number of subject positions that not only reflect the history of Black women but demonstrate alternate and agentic forms of Blackness and femininity in the way she navigates the world.

In sum, this study demonstrated how racial and gendered sanctions interpolate Black women into subject positions, which work to replicate broader raced, gendered and classed discourses about Black femininity from the past, even when the subject positions were of a seemingly agentic Black woman. In doing so, we see how the current constructions of Black women are embedded in beliefs about Black females that appeared centuries ago (Collins, 2002). As such, remnants of colonialism have stained Blackness, Black femininity and Black subjectivity as subject positions occupied either replicated essential notions of Black women or in line with Jackson (2010), directly countered essential Blackness, Black femininity and Black subjectivity in accordance

with these historical discourses about Black woman. Evidently, the performative nature of gender demonstrates its flexibility (Kramer, 2010).

Through a critical paradigm, this study identified the dominant forces that work to constrain the way in which Black women are to understand themselves, as well as how others are to perceive them. By doing so, this achieved the political aims of intersectionality (Gouws, 2017) as Black women communicated multiple oppressive ideologies that worked to impact their experiences and subjectivity. As such, this study contributed to the ongoing theorising about feminism globally, and more specifically in the context of South Africa where new forms of Black feminism are competing with feminism internationally. A modern way in which we engage with Black feminism was arrived at. By highlighting the heteronormative manner in which Black women have been discussed in the literature, the researcher also illuminated the presence of counter-normative subjectivity, broadening the subject positions that more Black women now occupy. Therefore, engagement with Black women that moved beyond the body was evidenced in this study, which reflects the many shifts that have occurred as a result of the end of apartheid. Notably, the fluidity between positive and negative and oppressive and progressive constructions of Black femininity have remained, with a larger amount of Black women possessing easier access to self-constructions of Blackness and femininity as opposed to those during apartheid. Given that the body is performative in its enactment of the various constructions in this study, it inevitably remains the site of tension between old gender discourses and new subjectivities (Nielsen, 2004).

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Appendix A: University of the Witwatersrand Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MASPR/18/006 IH**
PROJECT TITLE:	Discourses in the talk of black women about thei representation in popular media.
INVESTIGATORS	Nyamah Kholofelo
DEPARTMENT	Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	19/07/18
DECISION OF COMMITTEE*	Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE: 19 July 2018

CHAIRPERSON _____
(Prof. Gillian Finchilescu)

cc Supervisor:

Prof. Garth Stevens
Psychology

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR (S)

To be completed in duplicate and **one copy** returned to the Secretary, Room 100015, 10th floor, Senate House, University.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure, as approved, I/we undertake to submit a revised protocol to the Committee.

This ethical clearance will expire on 31 December 2020

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix B: Table of Participant Demographics

Name	Age	Year of Study	Degree	Language spoken during the focus group	Socio economic status	Focus group
Participant 1 (P1)	21 years old	3rd	BA	English, Zulu	Middle	1
Participant 2 (P2)	22 years old	3rd	BA	English, Zulu		1
Participant 3 (P3)	19 years old	3rd	BA	English		1
Participant 4 (P4)	26 years old	Honours	BA Honours	English, Setswana		1
Participant 5 (P5)	21 years old	3rd	BA	English		1
Participant 6 (P6)	21 years old	3rd	BHSC	English		2
Participant 7 (P7)	19 years old	3rd	BHSC	English, Sesotho, Zulu		2
Participant 8 (P8)	22 years old	3rd	BHSC	English		2
Participant 9 (P9)	21 tears old	2nd	BSC -	English		3
Participant 10 (P10)	21 years old	3rd	BA	English		3
Participant 11 (P11)	19 years old	2nd	BA	English, Zulu		3
Participant 12 (P12)	19 years old	2nd	BA	English, Sesotho		3
Participant 13 (P13)	21 years old	2nd	BA	English		3
Participant 14 (P14)	19 years	2nd	BA	English, Xhosa		3
Participant 15 (P15)	19 years	2nd	BAssSci	English	Middle	4

Participant 16 (P16)	18 years	2nd	BAssSci	English	Not sure	4
Participant 17 (P17)	23 years	Honours	BA Honours	English		4

Appendix C: Focus group schedule

Beginning the session

Hello. My name is Kholo. I'd like to start off by thanking each of you for taking the time to participate today. We'll be here for about an hour and a half. We are here to discuss how you read and receive the representation of Black women in the magazines present today. *I will now collect the signed consent forms.*

Ground rules:

To allow our conversation to flow more freely, I'd like to go over some ground rules,

- Only one person will speak at a time.
- Please avoid side conversations.
- Everyone does not have to respond to each question but I would love to hear from each of you.
- You should note that I can only guarantee partial confidentiality and anonymity within this discussion and study. Your identities will be kept anonymous with the use of pseudonyms in my write up. I only ask that you do not disclose each other's names beyond this focus group.
- I stress confidentiality and anonymity because I would like an open discussion. I encourage you all to feel free to comment on each other's remarks without fear.
- There are no right or wrong answers, just different opinions. With that being said, please respect each other's opinion.
- Any questions?

Introduction of participants:

Before we start I'd like to know a little about each of you. Please tell me your name and a fun fact about yourself.

Discussion

I will pass the magazines around and ask that they pick an image they like or would like to discuss and ask that they remove it from the magazine for the discussion. I will ask that during the discussion they present the representation to everyone, so we know what they are talking about during the discussion.

1. What does it mean to be represented as a woman in popular media (film, TV, print)?

2. Describe the images you have before you

3. How are Black women represented in these images?

4. In what identifiable ways can we say the woman/women is Black in these images?

5. What meaning do you think they were trying to convey by representing her/them in this way?

6. How do you feel about these representations?

7. In what ways do these representations align with how you think Black women should be represented?

8. Tell me in what ways these representations influence you?

9. How have any of the images before you, communicated any abilities beyond her physical attributes?

    - If none, how are Black women represented beyond her physical attributes and how has this been achieved in popular media?

10. How do you think these representations have changed over time?

- How are these changes, if any, positive or negative?

11. In what ways do you think the representation of Black women in the images before you or more generally in South Africa, reflect a sense of self-representation and the context we are living through now?

12. Tell me of representations of Black women in popular media you disagree with and why.

13. Tell me of representations that go beyond the norm of what it means to be a Black woman in society today?

14. How do you conduct yourself as a Black woman in society?

15. How are you treated by individuals in society as a Black woman?

16. Anything else you would like to say about the representations of Black women or your experience as a Black woman?

<u>Ending the session</u>

Thanks for coming today and talking about the representations of Black women. *I will summarise the main points that came out*. Should there be any questions regarding the findings you can email me and a summary will be forwarded to you when it becomes available. I thank you for your time.

Appendix D: Participation Information Sheet

PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 · Tel: 011 717 4541 · Fax: 011 717 4559 · E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

25 June 2018

Dear Student

Hello. My name is Kholofelo Nyamah. I am currently studying a Master's in Social and Psychological Research at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am conducting this research for the purpose of obtaining this degree. The purpose of my research is to explore discourses in the talk of Black women about their representation in popular media. The overarching aim of this study is to explore the discourses embedded in the talk of the representation of Black women in popular media. The study also aims to identify what these discourses reflect about the ideologies surrounding Black women, existing in the broader social context of South Africa.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Participation in this study will involve taking part in a focus group discussion which will focus on discussing images of Black women in magazines. I will be facilitating this focus group. The discussion should take approximately one and a half hours. Participation is voluntary. Participation in this focus group results in no exposure to risks or benefits of any kind. Everything you say during the discussion will be kept as confidential as possible. The discussion will be audio-recorded and only my supervisor and I will have access to these recordings. The recordings and transcripts will not be destroyed but stored in a password protected laptop to ensure data integrity. Although I know who you are, and other participants may identify you, partial confidentiality will be maintained by not disclosing any information that is of a personal nature in the report. I also ask that you respect the other participants' confidentiality as well. I will assign a pseudonym to your information in the report. You have the right to withdraw from the study. You also have the right to refrain from answering any question should you wish to do so. Should you require counselling services for whatever reason you may contact the Emthonjeni Centre situated on campus.

Ms Paballo Lepota

Tel: +27 (0)11 717 4513
Email: paballo.lepota@wits.ac.za

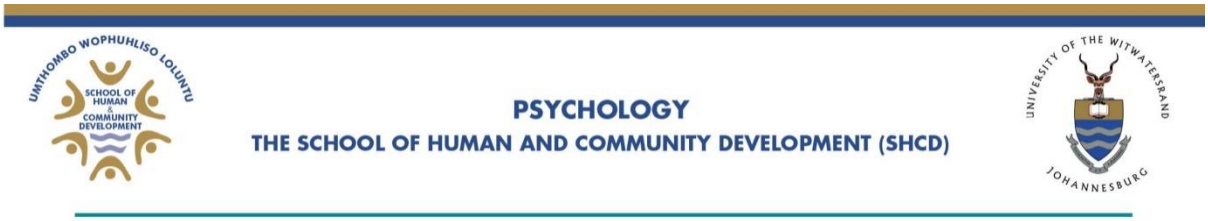
Feedback in the form of a short summary of results will be emailed to you upon request. You may e-mail me or my supervisor if you would like to receive this. Our contact details appear below. The feedback will be available approximately 8 months after the collection of the data. Before beginning the focus group, I will need you to read through and sign the consent forms. These forms will confirm that you are aware of everything that we have discussed concerning confidentiality, feedback and privacy. Please detach and keep this sheet.

Yours sincerely

Kholofelo Nyamah
kholoca@gmail.com
079 815 3266

Supervisor:
Prof. Garth Stevens
Garth.stevens@wits.ac.za
011 717 4535

Appendix E: Consent Form (focus group)



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Consent form (Focus Group)

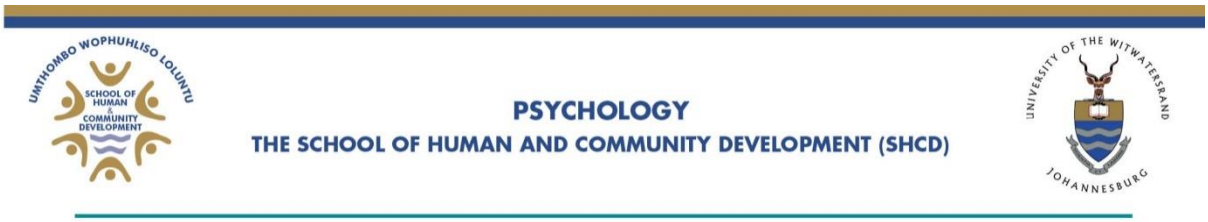
I_____, consent to being interviewed within a focus group by Kholofelo Nyamah for her study on discourses in the talk of Black women about their representation in popular media. I understand that:

- Participation in this focus group is voluntary.
- Refusal to participate will involve no penalty.
- Participation in this focus group results in no exposure to risks or benefits of any kind
- I have a right to refuse to answer any questions that I prefer not to answer.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- No identifying information will be used in the research report except for direct quotes. However, through the use of pseudonyms in the writing of the research report, the researcher will keep all responses as anonymous as possible.
- An audio recording device will be used to record the focus group.
- The recordings and transcripts will not be seen or heard by anyone other than the researcher and her supervisor.
- The recordings and transcripts will not be destroyed but stored in a digital format in a password protected laptop to ensure data integrity.
- Pseudonyms will be used to identify different participants in the report to maintain partial confidentiality and anonymity in the write-up.
- Quotations from the focus group will be used in publications.
- The focus group confidentiality agreement should be signed to help maintain confidentiality amongst focus group participants.
- The research may be published in a journal and/or book chapter. Feedback in the form of a short summary of results will be emailed to you upon request

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Consent Form (recording)



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Consent Form (Recording)

I, _____ give my consent for my focus group with Kholofelo Nyamah to be audio recorded for her study. I understand that:

- The recordings and transcripts will not be seen or heard by anyone other than the researcher and her supervisor.

- The recordings and transcripts will not be destroyed but stored in a password protected laptop to ensure data integrity.

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

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

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G: Focus Group Images

Focus group 1

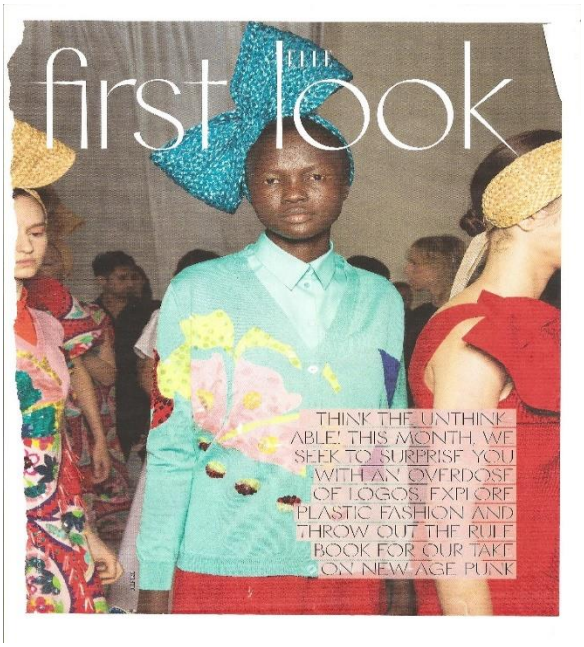

*Image chosen by P1



Image chosen by P3



Image chosen by P5



Image chosen by P2



Image chosen by P4

* Sources: Elle magazine (P1, P5). True Love magazine (P3). Drum magazine (P2). Cosmopolitan magazine (P4).

Focus Group 2





*Image chosen by P7

Image chosen by P6

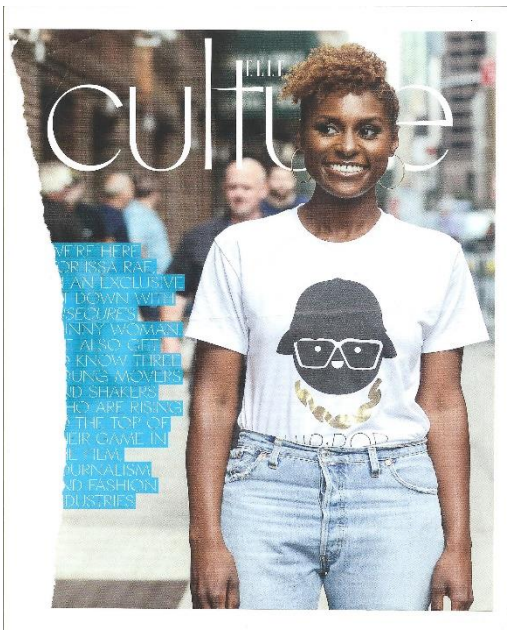

Image chosen by P8

* Sources: True Love magazine (P7). Cosmopolitan magazine (P6). Elle magazine (P8).

Focus Group 3



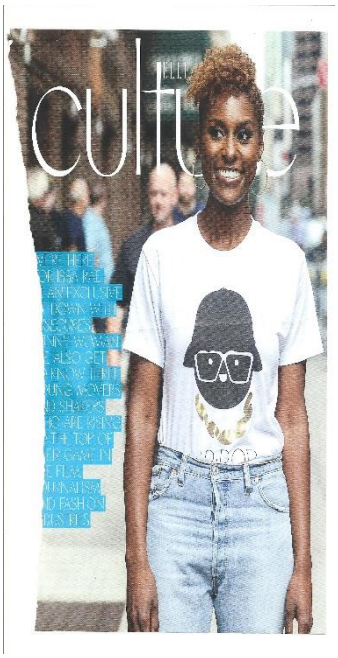



*Image chosen by P12 Image chosen by P13 Image chosen by P10





Image chosen by P11 Image chosen by P9

* Sources: Drum magazine (P12). Elle magazine (P13). True Love magazine (P10, P11). Cosmopolitan magazine (P9).

Focus Group 4



Ever wondered who's **behind the lens** of your fave influencer's feed? We get to know the **boyfriends (and girlfriends)** devotedly **snapping** their SO's shots

BY NOXOLO MAFU

Being your partner's photographer is a big role. How did you guys decide on it?

BASH

TWIGGY Bash was a photographer before we met, so it wasn't weird to ask him to take my #OOTD photos. I knew he could do it. I was just a little shy to ask him to shoot my campaigns. I can't remember when we made the decision – but I know I was super-enthusiastic because I'll have a full-time photographer with me every day!

How has shooting #wiggy affected your relationship?

BASH

TWIGGY I think the best was in Mauritius, on a catamaran. Bash wanted to take a photo of me, and told me to stand still – and I was like 'Why??'

You've had a lot of experience trying to get the shot. What's the best and the worst?

BASH

I was certain it wasn't a flattering angle because he was sitting down while I was standing up. To my surprise, he took the most incredible photo. He laughed when he saw my reaction after he got the shot. This happens a lot. He always sees something amazing – and I never trust him until he shows me the end result...

What's on the agenda for summer?

BASH

TWIGGY We always have trips popping up. Hopefully another tropical trip soon!

Bash's Cheat Sheet

For taking the best image for her:

- You've got reference shots – they're never impersonal.
- Shoot! He was your partner before he was a photographer, so he'll not be shy to tell you that it's bad.
- Be patient.
- Always take more shots than you're going to use, so things have a natural flow to it.
- BE PATIENT!



*Image chosen by P15

Image chosen by P16



Image chosen by P17

* Sources: Cosmopolitan magazine (P15). Elle magazine (P16). True Love magazine (P17).