



Minnesota State University, Mankato  
Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly  
and Creative Works for Minnesota  
State University, Mankato

---

All Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Other  
Capstone Projects

Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Other  
Capstone Projects

---

2018

## Race, Stigma, and the Politics of Black Girls Hair

Vanessa King  
*Minnesota State University, Mankato*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/etds>



Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#), and the [Multicultural Psychology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

King, V. (2018). Race, Stigma, and the Politics of Black Girls Hair [Master's thesis, Minnesota State University, Mankato]. Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato. <https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/etds/764/>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Other Capstone Projects at Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Other Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Race, Stigma, and the Politics of Black Girls Hair

By

Vanessa King

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In

Gender and Women's Studies

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

December 2017

December 2017

Race, Stigma, and the Politics of Black Girls Hair

Vanessa King

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

---

Dr. Ana Maria Pérez, Advisor

---

Dr. Laura B. Harrison

---

Dr. Christopher B. Brown

## **Abstract**

An abstract for the thesis of Vanessa J. King for the Master of Arts in Gender and Women's Studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato, Minnesota

Title: Race, Stigma, and the Politics of Black Girls' Hair

Historically, black girls and women has been subjected to high public scrutiny that represents their bodies and hair styles as deviant from a European standard of beauty and respectability. Black women have endured many social pressures that have shaped their hair choices in various ways. I will explore assimilation theories of culture and the construction of dominant ideals of worth and respectability within K-12 settings, to document the ways in which black girls' hairstyles have been stigmatized. For this this study, I conducted a media and discourse analysis to document the language that is used to stigmatize black women's hair, focusing on K-12 school settings in the United States.

As of 2016, several schools have attempted to ban natural and other African American hairstyles in the states of Kentucky and North Carolina. I used Lexis-Nexis, Google News and Ethnic News Watch databases to search and compile the occurrences of school regulation of Black hairstyles over the last 10 years in the United States. Despite the cultural, social and political advancements of African Americans in 21st century, discrimination against African American boys and girls in K-12 settings is a key site of inequality. Furthermore, this time frame will give us insight on the ways that K-12 educational settings continue to be a main site of transmission of dominant social standards and the reproduction of social inequality. Additionally, I will explore the ways

in which African American feminists have created a space of self-celebration and self-love to resist the negative representations of black femininity. This intersectional approach will help in understanding how a longer history of the stigmatization of Black women's hair continues in the contemporary moment. At the same time, looking for the ways that Black women have resisted and continue to shape positive images for themselves is an important aspect of this research. This study will contribute to the national debate on K-12 school's power in regulating black students' hair choices and styles to illuminate a longer history of stigma and an even longer history of resistance.

## **Acknowledgments**

Throughout the process of this project I received an immense amount of support, encouragement, and guidance from many people. This project would not be possible without these people. I have the deepest amount of appreciation for every person.

I would first like to thank my academic community. I would like to express a profound amount of gratitude to my academic advisor and thesis chair Dr. Ana Perez. She provided me with a large amount of guidance, encouragement, motivation, and patience throughout my academic journey. To my committee members Dr. Harrison and Dr. Christopher Brown. Thank you for your incredible amount of insight on this project. Your perspectives were greatly appreciated.

Next, I would like to thank my very supportive friends Kate Froehlich and Tierra Spellmon, you both have encouraged, motivated and been by my side every step of the way in my academic journey. I do not know if I would have been able to make it through this academic journey without the two of you. To my all my friends and cohort, thank you. You too have provided me with an immense amount of courage and strength. Having a shoulder to lean on and having people who understood and shared the same experiences, was an amazing amount of motivation.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank my parents. They have provided me with an extraordinary amount of support through the ups and downs of my academic journey and I would not be here without them and their constant support and encouragement.

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1</b>	
Introduction.....	1
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
Literature Review.....	4
<i>History</i> .....	5
<i>Theories of Assimilation</i> .....	10
<i>Intersections of race, class, and beauty</i> .....	11
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	14
<b>Chapter 3</b>	
Methodology.....	16
<b>Chapter 4</b>	
Analysis.....	18
<i>Distracting</i> .....	21
<i>Extreme</i> .....	24
<i>Grooming</i> .....	25
<b>Chapter 5</b>	
Discussion.....	27
<i>Politics of Respectability</i> .....	27
<i>History of Black Resistance</i> .....	31
<i>Natural hair pride and celebration of Black girlhood</i> .....	32
<b>Chapter 6</b>	
Conclusion.....	34
<b>Appendix</b> .....	37
<b>Works Cited</b> .....	40

## Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2016, there was a national case that sparked debate among various communities in the United States. Butler High School in Louisville, Kentucky suspended 15-year-old Ashanti Scott not obeying the dress code policy that banned hairstyles that are generally worn by African Americans. Ashanti, who wore her hair naturally, was sent home from school because her hair was considered “extreme, distracting and attention-getting”. The school policy of Butler Traditional High School stated "hair must be clean and neat all the times. Hairstyles that are extreme, distracting, or attention-getting will not be permitted. No dreadlocks, cornrolls, twists, mohawks, and no jewelry will be worn in hair. Hair must be a natural color. (no two-toned hair or severe contrasts). No male may dye, tint, or high light his hair in anyway. Males hair length must be kept at a reasonable length”. Ashanti’s mother Attica Scott posted a copy of the notice on twitter stating, “Soooo...my daughter had registration today and let’s just say she’s happy abt the #JCPS no natural hair policy.” Scott argued that the policy was discriminatory, “it’s about policing our kids’ hair. I don’t want our kids’ hair to be policed. They’re already policed enough.” This case instantly grabbed the attention of other parents and became viral.

Ashanti Scott’s case illustrates and gives an example of one of many cases that have occurred throughout the United States. This case brought attention to dress code policies throughout the United States. More specifically, it prompted debates on the ways that dress codes regulate and stigmatize African American hairstyles within K-12 school settings. It is very important to look at cases from the last ten years to see how these documents the language and the region of each case. Over the last decade there has an



increase in the amount of positive and celebratory media representations of Black girls and women.

In 2010 the “Black Girls Rock!” celebration made its national debut on the cable network VH1. This televised awards show celebrated the accomplishments of Black women and girls in the fields of music, the arts, film, medicine, philanthropy, and social activism. Black Girls Rock’s mission is “to change the world by empowering Black girls to lead, innovate, and serve.” Black Girls Rock was founded by DJ and philanthropist, Beverly Bond in 2006. This organization is committed to enriching girls’ lives through leadership, education, and positive identity development by building the self-esteem and self-worth of young women of color by changing their outlook on life, broadening their horizons and providing tools for self-empowerment and efficacy (Black Girls Rock, 2017, Mission section).

Black Girls Rock! marked an important cultural moment of celebration and positive visibility for Black girls and Women in the United States. Since then Queen Latifah, Janelle Monae, Kerry Washington, Misty Copeland, Ava DuVernay and Shonda Rhimes have been honored for their contributions to popular culture and African American culture. In 2016, Black Girls Rock! honored the founders of the Black Lives Matter movement Alicia Garza, Patrice Cullers, and Opal Tometi were honored for their contributions to social justice. Thus, I frame this study of the continual repression of African American culture in light of Black women’s increasing positive visibility and growing influence in popular and political culture.

This thesis emerged from an undergraduate research project that I completed in 2013. That research study explored both African and African American college women's feelings about the motivations to chemically straighten (relax) or wear their hair without chemical treatment (natural), followed by understanding how their ethnicity influenced these hair choices. Through my adolescent years, I had my own experiences with stigmatization of my hair along with having to make decisions about my own hair choices. At an early age, I was brought to a hair salon by my mother, where my hair was washed and straightened. Short after, then chemically treating my hair. At a young age, these hair choices were made for me. I was told that straight hair was professional, pretty and would get me somewhere in life. In attended a predominantly white elementary school, I faced some of my first experiences of racism because of biases related to my hair. Many I recall white girls in my elementary class would brush and braid each other's hair. I remember feeling excluded, even when I asked to join. My classmates went as far as saying "we can't do your kind of hair." Even with having straight relaxed hair, I was excluded from these bonding rituals that included anything that had to do with hair or beauty.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Black girls and women have been subjected to high public scrutiny based on their perceived racial difference. Hairstyle and hair grooming is a way to express one's individual style and culture, political stance; and assimilation, negotiation, or rejection of dominant beauty ideals (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). Black girls face a number of social obstacles that informed by racial stereotypes and bias, societal pressures, and conflicting messages (Phelps-Ward and Laura, 2016). Much of their stigmatization is rooted in the histories of racialization based on racial difference associated with Black women's embodiment. "The Black/female/ body is under constant subjugation, scrutiny, and marginalization even within an academic setting, wherein the expectation is that people will be valued and judged for their ideas, not their race and/or gender (Mowatt, French, and Malebranche, 2013, p. 649). European standards of respectability, assimilation theories of culture and the construction of dominant beauty ideals within mainstream culture have influenced the ways in which Black girls and women's hairstyles are policed and regulated. However, black women and girls have negotiated and resisted dominant beauty norms and have created spaces of self-love and celebration of black hair. A brief exploration of the historical context of the representation of black women and girl's hair allows for framing of this research. Furthermore, the understanding of assimilation theories of cultures allows for a nuanced discussion of the ways that black women and girls have negotiated and resisted European standards of beauty and respectability. Black women and girl's hair styles reflect their overall identity. This reflects the,

“Profound implications for how African American women experience the world. Black women’s hairstyles choices are seldom just about aesthetics or personal choice, but are instead ever complicated by such issues as mate desire, mainstream standards of beauty, workplace standards of presentation, and ethnic/cultural pride” (Jacobs-Huey, 2006, p. 3).

## **History**

African Americans have endured centuries of systemic discrimination and institutionalized racism. Enslaved Africans were forcibly transported from Africa to the United States in the 1600’s. Upon arrival to the United States, enslaved Africans had their hair shaved off. This was one of the first significant steps in stripping Africans of their identity and culture. This left each them with no identity or economic status (Byrd and Tharps 2001; White 2005), it was the complete demoralization of the enslaved. The removal of African styled hair was one of the first racialized European standards that was forcefully imposed onto Black women and girls. Europeans forcefully stripped Black women of their culture, community and identity. For some of the enslaved, certain body types and hairstyles were the definition of their economic status and ability to pass as white in plantation society (Patton, 2006). Byrd and Tharps (2014) state, the “community was forever trapped by its circumstances and imprisoned by its features” (p.35). Even within the 1600’s Black women and girls endured indignities centered around the racialization of Black women’s bodies.

For instance, house slaves endured a different form of racialization than field slaves. Enslaved women who worked in the home were forced to groom and straighten their hair to look like White Europeans. Whereas, field slaves were given no time to

groom their hair and wrapped their hair in scarves to hide their “wool” hair (Byrd and Tharps, 2001). In many cases, the master’s jealous wife forced slave women to keep their hair “unkempt”, to humiliate them for their disease, baldness and breakage of their hair (Byrd and Tharps, 2001). However, there came a point in time when slave masters were judged for their slaves’ conditions. This allowed enslaved people to take Sundays off from work to perform proper grooming to their hair.

As a result of White slave owners exploiting Black women, some Black women gave birth to children of their slave masters. Mixed-race children had looser, straighter and softer hair, meaning “good hair.” While Africans were considered to have “bad hair” because of the textures of their hair. These ideas influenced the ways that some Black communities adopted colorism and Eurocentric standards of beauty and respectability (Tate, 2007). After a century of enslavement Black women and girls began adapting to these European beauty standards. Black women and girls were forced to believe that lighter skin and straight hair, would increase their social and economic status (Byrd and Tharps 2001). This led to the consumption and production of European beauty ideals by Black women and girls.

Black women’s hairstyles changed over time in the eras of post-Emancipation, particularly during the mid 20th century. The Civil Rights Movement led to shifts in how Black women defined and perceived themselves in relation to dominant white society. The Black Power Movement and Black Pride from 1966-1974 reaffirmed American African women and girls’ hair as a symbol of economic status, cultural identity, and African ancestry (Bellinger, 2007). In fact, Black women and girls’ hair

become one of the major icons and identifications of Black Power and Black Pride movements. Hair is the identification of being a woman, gender, and the identity for people of color throughout the world (Chapman, 2007).

One of the most prominent member of The Nation of Islam, Malcom X stated, “Blacks needed to reclaim control of their bodies to shape an authentic ‘Black identity as an integral part of constructing separate Black communities rather than further racial and civic integration” (Hohle, 2013, p.2). Over the past decades, there has been several changes and development of Black women and girl’s hair styles. European beauty ideals have been selectively adopted by Black women (Mathews, 2013). There were four main products developed for Black women and girl’s hair to adapt to these European beauty ideals. These products were advertised consistently between the years of 1866 and 1905. These products were: Black Skin Remover, Black and White Ointment, Ozonized Ox Marrow, and Curl-I-Cure: A Cure for Curls. These products included skin lighteners and chemical hair relaxers for African American hair. “The advertisements argue for the desirability of changing physical manifestations of "classic" African American features by juxtaposing the characteristics of Caucasians and Africans to highlight the advantages of disavowing the physical manifestations of an African ancestry” (Rooks, 1996, p. 27). These very advertisements, influenced the way Black women and girls viewed themselves and their community.

Along with advertisements that stated, “This wonderful hair pomade is the only safe preparation in the world that makes kinky or curly hair straight”, “A Cure for Curls, you owe it to yourself, as well as to others who are interest in you, to make yourself as

attractive as possible” (Rooks, 1996, p. 33). Rooks (1996) indicates that these alterations were advertised for women with textured hair as a way to enhance their level of attractiveness to others in society. (p.155). Undoubtedly women compared and contrasted their hairstyles to the Western beauty ideals of being white, young, slim, tall, and upper-class woman (Thompson, 2009). In many cases this has led to Black self-hatred and the lack of acceptance of blackness (West, 1993). Leaving Black woman to make hair choices that will be most beneficial for one’s self. “For Black women, such choices also reflect the search for a survival mechanism in a culture where social, political and economic choices of racialized individuals and groups are conditioned by the extent to which their physical characteristics, both mutable and immutable, approximate those of the dominant racial group” (Caldwell, 1991, p.383).

In 1905, Madame C.J Walker, Anna Turbo Malone of Poro Company and Sara Spencer of Apex Beauty Company, introduced the straightening comb, hair education, and employment for Black women. The creation of this new product created more opportunities for Black women and girls to straighten and style their hair in their own homes or within beauty salons (Jere-Malanda 2008; Gill 2008; Rooks, 1996). Madame C.J. Walker not only produced products that were beneficial for African American women, but also impacted how African American women perceived themselves in society.

Other political leaders, cultural revolutionaries, feminists, and socially conscious fashionistas emerged between 1954 and 1994. They were Miriam Maeba, Judy Richardson, Angela Davis, Olive Morris, and Amye Glover. These women were social

activists that explored the “soul style and Afro look” (Ford, 2015). These public figures conveyed the overarching message that:

“There is not one single type of African hair, just as there is not one single type of African. The variety of hair textures from western Africa alone ranges from the deep ebony, kinky curls of the Mandingos to the loosely curled, flowing locs of the Ashanti. The one constant Africans share when it comes to hair is the social and cultural significance intrinsic to each beautiful strand (Ford, 2015, p.1)

Furthermore, Afrocentric women explored many hairstyles not only socially or culturally, but to also illustrated a political statement during those times. These women paved the way for the dramatic cultural and political changes of the 1960s and 1970s. The Civil Rights movement was a movement that empowered the African American community. The “Afro” was an integral part of the black diasporic urban lexicon and imaginary, the name of one of the most popular hairstyles for black women and men” (Ford, 2015, p.161). However, the term “afro” defined more than just a hairstyle to black women and men. It was also a definition of racial and national identity (Ford, 2015). The Afro was later understood to symbolize Black Power and Black Pride. The afro became the symbol of African Americans a political and cultural statement for future generations.

Rooks (1996) also expresses the concern with the alterations of textured hair and how these too are examples of oppression. “The site where African American women comb their memories and braid or straighten their experiences to express the dreams and possibilities of a social reality where they are equal partners in the creation and styling of



a world free of oppression (p. 8). However, one may argue that it is more complicated than that. Rooks (1996) also explores the crisis of African American women's identity, agency, and audience and how this can play a part in the quest for "white approval and acceptance and an endeavor to overcome the internalized association of Blackness with inferiority" (p.15).

African Americans have fought against the discrimination against based on race, religion, sex, and nationality origin during this time. Black women took a political stance not only for equality but through the appearance of their hair. Like times before, the hairstyles and hair choices of Black women made reflected many aspects of their identity. Black women's hair was no longer worn straight, but left natural and textured to embrace their blackness (Byrd and Tharps, 2001). Which also caused the "double othering" of Black women (Chapman, 2007). Double othering meant that black women were not only being oppressed for being a woman, but for being a black woman. Black women have been oppressed by European beauty ideals that have created standards of "good" and "bad" hair. This is perceived as the hair closest to European hair- long, straight, silky, bouncy, manageable, healthy, and shiny; while "bad: hair is considered "short, matted, kinky, nappy, coarse, brittle and wooly" (Chapman, 2007, p. 28).

### **Theories of Assimilation and Acculturation**

How are Eurocentric values of upward mobility and respectability centralized in major societal institutions of the workplace, military, education, and mass media? In 2010, there was a population of about 38.9 million Black Americans in the United States in 2010 (Oney & Sellers, 2011). Many black Americans were brought forcibly from

Africa to North America during the height of the Transatlantic slave trade. There was still a large amount of segregation amongst black Americans in the United States. Due to historical and contemporary forms of racial stratifications in the United States, African American communities have developed under harsher socioeconomic conditions, patterns of residential segregation, segregated labor markets, and family formations (Oney & Sellers, 2011).

Black women and girls have adopted some of these ideals of acculturation and incorporated aspects into African American culture. Also, known as the assimilation of cultures. For those who chose not to “pass”, the assimilation to a White aesthetic was the best option (Byrd & Tharps, 2001, p.28) Some African American women have struggled to embrace their blackness. The acceptance of Eurocentric ideologies of beauty, upward mobility intersected with African American constructs of respectability, versatility of hairstyling, hair length, and economic well-being all impact the identities of African American women within the mass culture (Rooks, 1996). The reconstruction of Black Womanhood centered around the reclaiming of Black womanhood in the face of racial and gender oppression. The original group was a “construct so diminished by the rapes and other abuses of slavery” were rebuilt and formed into Civilized Negro (Byrd & Tharps, 2001, p. 28). By reconstructing these ideas, the light-skinned Black elite women were influenced by the many Eurocentric features and hairstyles. For example, A’Lelia Bundles, the great-great granddaughter of Madam C.J. Walker states, the ideal image of women in the nineteenth and twentieth century revolved around having a large amount of hair and if you were unable to grow your own hair, there were wigs that were available

(Byrd & Tharps, 2001).

### **Intersections of Race, Class and Beauty**

Women have been pressured and influenced to adopt European beauty standards (Patton, 2006; White, 2005; Thompson, 2009). While the pressure to conform impacts women, this social pressure is sometimes decided on the behalf of black girls (White, 2005). Black women have negotiated Western beauty ideals in various ways. For instance, white skin, long blond hair, and thinness, are all some of the major ideals within Western culture beauty. (Collins, 2004). Black women have constantly been compared to white women, or the ideal of beauty. Because of these dominant standards there is an incredible amount of social pressure for black women to conform to the dominant European beauty standards (White, 2005; Patton, 2006; Tate, 2007). These ideals included light skin tone, long and straight or loosely curled hair, and along with a curvy body shape (Collins, 2004). Again, stemming from the invention from the Madam C.J. Walker, Black women felt pressure to demonstrate upward mobility by adopting new technologies available to fashion and style African American hair (Thompson, 2009). With these products that were invented came much alteration to Black women's hair. In 1859 Martin H. Freeman expressed in the Anglo-African Magazine, his doubts about mainstream society acceptance about the politics of black identity and hair straightening. As well as his critique about the similarities to European standards.

Mass media has a large impact on the many beauty ideals within many cultures. Mass Media networks and mediums tends to portray white women with straight hair as the beauty ideal, while back women are usually featured with similar traits of light

skin and straight hair (White, 2005; Patton, 2006; Lester, 2000). “It is impossible to ignore the fact that pop culture paradigms of beautiful Black women are coiffed with long, straight hair” (Byrd & Tharps, 2002)

Furthermore, Eurocentric beauty standards seem to be so ingrained in Western societies that they are, in various instances, institutionalized to the point where natural African American hairstyles can determine what kind of job she can have and whether she can keep the job (Thompson, 2009). Black girls are not exempt from these Eurocentric standards. Indeed, in most of corporate America, straight hair is considered more professional and presentable while natural hair is considered unkempt and unprofessional (Thompson, 2009). For this reason, Patton (2006) demonstrates that it has been even harder for black women with natural hair to secure jobs as their hair often does not conform to “corporate grooming policies” that deem afros, dreadlocks, braids and such hairstyles as unprofessional, radical and subversive. Similarly, amongst many cases, Black children have been sent home from school for very similar reasons.

According to Evans and McConnell (2003), some women within American society strive to attain cultural dominance and success adopting mainstream Western beauty standards. Evans and McConnell (2003) have also found that although Black women and Asian women are both racial minorities. They do not experience institutionalized racism the same. Black women use self-protective strategies when comparing themselves to mainstream beauty standards.

Intersectionality is a concept developed within feminist and critical race theory to describe an interdisciplinary framework that simultaneously consider the influence of

multiple social categories in the oppression of women of color in the United States (Cole, 2009). Intersectionality provides a comprehensive understanding of the many intersections of one's experience that influence how identity and social stratification inform experiences. This can be very important when understanding how Black woman and girl's identity. Rooks (1996) explains that there is a "strong relationship between economic opportunity, reality, political values, beauty, and hair" (p.16).

Within the Black community, hair is very important for Black woman. "Hair is not a point just about race; rather, it is a classic intersectional point." (Chang & Davis, 2010, p.7). Meaning "the interactive effects of racial and gender discrimination" (Change & Davis, 2010, p. 8). For Black women, hair becomes the way they navigate and negotiate Eurocentric beauty standards. The process of straightening a black women's hair has not only become a process for hair, but also one's Black identity. "Straightening does to our racial identity what the chemicals of relaxers or the heat of pressing combs does to our hair- it makes us seem whiter" (Morrison, 2016, p.86). Patricia Hill Collins argues, the "matrix of race, class and gender oppression" in young girls' lives suggest that Black daughters must learn how to survive "while rejecting and transcending those very same structures" (Hill Collins, 2001, p. 45).

The existing literature shows how Eurocentric standards of beauty, upward mobility and respectability; and assimilation theories of culture, have had a significant impact on Black girls and women's hairstyles over the years. These same intersections have shown how these different aspects of Black women and girls' lives have shaped the way they perceive themselves as Black women and girls'. Choosing these bodies of knowledge

has helped to develop connections to the hair bans in schools. Understanding the history of oppression and black people, theories of assimilation, and the intersections of race, class, and beauty.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This study originated from my previous research that examined the hair style choices of Black women at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Black women have endured many social pressures that have shaped their hair choices in various ways. As of 2016, several schools have attempted to ban natural and other African American hairstyles in the states of Kentucky and North Carolina. For this qualitative study, I conducted a media and discourse analysis to document the language that is used to stigmatize black women's hair, focusing on 30 news stories in K-12 school settings in the United States. I collected data using Lexis-Nexis, Google News and Ethnic News watch database to document the number of incidents involving the policing and regulation of black girls' hairstyles in the United States over the last 10 years. The collection of this data identified regional patterns of school hair policies/bans throughout the United States. There have been a significant amount of media representations of Black women and girl's hair throughout the years that has caught the attention. It is important to study the stigmatization of Black hair within this ten-year time period, between 2007 and 2017. For instance, in 2010 Willow Smith released the song, "Whip My Hair". This song quickly was adopted as anthem of Black girl celebration and self-love. During this time frame, we also see more positive representations of Black womanhood and Black girlhood in popular culture. Thus, placing in conversation the rise of positive representations of Black girls and women with the regulation of Black girls' hair will demonstrate the relationship between oppression and resistance. Furthermore, time frame will provide insight on the ways in which K-12 educational settings continue to be a main

site of transmission of dominant beauty standards and a site of social control. In addition, this study will explore the racialized code words that are used to restrict African American hairstyles and how this terminology stigmatizes blackness. I will explore the ways in which African American feminists have created a space of self-celebration and self-love to resist the negative representations of black femininity and black girlhood.

This intersectional approach will help in understanding how a longer history of the stigmatization of black women's hair continues in the contemporary moment; at the same time, I will look for the ways that Black women have resisted and continue to shape positive images for themselves; particularly in social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram of creating hashtags like #blackgirlmagic. To understand the ways in which Black women have resisted and continued to shape these positive images for themselves and their community, I will conduct a media social analysis. By looking at children's, blogs, Facebook videos, Instagram, and Twitter. I will look at the ways in which Black feminists have created these self-love and self-celebrated spaces. This study will contribute to the national debate on K-12 school's power in regulating black students' hair choices and styles to illuminate a longer history of stigma and an even longer history of resistance.

In qualitative research, it is important that the researcher practice reflexivity, which means to "recognize, examine, and understand how his or her own social background and assumptions can intervene in the research process" (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p.1). Since my own knowledge is shaped through socialization, our environment and our different identities, it is important for me to examine all the factors that can help or hinder



the research process. I identify as an African American woman who has chemically altered (relaxed) hair and has struggled with my own hair choices throughout my life, trying different hairstyles and having felt self-hatred for my own hair choices.

Through my analysis and interpretation, there is space for potential biases and I acknowledge the differences and similarities, along with the acknowledgement of the differences and similarities of my own identity. I as a researcher have experienced some of the same experiences that black women and girls' have faced throughout their lives. The purpose of this study is to illuminate current practices of bias and discrimination against Black girl's hair. As a researcher, I will look at patterns and trends within the selected reports and interpret this data conclusions based on region, ethnicity, gender and age. This study examines the patterns of discrimination and I interpret findings based on language used in the reporting of school dress and grooming policies that stigmatize African American hair.

## Chapter 4: Analysis

The purpose of this study was to understand the scrutiny Black girls are subjected to in K-12 school settings, to explore assimilation theories of culture and the construction of dominant beauty ideals and to document the ways in which black women's hairstyles have been stigmatized. For this qualitative study, I have conducted a media and discourse analysis of 30 online newspaper articles to document the language that is used to describe black girl's hair, focusing on various school settings in the United States. I analyzed the language that is used to stigmatize and regulate Black girl's hair within these settings. These news articles discussed hair bans and school grooming policies throughout the United States over the last ten years. I coded the data by region, race and ethnicity, age, and gender. I analyzed each news story by identifying common themes, key words, and organizing the data. Based on the keywords that were commonly used in the news stories, I identified 3 overarching themes using the following keywords: 1) "distracting" 2) "extreme" and 3) "groomed". These main themes are central to organizing the analysis and interpretation of the data.

The thirty reports of hair bans took place in a wide range of regions throughout the United States. However, a significant amount of cases that have happened within the southern region of the United States. These states include Texas, Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Virginia, Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, Alabama and Georgia. More specifically, the two states with the largest number of occurrences were within the state of Texas with seven cases and Florida with four cases. It has been shown that although these cases have been happening all throughout the United States, it is more prevalent in

the southern region of the United States. In history, it has been shown that southern states have undergone large amounts of segregation and discrimination. The Civil Rights Project has been following the reports of discriminatory acts amongst schools in these southern states. The Civil Rights Project (2017) has defined the southern region for the past decade as the black-white paradigm--a tri-racial region. "The Southern region used in Civil Rights Project reports includes the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia since its creation 21 years ago". Although there is no longer a separation of Black and White schools in these southern states, there are still forms of discrimination that happens within these states. Much of which happens within school settings. The Civil Rights Project discusses the South as the central focus of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision from the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954. The only serious period of enforcement using these authorities came in the 1965-1968 period which initiated historic changes making the South the most integrated region of the country by the early 1970s.

The next category of analysis included race and ethnicity. I based my interpretation of students affected by school grooming policies based on the race and class-based keywords found in the news reports. I found that the most targeted groups are African American boys and girls. Within the age category, there was also a range of age groups that were impacted by hair and grooming policies. The ages ranged from three years to eighteen years of age, this includes Pre-K to high school students. Elementary school age groups, which included ages five to ten years old, showed the largest number of occurrences. Gender was also a central factor when analyzing these cases. I found that

there was an equal number of female and male students who were impacted by these bans within these school settings.

In terms of the use of racialized language, I interpreted the data using a discourse analysis of 3 overarching themes. These themes included the commonly found terms 1) “distracting”, 2) “extreme”, and 3) “groomed”. Amongst these categories there were many cases that could fit into more than one category because of the different kinds of language that is being used. For instances, in one of the most popular cases within the United States, Ashanti Scott, a fifteen-year-old girl who was attending Butler Traditional High School was banned from attending school because of a policy that states

“Hair/Personal Grooming: Hairstyles that are extreme, distracting, or attention-getting will not be permitted. No dreadlocks, cornrolls, twists, Mohawks, and no jewelry will be worn in hair. Hair must be a natural hair color. (No-two-toned hair or severe contrasts). This includes unnatural hair colors. No male may dye, tint or high light his hair in any way. The hair lengths must be kept at a reasonable length; hair no longer than top of the shirt collar, above the eyebrows and Afros no longer than two inches in length. (Tapered sides and back).” After giving these examples, the policy continues to state “Those students who come to school in violation of the dress code will not be allowed to attend class or circulate through the school until their attire is corrected. REMEMBER- All dress codes are at the discretion of the administration.”

Ashanti Scott's case along with many others blatantly express that their hairstyles are “extreme, distracting, and attention-getting”. However, these policies do not express who

these hairstyles are distracting, who they are too extreme for or who's attention they will be taking? There is never an explanation as to whether or not other students will get distracted or if it is the administration that will be the ones who get distracted from the students with these different kinds of hairstyles.

### **Distracting**

The “distracting” category illustrates how school sanctioned codes of conduct in K-12 school settings prefer neutral styles which assumes a Eurocentric standards of respectability and civility within these settings. Connecting to idea of school-sanctioned femininity within schools, Julie Bettie (2003) argues that Mexican American girls and poor white girls, were excluded from Honors academic and sports activities because they fell outside of school-sanctioned femininity but instead were within dissident femininity. Dissident femininity was performed and prescribed for both White and Mexican-American working-class girls. School-sanctioned femininity was impacted by race, ethnic group, and class. The formation of femininity included the choices of their clothing, hairstyles, and make up color. Often times influenced by the White students of the school. Dissident femininity students wore darker colors and darker lipstick, while students that fell under school- sanctioned femininity wore lighter lipstick colors and clothing the expressed this form of femininity. Julie Bettie finds that Mexican American girls who successfully performed school-sanctioned femininity faced race-class injury for “acting white and abandoning her community” or in other words “acting white”. (Bettie, 2003, p. 90).

There is a constant struggle amongst girls of color and how they perform school-

sanctioned femininity. Being distracted relates to heterogeneous standards, beauty standards and the effects it has on the learning environment as a whole. When students of color deviate outside of these “neutral” standards, they are often times seen as a “white aesthetic”. Students of color are cannot only be ridiculed or concerned with one part of their identity, but they must be concerned with every intersection of it and who their identity may be distracting. Today News discusses (2013) Deborah Brown Community School in Tulsa, Oklahoma. A seven-year-old girl named Tiana Parker was sent home for having dreadlocks. The administration sent her home because the dress code policy states, “the Administration reserves the right to contact the parents/guardians regarding any personal hygiene issues that it believes causes a risk to the health, safety and welfare of the student, his or her classmates, and faculty or staff or detracts from the educational environment. Hairstyles such as dreadlocks, afros, Mohawks, and other faddish hairstyles are unacceptable.” Within Deborah Brown Community School’s policy, they use racialized words like “faddish and unacceptable” to describe hairstyles like afros and dreadlocks that are predominately worn by African American students and continuing to racialize black people. “The correlation between race/ethnicity and class means that counselors are likely to assume that brown students are from low-income families (even when they are not) and therefore to make assumptions about what educational resources they need and can handle” (Bettie, 2003, p. 162). Meanwhile, for white students, class does not appear as easy as it would for a brown or black person. Their whiteness overshadows their class status and gives them the ability to pass (Bettie, 2003).

Within that same year 2013, a 12-year-old girl named Vanessa VanDyke who attended

Faith Christian Academy in Orlando Florida was sent home and told she could be expelled if she did not cut her natural hair. According to VanDyke's mom, Sabrina Kent, "my daughters has had the same hairstyle since the beginning of the school year, but school officials only became concerned after I complained to them about her daughter being teased, there have been people teasing her about her hair, and it seems to me that they're blaming her" (Kent, 2013). Kent continues to say the officials told her that her daughters hair was a "distraction". Meaning that her daughters hairstyle was distracting the other students within the school. Moreover, the student handbook states: "Hair must be a natural color and must not be a distraction". But like Vanessa VanDykes's mother states "A distraction to one person is not a distraction to another, you can have a kid come in with pimples on his face, are you going to call that a distraction?"

Bettie (2003) discusses,

"both white and Mexican-American, were not only worried about whether their actions were masculine or feminine; they were equally concerned with the race and, in a more convoluted way, the class meanings of their practices, or "performances," which, if they mimicked preps, would set them up in competition where they could only fail. Less (or not only) victims of mass culture than creative users of it, girls who did not meet prep norms created alternative symbolic economies in which they earned and wore different "badges of dignity" (p.4).

Furthermore, these students were faced with these "badges of dignity" that were left to define who they were.

There is still a continuation of hair bans within 2017. Chicago's Very Own WGN9 Morning News reports, a freshman at Chicago Charter High School named Daisy Chavero received detention and was out of the classroom for five days for attending school with red hair. Again, the school policy states they do not allow any unnatural hair colors which may be distracting to students.

### **Extreme**

The second category that I analyzed is "extreme". I framed this through a discursive analysis of "extreme" within the context of racial difference and the stigmatizations of blackness. Many of the words that were used within this category are used to stigmatize or racialize black people all throughout history. Within this category, I grouped discursively related terms such as: "dangerous," "criminal," "too much," "inappropriate," "unnatural" and "wild" are all words that are used to naturalize racial difference and assign negative racial meaning to natural textured hair and other "extreme" hairstyles. Therefore, I interpret the category of "extreme" as a discursive way that stigmatizing blackness and locates racial difference on the body. However, the development of racial stigma within the United States stems from the institution of slavery. These stigmas relate back to the master-slave hierarchy and dishonored slave.

As reported by the Huffington Post (2013) Tiana Parker who was only 7 years old was sent home from Deborah Brown Community School in Tulsa, Oklahoma for wearing dreadlocks. The school officials at Deborah Brown Community School said that her hair "did not look presentable". "The parent of the student in question elected to choose a



forbidden hairstyle which detailed in the school policy.” The dress code does state specifically “hairstyles such as dreadlocks, afros, mohawks and other faddish styles are unacceptable” The school policy says, “the administration reserves the right to contact the parents/guardians regarding any personal hygiene issue that it believes causes a risk to the health, safety and welfare of the student, his or her classmates, and faculty or staff or detracts from educational environment.” Tiana’s parents took this as a target towards their daughter’s race. By targeting certain hairstyles, they are therefore targeting certain races, blackness, and racial difference. After this case going viral on Facebook and other social media sites, there were a lot of questioning about race within school systems.

There was even a petition that received 20,000 signatures that asked for a public apology from Deborah Brown Community School. A commenter Rosemary Michelle Malign said “they can have a weave i.e., white people hairstyles. Meaning, your child must go through painful and expensive hair alterations...rather than natural options...like an afro or dreads. Disgusting”. However, it has been shown that hairstyles like afros, dreadlocks, braids, and other hairstyles are considered to be unprofessional.

### **Groomed**

The last discursive category that I analyzed from the reports is the word “groomed”. Many of the reports used language that reflects a standard of respectability which attempts to shape African American students into what it means to be respectable students and citizens. I connected the word “groomed” within overlapping and related ideas of whiteness, Eurocentric, standards, acceptable, employable, control, untidy, and unkempt are all forms of language that reflects how school grooming policies are used to

socially control blackness and assimilate students into a mold that is presumably employable and acceptable in educational and other professional settings.

These cases have shown to happen at early ages as well. The Washington Post (2007) reports a child as young as 3 years-old named Jayce Brown in White Plains, Maryland was told that he had to cut his dreadlock off before he could return to school. His mother Danielle states, “it came out of nowhere, and they were telling me I had to cut it away”. The school administration said that his hairstyle went against school policies for boys. The policy states “forbids extreme faddish hairstyles, including the use of rubber bands or the twisting of hair”. Because Jayce’s parents refused to cut his dreadlocks off, he was suspended. For these students, it is an attack on their identity and on their blackness.

These 3 themes are important when understanding and analyzing the ways that school grooming policies stigmatize Black hair within K-12 school settings throughout the United States. Each term is used to describe these student’s key factors and how themes were developed. Amongst these themes are connections between ethnic group, age, and region. The coding each of these kinds of language, I could find similarities amongst each of these categories and understand which regions, what ages, and what ethnic groups were most affected by school grooming policies.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

The main purpose of this study is to determine the major factors that have contributed to the stigmatization of Black girls and boys face within K-12 settings. Initially, I anticipated my results would show that Black girls of all ages within the southern region would be the focus of target of these discriminatory school grooming policies. I was surprised to find that other groups are also affected by these rules. The results demonstrated that both Black girls and Black boys face stigmatization. Unfortunately, I was not surprised to find that the language used in hair policies was most likely to target Black students in compared to other groups of students. As previously mentioned, these policies were mostly enforced in the southern regions of the United States. Furthermore, these cases were more likely to take place in elementary school and middle schools ranging from 5 to 13 years of age. I also found that, there was an equal number of male and female students that have faced these hair bans.

My analysis based on the racialized understandings of grooming and Eurocentric respectability standards place racial difference on the body. Ashanti Scott, a student at Butler High School in Kentucky stated, “I noticed that as a you kept reading [the school notice] they added more hairstyles that were natural and mostly worn by black people. I’ve worn those hairstyles so I definitely felt targeted, and I felt like other black students like myself were targeted, as a whole.” In comparison, white students were regulated by school grooming policies for wearing hair colors that are described as “distracting.” This included wearing “unnatural” colors like pink and purple and wearing mohawks. For instance, in the 2016 Muscle Shoals High School policy stated, “students will not be

allowed to attend classes if their hair has been dyed a bright or distracting color”.

Given that school grooming policies used stigmatizing language in over 50 percent of the news stories, it is imperative that K-12 educators consider the impact on Black students. Duncan and McCoy argues that “Black youth do not exist in the world as self-evident and distinct entities” (Duncan and McCoy, 2007, p. 44). Furthermore, there is evidence that explores the importance of educators in promoting positive racial identity formation within these settings. By doing so, we are allowing Black students to develop positive academic identities and reach their fullest potential.

### **Politics of Respectability**

The standards of respectability for Black adolescents is shaped by a history of racial oppression in the United States. For many racialized marginalized groups, children and adolescents are taught to be treated and *respected* well from a group in power, they must behave and go above and beyond the expectations (Higginbotham, 1993).

Throughout many of 30 reports, there were policies that were enforced that stigmatized Black students and expected them to fit into a school sanctioned standard and called for a change to their hairstyles and to conform to hairstyles that are presented as “respectable”.

Evelyn Higginbotham discusses respectability politics within the African American community. Higginbotham looks to central ideas associated with “uplifting the race” that focused on religious, civic, and community standards of conduct and citizenship. Osagie Obasogie and Zachary Newman note how people of color are racially profiled based on appearance, clothing, and size. Parents, therefore teach their children the “rules” of comportment and dress to decrease the risk of their children being targets

of racial profiling and racial violence (Obasogie & Newman, 2016). This politics of respectability practiced by some African American communities' help explain the school grooming policies that are also enforced at predominantly African American schools.

Scholars have argued that the politics of Black respectability encourage some Black women and girls to aspire to normative standards of middle-class femininity (Moore, 2011). Although much of the discussion on Black respectability involve Black women promoting good representations of Black women, these discussions do not consider the full impact of Black respectability on Black women and girls. For instance, Hill (2002) argues that these discourse of strength and respectability prescribe contradictory traits and behaviors of Black women and girls. Therefore, both Eurocentric standards of respectability and Black respectability informs the ways in which Black girls and Black boys' appearance and embodiment are regulated.

For example, U.S. school systems have promoted academic success programs that incorporate norms that are often problematic for Black students. Researchers express that: "the application of these models provide numerous examples of smuggle and empowerment, they often do so in ways that undermine a larger objective of challenging White supremacy in educational practice; Even as these studies seek to affirm and legitimize the developmental processes of Black youth, they do so in ways that reinforce the supremacy of White American middle-class culture by establishing the standards and values of respectability as the endpoints or the highest stage of human development" (Morrison, 1992; Sleeter, 1992; Duncan & McCoy, 2007).

Thus, exposing Black youth to positive examples and demonstrating diverse models of

success and academic citizenship are central to counteracting the real effect of discriminatory school grooming policies in the United States.

Furthermore, other studies suggest that by implementing positive programs, they are helping to form positive politics of respectability. Randal Kennedy, a professor at Harvard University, argues that amongst the African American community there are many forms of allegations of racial misconducts. However, these are brought upon African Americans without any evidence and arguments that challenge these conclusions of African Americans being “intellectual sloppiness, unduly and hostile” (Kennedy, 1993). Although this study focuses on respectability, race neutrality and the law. Kennedy (1993) touches on respectability amongst the Black community and how it has hindered Black adults and adolescents to assimilate in fear of expressing these negative images. In Harper’s magazine, Randall Kennedy (2015) continues to argue that the politics of respectability has only helped to misguide marginalized groups, like the Black community. “The politics of respectability is a tactic of public relations that is, per se, neither necessarily good nor bad. A sound assessment of its deployment in a given instance depends on its goals, the manner in which it is practiced, and the context within which a given struggle is waged. Its association with esteemed figures and episodes in African-American history suggests that the politics of respectability warrants a more respectful hearing than it has recently received” (Kennedy, 2015).

For Black students, racial profiling and harassment is an everyday reality. The intersections of Black respectability and discriminatory school grooming policies reveal the layers of regulation and policing of students assigned racial difference. Black boys

and girls face discrimination in schools not only for their behaviors, but also for non-school sanctioned hairstyles. Black boys and girls are expected to assimilate and conform to school respectability in the form of neutrality and professionalism. Case in point, seven-year-old Tiana Parker from Tulsa, Oklahoma was sent home for Tiana for violating school policies because she wore an “unusual hairstyle and distracting from Deborah Brown Community School’s ‘respectful’ learning environment. Meaning, no dreadlocks, Afros, Mohawks or faddish styles were permitted on the premises of Deborah Brown Community School.” Deborah Brown Community School also use school grooming policies to regulate the parents. The policies further states, “female parents are banned from entering the school or going on field trips braless; male parents are prohibited from wearing pants that sag; vulgarity or cursing by parents is subject to prosecution under the state’s criminal penal codes; and the display of “inappropriate behavior” during school programs such as, holding a crying baby or using a cell phone” (Deborah Brown Community School dress code policy, 2014).

### **History of Black Resistance**

Black resistance starts stems from the time of slavery. Angela Davis (1981) focuses on the experiences of black women and the movement of resistance. Davis states, “women resisted and advocated challenges to slavery at every turn, often subtler than revolts, escapes, and sabotage” (Davis, 1981, p.5). Davis also continues to connect these experiences that Black women had with their reproductive rights as “demeaning” and when being faced with these forms of oppression, only leaving Black women with one choice but to resist. Although her focus was on resistance of reproduction, much of the

resistance was against the harsh forms of oppression that Black women were facing at the time of Slavery. More recently, hairstyles have become the form of discrimination amongst Black girls and boys. However, many of these newspaper reports about regulations on hairstyles impact Black students. More recently, there have been regulation on how a student may even wear their facial hair. There was a case in Louisiana where a school valedictorian was not allowed to be present at his high school graduation because of his facial hair. These school sanctioned policies are interfering with the education of these students that are continuously being regulated.

### **Natural Hair Pride and Celebration of Black Girlhood**

Meanwhile, it is also important to explore the different spaces that Black women and girls have created positive representations for themselves. I found that within the last ten years, there has been an increase in the amount of social media hashtags and positive representations of Black girls throughout the United States. The social media hashtags, #BlackGirlMagic or #BlackGirlsAreMagic emerged in 2013 and was created by CaShawn Thompson. She explains in her interview to *The Times*, “I say ‘magic’ because it’s something that people don’t always understand. Sometimes our accomplishments might seem to come out of this air, because a lot of times, the only people supporting us are other black women” (Thompson, 2015).

Positive and celebratory representations of black girlhood are also featured in children’s books. For example, some Popular children’s books are: *Big Hair, Don’t Care* by Crystal Swain-Bates and Megan Bair; *Nappy Hair* by Carolivia Herron; and *I Love My*



*Hair!* By Natasha Tarpley and E.B Lewis. These popular children's books are helping Black children form positive Black centric identities. Georgina Lawton writes in *Dazed Magazine*,

“Natural hair is having a moment – again. Historically a politicized issue, natural black hair finally infiltrated the mainstream when the ‘fro was famously sported by activist Angela Davis and actress Pam Grier. They styled it loud and proud to reflect the political sentiments of the time; namely, black power, militant feminism and a general resistance to cultural and beauty assimilation based on Eurocentric ideals. Today, as discussions of racial politics dominate the barber-shops *and* blogs, the natural hair movement is enjoying a defiant resurgence.

The sharing of positive social media hashtags and children's books are contributing to the creation of spaces to celebrate natural hair. YouTube tutorials featuring young women wearing natural hairstyles are very popular with online audiences. A quick search on Instagram for the hashtag “naturalhair” yields 7 million results. Hair products advertisements for “Carol’s Daughter” feature Black women wearing natural hairstyles. In a time where Black students are predominately being policed and regulated in schools for their hairstyles, it is very important that these students have these spaces in which celebrate themselves.

I speculate that future research could take a variety of different directions to further explore this topic. Future research could broaden the scope and explore where these hair regulations are happening throughout out the world. Also, future research could

examine the forms of language that is used throughout the banning of hairstyles in other settings like youth sports organizations, military youth groups, and other youth groups. This way, studies could understand the ways in which dress and grooming policies use racialized language to continue to assign “natural” racial differences onto the bodies of Black children. Most importantly, future research will continue to explore the many contours of Black resistance to rigid respectability politics and negative representations of Black girlhood and Black boyhood.

### **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

The purpose of this study is to illuminate current practices of bias and discrimination against Black girl’s hair through the United States. Throughout this study, I analyzed 30 online newspaper articles to document the language that is used to stigmatize black girl’s hair. The focus of this study is to understand and determine what school settings in the United States are regulating hairstyles in K-12 settings, followed by to documenting and analyzing for common types of language that is used to stigmatize and regulate Black girl’s hair within these school settings. Furth more, to also understand what races and ages are being affected the most. These news articles discussed hair bans throughout the United States over the last ten years. By selecting the last ten years, this study could explore the times in which there are natural hair movements emerging, media representations of black hair celebration and self-love. Much of which are on social media websites like Twitter and Instagram. This is where you find different hashtags like #blackgirlmagic and #blackgirlsrock. Within this time frame, there have been an

immense amount self-celebration and self-love that has helped Black girls throughout the United States. When I coded to explore by region, race and ethnicity, age, and gender. By doing so, I could identify three common themes. These themes are interpreted and categorized by the following key words: Theme one is “distracting”, theme two “extreme”, and theme three “groomed”.

These themes and categories are very important when understanding and analyzing why Black girls are being stigmatized within these K-12 school settings throughout the United States. Each of the different terms that are used to describe these students are the key factors in developing these themes. Within these themes there are connections between ethnic group, age, and region. By coding each of these forms of language, I could find similarities amongst each of these categories and understand which regions, what ages, and what ethnic groups are facing the most regulations against hairstyles in school settings.

Over the year, there has been an increase in the amount of self-love and self-celebration amongst the Black community. Much of this celebration has emerged and continued to develop through social media websites like Twitter and Instagram. From these websites, there has been a development of hashtags to help Black girls love themselves and celebrate everything about themselves. In a time where Black students are predominately being policed and regulated in schools for their hairstyles, it is very important that these students have these spaces in which they can love themselves. Nonetheless, representations of Black girls have increased not only on social media

websites but in children's books as well. There has been an increase in the number of children's books.

I speculate that future research could take a variety of different directions to explore discrimination amongst Black girls' and boys' hairstyles. Future researchers could broaden their region and explore where these hair regulations are happening throughout the world. Also, future research could examine the forms of language that is used throughout the banning of hairstyles in other settings other than schools. This way, studies could understand whether the same forms of language are being used for both boys, girls, men and women.

The purpose of this study was to get a better understanding of why there are dress code policies in schools to regulate and discriminate against Black boys and girls.



**Figure 1: Themes**

<b>Theme 1</b>	<b>Theme 2</b>	<b>Theme 3</b>
Distracting	Excessive	Grooming
Heterogeneous	Racial Difference	Eurocentric
Deviate from the standards	Blackness	Standards
Effects on learning education	Dangerous	Acceptable
	Criminal	Employable
	Too Much	Control
		Hair Rules
		Untidy
		Unkempt
		Whiteness

Figure 2: Races

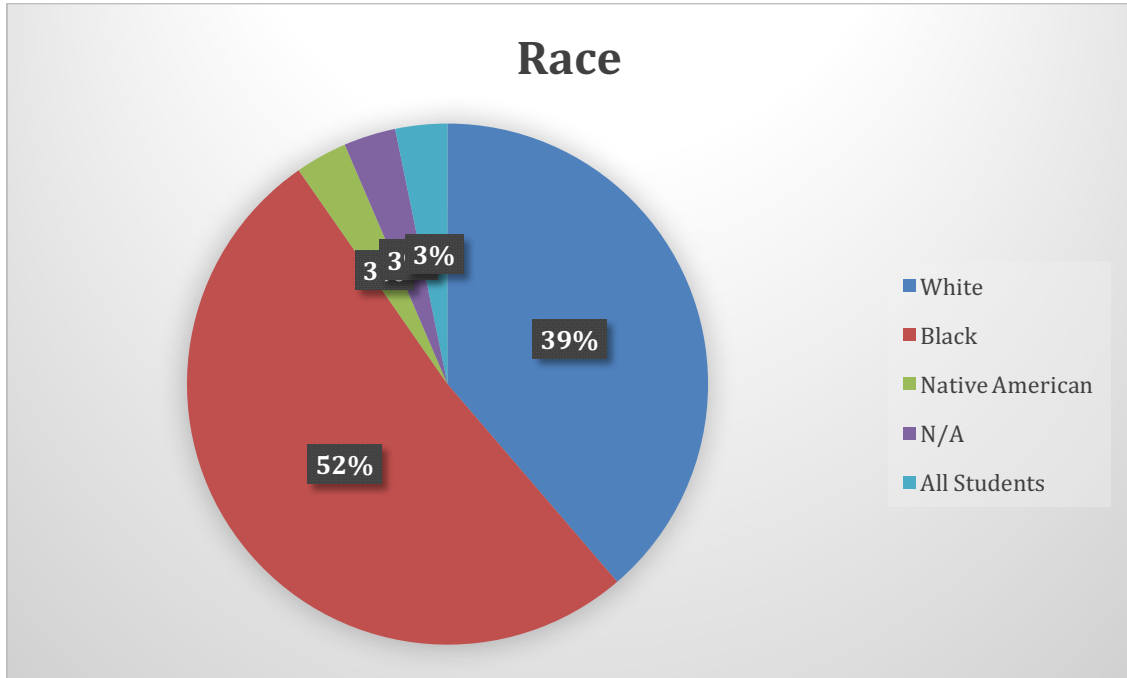
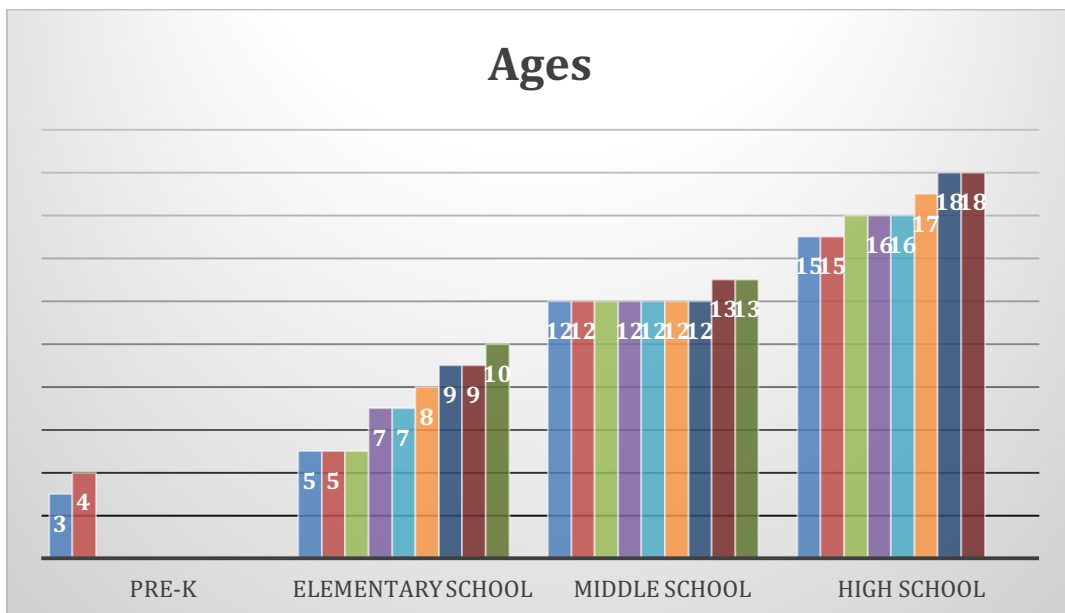
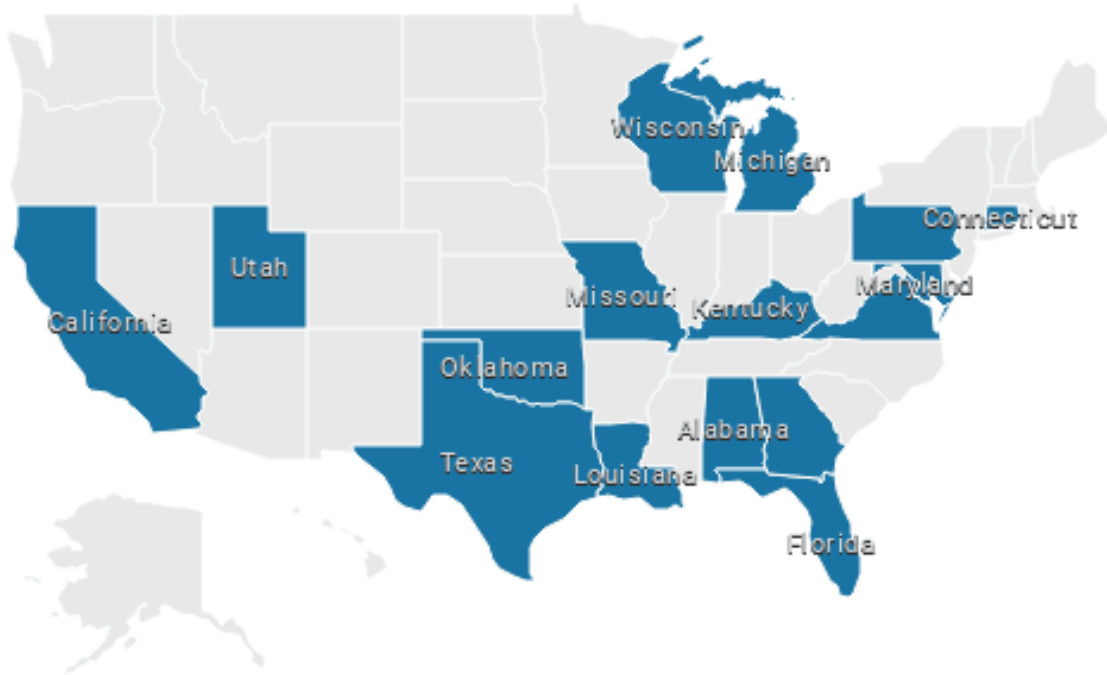


Figure 3: Grades Levels



**Figure 4: Regions**





### Work Cited

- Banks, I. (2000). *Hair Matters: Beauty, Power, and black Women's Consciousness*. New York: NYU Press.
- Bellinger, W. (2007). Why African American women try to obtain 'good hair'. *Sociological Viewpoints*.
- Benedict, E. (2015). *Me, my hair, and I: Twenty-Seven Women Untangle an Obsession*. NY, NY: Workman Publishing.
- Bettie, J. (2014). *Women without Class: Girls, Race and Identity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Byrd, A. D., & Tharps, L. L. (2002). *Hair story: Untangling the roots of black hair in America*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Craig, M. L. (2002). *Ain't I a Beauty Queen? Black women, beauty, and the politics of race*. New York City, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Caldwell, Paulette (1991). "A Hair Piece: Perspectives on the intersections of Race and Gender." *Duke Law Journal* 2
- Chapman, Y. (2007) "I am not my hair! Or am I?": Black women's transformative experience in their self-perceptions of abroad and at home.
- Davis, A. Y. (1981). *Women, race, & class*. New York: Random House.
- DeCuir-Gunby, J. T. 2009. "A Review of the Racial Identity Development of African American Adolescents: The Role of Education." *Review of Educational Research* 79: 103–124.
- Greenwell, M. (2007, November 24). *Parents and School Tangle over Waldorf Tot's*

*Locks*. Retrieved from

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2007/11/23/AR2007112301624.html>

- Harris, M. J. (1999). Crown and Glory on the Journey: Hair, Culture, and Self-Construction Among African American Women. *Dissertation Abstracts International. Section A: Humanities & Social Sciences*.
- Harvey, A. M. (2005). Becoming Entrepreneurs: Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender at the Black Beauty Salon. *Gender & Society*.
- Higginbotham, E. B. (1993). *Righteous discontent: The women's movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Hill, Shirley A. 2002. Teaching and doing gender in African American Families. *Sex Roles*.
- Huffington Post. (2013, November 26). *Vanessa VanDyke could be expelled after having her hair mocked*. Retrieved from [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/26/vanessa-vandyke-expelled\\_n\\_4345326.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/26/vanessa-vandyke-expelled_n_4345326.html)
- Jere-Malanda, R. (2008) Black women's politically correct hair. *New African Woman*.
- Lake, O. (2003). *Blue veins and kinky hair: naming and color consciousness in African America*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Morrison, A. M. (2016). Straightening Up: Black Women Law Professors, Interracial Relationships, and Academic Fit(ting) in. *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender*.

- Obasogie, O.K., & Newman, Z. (2016). Black Lives Matter and Respectability Politics in Local News Accounts of Office-Involved Civilian Deaths: An Early Empirical Assessment. *Wisconsin Law Review*, 2016.
- Oney, C. N., Cole, E. R., & Sellers, R. M. (2011). Racial identity and gender as moderators of the relationship between body image and self-esteem for African Americans. *Sex Roles*.
- Persch, J. A. (2013, September 10). *School that barred 7-year-old's dreadlocks changes dress-code policy*. Retrieved from <https://www.today.com/parents/school-barred-7-year-olds-dreadlocks-changes-dress-code-policy-8C11122821>
- Robert S. Chang & Adrienne D. Davis (2010). An Epistolary Exchange Making up is Hard to do: Race/Gender/Sexual Orientation in the Law School Classroom. *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender*.
- Rooks, N. M. (1996). *Hair raising: Beauty, culture, and African American women*. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press.
- Rutledge, A. (2017, April 21). *Student Banned from Class Over Hair Color*. Retrieved from <http://wgntv.com/2017/04/21/student-banned-from-class-over-hair-color/>
- Staples, J. M. (2008). Hustle & Flow: a critical student and teacher-generated framework for re-authoring a representation of Black masculinity. *Educational Action Research*
- Tate, S. (2007). Black beauty: Shade, hair and anti-racist aesthetics, 30:2, 300-319. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*.

Thompson, C. (2008). black women and identity: What's hair got to do with it? Michigan Feminist Studies.

Thompson, C. (2009). Black Women, Beauty, and Hair as a Matter of Being. *Women's Studies*.

Valcin, N., Kawaja, J., Sereny, J., Sienna Films (1999). National Film Board of 40 Canada., CBC News world., & Women Make Movies (Film). *Black, bold & beautiful: Black women's hair*. New York, N.Y.: Women Make Movies