When They See Our Hair:

Detangling the roots of racial representation in The Netherlands through the imagery of Black hair salons in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam

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ABSTRACT

Black hair discrimination has gained increased visibility in recent years. This is partly due to reported stories of discriminatory school or work policies that have prevented Black women from wearing their natural afro or curly hair out in work or school environments. Black female public figures, including former American first lady, Michelle Obama, as well as Dutch politician, Sylvana Simons, have also been the targets of Black hair discrimination. In Sylvana's case, an appearance on a Dutch programme called *De Wereld Draait Door*, resulted in a series of racist responses online aimed at her afro hairstyle. This raises questions about how racial representations of Black hair influence the socio-political position of Black women in western societies and more specifically in the Netherlands. Black hair as a racially charged symbol can evoke negative reactions which can have damaging effects on the social realities of Black women living in urban spaces. In an attempt to investigate the extent of these effects, qualitative research was conducted to interrogate how race is articulated in Dutch capital cities through imagery of Black hair salons and the experiences of Black women who frequent Black hair salons. In order to examine how race manifests in contemporary Dutch society, the roots of race and racism were traced back to the colonial era. By tracing the historical legacy of race and racism in Europe, race relations in the Netherlands was contextualized and served as a point of departure for the examination of the articulation of race in modern urban spaces. In order to understand how Black women connect their Black hair practices and experiences of going to Black hair salons to their positionality, interviews were conducted with 10 participants. To supplement this inquiry, 60 images were collected of Black and White hair salons in the nexus of the cosmopolitan cities of Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam. Critical discourse analysis and visual analysis were employed to analyse the varied data. The findings highlighted the intersections between race and gender as factors that contribute to inferior representations of Black hair and Black beauty. Ultimately, the research results revealed that race was consistently articulated through dominant representations of White beauty and western aesthetics, whereas Black hair and consequently Black women were undermined through a lack of representation.

KEYWORDS: race, racism, black hair, representation, intersectionality, Netherlands

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1. Introduction

> *Curly hair, coiled hair, Black hair is a trigger, it seems, that reveals the bigotry of people who don't understand themselves as bigoted, people who just imagine themselves, as upholding "standards."*
> *(Bellafante, 2019, p. 3)*

In the year 2010, a woman by the name of Chasity Jones was offered a job in customer services at a crisis management company in the American state of Alabama. Chastity filed a lawsuit after the job offer was withdrawn because she refused to undo her locs. To her dismay the federal court decided not to take her case because her hairstyle was considered to be changeable (Nasheed, 2019). In 2016, an image of 13 year old, Zulaikha Patel, went viral when she was captured boldly protesting on school grounds against discriminatory hair policies (Nicholson, 2016). The South African pupil, along with many of her peers claimed that their prestigious school, had banned afro hairstyles from being worn as they were considered to be 'untidy' and 'un-ladylike' (Nicholson, 2016). Two years later, north of the Atlantic Ocean, 16 year old Ruby Williams, sued her east London school after she was frequently sent home because "her natural afro hair was deemed to be against uniform policy" (Dabiri, 2020, para. 5). In the same year, a video of an American high schooler, Andrew Johnson, made international headlines when he was forced to cut his locs in order to participate in a wrestling match in New Jersey (Bellafante, 2019). What these incidents reflect are the extent to which modern "institutions, practices and beliefs become 'raced' when they are shaped and understood through racial categories" (Buechler, 2008, p. 143). Black hair as a signifier of Black identity renders it a site for political struggle and therefore vulnerable to discrimination. The aforementioned cases suggest that these vulnerabilities are transnational.

The increased visibility of discrimination against Black hair in North America has led to the enactment of the CROWN (Create a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural Hair) Act. As of July 2019, California became the first American state to

criminalize discrimination against Black hair (Nasheed, 2019). Laws like the CROWN Act illustrate how discourses concerning Black hair and ultimately Black cultural identity are coloured by racist ideology. The association of Black natural hair being 'unkempt' and 'unprofessional,' arguably connotes to how "identity-based oppression restricts individuals to the extent that their capacity to imagine their identities becomes fixated on an unreachable ideal, i.e. the White, hegemonic masculine subject" (Song, 2017, p. 50). This notion is illustrated in the way in which former American First Lady, Michelle Obama's hair was the object of much media scrutiny. Hair politics is relevant in this way because Michelle consistently straightening her hair pertains to an attempt to "accommodate hegemonic expectations" (Song, 2017, p. 64). These hegemonic expectations and their influence on perceptions of Black hair are not only pervasive in American society but are widespread, throughout Europe and more specifically in the Netherlands. An example of this is when Dutch politician, Sylvana Simons was criticized for her hair on a well-known Dutch current affairs programme, *De Wereld Draait Door*. In 2014, Sylvana was a guest on the programme and wore her hair in its naturally curly, textured form. On social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, she received racist comments about her afro hairstyle which was referred to as a 'bird's nest', 'ugly' and was ignominiously associated with 'pubic hair' (Arakel, 2014). Sylvana responded to the distasteful retorts in an interview with Dutch YouTuber, Zarayda Groenhart: "the standard of the world that we live in is White, male and hetero" (Simons, 2014). The politician went on to explain that aesthetics that challenge that standard often provoke negative reactions (Simons, 2014).

With the exception of Andrew, the young male wrestler, the aforementioned examples illustrating Black hair discrimination, involve Black females. This is arguably linked to how "for the vast majority of Black women, hair is not just hair; it contains emotive qualities that are linked to one's lived experience" (Thompson, 2009, p. 831). This lived experience is often characterized by gender and race. By tracing the history of Black hair to the colonial period, inferences can be drawn about how "skin colour and hair are so intertwined that it is hard to separate the two when examining the forces that shape Black people's lives" (Thompson, 2009, p. 833). These forces are particularly evident in urban spaces, as Black women are subjected to expressions of Black urban

femininity which is a notion that involves Black women alchemizing their behaviour and physical appearance (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020), in order to fit within the western ideals of femininity and beauty. The ‘good/bad’ hair dichotomy that frames afro natural hair as ‘bad’ and western straight hair as ‘good,’ fosters racist practices that can potentially impact urban positionalities. This suggests that the act of changing or straightening afro natural hair is “not only linked to physical attractiveness, it is also a marker of socio-economic mobility” (Thompson, 2009, p. 843). In light of this, it is important to examine the extent to which aspects of Black cultural identity, like Black hair influence socio-political mobility in urban settings.

The aesthetics of Black hair and the Black body can act as both a sign of political protest and an expression of cultural subjectivity. The same way in which the Black body acts as a canvas for Black culture can be extended to the way particular urban spaces can reflect Black cultural identity. Within the frame of *urban politics of representation*, there is a belief that living and being represented in a city is associated with finding a place in the world (Georgiou, 2006). In other words, urban spaces play a significant role in representing the absence or presence of a culture which in turn feed into cultural groups’ sense of belonging. This sentiment is generally applied to migrant and diasporic urban dwellers because more often than not, it is these minority groups who seek “unrestricted access to spaces of expression and forms of citizenship, which do not always fit within the dominant political outlook of the liberal western state” (Georgiou, 2006, p. 7). Former colonial powers, like the Netherlands have become home to mixed ethnic, racial and cultural groups. Cosmopolitan cities within the Netherlands are often hubs of multiculturalism due to this diversity, therefore, making these cities significant urban spaces where these different groups intersect and attempt to find a place of belonging. Minorities of African and of Caribbean descent are historically clustered in cities like Rotterdam, The Hague, and Amsterdam due to the wave of immigration that took place from 1970s (Blakely, 1993). The Netherlands like many other different European states, has expunged the use of race in public discourse. As a consequence of this, the idea of race is understood in relation to cultural difference as opposed to biological difference. This reduction of the concept of race perpetuates

“rhetoric of a colour-blind society while ignoring the historical legacy of being a colour-conscious society” (Buechler, 2008, p. 145).

With this in mind this research project aims to explore how race is articulated in the Netherlands today, through racial representations of Black cultural identity in the form of Black hair and the implications of these representations on the positionality of Black women living in the Netherlands. The focus will be on how the imagery of Black hair is represented through Black hair salons in Rotterdam, The Hague and Amsterdam and how these representations are connected to the experiences of the Black women who frequent Black hair salons. By adopting the theoretical lens of critical discourse analysis and cultural studies the goal is to answer the following research question:

How is race articulated in urban Dutch cities through the imagery of Black hair salons and the experiences of Black women living in the Netherlands?

Black hair salons are not only significant in their economic value as businesses but are also culturally valuable. Black minorities in Europe are often excluded from formal politics and thus engage with *urban politics of representation* which often involve street activities, local life participation, among many other things (Georgiou, 2006). Minority groups do this “as a reflection of their mobile status and their everyday engagement with images and representations of the self, community, the city, global politics and cultures” (Georgiou, 2006, pp. 9–10). The notion of *urban politics of representation* highlights the link between space, cultural identity and positionality. This concept is illustrated in the “processes of communication and interaction initiated by city dwellers as part of their planned or unplanned attempts to find a location” (Blakely, 1993, p. 9) within urban spaces that is significant both, physically and symbolically. With respect to this project, the intention is to investigate how the physical location and cultural representation of Black hair salons in the cities is related to the positionality of the Black women who frequent the Black hair salons. Black hair salons serve as spaces in urban settings where Black cultural identity is affirmed. If cultural identities “are the names [given] to the different ways [people] are positioned by, and position [themselves] within, the narratives of past” (Hall, 1990, p. 225), then in part, this research project aims to explore how, in light of the Netherlands colonial past, the practice of going to Black hair salons relates to the socio-political position of Black

women in modern Dutch society. In order to interrogate the extent of this connection, the following sub-question will be asked:

Sub-question 1: How do Black women connect their experiences of going to Black hair salons to their positionality in society as racialized subjects?

The first sub-question helps draw connections between racialized definitions of Black cultural identity and their influence on positionality. These definitions and their influence on positionality is explored through interviews with Black women who frequent Black hair salons. To further understand how race is articulated in urban spaces, the second sub-question aims to investigate if and how the positionality of Black women who frequent Black hair salons is mirrored by the racial representations of Black hair salons in different Dutch cities. This is interrogated by analyzing the images of Black and White hair salons in the nexus of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague. The analysis is directed by the following question:

Sub-question 2: How is Black cultural identity constructed in the city centres of Rotterdam, the Hague and Amsterdam through the imagery of Black hair salons?"

Analyzing the representation of Black hair salons requires outlining the ways these enterprises construct Black cultural identity and how this contributes to understanding the significance of their representation and how race is articulated through their visibility. By interrogating the positionality of Black women through their experiences of going to Black hair salons and relating that to the representation of Black hair salons, this project hopes to understand how race is articulated in Rotterdam, The Hague, and Amsterdam. Moreover, the links made between Black hair, racial representation and positionality, provide insight into the lived experiences of Black women living in the Netherlands.

1.2 Social Relevance

On May 25th 2020, George Floyd, an unarmed African-American man, was tragically killed during an arrest by Derek Chauvin, a White police officer, in Minneapolis (Hill et al., 2020). The footage of the violent arrest rapidly spread across social media channels and caused a global uproar. This reignited the Black Lives Matter Movement and was the impetus behind widespread protests all over the world. Cities like

Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague attracted thousands of demonstrators challenging “a culture of systemic racism in the Netherlands” (Muhlberg, 2020, para. 1). George Floyd’s death has spurred conversations about racial injustice in all spheres of society. In light of this, questions have been raised about how race is confronted or not confronted in contemporary societies.

Modern European countries, including The Netherlands, have “promoted a cleansed history of colonial rule” (Lentin, 2008, p. 488) and in doing so have removed discriminatory biological associations made with race from public discourse. This concept of race has been replaced with prejudice, based on cultural difference which is considered to be less charged than discrimination rooted in racial science (Lentin, 2008). However, Black cultural identity in the form of Black hair texture, length or style is still often racialized. The politics of Black hair is rooted in discriminatory practices that date back to the colonial era (Rezende et al., 2018). These roots still bloom today in the form of cultural racism. The term cultural racism is used here, solely to refer to the positing of White culture as superior over non-White cultures, thereby reducing non-White cultures to inferior statuses (Salem & Thompson, 2016). By erasing the concept of race in public discourse, contemporary society potentially deflects racist practices and replaces the recognition of race “with evocations of pluralism and diversity that further mask reality” (hooks, 1992, p. 176). In the tradition of critical discourse analysis, highlighting discourses around race and Black hair discrimination expose unequal power relationships (Dijk, 1993) and in doing so can help propel social change. This can be done by encouraging discussions about socio-political disparities rooted in racial prejudice that members of the Black community face; raising awareness about racialized depictions of Black hair and how they are reproduced by Black salon owners, Black hair product owners and even non-Black hair care providers; and highlighting the importance of the visibility of Black cultural identity through the representation of Black hair salons and other relevant cultural enterprises. Knowledge obtained from this project could be relevant to municipal officials. Local governments can become conscious of diverse cultural inclusion in urban spaces. Members of society, regardless of race or ethnicity, can potentially benefit from educational measures or municipal initiatives that address diverse cultural representation and the impact of systematic racism. This can

help society as a whole, specifically privileged members of society, recognize that discriminatory practices based on colour-conscious prejudice, are social realities despite institutional efforts to erase the concept of race.

1.3 Scientific Relevance

Although the study of race and racist practices in The Netherlands is prevalent within academia, there is a lack of academic inquiry into the politics of Black hair and the representation of Black hair salons in urban spaces within the Dutch context. Furthermore, there is a general lack of academic literature dedicated to conceptualizations of race and racism within the European context specifically. Academic inquiries about race and racism are often written from the American perspective, leaving little room for explanations of the nuances of race and racism in western Europe (Goldberg, 2006). This research project hopes to contribute to the knowledge gaps concerning Black hair politics in the Netherlands and the manifestations of race and racism in modern Europe. In discourses about racism, Urban Studies are rarely employed to interrogate the significance of place, mundane urban activities and identity (Amin & Thrift, 2016), particularly within the scope of race and Black hair politics. Therefore, the project can potentially highlight this academic blind spot and foreground *urban politics of representation* and its role in influencing the positionality of urban populations.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Race and Racism in the European Context

In order to understand how race and racism manifest in different areas of social life in contemporary Europe, and more specifically The Netherlands, the terms race and racism need to be interrogated and clearly defined. Both terms are considered to be widely contested however, there is a general consensus among critical theorists that "race is not biologically determined but rather socially constructed" (Buechler, 2008, p. 132). This suggests that this conception of race recognizes the different physical attributes that people have and points to how this difference is used to prescribe racial categorizations. Within critical discourse, this process of racial categorization "become[s] real through social definition" (Buechler, 2008, p. 132), therefore, the realness of these racial categorizations are realized in their consequences (Buechler, 2008). I am interested in uncovering the consequences of these social definitions of race and how they materialize in modern urban spaces. In order to make sense of how racial categories defined by hierarchy reveal themselves in the Netherlands, Europe's colonial past must be contextualized.

European exploration and imperial conquest marked a significant chapter in the rise of racist ideology. As a major colonial power, the Netherlands played an important part in perpetuating racist ideology by enforcing racist practices to serve its imperial ambitions (Geert Oostindie, 2008). The discourse of race was developed as a result of the encounters between the colonizers and indigenous groups of people (Buechler, 2008). Observable, physical traits were identified and used to justify hierarchies in which the colonized groups were deemed to be on the inferior end of the power structure (Buechler, 2008). Racist legitimation which is the rationalization of unequal treatment based on race, allowed the colonial powers to rule colonies through cultural domination and political control. This illustrates how the "the social construction of race links biology, inferiority and racism in fateful ways" (Buechler, 2008, p. 134) and elucidates the history of race relations. Furthermore, it explicates how the colonial model is the bedrock on which racial inequality sprung and pervaded European consciousness.

What follows the definition of race and racism is how its discriminatory nature rears its ugly head in Europe today.

In discussions about race, the United States of America (USA) is often used as an index for racism, thereby allowing European societies to remove themselves from the same category and rather be perceived as “non-racist or not-as-racist” (Salem & Thompson, 2016, p. 3). By relegating slavery and colonialism to the past, Europe has conceptualized racism as something that does not exist in modern Europe (Salem & Thompson, 2016). The rhetoric that is showcased here is that Europe’s only tragedy was the Holocaust while “colonialism was someone else’s” (Lentin, 2008, p. 495). After the Shoah (the Holocaust), Western Europe in particular, set off to rewrite their story and in this revision, race was no longer acceptable in public discourse. The West’s insistence on being non-racist and thus category-blind and detached from race (Lentin, 2008) is an important part of modern Europe’s story. In order to understand the chronicles of race and racism in modern Europe, these concepts must be branched off from their collective understanding and be conceptualized within specific spatio-historical conditions. According to Goldberg (2006) uncovering the racial thinking of a specific place requires mapping out the social and historical backstory of that particular region or country. Although broad definitions of race and racism feed into general interpretations of racial thinking, he argues that race and “racisms have a history of travelling, and transforming in their circulation” (Goldberg, 2006, p. 333). Thus, suggesting that conceptualizations of race are unique to their context. He argues that race goes beyond ideology and is more about a way of living and being which is articulated distinctively in different places, at different times (Goldberg, 2006). Therefore, racial definitions and articulations in the USA cannot be directly translated to a European context. This differentiation is significant as it decenters the notion of a universal experience of race and highlights socio-geographical conditions. Identifying the distinct social, historical and spatial codes of the language of race and racism allows for a comprehensive understanding of race relations in a particular place. This spatio-historical map of the racialization process in a specific place, provides an explanation for the historical roots, the social manifestations and implications of racial definitions formed within that particular space (Goldberg, 2006). Goldberg’s (2006)

conceptualization of race and racism in Europe as *racial europeanization* will be used to frame questions about how race and racism have been conceived and expressed in Europe and more specifically the Netherlands. The specificity of *racial europeanization* helps explain how race is determined by the "social particularities, of socially embedded particularities resonant in racially related, racially conceived" (Goldberg, 2006, p. 334) European backdrop. It provides a lens into how Europe's colonial legacy has helped construct the reality of race in modern Europe.

By tracing Europe's colonial development of race into an "evolved system for the hierarchical ranking of humanity, from superior White to inferior Black, over a long period of 200 years" (Lentin, 2008, p. 491), the abstract concept of race becomes tangible. This conception of race helps locate racial meanings and their historical roots within Europe. It illustrates how race is used as a marker for Europeanness and non-Europeanness based on a corporeal fact which is used to justify racist behaviour (Lentin, 2008). Racism as a product of race reveals the consequences of these hierarchical social definitions of race. Although colonialism exemplified this racial thinking, it was the Holocaust that Europe recognized as its defining, racially motivated transgression (Goldberg, 2006). In taking responsibility for this tragedy and marking the Holocaust as a definitive case of the "horrors of racial invocation and racist summation" (Goldberg, 2006, p. 336), Europe vowed to exorcise race from European political culture. A primary reason for Europe's admission of guilt for the Holocaust is due to the domestic nature of the genocide. The tragic event occurred within European borders while colonialism took place on foreign soil and thus, renounces Europe from its colonial crimes. It is in this spirit of denialism that Europe eclipsed race from public discourse and showcased "racial avoidance as denial of or at least failure to acknowledge its own racist implication" (Goldberg, 2006, pp. 344–345). This deflection of the concept of race and the effort to refashion it into cultural or ethnic difference, did not only signal the erasure of the term but it suggested the dismissal of racism. This banishment is aligned with Europe's attempt to shed itself of its former colonial image and reimagine itself as democratic, civilized and non-racial. Forgetting was institutionalized in the Netherlands as the country followed Europe's formula of erasure (Salem & Thompson, 2016). The Dutch's ability to refute its colonial past and portray it as a "relic of a time that was not

necessarily *wrong*" (Salem & Thompson, 2016, p. 9) has influenced modern conceptions of race in the country.

2.2 The Erasure of Race in the Netherlands

In the spirit of modernity and democracy, the Netherlands mirrored similar patterns employed by other former colonial powers and absolved itself of its colonial sins. In the practice of *racial europeanization*, this process of absolution involved expunging the concept of race and dismissing the presence of racism in modern Dutch society. As a result of the banishment of race in public discourse, Dutch institutions transformed the concept of race and replaced this conception with that of identity politics defined by 'ethnicity' or 'culture' (Gert Oostindie, 2011). In this way the term race is "disassociated from its crimes, becomes a mere descriptor" (Lentin, 2008, p. 498) and is thus less threatening in definition and more digestible for the Dutch and other Europeans alike (Lentin, 2008). Through this erasure of race, the Dutch have been able to reimagine themselves and build upon the idea of them as egalitarian and pluralistic (Kešić & Duyvendak, 2016).

Despite the Dutch being hesitant to adopt nationalistic tropes, in the attempt to form a collective identity, the Dutch along with many other European states, constructed the idea of a nation "based on discursive and social imaginations of an organic community in which its members perceive themselves as a part of that group" (Salem & Thompson, 2016, p. 4). The intention here is to portray a nation as an environment devoid of race and racism. As a consequence of race not being a formal category in Dutch political discourse, discussions about ethnicity and national identity have been more publicly accepted (Salem & Thompson, 2016). This is demonstrated by the way in which the Dutch have generally categorized people living in the Netherlands under two labels: *autochthon* and *allochtoon*. Those whose parents are native Dutch citizens are considered to be *autochthons* and those people who were either born outside the Netherlands or who have one parent who was born in another country are labelled as *allochtoon* (Salem & Thompson, 2016). These labels are illustrations of the persistent significance of *Othering* that continues in modern day Dutch society. In this case, the concept of *Othering* refers to the "phenomena of stereotyping and racialization

“ (Thomas-Olalde & Velho, 2011, p. 27) which in practice is a mechanism used to legitimize domination of one group over another. As conceptual *Othering* instruments, essentialism and homogenization help produce images of the *Other* “via the construction of an antagonism” (Thomas-Olalde & Velho, 2011, p. 31). How this is illustrated in the Dutch context is in “the construction of the Dutch self-image as tolerant” (Salem & Thompson, 2016, p. 9) and it is with this image that Dutch society forms an “identity of the civilized Dutchman” (Salem & Thompson, 2016, p. 9) and by extension legitimizes certain social, political and economic policies that enforce the discrimination of minority groups (Salem & Thompson, 2016). This echoes the paradoxical nature of the desire to create a non-racial, national collective. The formation of a national collective is premised on “ the construction and representation of an *Other* that is placed outside of this imagined corporeal nation” (Salem & Thompson, 2016, p. 5), and therefore highlights the binary structure of the Dutch in relation to minority groups and signifies how implicitly racist this construction is. By integrating into Dutch society, outsiders are expected to “deny the significance of the experience of race” (Lentin, 2008, p. 500) because that word has been expunged from Dutch vocabulary. The manner in which topics concerning race and racism, “remain uncovered and unchecked,” (Salem & Thompson, 2016, p. 3) has allowed for local racist practices to go unnoticed or are deflected from the attention of Dutch authorities. If race is not acknowledged then racist consequences cannot be addressed. One of the primary concerns of this paper is to question and investigate:

> “What happens when no category is available to name a set of experiences that are linked in their production or at least inflection, historically and symbolically, experientially and politically, to racial arrangements and engagements” (Goldberg, 2006, p. 335).

If the context of social action is imbued by the debris of racial definitions how can cultural hierarchy, which is racially defined, be challenged? According to Oostindie (2011), the removal of race as formal category in a post-colonial Dutch society, fed into “culturalizing citizenship” (p. 104) which in practice encouraged the shedding of

diasporic identities and the adoption of western norms. In post-colonial Netherlands, “respectable social advancement was and continued to be largely dependent on the extent to which the colonial citizens adopted European norms” (Gert Oostindie, 2011, p. 105). This suggests that under the veil of a post racial Netherlands, diasporic communities were rewarded with respectability and a form of social status if they complied with these integration rules (Gert Oostindie, 2011). The implications of this is the systematic ranking of one cultural practice over others which potentially fosters racist practices that cannot be categorically accounted for in modern Dutch society, due to the erasure of race. By drawing on this Dutch political context regarding race relations and applying *urban politics of representation*, an argument of the manifestation of this cultural hierarchy within urban settings can be established. Within the theoretical framework of *urban politics of representation*, cultural processes and political consequences are linked together (Georgiou, 2006). Therefore, representations of cultural hierarchy in modern cities can be considered to reflect racial thinking. In order to interrogate the articulations of race through cultural signifiers in urban spaces, further context needs to be given concerning the historical definitions of race and their influence on the perception of Blackness.

Perceptions of Blackness within Dutch society were significantly influenced by the Dutch’s prominent role in the African slave trade (Blakely, 1993). “The image of Blacks as a servile race eventually eclipsed all other images” (Blakely, 1993, p. 225) and fostered negative stereotypes that persist in modern Dutch society. From roles as slaves to servants and labourers, Black people have historically been framed in subordinate social positions in relation to their White counterparts. As investigated by Blakely (1993), evidence of these negative stereotypes are illustrated by a series of historical art, literature and folklore. An example of associations of Blackness with servility that has prevailed over time, is the figure of Zwart Piet (Black Pete). Zwart Piet forms a part of a popular duo that is celebrated over the Dutch Christmas holiday, known as Sinterklaas (St. Nicholas). There are various accounts of the origin of the controversial figure, however, the enduring characteristic of Zwart Piet, is his Black skin colour, caricatured depiction and his role as a servant to the benevolent representation of Sinterklass (Blakely, 1993). The binary opposition represented in the symbolic

relationship between Zwart Piet and Sinterklaas provides a glimpse into the perceptions of Blackness in the Netherlands. Although race might be banished from public discourse it is in traditions like Zwart Piet that the residue of race in the Dutch cultural imagination is revealed.

Colonies formed by the Dutch were established and governed by the East and West India trading companies (Blakely, 1993). These trading companies had monopoly over the Dutch trading market and were not only instrumental in creating immense wealth for the Dutch empire but were also responsible for changing the demographic makeup of the country. Of the Netherlands' six colonies, three of these colonies were made up of slaves who were predominantly of African descent (Blakely, 1993). The demise of the Dutch empire and development of industry, ushered in high levels of global mobility and immigration which resulted in a culturally more heterogeneous Dutch state. On the eve of Suriname's independence in 1975, an estimated 100 000 people out of a population of 400 000 migrated to The Netherlands (Oostindie, 2008). In the 1980s, a large-scale migration of Antilleans, mainly from Curacao followed and are said to have produced an expat community of 125 000 (Oostindie, 2008). These migrations epitomized the idea that members of former colonies declared, "we are here because you were there!" (Oostindie, 2008, p. 19). The Netherlands' colonial ties resulted in a substantial portion of Dutch society being made up of members of the African diaspora. This wave of immigration into Dutch society exposed the consequences of the racist ideology that was shaped and perpetuated during the colonial era.

Prejudice based on race was not only pervasive within the colonies themselves but prevailed into the Netherlands as well, hence the discriminatory perceptions and practices that newcomers experienced once they docked on Dutch shores (Blakely, 1993). Netherland's post-colonial migration was characterized by three waves of immigration: Indonesian migration in the 1960s, Surinamese migration in the 1970s and the Antillean migration between the1980s and the 1990s (Oostindie, 2011). Immigrants who did not physically look European were subjected to discrimination, however degrees of discrimination were afforded to different immigrants. For example, the Indisch populations, who are considered to be Eurasians with Indonesian lineage, were predominantly granted 'western migrant' status (Oostindie, 2011). As a result, Indisch

communities did not feature in policies administering minorities as they were not labelled as “problematic migrants “ (Oostindie, 2011, p. 30). This discrimination was illustrated through systematic bias in the way predominantly Black “immigrants often [occupied] bad housing, [were] often in poorer neighbourhoods of the larger cities. They [held] mainly menial and factory jobs,” (Blakely, 1993, p. 13) if they were even able to gain employment. Much of the representation of Black people in Dutch society does not reflect the community but rather, reflects the perceptions imposed onto them (Blakely, 1993). These perceptions are fueled by connections made with Blackness and servility which are drawn from associations with slavery itself and archaic ideas of the colour black personifying evil (Blakely, 1993). In contemporary Netherlands, as a result, “racialized discourses constructing Blacks as inferior, intellectually backward, lazy, sexually insatiable and always available, and the White self as superior and full of entitlement” (Essed & Hoving, 2014, p. 168) are prevalent.

In the last two sections, the historical context of race as it pertains to the Black experience in Europe and the Netherlands has been extensively discussed. This has provided a backdrop to how racial representations can be understood in contemporary Netherlands. Moving forward, the theoretical scope of *urban politics of representation* will be used as a map to showcase the intersections between cultural representations and social positionality in urban spaces. This will be done by highlighting mediation as a key facet of *urban politics of representation*. In this instance, mediation refers to the various forms of communication in daily social reality (Georgiou, 2006). Different forms of communication are often used by diasporic communities as political tools to advocate their subjectivity through visibility (Georgiou, 2006). For the purposes of this thesis, the focus will be on how Black hair salons as establishments that are visual in nature, exemplify racial representations. These observations will be supplemented by interviews with Black women who frequent these Black hair salons. The interviews and the visual observations will be used to examine the parallels between the experiences of going to these Black hair salons and their articulation of race.

2.3 Race, Space and Hair: The Articulation of Race in Post-Racial Urban Spaces

Within discourses of race, images of Blackness as signifiers of inferiority have been prevalent in the Dutch cultural imagination and have encapsulated much of the racial thinking in the Netherlands (Essed & Hoving, 2014). This thinking speaks to racist practices that occur in urban spaces where there are often diverse communities. Slave societies that emerged within Dutch colonies were characterized by multi-national, multi-religious and multi-racial populations (Blakely, 1993). By the end of the Dutch's involvement in the slave trade, the diversity of the Dutch colonies was mirrored in cosmopolitan cities like Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague (Blakely, 1993). In thinking about how cities are sites for daily intersections and negotiations of race, culture and ethnicity due to multiculturalism (Amin & Thrift, 2016), the city can be considered to be "a point of arrival and of transition for different populations" (Georgiou, 2006, p. 11). Thus, it does not only host diverse cultural practices but it can also serve as an urban space where both tolerance and racism can emerge. Cities like Rotterdam, The Hague and Amsterdam can provide a glimpse into the diversity that can be observed in the multi-racial makeup of Dutch society. Furthermore, these cities can provide insight into the social structures and racist practices that may arise as result of the racial and cultural heterogeneity in those urban spaces.

For migrant communities, post-colonial societies provided opportunities to rediscover and form new identities (Hall, 1990). Identity construction can be characterized by the idea of *cultural identity* which is a concept that suggests that the *social location* of individual identity is informed by the collective (Buechler, 2008, p. 202). Hall (1990) defines *cultural identity* "in terms of a shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves' which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (p. 223). He goes on to explain that despite the nuances in people's circumstances, it is the "common historical experiences and shared cultural codes," (Hall, 1990, p. 224) that provide individuals with a sense of 'oneness'. This 'oneness' is encompassed by the notion of a collective diasporic identity. The shared experiences and cultural codes not only connect members of the diaspora but it also distinguishes them from those who are different (Buechler, 2008). Assuming that *cultural identity* is composed of multiple social

identities, these various ‘selves’ can be categorized according to social identities that serve as “social variables against which forms of social behaviour or linguistic usage [can] be measured,” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 24). In discussions about identity, particularly as it relates to navigating multiple identities, there are theories made about the way these identities overlap and intersect with each other. This notion of *intersectionality* is “prompted by politically motivated identity work” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 25) and as such, is often associated with members of marginalized social groups. In western societies this can often be observed, as diasporic communities balance the multi-dimensional nature of their identities. Social identities in countries like the Netherlands and many other parts of the world, generally determine who is “enabled or constrained by social order” (Buechler, 2008, p. 202). Black women are often constrained by their racial and gender identities. Crenshaw (1991) proposed that *intersectionality* was important to consider as it explained the disproportionate forms of marginalization Black women face due to the intersections between race and gender. One of the main motivations driving this research is interrogating this idea and unpacking what aspects of Black cultural identity enable and constrain Black women within the Dutch social order. Black hair as a racially charged symbol of Black cultural identity is a relevant component of social identity to investigate as it can give insight into how harmful perceptions rooted in racist ideology can impact positionality. Considering that “hair is a key component in Black women’s acculturation and socialization, for it influences the concept(ion) of femininity, ” (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2019, p. 66), gender is another significant facet of social identity to examine in the scope of Black hair culture and the lived experiences of Black women living in the Netherlands. In order, to understand how gender and race enable or constrain Black women’s social realities, these intersecting identities as part of a broader diasporic cultural identity must be discerned through the historical narratives they have been defined within. This is because “cultural identities are points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture” (Hall, 1990, p. 226). By framing these identities through the narratives of the past, racialized representations of Black hair can be understood.

The importance of hair as a signifier of cultural identity dates back to the colonial era. Historical accounts suggest that Black people have used their bodies as canvases to express their presence as subjects since the slave trade (Dash, 2006). One such account is told from the perspective of a Dutch traveller who is said to have witnessed the arrival of slaves in Suriname in the 17th century (Dash, 2006). He remarked on how he watched, as the slaves were led up to the deck and he noticed, “their hair shaved in different figures of stars…which they generally [did] to one another by the help of a broken bottle” (Dash, 2006, p. 27). The Dutch traveller went on to explain what an impressive sign of “cultural vitality” (Dash, 2006, p. 27) the slaves showcased by decorating their hair in the face of a dehumanizing experience (Dash, 2006). This account speaks to how Black hair is and has always been an expression of cultural identity and political subjectivity. In contemporary western popular culture, the aesthetic of the Black body has often been characterized by “depictions of the Black as beady eyed and thick lipped with wild unkempt hair” (Dash, 2006, p. 28). These adjectives suggest undesirable features: ‘beady’ connoting to suspicious eyes, ‘thick’ implying big lips which is a common caricature of Black facial features, and ‘unkempt’ suggesting messy hair which is also a common association with Black natural hair. Perspectives on the Black body and more specifically Black hair are products of racist ideology as they are evaluated based on how different they are from White physical features. Black aesthetics are often considered to be alluring and yet threatening but more significantly they represent a” distant other world detachment and the perceived lower ‘racial’ status of the Black subject” (Dash, 2006, pp. 34–35). This illustrates how imagery of Blackness or cultural expressions of Blackness are often associated with inferiority. It highlights how perceptions of Black cultural identity in modern western societies are products of the colonial legacy. By focusing on how race is articulated in urban settings, I hope to emphasize the importance of representation and how it influences social positionality.

The concept of the *spatial turn* argues “that who we are is inextricably linked to where we are, have been or are going” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 2010). Diasporic identities cannot be discussed outside of the concepts of place and space, especially with regards to urban settings. This has a lot to do with how race in western cosmopolitan cities “[have] spatial connotations in and through the construction of areas

like ‘Chinatowns’, such that ‘space becomes saturated with meanings, with ideas of *Otherness*,” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 214). Assuming that *place identity* contributes to the conception of the self, (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006), how does Rotterdam, The Hague and Amsterdam help diasporic communities construct their identities . Cosmopolitan Dutch cities, the likes of Rotterdam, The Hague and Amsterdam, provide spaces where migrants or diasporic dwellers seek sociality or a place of work (Georgiou, 2006). *Urban politics of representation* is a process of communication and interaction which a city dweller commits to in order to find a location in or of the city that they can call their own (Georgiou, 2006). Through daily social activities, city dwellers, specifically diasporic city dwellers, attempt to not only find a physical place to live but to find a space where one is reflected which signifies belonging (Georgiou, 2006). Feeling a sense of belonging in a city speaks to more than an attachment to a physical locale but refers to the “symbolic ideas of *Heimat*[1]” (Morley, 2016, p. 425) that an urban physical space conjures up. For the purpose of this paper, belonging and its association with notions of home is used to pertain to the idea of community, mobility and an affirmed sense of cultural identity within the context of urban settings. Through the theoretical framework of *urban politics of representation*, the connections between belonging, urban spaces and cultural identity are exemplified by highlighting how “becoming present, visible, to each other can alter the character of powerlessness” (Sassen, 2012, p. 8). This suggests that cities have the potential to reconfigure urban positionalities through forms of representation. According to Sassen (2012), a city can provide diasporic dwellers who are often disadvantaged and discriminated against, presence and visibility which can translate into a form of political power. Sassen claims that cities can act as sites where new forms of power can be negotiated at a subnational level:

> “The space of the city is a far more concrete space for politics than that of the nation. It becomes a place where non-formal political actors can be part of the political scene in a way that is much more difficult at the national level” (Sassen, 2012, p. 7).

[1] *Heimat* is German for home.

Therefore, non-formal political actors like members of minority groups can be accommodated and empowered in city spaces in spite of their presence being "rendered invisible in the space of national politics" (Sassen, 2012, p. 7). By foregrounding urban spaces, attention is brought to the significant role cities play in mobilizing or immobilizing political participation and social mobility. Political participation and social mobility pertain to notions of positionality which essentially encompass discourses concerning power relations. Throughout this research project, the term positionality will be used in the broadest sense to refer to a form of social power that is based on "access to valued social resources, such as wealth, jobs, status," (Caldas-Coulthard et al., 1995, p. 85) or public discourse. Social power has the potential to "redefine the role of citizens, mostly weakened and fatigued after decades of growing inequality and injustice" (Sassen, 2012, p. 6), hence the importance of examining the interface between urban spaces and positionality.

Representation can significantly contribute to urban positionalities because visibility in a city does not only suggest the presence of particular cultural groups but it can also aid the normalization of particular cultural practices. In exploring themes of race, positionality and how these concepts manifest in urban settings, I wish to focus on Black hair salons as signifiers of cultural identity. Hair is significant because it is a,

> "powerful symbol of individual and group identity, powerful first because it is physical and therefore extremely personal, and second because, although personal, it is also public rather than private" (Synnott, 1987, p. 381).

The symbolic nature of Black hair salons in urban setting is essential in facilitating the performance of Black urban femininity. Black hair salons are an extension of Black cultural identity and a place where Black subjectivity is not reduced to an inferior status, thus they are important social entities. Their presence and visibility is particularly significant in western societies like the Netherlands as they are safe spaces that assert Black beauty and Black cultural identity (Rezende et al., 2018). Black hair salons are "responsible for rescuing, producing and developing aesthetic and identity references that contrast Western hegemonic model[s]" of beauty (Rezende et al., 2018,

p. 595) which in turn can signify spaces of Black cultural refuge and acceptance for Black women.

In discourses about gender identity, Judith Butler and the concept of *performativity* is often referenced. The gender theorist draws attention to the idea of gender being a product of discursive practices which is constructed by daily symbolic iterations based on “stylized, conventionalized gender performances which are informed by the authority of historical, anterior voices” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 33). For Black women living in metropolitan spaces, gender performance as it relates to hair, is constructed on an idea of Black urban femininity which is inherently racialized. Black urban femininity is premised on the “monolithic construct [which] to a great extent [is] homogeneously applied, for its ultimate aim is to homogenize Black women into an acceptable and categorical position” (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020, p. 62). The implications of this are illustrated through the practice of ‘shifting’. ‘Shifting’ refers to Black women’s efforts to change their appearance and demeanor (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020). In relation to hair, this practice involves straightening afro natural hair because “too frequently, sporting natural hair undermines Black women’s possibilities of occupying high-paying positions” (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020, p. 60). At the core of Black hair politics is the juxtaposition between natural/unnatural Black hair and as mentioned earlier ‘good/bad’ hair (Thompson, 2009). ‘Good’ hair referring to the idea of “ White beauty embodying pureness, sensuality and feminine delicacy” (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2019, p. 66) while ‘bad’ hair suggests the antithesis of this ideal.

Gendered performances of femininity are linked to western metropolitan centres because these urban spaces provide a stage for normative, westernized social patterns of behaviour and appearance to be represented (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020). In attempts to assimilate, Black women are compelled to practice ‘shifting’ as a survival mechanism and in doing so are forced to “ignore racist comments, alter their speech, tone and appearance, and even relax their hair” (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020, p. 62). Over the years, metropolitan cities have represented local and global hair trends and movements as they do when it comes to fashion (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020). In response to discrimination against Black hair, since the 1960s hair movements have taken to metropolitan streets to:

> “forward new ways of embodying Black womanhood in urban centres, where fashion trends set, endorse, and perpetuate epistemological paradigms about the embodiment of womanhood and femininity” (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020, p. 61).

Despite the relative success of these movements in encouraging diverse notions of beauty, Black natural hair continues to be at the “margins of fashion and professionalism in the same manner in which beauty salons devoted to [taking] care of natural hair are mostly located in peripheral areas of big cities and not at the city centre” (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020, p. 61). It is from this idea, that this project grounds its inquiry into the racial representations of Black hair salons and the experiences of Black women who frequent these specific beauty salons.

Having discussed the intersections of race, space and Black hair and the collective influence of these points on the broader map of positionality, the next chapter will detail procedures and analytical tools employed to conduct the research. Furthermore, concerns around limitations and research credibility will be addressed.

3. Method

3.1 Methodological Approach

In the interest of uncovering the nature of discourses around race, racism and Black hair in the Netherlands, I chose to employ qualitative research as this approach operates from the perspective of language being an integral part of the construction of reality (Gray, 2003). Qualitative research is interested in the meaning-making process and in how individuals in their everyday existences construct their realities through the meanings they give to everyday practices (Flick, 2007). This theoretical framework allows me to investigate the meanings that Black women in the Netherlands give to the visibility of Black hair salons and to their hair practices. The hermeneutic principle of qualitative research unlocks opportunities for inquiry into how individuals as social agents develop and share knowledge and further construct their social realities as a result of these discursive practices (Fairclough, 2001). This research approach underscores the meanings that people bring to daily behaviour and social interactions and therefore aligns with the aim of this study(Fairclough, 2001). By systemizing different ways participants make sense of their social lives, their meaning-making process becomes tactile and can then be situated in larger ideological frameworks. Therefore, examining discourses around race, racism and Black hair from this methodological vantage point provides insight into the ways “discourses produce and transform social reality, and make[s] it possible to evaluate the practical consequences of different ways of approaching” (Talja, 1999, p. 461) the particular phenomenon of Black hair practices and Black hair imagery in the Netherlands. For the purpose of this study, I conducted varied data research which involved conducting in-depth interviews and capturing images for critical analysis. By examining both textual and visual data, I intended to develop a deep understanding of race relations in the Netherlands within the context of Black hair and Black hair salons in urban locations.

The in-depth interviews functioned as texts that would answer sub-question one which relates to Black hair practices and positionality, and the images operated as visual tools to answer sub-question two which pertains to the representation of these Black hair salons and how their imagery not only contributes to the construction of Black

cultural identity but are also a product of this construction. This research project is explored within the scope of cultural studies and thus it serves to interrogate everyday life (Gray, 2003). Cultural studies attempt to “explore meaning in relation to the construction of social and cultural identity” (Gray, 2003, p. 7) and in doing so answers questions about the intersections between subjectivity, culture and identity. Language can be used to unearth this meaning-making process because “words, texts, and practices are both products of and constitutive of the social world” (Gray, 2003, p. 2). Therefore, in-depth interviews as accounts of social reality help with understanding the extent of an individual's engagement with those meanings within urban spaces, which provide insight into their positionality (Gray, 2003). This form of interrogation highlights social power and what is considered legitimized forms of cultural identity (Gray, 2003). As a way to complement those accounts of lived experiences, the imagery of the Black hair salons is used as a visual method to illustrate how meanings are formed or how they are represented (Gray, 2003). Collectively, this varied data will illustrate how the visibility of these Black hair salons helps one understand the experiences of the participants as social actors and the racial representations demonstrate how race can materialize in urban spaces. This qualitative method will help garner ‘thick descriptions’ (Dey, 2003) of the participants' experiences and the accompanying images will paint a picture of how these experiences are translated in the city.

The logic behind this varied data method is partly framed within the idea of the *dispositive,* which is put forward by Michel Foucault. The notion of the *dispositive* is an extension of discourse theory that recognizes that discourse does not operate independently, instead it is a vehicle that “transport[s] knowledge on which the collective and individual consciousness feeds. This emerging knowledge is the basis of individual and collective action and the formative action that shapes reality” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 7). *Dispositives* are therefore products of discourses as they are points where discursive practices and non-discursive practices interface (Fairclough, 2001). They are a “constantly evolving context of items of knowledge which are contained in speaking/thinking – acting – materialization” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 27). For the purposes of this particular research project, this concept illustrates the significance of conducting interviews and gaining understanding about participants’ experiences of the non-

discursive practice of going to Black hair salons. Furthermore, capturing the images of the Black hair salons in urban settings arguably exhibits the discursive practice of communicating meaning through imagery. The *dispositive* framework outlines the epistemological bases of race imbued discourses and thus helps locate meanings given to racialized experiences or representations (Fairclough, 2001). Ultimately, this varied data approach performed through the lens of the *dispositive* concept within the broad scope of cultural studies, helps expose discourse concerning race and the positionality of Black women, and further connects these two concepts to the racial representation of Black hair salons in Rotterdam, The Hague and Amsterdam today.

3.2 Units of analysis

3.2.1. Interviews

The sample for this study is made up of ten Black females who have experiences of going to Black hair salons in Rotterdam, The Hague and Amsterdam. The reason for focusing on Black female participants is due to the role that hair plays in articulating femininity but more specifically how the politicized nature of Black hair is unique to the Black female experience. Going to Black hair salons is generally a personalized beauty practice for most Black women and acts as a space where Black beauty and womanhood is groomed. The growing popularity of Black hair YouTubers and Black hair social media influencers has contributed to the resurgence of the *Natural Hair Movement* (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020). The proliferation of this positive representation of Black natural hair on social media mirrors a strategy developed in the 1960's that promoted self-love and empowered Black women to be proud of their natural hair (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020). In recent years, this online visibility and policies like the CROWN Act have brought issues of Black hair to the forefront of the political and social agenda, again. Despite the growing interest in Black hair discourses within academia, inquiry into the construction of the Black female experience in the Netherlands is limited (Essed & Hoving, 2014). This is often attributed to Black women being marginalized in western societies and rarely given opportunities to provide their own perspectives on topics outside of stereotypical representations. Therefore, interviewing these young Black women provided an opportunity for them to communicate their experiences of going to

Black hair salons and help me develop an understanding for how they signify Black hair practices and the imagery of Black hair salons.

The snowball technique was used to find the participants to be interviewed. This particular sampling procedure was used because the specificity of this target population made it difficult to recruit representatives from this population, outside of established relationships (Babbie, 2017). The criteria used to recruit participants was race, age, language and gender. I recruited Black females who have experiences of going to Black hair salons. Recruiting Black females who have experiences of going to Black hair salons in the Netherlands was crucial as the focus of this study is to gain insight into the perspectives of these women about their experiences in Black hair salons. It is important to highlight that these experiences are not limited to traditional notions of Black hair salons as these businesses can be stand - alone entities located in urban settings or they can be family businesses run from personal homes. Due to the diverse, diasporic makeup of the Black population in the Netherlands, nationality was not significant as long as the participant identified as a Black woman and had experiences of going to Black hair salons or entities in Rotterdam, The Hague and Amsterdam. These capital urban spaces were selected because they are the cities in the Netherlands with the highest concentration of the Black population. By interviewing participants between the age range of 24 years old and 27 years old there was a probability of the participants having a high level of English proficiency. This ensured a level of articulation that could result in 'thick description' (Dey, 2003) which is significant when sensitive topics like race and Black cultural identity are being discussed.

For recruiting, I relied on my personal social network and social media sites to locate participants that met the criteria. Invitations in the form of textual posts accompanied by posters, were uploaded onto two Facebook groups: *Black Hair Beauty Community TM* which at the time of the data collection had 2343 members and *The Natural Hair Club NL* which sat at 4374 members. These two Facebook groups were chosen as they are online communities where topics relating to Black hair are discussed and both groups have relatively large followings in the Netherlands. My personal network of friends proved to be the most successful method for recruiting participants for the interviews as very few people responded to the social media posts. An overview

of the participants is provided in Appendix A. In an effort to follow ethical due process, the names of the ten participants were anonymized by employing a softer form of anonymization through the use of pseudonyms (Mondada, 2014). The participants' names were substituted with pseudonyms that preserve their original features. In the case of this project, pseudonyms were chosen based on names that have cultural connotations to the participants themselves as to showcase the diverse nature of the women interviewed. Considering the project's focus on urban positionalities, the participants' age, nationality and resident area have been labeled in an overview of the participants (Appendix A). In exploring the participants' positionalities, the relevance of highlighting their nationality is important as it connects to their positionality in Dutch society. Within the Dutch context, questions regarding nationality often involve complex battles between ideas of citizenship and cultural heritage. In asking the participants about their national identity, the focus was on what they perceived nationality to mean and how they identified themselves within that meaning. All the participants classified themselves according to both their 'official' nationalities (as stated in their passports) and their families' cultural heritage. For participants who are Dutch nationals, this often included more than one country whereas, participants who are not Dutch citizens only mentioned one country or region.

I was unable to conduct face-to face interviews as initially planned due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Contingently, I conducted and recorded the interviews via Skype. Ten interviews were conducted in English as this was the most comfortable medium of communication, for myself and the participants. The participants were not native English speakers, however, this was not an issue as the participants could articulate themselves in an intelligible manner. I believe that the ease of communication was also partly due to my position as a young Black women who is, to some extent, familiar with certain cultural codes, especially those pertaining to Black hair practices. The interviews allowed the participants to express their "feelings, emotions, experiences and values," (Brennen, 2017, p. 29) regarding their positionality as racialized subjects in Dutch society as illustrated in their experiences with Black hair salons in the Netherlands. The decision to conduct semi-structured interviews allowed for some flexibility in the order questions were asked and it gave me room to ask follow up questions, so experiences

could be explored further (Brennen, 2017). In preparation for the interviews, a topic list was drafted and formed the base for the final questions relating to personal Black hair practices and how these experiences connect to race relations in the Netherlands. Drafting up questions for the interviews was guided by the first sub-question:

Sub-question 1: How do Black women connect their experiences of going to Black hair salons to their positionality in society as racialized subjects?

With the intention to derive 'thick descriptions' from the participants which entailed collecting "information about the context of an act, the intentions and meanings that organize that action," (Dey, 2003, p. 32) the interview questions (Appendix E) were divided into three sections: introductory questions, Black hair and representation, and positionality in society. These sections were designed to explore concepts of race, Black hair as cultural identity and positionality. The aim of the introductory section was not only to ease the participant into the interview but also to discover how participants identified themselves within the family tree of the diasporic cultural identity. This was followed by the section on Black hair and representation which provided insight into participants' experiences of going to Black hair salons and their perceptions of Black hair as extensions of their Black cultural identity. Finally, the section on positionality in society was focused on the participants' experiences of Black hair discrimination and how this influences their socio-political positions in their urban environments.

Throughout the interview, the questions were structured in a manner that would yield information relevant to the meanings the participants give to the practice of going, seeing and engaging with Black hair salons as racialized subjects in urban settings. Therefore, the terms race, representation and positionality and their associated meanings formed the basis of the topics discussed. Abstract ideas were made more concrete through operationalizing the aforementioned concepts. In referring to race the term was defined as colour conscious behaviour based on hierarchical classification which often results in discriminatory actions which are subsequently labeled as racist (Buechler, 2008). The term positionality was used to refer to socio-economic positions or the degree of social participation and political representation social groups have in

society (Caldas-Coulthard et al., 1995). Representation was framed as a “process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture,” (Hall, 1997, p. 1) which in this instance suggests that Black hair salons, Black hair product stores and other images that relate to Black hair, overtly seen in the city signify the inclusion and affirmation of Black cultural identity. The conceptualization of these concepts were also used to frame the investigation of discourses around racial representations in the images collected. A concept tree providing a map of the conceptualization process of the constructs of positionality and race can be found in (Appendix B). Additionally, a code frame of both data types, illustrating the questions that helped guide the data analysis process is provided in (Appendix C).

3.2.2 Images

If social images contribute to individuals’ conception of themselves and their communities (Harris, 2003), then supplementing my inquiry by investigating how Black cultural identity is articulated through the imagery of Black hair salons in metropolitan areas, augments my research. Having briefly outlined the links between cultural identity, representation and space in the theoretical framework chapter, I set off to collect and analyze 60 images of Black and White hair salons in the cities of Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague, with the aim of investigating how Black hair culture manifests itself in these spaces. Images of White hair salons were not focal points of this thesis as they were strategically used as mechanisms for analysis. Notwithstanding this fact, the same visual analysis performed on the images of Black hair salons was conducted on the images of White hair salons. I drew on the concept of the *spatial turn*, which suggests that spaces are important aspects of individual and collective identities (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006) because “not only do people make spaces, but also spaces make people, by constraining them but also by offering opportunities for identity construction” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 213). With this in mind, I chose to make images of Black and White hair salons the objects of my analysis because Black hair salons act as signifiers of Black beauty and thus Black cultural identity, in the same way White hair salons signify White beauty and western cultural identity. Considering that the goal here is to understand how race is articulated through the representation of

Black hair salons, I chose to use images of White hair salons as contrasting tools to visualize the material degree of racial representation. This was done because race is historically defined through racial categories. As echoed by Fanon (1968) “for not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man” (p. 108), therefore, the meanings of Blackness can be understood in their relation to the definitions of Whiteness.

Initially, I intended to take photos of Black and White hair salons and their surrounding landscapes in Rotterdam, The Hague and Amsterdam, however, I was unable to travel due to the pandemic. Therefore, I was only able to screenshot Google images of the hair salons situated in the city centres of these Dutch capitals. The process of collecting the data on Google Maps, involved five steps: 1) locating the hair salons by typing in the city name and adding the keyword “centre” which limited my search. 2) I then clicked on the “nearby” icon and typed the keywords “hair salons” and “afro hair salons” which filtered the search to specific entities that were in close proximity to the city centre. The reason for specifying “afro hair salons” in my search is because upon searching for general hair salons near the city centre under the keyword “hair salons”, very rarely would Black hair salons come up in the first ten businesses recommended. Therefore, I specifically used the keyword “afro hair salons” to ensure that I would find businesses that catered to Black hair specifically. I also found that the keyword “Black hair salons” would bring up White hair salons that referenced black hair colour on their websites, so specifying “afro hair salons” would yield the desired data. 3) In an attempt to systemize the process, I selected the first five hair salons which were recommended by Google for each type of hair salon search, the search was automatically based on rating and proximity. 4) For each business I would screenshot two images of the hair salon. In capturing the screenshots I considered imagery and landscape and so I took one close up shot that focused on the window display and a medium to long shot to get a visual sense of the landscape or surrounding areas of the hair salons. By understanding that images “help ideological constructions like race take form in the physical world” (Harris, 2003, p. 14), these images were used to identify patterns that could be linked to broader articulations of race in the city.

3.3 Data Analysis

3.3.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Studying discourses is essentially the practice of examining the way a particular subject is talked about. This inquiry is based on the understanding that the way people speak is a product of structural forces:

> "Discourses are no individuals' creations: they have taken their shape with the passage of time, they reflect the whole history of the societal form, and they have effects that no one has consciously intended" (Talja, 1999, p. 469).

Texts from qualitative interviews provide significant insight into participants' feelings and experiences (Brennen, 2017). The examination of the interviews I conducted, helped develop an understanding of whether the participants connect their Black hair practices and the imagery of Black hair salons to their social position in the cities they live in. In order to ascertain the meanings that the participants give to their Black hair practices and their experiences of Black hair salons, I employed critical discourse analysis to analyze the interview data. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is transdisciplinary and is thus rooted in various disciplines including sociology, politics, psychology and socio-linguistics (Fairclough, 2001). These branches of knowledge work together to conceptualize discourse as a social phenomenon that is formed with a specific context (Fairclough, 2001). A distinguishing characteristic of CDA is its propensity to advocate against social inequality (Fairclough, 2001) by exposing power relationships and social-political dynamics. Considering that my research is concerned with discourses around race, Black hair and positionality, CDA is the most suitable method for my research project. This method strongly relies on theory in order to execute analysis, therefore this thesis drew from conceptual frameworks proposed by prominent CDA scholars, Teun van Dijk and Ruth Wodak. Aspects of the analysis are informed by van Dijk's principles of CDA and Wodak's historical discourse approach. Bearing in mind that this thesis is broadly focused on interrogating power relations and their racial representation, van Dijk's conceptualizations on race and discourse were fundamental in helping define properties that are characterized by discrimination and

social power. Wodak's discourse historical approach is concerned with the political nature of social action and thus was beneficial in providing tools to identify socio-political properties (Wodak, 2001). As a scholar that has conducted extensive research on discourse and racism, van Dijk's investigations provide significant insight that is relevant for this research project. Van Dijk (2016) considers discourse to be a communication event that is socio-cognitive in nature. He argues that the "exercise of power usually presupposes mind management, involving the influence of knowledge, beliefs, understanding, plans, attitudes, ideologies, norms and values," (Dijk, 2016, p. 257) illustrating how social action and interaction are mediated through social cognition. The assumption here is that discourse is the result of the interplay between individuals as social agents in social situations governed by societal structures:

> "Social actors mainly rely upon collective frames of perceptions, called social representations. These socially shared perceptions form the link between social system and the individual cognitive system" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 7).

This suggests that social representations are belief systems that are applied individually but constructed collectively (van Dijk, 2016), therefore, illustrating the significance of collective consciousness in reifying social norms which are sustained through different forms of communication (Fairclough, 2001). The concept of social representation directed my analysis process by informing my definition of discourse in the context of this specific study. Fairclough (2001) lists the three forms of social representation as follows: *knowledge*, *attitudes*, and *ideologies*. These three forms guided the initial steps of my analysis process. During the interviews I made notes that helped me build initial codes based on the recurrence of certain sentiments, or explicit differences from common utterances made by participants as well as highlighting texts that corresponded with concepts outlined in the theoretical framework. This annotation process, also known as memoing, is a procedure that records "observations and ideas about the data in order to prepare the ground for further analysis" (Dey, 2003, p. 93). Upon transcribing the interviews, I highlighted sections of relevance based on the three forms of social representation. These forms helped me focus my attention on identifying

fragments in the interview transcripts that I would closely analyze in subsequent readings. Fragments in this instance, were sections of text that held bundles of 'bits' of data. 'Bits' of data are categorized as "words, lines, sentences or paragraphs" (Dey, 2003, p. 122) that are analyzed for research purposes. For the purposes of this research project, it is important to note that the fragments highlighted were constitutive of 'bits' of data that related to the forms of social representation in their 'unit of meaning' (Dey, 2003). This suggests that the fragments were selected because they were relevant in the content they conveyed as opposed to their form (Dey, 2003). At this particular stage of this analysis process the fragments that were highlighted were comprised of paragraphs or sentences that would be closely examined during coding cycles. The fragments I highlighted revealed the knowledge that participants have about Black hair salons and Black hair practices based on their experiences and how these experiences inform their attitudes or feelings about these activities as cultural practices. The sections of text also unveiled ideologies they hold on race, particularly in the context of Black hair and Black hair representation in the Netherlands.

In my second close reading of the text, I started identifying patterns and simultaneously organized these discursive patterns into categories. With the goal of answering the research question that pertains to how racially charged ideology materializes through Black hair practices and Black hair imagery in Rotterdam, The Hague and Amsterdam, I based the analysis process on the discourse-historical approach which essentially frames race related language or discriminatory discourse within distinct contexts (Wodak & Reisigl, 2003). By referencing the historical legacy of slavery in Europe and the context of race in the Netherlands, as outlined in the theoretical framework, I conceptualized discriminatory discourse in the domain of Black hair and Black hair practices. The discourse-historical approach underscores the following discursive patterns that directed my examination of the language used in the fragments : 1) *strategies of predication*, which refers to the manner in which text reveals stereotypical tropes or suggests positive and negative attributions, 2) *strategies of perspectivation*, this is the representation of perspectives through description and narration that are often identified through connotations and lexicalization, and 3) *referential strategy*, which zooms in on linguistic properties or utterances that suggest

group categorizations (Fairclough, 2001; Wodak & Reisigl, 2003). This process helped me operationalize discriminatory discourse and identify evidence of prejudice as outlined by Van Dijk as semantics that suggest differentiation, dominance and daily discrimination (Wodak & Reisigl, 2003). It was from this process I was able to assign categories to broader themes that relate to race, Black hair and racial representations in urban spaces. Ultimately, the discursive strategies employed, worked together to answer

Sub-question 1: How do Black women connect their experiences of going to Black hair salons to their positionality as racialized subjects

3.3.2 Visual Analysis

Visual representation is important because “images are laden with political and psychological potential and potency...They construct, confirm and affirm identity” (Harris, 2003, p. 14). Hence, the importance of using images to uncover how the visual language of Black hair culture through the imagery of Black hair salons “provide[s] traces of a socially constructed reality” (Brennen, 2017, p. 185). In an attempt to trace how Black cultural identity is articulated through the visuality of Black hair salons, I employed visual analysis. Visual analysis theory recognizes the significance of visuality in social life as the method,

> “Seeks to incorporate affect and ideology. For, between affect and the ideology that exerts power over subjects when they perform acts of looking, images can be seen at their most ‘active’, not only having a social life but also impacting on that of the people who interact with them” (Bennett & Frow, 2008, p. 8).

I used this idea to help me examine how the aesthetics of Black and White hair salons as objects could be communicated to Black women as racialized subjects as well as other members of society. Considering how representation is a central element to the construction of cultural identity (Hall, 1997), Black hair salons act as urban canvases through their imagery of Black hair culture and therefore can contribute to the construction of Black cultural identity. By employing the visual analysis method, my

intention was to interrogate the extent of this construction through its representation, by focusing on the meanings that could be assigned to the visual codes identified in the collected images.

My analysis process was carefully guided by the concept of difference as a theme as outlined by Stuart Hall (1997). In light of the study's focus on Black cultural identity and its connections with race, I based my examination of the images on the notion of racialized discourse being organized according to binary opposition. In other words, in coding the images I paid attention to visual codes that articulated representations of difference. My coding process involved me broadly highlighting what the images of the Black and White hair salons denote and connote (David Machin & Mayr, 2014). I did this by paying attention to visual semiotic cues and applied the following concepts (David Machin & Mayr, 2014) : 1) *Iconography*, my first reading involved describing and coding what was depicted in the image, primarily focusing on the objects related to the hair salon and surrounding landscape. 2) *Attributes*, upon my second reading, I focused on the descriptions and codes of the elements found in the image and highlighted what they potentially communicated about the hair salon's representation. I assigned potential latent meanings that could be interpreted by the presence of the objects and strongly grounded this interpretation on discourses relating to race and the politics of Black hair. 3) *Settings*: the role of space is a significant aspect of this research project but in this case it was difficult to assess the landscape of the hair salons accurately, however, for this step I focused on objects in the image that revealed information about the location of the hair salon, in terms of evidence suggesting its visibility, (e.g. positioned on main street, residential area or on the corner of two streets) which indicates its accessibility. 4) *Salience*, this step involved underscoring various features in the images that "are made to stand out, to draw our attention to foreground certain meanings" (David Machin & Mayr, 2014, p. 54). Identifying salient features involved me labelling cultural symbols, sizes of objects displayed by the hair salon, colour palettes used in presenting the hair salon and compositions of the objects that were foregrounded (David Machin & Mayr, 2014). The main aim of the visual analysis process was to ensure that focus is on locating discourses represented in the images that would help answer:

Sub-question 2: How is Black cultural identity constructed in the city centres of Rotterdam, the Hague and Amsterdam through the imagery of Black hair salons?"

In this chapter, I have provided an outline of the methodological steps I have taken to collect and analyze the textual and visual data examined for this research project. Even though I used two different analysis procedures to examine the data, critical discourse analysis was the broad lens in which information from both interviews and images was framed. A code frame for the varied data analyzed can be found in (Appendix C) and the visual analysis process with sample images can be found in (Appendix D).

3.3.3 Limitations and Credibility

Hall (1990) argues that all people speak and write from a particular position. With that in mind, it is imperative that I highlight the limitations of this research project by firstly, clarifying the biases that may have influenced the trajectory of this inquiry because of my position. I am a young Black woman with Black hair whose experiences are reflected in some of these participants' stories, therefore, this research project has not only been an academic endeavor but it has also been a personal one. I have attempted to be transparent and critical about my position by keeping a research diary throughout this research project. By documenting various stages of the research process I was able to be reflexive about my role as a researcher, however, "strict 'objectivity' cannot be achieved by means of discourse analysis" (Wodak, 2001, p. 13) therefore, I implemented measures that would ensure that I produce credible research.

With regards to reliability and validity as measurements for assessing the quality of this research project (Wodak, 2001), I employed triangulation by collecting and analyzing two types of data: interviews and images. This was an attempt to minimize inconsistencies. Implementing triangulation in the form of performing analysis on textual and visual data was particularly useful as this strategy helps uncover "divergences and contradictions between one's own analysis of the mediated actions one is studying and those of participants" (Wodak, 2001). Further efforts made to minimize bias, due to the employment of critical discourse analysis, included accounting for the extralingustic aspects of theoretical concepts, which refers to exhaustively contextualizing the

concepts (Wodak, 2001). I did this by mapping out the historical roots of concepts like race and racism and providing a detailed description of the theoretical frames I used to conduct this inquiry. By providing a concept tree (Appendix B), I hoped to show how these main concepts were operationally defined during analysis. Additionally, I have included code frames that indicate the questioning that directed the textual and visual analysis (Appendix C). The steps employed to conduct visual analysis have also been included with sample images from the data collected. By showing the strategies used to conduct this research, I hope to achieve some form of transparency.

Considerations must also be made for the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on my ability to conduct more observational, ethnographic research as initially intended. By conducting interviews on Skype there were technical issues to overcome and sound disruptions that made it difficult to transcribe and fully elicit 'thick descriptions'. I was also unable to take photographs of the physical hair salons in the different cities as I intended and thus had to resort to capturing screenshots of these sites by using Google Maps. This was limiting in the types of images I obtained because of the restrictions the street view function on Google maps provides. Additionally, a full critical assessment of the landscape or surrounding area of the hair salons could not be made due to the limits of the Google street view function.

Given the complex nature of the subject matter explored in this project and a combination of factors that include the time frame, access and the general mental and physical conditions caused by the pandemic - limitations were inevitable. In spite of these challenges, I hope the detailed theoretical framework, strict analytical procedures and the documentation of the various stages of this thesis have been relatively successful attempts to minimize bias and produce credible research.

As we turn to the Results chapter, I trust that these attempts will be evident.

4. Results

This chapter details my research findings by highlighting three overarching themes that were identified by analyzing the interviews and the images captured of Black and White hair salons located in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam. These themes reflect the intersections between race, space and Black cultural identity as represented through Black hair salons in the Netherlands. The excavation of these concepts and the discourses around them resulted in the identification of the following main themes: gender, race and positionality. It is important to note that the quotes from the participants are followed by their pseudonyms and the participants'' area of residence or the location of their respective hairdressers.

4.1 Escaping the White gaze

In discussions around the broad definition of cultural identity, sutures of intersecting social identities have been highlighted as to draw attention to the multi-dimensional nature of diasporic identity. When asked about the *intersectional* makeup of their social identities, the participants were unanimous in the view that negotiating their diasporic identities was a common practice for them. From the sentiments shared by the majority of the participants, the struggle to locate oneself in Dutch society requires members of diasporic communities to conceal the features that draw attention to their difference. In an attempt to circumvent scrutiny based on that reality, a participant explained that, "you try to adjust to the so-called norm" (Joyce, Amsterdam).

Adjusting to the norm has various implications for Black women living in western urban settings which are tied to race and gender (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020). It was suggested by one participant that this social reality may be linked to how, "women's bodies are always subjugated to like the public space, like the public's opinion" (Selam, Rotterdam). Assuming that this is true, women arguably feel pressured to perform their femininity as prescribed by their social environment. Hair is a significant element to performing femininity because of historical notions that a woman is not a woman without her hair (Synnott, 1987). This view underscores the importance of hair salons in facilitating the performance of femininity. In light of this, there was a broad sense among the participants' that hair salons, specifically Black hair salons, provided Black women

with spaces where Black beauty is asserted. Commenting on this, one participant expressed the following:

> "I think just in general, the way Black people, especially Black women, have been criticized for their hair, you need to have a space where you can ask questions, feel safe. Like, feel like your hair is appreciated. And that's only a place where you, like, almost a Dutch free place where you can feel beautiful despite how society looks at your beauty" (Sylvana, The Hague).

Sylvana's sentiments demonstrate the application of the notion behind the *spatial turn* as she discusses the extent to which Black hair salons are linked to Black cultural identity. By referring to the significance of Black hair salons as places of 'safety' for Black women, Sylvana is suggesting that outside of those places, Black women do not necessarily feel 'safe'. Having alluded to the criticism that Black women face because of their hair, Sylvana is arguably suggesting that it is this criticism that contributes to women not feeling secure or confident about their Black hair. The lexical choices used predicate the negative associations made with Black hair and further emphasize the extent of these negative associations on Black women's' perceptions of Black hair. Sylvana states that Black hair salons, as places that are "Dutch free," are important because they provide environments where Black hair is valued and Black women feel beautiful despite the hegemonic perceptions that perpetuate contrasting narratives. By using the words "Dutch free," Sylvana is arguably implicating Dutch White society which could be a considered to be a reference to the idea of the *white gaze*. The concept of the *white gaze* as conceptualized by Fanon (1968) pertains to a perception that "reduces Black individuals' subjectivity to racist representations of colonial ideology" (Song, 2017, p. 50). Therefore, by referring to a place that is "Dutch free," Sylvana is emphasizing the importance of Black hair salons as spaces that are away from the *white gaze* thus away from prescriptions of Black beauty as undesirable. In having discussions about the significance of Black hair salons, the term 'safe' was consistently used by other participants, illustrating the insecurity most of these participants feel about representations of Black hair in their social environments. One participant

elaborated on the root of this insecurity and the longing for the ‘safety’ Black hair salons provide:

> “I think for a lot of Black people not fitting in and always having to have this sense of double consciousness. Feeling like this...this country, or of always having to, reduce your own identity, just to belong or to get accepted, to get doors open in a safe space where you can just laugh out loud without having to be charged, like talk about things and talk your own language and feel safe”(Maria, The Hague).

The view made by Maria, about Black people not feeling like they fit into Dutch society was echoed by the majority of the participants. The self-awareness of being Black in a predominantly White society, what Maria suggestively refers to as “double consciousness”, was shared by 8 of the 10 participants. By using the word “double consciousness”, Maria is referencing acclaimed African-American sociologist, W.E.B DuBois, who conceived the term. In his seminal work, *The Souls of Black Folks*, Du Bois describes *double consciousness* as “this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (Du Bois, 2008, p. 8). Du Bois’ words suggest that Black people’s perception of themselves is constructed through the eyes of the western societies that govern their social realities. In connection to the subject of beauty and Black hair, *double consciousness* arguably pertains to how Black women define their beauty through the lens of the *white gaze*.

Maria’s reference about reducing one’s identity to adjust to the norms of Dutch society, reverberates notions of ‘shifting’ practices that involve Black women playing down the reality of their Blackness (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020). As briefly discussed in the Theoretical Framework, the concept of ‘shifting’ requires Black women in urban spaces to shed or underplay their Black cultural identity so they can be accepted in society (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020). By taking this into account, an understanding of the value of Black hair salons as places where Black cultural identity can be exercised without fears of racial scrutiny, is comprehensible. This sense of ‘safety ‘is further amplified by how Maria details the significance of being able to “laugh loud without having to be charged.” The connotations associated with the word “charged” indicate that there is a penalty or

a retributive consequence for “laugh[ing] out loud” outside of the ‘safety net’ of a Black hair salon. Maria goes on to list cultural expressions that can occur within the ‘safety net’ of Black hair salons, like being able to talk in one’s native language. Within the theoretical frame of the *spatial turn*, the meanings that Maria gives to her experiences of Black hair salons are enveloped in feelings of cultural belonging, hence her emotive explanation of the energy in the space: “that energy that is in that hair salon, most of us crave it. Like we feel, we feel like, like a burning has gone off of our backs when we leave there” (Maria, The Hague). The figurative language used here, illustrates the profundity of Maria’s experience of going to Black hair salons. The word ‘crave’ implies a yearning for something which potentially speaks to a deep desire to feel ‘safe’ in exercising aspects of Black cultural identity. The metaphor about the burning in the back alludes to a type of pain that has been relieved from the experiences of being in a place of cultural communion. The overall tone about Black hair salons expressed by Maria epitomizes the “feeling of safety, of arrival, of homecoming” (hooks, 1992, p. 175). This was a recurring theme in the interviews, as the participants’ characterized Black hair salons as places where Black cultural identity and femininity is celebrated.

Not all the participants expressed such strong and positive feelings about their experiences in Black hair salons. Considering how Black or ethnic hair salons are targeted at diasporic communities, the places in themselves are occupied with diverse subjects, particularly in western societies. Therefore, language barriers or cultural barriers are inevitable. These boundaries can conjure up emotions that are contrary to feeling ‘safe’ and are likely to increase feelings of ‘foreignness’. For the small number of the participants who shared this opinion, the main reason behind their feelings of ‘foreignness’ were due to language barriers as explicated by one participant: “there's a bit of detachment here [Black hair salons in the Netherlands]. I don't know, maybe sometimes…because I [can’t] speak Dutch” (Danai, Amsterdam). Another participant shared a similar view: “so most of the customers have a Cape Verdean background as well as their language, right. So you feel excluded automatically because you are, you cannot understand what's being said” (Selam, Rotterdam). These feelings of disconnection and detachment illustrate how complex managing intersectional identities can be in cosmopolitan cities. Crenshaw (1991) argues that although intersectionality as

a matter of identity politics can be a source of community for minority groups, it can also overlook intragroup differences.

Upon analyzing the visual data that supplements the textual data derived from the interviews, it is evident that there are inconsistencies in the participants' experiences of Black hair salons and the racial representations of Black hair salons. This illustrates how the articulation of Black cultural identity as it pertains to Black hair representation, is rarely emphasized in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam. The visual semiotic signs in the images were analyzed in relation to their relevance to race and positionality in their connection to Black hair politics as the concepts are defined in Appendix B. It is important to note that the focus of the analysis of all 60 images was broadly premised on the notions of *denotation* and *connotation*. As described in the Method section, analytical tools used to identify elements in the visual data were: *iconography*, *attributes*, *settings* and *salience*. In a collection of 30 images of Black hair salons, less than 10 of these hair salons displayed imagery of Black models with afro/curly hair or mannequins with wigs/weaves with Black afro/curly texture. In addition to this, less than 10 of those 30 images showcased visuals of Black models. This suggests a lack of representation of Black cultural identity in the form of Black models with Black afro/curly hair. Moreover, it illustrates a discord between the experiences of Black cultural communion that some participants describe in their experiences in Black hair salons and what is represented outside of the hair salons. The majority of the participants, to varying degrees, consider Black hair salons to be custodians of Black beauty however, Black beauty is not foregrounded in the representation of most Black hair salons in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam.

A close examination of salon 1(images 1a-c), salon 2 (images 2a-b), and salon 3 (images 3 a-b) demonstrates these discrepancies. 1 (images c), showcases one side of a Rotterdam based salon's window where there are images of two White models and two mannequins. The model with short blonde hair and a purple top is the most salient object in the display window due to the size of the picture in comparison to the other objects. On the other side of the salon, salon 1(image b) depicts images of two Black models, one light-skinned and one dark-skinned model. The images of the models are not very clear but their profiles suggest that the light-skinned model has medium sized

curly hair whilst the dark-skinned model has afro short hair. The dark-skinned model appears to have a relatively larger sized image than the image of the light-skinned model which places emphasis of the dark-skinned model. The representation of both these models is significant as it showcases the diversity of Black beauty and Black hair. It is also important to mention that out of the 30 images analyzed this was one of two Black hair salons to foreground two Black models in their window display. The contrast between salon 1 (image b), and salon 1 (image c), is seen in the display of mannequins and general appearance of the two windows. Salon 1 (image b) is visibly over-ornate than salon 1 (image c). This makes salon 1 (image b) visually more striking and potentially more appealing to the eye, however, the excessive display of the mannequins predominantly modeling long, straight, auburn and blonde coloured hair, arguably distract from the Black models. Whereas, the White model in salon 1 (image c) stands out in the display window due to the lack of visual distractions. Various deductions can be made concerning the discrepancies that these images showcase but within the idea of Black hair salons being custodians of Black beauty, it appears that western beauty ideals in the form of long, straight hair are more accentuated than representations of Black afro/curly hair.

A common thread is revealed in the analysis of salon 2 (images 2a-b). In salon 2 (images 2a-b), one of the first noteworthy signs, is the large board with the name and logo of the hair salon above the entity. There are two models in the right side of the image, a White female model and Black (dark-skinned) female model. Although, the Black female model is foregrounded as she is in front of the White model, her hair is considerably long and straight. Connotatively speaking, this visual places significance on the Black female model as she is placed in front of the White model but her long straight hair arguably epitomizes the practice of ‘shifting’ by having long, straight hair. Just below this name board, there are five medium-sized images, showcasing models involved in various grooming activities. Of the 5 models, 4 of them are visibly White and one is Black. Again, the ratio of the racial representation is not balanced, considering that this is a Black hair salon that predominantly services Black customers. By inspecting salon 2 (image 2b) further, it is evident that the mannequins on display are white and they are modelling western hair textures and lengths. Similar observations

are identified in salon 3 (images 3a-b), as the Black hair salon presents a large-sized image in the right-hand corner, of a White model with red wavy hair. What is most interesting about salon 3 (images 3a-b) is how this Black hair salon chooses to display one image of a model on its main window and having that model be White. This again, reveals the dissonance between marketing strategies through representation and the main target group. This visual choice suggests that Black hair salons' studied in project, do not only accentuate White beauty but they dismiss Black beauty by not including it in its representation. Straight hair and Whiteness are consistent signifiers identified in the representation of most of the Black hair salons analyzed. One of the participants noticed how Black hair is often underrepresented in urban settings and said:

> "Black hair salons…They have a lot of weave[s] hanging from all of the stores, that I have noticed. But I think if [they] put like more of afro, you know, Black woman with afro hair and these kind of stuff. I think that would make things different on the street because then people will be more aware of the fact that we are there" (Georgina, Amsterdam).

Georgina's comment confirms the idea that Black hair salons often emphasize western beauty standards over representations of Black beauty. She also highlights the importance of representation in urban spaces by suggesting that more imagery of Black women with afro hair in urban settings contributes to the visibility of Black women in these urban environments. Insomuch as experiences in Black hair salons as detailed by the participants, evoke feelings of cultural connection and refuge they also serve as 'facilitators' of expressions of Black urban femininity. Considering that urban spaces serve as places where fashion and success are epitomized, they are central to the commodification of femininity (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020). It is within this frame that Black women are compelled to 'shift' to western aesthetics (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020).Therefore, expressions of Black urban femininity have little to do with accentuating Blackness but rather serve the acculturation of Black women into western urban environments. In other words, the term Black urban femininity suggests that this expression of womanhood is connected to Black cultural identity in some form, however, according to

the lived experiences of some of the participants, Black urban femininity is an expression of womanhood as defined by the *white gaze*.

4.2 Good hair and Bad hair

The intersections of gender and race were previously explored in relation to the politics of Black hair and Black hair salons' facilitation of Black urban femininity. Moreover, Black hair salons' conflicting roles of being both custodians of Black beauty and their implicitness in perpetuating westernized beauty as the norm, were interrogated. This section delves into the implications of westernized definitions of beauty on Black women's conception of themselves, through their perceptions and experiences as they relate to Black hair. These perceptions are explored through participants' experiences of *Otherness* and internalized inferiority as further observed through Black hair salons' imagery.

From the perspectives of most of the participants, negotiations of *Otherness* are a common feature of the Black experience in the Netherlands. A number of the participants suggested that this was partly due to the Dutch categorizations explained in the Theoretical Framework: *autochthon and allochtoon*. Considering that the interviewees have national roots in various diasporic countries, including: Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Ghana, Eritrea, Curaçao, Suriname, Portugal and Guiana (Appendix A), questions addressing their nationality often emerge. According to most of the participants, these national identities are used to challenge the authenticity of their Dutch nationality. They perceive their identity to be used as a reminder of their *Otherness*. One participant explained:

> "I feel like I have to claim this identity in a way to claim my space in this society...because this society has or this country has told me since I was basically a toddler or like, you know, a four year old that I am different and that I'm all allochtone" (Selam, Rotterdam).

Awareness of this *allochtoon* label speaks to how some of the participants recognize their 'foreignness' in Dutch society. One participant was explicit about her presence in the Netherlands and explained how she feels like she doesn't, "fit the Dutch

culture or the Dutch customs" (Maria, The Hague). In the interview she alluded to how her physical presence may play a role in her not fitting in. Another participant echoed similar sentiments: "I feel like I am lost in identity because I feel like the Dutch people will never recognize me as…as a Dutch person, and therefore I cannot place myself as a Dutch citizen" (Yvonne, Amsterdam). A common pattern that can be identified in the participants' views, is how they discuss their 'foreignness' in relation to their appearance or in connection to some form of material quality. Selam refers to claiming her space, which connotes to 'physically' proving her 'Dutchness' because the notion of space suggests a type of physical form. By Yvonne using the word "recognize" she is also potentially referring to how Dutch society presumes she is not Dutch based on a physical quality as the term has visual connation attached to it. In essence, these participants' experiences may be linked to a corporeal aspect of their identity – their race.

Race as a social category is central to informing both the performativity and the construction of national and gender identity. Therefore, these two social roles are framed within the conception of race. This is illustrated in the way that most of the participants struggled to claim their Dutchness because their physical traits are automatically associated with non-Europeanness and they are therefore, subjected to *allochtoon* statues. Additionally, their performances of femininity impel them to change their hairstyles to appear less Black. Black cultural identity is ultimately defined by how the concept of Africa is situated in the centre of this collective identity and as a result gives meaning to the other social identities (Hall, 1990). The meanings that are derived from this association are fundamentally due to the corporeal reality of race as mentioned in the theoretical framework. According to theorist Frantz Fanon, Blackness can be attributed to the idea of being "an object in the midst of other objects" (Goldberg, 1990). This suggests that the physical fact of having different skin tone makes Black individuals the object of the *white gaze* - a gaze rooted in colonial ideology (Song, 2017). The implication of this gaze is the persistent act of internalizing inferiority. Song (2017) explains Fanon's notion of the epidermalization of inferiority as: "that corporeal schema [which] racializes into a racial epidermal… [which is] equivalent to being pushed into the position of inferiority" (Song, 2017, p. 50). This conception essentially

suggests that – in their own eyes and the eyes of others – Black bodies are fundamentally marked by inferiority due to racialized definitions. In relation to Black hair, internalized inferiority is revealed in participants' experiences of being socialized into believing that western aesthetics encompass what it means to be beautiful or desirable in western societies. According to the majority of the interviewees, in their experiences, femininity is dictated by Whiteness, therefore, Black women often feel coerced into 'shifting,' in order to integrate into western society. One of the participants elaborated on what this practice means to her, "it's just this idea of like dominating my own identity into…like fit into that mould of like what beauty means" (Maria, The Hague). By using the word 'dominate,' Maria is insinuating that the process of assimilating to western ideals of beauty, are parallel to acts of exerting force over one's identity. The connotations associated with this idea have oppressive resonance. Many of the other participants shared a similar perspective as they have also been socialized to believe that the definition of beauty is fundamentally non-Black. The reason for this is explicated by one participant: "...western hair is better than Black hair because it's silky, it's straight and Black hair is quite stubborn" (Georgina, Amsterdam). An examination of Georgina's explanation reinforces the notion that White hair is 'good' and Black hair is 'bad'. The terms "stubborn" and "silky" are juxtaposed against each other and evoke opposite feelings - "stubborn" is associated with hard textures and "silky" with soft textures. By associating Black hair with stubbornness, Georgina is implying that Black hair is not easy to maintain whereas western hair is "silky" therefore easier to maintain. Discourses concerning Black and White hair are commonly characterized by this type of language and is instilled at a young age.

More than half of the participants had their hair straightened at a Black hair salon for the first at the median age of 12. For most of them, this was their first time at a Black hair salon. One of the participants, chronicled her childhood hair journey and equated the experiences of straightening her hair to the loss of childhood innocence:

> "It's like it's grown up. It was like this natural, untouched, glowing innocence. Like nothing was, only like some oil, you know? And slowly as you grow up, like you started realizing, like, the toxicity. So then my, my grandmother would have like

those combs that you put on, the on, the stove. And that would be warm and that they were straightening my hair with that. So that's how it started. And like slowly that was changing. And like in my sense, colonizing. And then slowly, once I got into high school that I had to get the relaxer" (Maria, The Hague).

Maria provides glimpses into the various stages of transitioning from the natural state of her hair into the process of processing her hair, firstly with her grandmother's stove comb and then by chemically processing her hair through a relaxing treatment. The detail in her explanation is an example of a *strategy of perspectivation* (Wodak, 2001). Through this narration Maria illustrates her perspective on the meanings attached to Black hair. The metaphor comparing her hair straightening process to the loss of childhood innocence is effective due to the figurative language she elicits. By describing her natural hair as "untouched" and radiating with "glowing innocence" she is arguably encompassing the blissful ignorance that comes with childhood. She then refers to this "toxicity", which may potentially refer to negative murmurs associated with Black hair that emerge as one gets older. Finally, she describes the instance when her grandmother uses a stove comb on her hair which is followed by this exclamation, "so that's how it started. "This tone suggests the processing of this "untouched" natural hair, in other words, the beginning of the diminishing of "glowing innocence." This is followed by her use of the word "colonizing" to encapsulate this hair straightening process which is effective in how it alludes to a racially charged action that reinforces the racist roots of Black people relaxing their hair. In discourses about Black hair, the relaxing treatment has always been a point of contention within Black communities. People believe that the act of applying relaxer to Black hair represents "internalized diasporic inferiority" (Dash, 2006, p. 29). Among the participants, opinions differed on whether this was true but for one particular participant, this is not the case at all: "To me, it literally only means a treatment which manipulates your natural hair pattern. It doesn't. To me, it doesn't define my own, my identity or the connection that I have with my world" (Cynthia, Rotterdam).

The act of relaxing Black hair, formerly known as conking, was popularized in African-American communities in the mid-20th century (Dash, 2006). This hair

straightening method has since become a major part of Black hair culture worldwide. Hair products with these straightening chemical agents have become crucial in performing Black urban femininity (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020). In adhering to these Black hair practices, Cruz-Gutiérrez argues that Black women living in cities are essentially "assimilating into and striving to fulfill metropolitan social patterns of style, behaviour and appearance displayed in fashion magazines and complicit with normative western(ized) femininity" (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020, p. 62). Contestation over the subject of relaxing Black hair is primarily characterized by the notion of cultural preference for Whiteness and therefore a rejection of Black cultural identity (Thompson, 2009). Hair being an important signifier of Blackness is assumed to be interwoven into the fabric of Black women's cultural identity and this is true for the majority of the participants. One participant proudly exclaimed: "when I have my natural hair out and I let it be. I have the wash and go and the curls are out and flourishing. And it tells whoever is around me that I am an African woman" (Danai, Amsterdam). In this statement, Danai refers to the "wash and go" practice which is a phrase commonly used to describe the process of Black women not manipulating their hair through any straightening treatments. It is essentially the act of washing one's natural hair and leaving it in its natural state. By using the word "flourishing" Danai is literally speaking to how the act of not using chemicals in her hair allows it to grow naturally. Figuratively, it suggests that this practice is healthy for Black natural hair. She also denotes to how her hair in its natural state signifies that she is an African woman. This supports the idea of Black hair being inextricably connected to Blackness. When discussing the unique signatures of Black hair Danai explained that: "when we're talking about Black hair, the first thing that comes in my mind is the afro hair, like, you know, the shrinkage, the curly pattern, 4C, 4B…" (Danai, Amsterdam). Participants generally shared Danai's definition of Black hair, however, there were some nuances in the participants' responses as some believed that Black hair could also extend to textures further up on the hair grade scale (See Appendix F). In general, there was consensus that Black hair is distinctly curly, kinky, and coily. In recognizing how hair is intrinsically connected to race and identity, one of the participants spoke about the changes she was noticing in her hair texture and how this change was challenging her perception of herself:

> So I always thought I was like a 3C, 4A. And now I'm like more leaning towards the 3C, 3B maybe. But I still have to figure it out completely. But I am not a 4A. That's clear to me right now… It's not even my hair. It's more about my identity, because even though I'm mixed race, I always identify as Black, you know… I grew up in my head as a Black woman. And my hair was part of that (Sylvana, The Hague).

This participant's concern about her changing hair texture and what this implies about her Blackness, added another layer to the discourse of Black hair. She highlighted two key points: the importance of diversifying definitions of what Black hair is and that even in recognizing how diverse Black hair is, it is still hierarchical. She briefly elaborated on this: "you can be pro Black as a mixed woman or as like, light skinned or any hair type, but you also need to know your position in the movement"(Sylvana, The Hague).This participant suggests that her mixed race heritage privileges her within the Black community. In acknowledging that privilege, she is highlighting racialized prejudice within the discourse of Black hair. In the same fashion, another participant discussed the privileges of her mixed ancestry and explained emphatically, why she refused to attribute Black hair solely to cultural identity:

> My hair is also, like mixed, it's not Black Black. It's not, it's not like White either. It's like Caribbean, this like, this hybrid thing. But if I see my hair because of this idea of like cultural identity, it's very...It creates this bullshit idea that there's no inequality in race (Maria, The Hague).

This participant's hesitancy, speaks to her concern of negating the political nature of Black hair in a society that deems itself to be post-racial. She believes it's important to highlight the inherent bias in the way different hair textures and hairstyles are perceived in western societies. Both Maria and Sylvana's sentiments highlight the racial representation that was observed in the window displays of the Black hair salons studied. In the 30 images of Black hair salons analyzed, light-skinned models were more represented than dark-skinned models. Salon 4 (images 4a-b), are evidence of this as there are two large

images of two light-skinned models (male and female) above the windows of the Black hair salon. Considering that in general Black models were underrepresented, these two images were significant in foregrounding two Black models with natural hair, without displaying any other images of non-Black models. However, the lack of representation of dark-skinned models with afro hair reinforces Maria and Sylvana's belief that this representation is a further dismissal of Black afro hair.

Commonly used terms by the participants to reference Black hair, were the words 'natural' and 'afro hair.' By referring to the idea of natural hair, the participants are alluding to the notion of 'hair that grows out of one's head,' therefore unprocessed hair. The term afro hair is used to describe hair that, "draws on qualities intrinsic to curly African hair: the coil of the hair, its capacity to grow in a thick mass" (Dash, 2006, p. 32). Afro and natural hair come in diverse forms hence the different hair grades that distinguish between different hair textures. The very idea of this measuring scale signifies the inequality that was remarked on earlier. This hair grading scale is marked by racial undertones as it ranks hair patterns and hair texture alphabetically with A indicating straight hair and C referring to afro hair. This is consistent with the language that is predominantly used in relation to Black hair. Linguistically, words like coily and kinky conjure up negative associations in comparison to words like silky, which is used to refer to White hair. The origin of the hair chart is linked to an African-American hairdresser, Andre Walker who reportedly created the chart for African-American women to distinguish between different hair textures (Jouelzy, 2012). This hair chart has since been widely adopted by Black communities all over the world.

References to the process of straightening Black hair as 'relaxing,' again suggests that Black hair is wild and needs to be 'tamed.' If "language is a signifying practice," (Hall, 1997, p. 5) then the meanings that are being attached to the terms used to describe Black hair are saturated in inferiority. The extent of how harmful language like this can be is articulated by Maria:

> "The way that we've been taught for a long time to hide our hair. To straighten it. To add relaxer. To, to do things to it. To like make it less, to make it less like

visible. To make it less aggressive in these spaces. And so we have this archive of knowledge of how to tame it" (Maria, The Hague).

Again, Maria articulates the emotions that were expressed by the majority of the participants – White hair is 'good' and Black hair is 'bad.' She traces the episteme of Black hair and how Black women are taught how to contain their hair through a series of measures - "straighten it," or "add relaxer" in order to hide it. She elicits words like "aggressive" and "tame" suggesting that natural Black hair is connotatively militant. Her words echo sentiments expressed by well-known activist, Angela Davis, who upon having her afro publically scrutinized, described the perception of her hair as "as an unruly natural hairdo [that] symbolized Black militancy"(Davis, 1994, p. 39). In suggesting that Black hair is unruly, Maria denotes to the pressures Black women feel in urban spaces to make their natural hair less visible. Her words ring true to Fanon's fears about how Black bodies are transformed by the *white gaze*: "Black individuals become inferior in concrete cases of everyday living, where Black individuals simultaneously suffer from racial hierarchy, while perpetuating it, by internalizing the idea of Black inferiority" (Song, 2017, p. 51). This internalization arguably reflects "the traumatic character of the 'colonial experience' "(Hall, 1990, p. 225).

This inferiority is arguably reproduced by the way Black natural hair is rarely represented in imagery displayed by Black hair salons. If Black hair is represented, it is generally 'tamed' by having it straightened or it is not accentuated. Salon 5 (images 5a-b), are examples of Black afro hair being 'hidden.' Salon 5 (image 5b) showcases three grey coloured sketches of women on the hair salon's window: two with straight hairstyles on the main salon window and one afro-styled woman on the side window. The races of the models are not distinguishable but their hairstyles fall within the racialized categories. The two images on the main window display are foregrounded due to them being located in the centre of the main window of the hair salon, while the afro-styled image is decentred due to it being positioned on the side window. This particular hair salon, markets itself as a hair salon that services afro European hair suggesting a diverse clientele. With this in mind, the image illustrates racial

discrepancies and supports the idea that western hair is consistently favoured over Black hair, in its representation.

4.3 The Invisibility of Blackness and the Invincibility of Whiteness

In the last two sections, lived experiences of the participants as they are shaped by the intersections of gender and race have been connected to their perceptions and representations of Black cultural identity in the form of Black hair. Parallels between racialized perceptions of Black hair and the representation of Black hair in urban settings have been consistently identified. These observations have revealed an absence of diverse Black hair imagery and a lack of representation of Black beauty aesthetic in Rotterdam, The Hague and Amsterdam. Pressure to conform to western beauty aesthetics have been prevalent in the interviewees' experiences and has been confirmed materially in the analysis of the images collected. The implications of this reality in the form of Black inferiority has been has been identified as a common thread throughout this chapter. This last section will elaborate on the consequences of these racialized perceptions and representations of Black hair, as they pertain to the positionality of Black women living in the Netherlands.

The cultural hegemonic idea that Whiteness is the categorical definition of beauty and desirability has served as the map on which the participants have attempted to locate a sense of belonging. By highlighting the racialized structures of femininity and nationality as they relate to Black hair, it has been evident that a degree of belonging is attained through processes of assimilation which potentially have dehumanizing effects. In analyzing the representations of beauty portrayed in the images of Black and White hair salons it has been evident that Black hair and Black beauty is depicted to be inferior in relation to western beauty aesthetics. This is illustrated in how, all 30 images of White hair salons examined, depicted no imagery associated with aspects of Black cultural identity. Generally speaking, most of the White hair salons did not display images of models at all, however, in the instances they did, the imagery was predominantly of White models with the exception of salon 10 (images 10a-b). A close examination salon 10 (image 10b), reveals that this White hair salon in The Hague exhibits several mini images of White female models in a Bohemian inspired window display. There is one image of a Black female model with afro hair whose picture is slightly alleviated in

comparison to the other models. Denotatively speaking, salience is placed on the image of the Black model due to the size and alleviation of the image, however, connotatively speaking, there is more emphasis on western beauty as there are more images representing that beauty aesthetic.

A striking finding in analyzing representations of White hair salons in comparison to representations of Black hair salons is the way that most White hair salons presented no imagery or overt aesthetics at all. Salon 6 (images 6a-b), and salon 7 (images 7a-b), are examples of this as they showcase wide transparent windows with little to no branding or indication that they 'sell beauty.' If objects are displayed in the windows, they are primarily products, as illustrated in salon 8 (images 8a-b) and salon 9 (images 9a-b). This contrasts representations seen in Black hair salons, as most of the establishments analyzed incorporated visual elements in some form in their representation and more often than not, those elements highlighted western beauty aesthetics. Assuming that these visual elements are attempts to emphasize the 'trading of beauty,' disparity in representation implies that White hair salons, being the standard of beauty, focus on marketing services whilst Black hair salons, in attempts to help customers assimilate to the western ideal, place emphasis on 'selling beauty.'

The beauty that is being 'sold' falls within a very specific beauty aesthetic which is suggestively non-Black. However, some participants' reported that the common Black hair representation they notice often resembles western attributes. A participant elaborated on this:

> "So there's a lot of posters or things on the street that are not White. But most of the times when you see Black women, they have like light skin. They look like me or even sometimes even like lighter and more ambiguous than me. So curly hair and very light skin... This idea of like hybridity or like mixedness "(Maria, The Hague).

This participant suggests that in her city, The Hague, there is representation of Black hair culture, however, these images are predominantly of light-skinned Black models or models with hair texture that is racially ambiguous. The terms "hybridity" and

“ambiguous” alludes to these models not looking distinguishably Black or White but rather representing an ideal that is acceptable because it objectively depicts western features. This confirm the notion that urban spaces place emphasis on beauty that reflects western aesthetics.

Thus far, bias roots illustrated in racial representations of Black hair through imagery depicted in the windows of Black and White hair salons have been outlined. These discrepancies shown through these racial representations have suggested that attempts to ‘hide’ and ‘tame’ Black hair are due to the assumed threat that Black hair poses to western culture. The absence of Black hair representation in urban settings and the manner in which Black hair salons are designated to marginal areas of cities (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020) speaks to efforts to render Black cultural identity invisible. This suggests that representation is an act of asserting subjectivity and thus Black hair representation is potentially threatening to western cultural hegemony because “safety reside[s] in the pretense of invisibility” (hooks, 1992, p. 168). According to the interviewees, this is a reality to varying degrees in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam. The participants from the Amsterdam area all spoke about one particular place being the Black cultural hub. On this topic one participant said: “Amsterdam has this thing where I feel like Black culture is situated in one area” (Danai, Amsterdam), and that area is referred to as Bijlmer. This residential area is located in the south of Amsterdam and is popularly recognized as the Black capital of Amsterdam with the largest concentration of the Black population living there. Although Danai, expressed feeling represented when she would go to Bijlmer, she also shared her indignation at the fact that she always had to travel so far for her hair needs, “why is Black culture only limited to just being in the Bijlmer?” (Danai, Amsterdam). A participant from Rotterdam shared Danai’s frustration when explaining how the majority of Black hair salons in her city are also situated in specific spaces. She highlights one particular area with a concentration of Black hair salons and several ethnic stores that is relatively close to the city centre:

> “That street represents basically who lives around there…Middlelandstraat, which is very close to the city center. But it's not city center like, because that's

not where people go to, to shop. It's actually the street that belongs to that neighbourhood or surrounding it" (Selam, Rotterdam).

What both Danai and Selam highlight is how Black hair salons are often situated out of view of the *white gaze* in western cities. Which reinforces the idea that these are attempts to preserve cultural hegemony. Assuming that this true, what are the social implications of these actions on the positionality of minority groups but more specifically Black women living in metropolitan spaces?

Throughout this thesis, positionality and social power have been used interchangeably. These terms have been used to refer to power which is based on "privileged access to socially valued resources, such as wealth, income, position, status, force, group membership, education or knowledge" (Dijk, 1993, p. 254). Much of the focus of this research project has been on how the politics of Black hair influences the social realities of Black women living in the Netherlands. What has been evident, as revealed by the interviewees is that from a young age, a conscious or unconscious conceptualization of Black hair is generally associated with negativity, inferiority and undesirability. One participant vividly recalled how she was bullied for her hair after a swimming class when she was younger. The participant spoke about how that experience has affected her perception of her hair, "I think it's very traumatic because that has kind of defined how I never wanted my hair to be out at a later age" (Selam, Rotterdam). Another participant, Yvonne, detailed a story about an incident involving her mother. Yvonne's mother was using public transit, when a child that was with their parent pointed to Yvonne's mother in fear and called her Zwart Piet. Many other participants talked about associations that are often made about their natural hair or afro hair with Zwart Piet. Selam is one of these participants and believes that Black hair is, "perceived as a joke sometimes. And as a gimmick because of, you know, Zwart Piet. I feel it's not taken seriously" (Selam, Rotterdam). Considering how prevalent these perceptions about Black hair are, the notion of 'shifting' becomes more appealing to Black women, especially as it relates to finding a job in urban spaces (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020).

Many of the participants shared experiences of questioning how they should present their hair for job interviews with fears of bringing salience to their Blackness if they wear their natural hair out. This is because “too frequently, sporting natural hair undermines Black women’s possibilities of occupying high-paying positions” (Cruz-Gutiérrez, 2020, p. 60). One interviewee explained how concerned she was when she was preparing for an upcoming interview:

> “I really, really needed the job. And I got this interview…And I was like, okey, I can just, in order to, I need this job, in order to get this, I'm going to just put my hair in a bun…also like wear the clothes that are very professional and like tame and like be very neutral…I'm going to do everything I can to allow myself in that space “(Maria, The Hague).

During the interview, Maria described how desperate she was to get this job due to economic pressures. That sense of desperation is suggested in her fragmented speech. Her iterations of the actions she has to perform in order to prepare for the interview imply that she is mentally preparing herself for the act of ‘shifting’. By putting her hair in a bun she suggests that she is ‘taming’ her hair. Her use of the word “neutral” insinuates that in order for her to present herself in a “professional” manner she must be “neutral.” The implication here is that she can only be neutral by reducing attributes of hers that pertain to her Black cultural identity. This assumes that Whiteness has the privilege of controlling its visibility, in other words: “White people can ‘safely’ imagine that they are invisible to Black people since the power they have historically asserted, and even now collectively assert over Black people, accorded them the right to control the Black gaze” (hooks, 1992, p. 168). This notion of White invisibility highlights the ‘colour’ of the professional spaces that Black women feel pressured to acclimate to in order to secure employment opportunities. Maria’s experiences of preparing for job interviews resonated with significant number of participants, who recalled having similar internal conversations with themselves before an interview or a professional meeting.

On most topics pertaining to the politics of Black hair or Black hair culture, there have been nuances in various experiences but on the topic of having their hair touched,

every participant that was interviewed could recall an incident when their hair was touched. For most of the participants, these experiences were disconcerting and indications of their difference as one participant explains: “you feel like you're different because they want to touch your hair because you don't want to touch their hair, you know” (Martha, The Hague). In discussing these occurrences with the participants, it was evident that although most of them had become accustomed to having their hair touched, the act made them feel uncomfortable and highlighted their *Otherness*. Many of the interviewees recalled incidents like these happening at school, at work, during interviews, in lobbies of theatres and at restaurants. In most of the situations the participants did not feel empowered to express their discomfort, with the exception of one participant. “For many of us [Black people] pretend to be comfortable in the face of Whiteness only to turn our backs and give expression to intense levels of discomfort” (hooks, 1992, p. 169). These sentiments articulated by hooks (1992) arguably encapsulate how instances like having one’s hair touched, can often make Black women feel uncomfortable because these acts suggest that Black features are objects and this is an inherently dehumanizing notion. Although experiences of having one’s hair touched is not limited to only Black women, the occurrences for Black women are disproportionate. This is potentially the result of Black women not only being subjugated because of their race but also being objectified because of their gender. This social reality speaks to “how intersectional identity as both women and of colour within discourses that are shaped to respond to one or the other, women of color are marginalized within both” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244). This marginalized social reality has been observed through the analysis of the participants’ experiences and racial representations connoted in the imagery depicted in Black and White hair salons. This illustrates how a lack of representation or visibility dismisses the presence of Black women in society because the devaluation of Black women is connected to their representation (Crenshaw, 1991). One participant explained why Black hair representation through imagery displayed by Black hair salons or hair stores is pertinent: “it’s not just, you know, a hair store, but it's like you are also being represented. Your culture, your hair, like you, like you, like you are also being seen. You are also being considered” (Joyce, Amsterdam). By drawing on *urban politics of*

representation, Joyce's explanation speaks to how representation as tool that enhances visibility, it can potentially redefine the socio-political position of Black women living in the Netherlands.

This chapter has mapped out how the interactions of gender and race as they relate to Black hair construct the social realities of Black women in urban spaces. The first section explored how racialized definitions of femininity impact the Black female identity by limiting the meanings of beauty to Whiteness. This beauty hierarchy is illustrated in the westernized definitions of femininity that Black women living in urban spaces are compelled to embody. The section that followed, focused on how observable dimensions of race through concepts of racialized perceptions of nationality and Black hair representation perpetuate Black inferiority. In the final section of this chapter, the intersectionality of gender and race within the scope of Black hair identity was explored in how it shapes Black women's positionality in urban spaces. Every section of this chapter, within the frame of Black hair politics, delved into how the intersections of race and gender as they are experienced and represented in urban environments influence Black women's social realities structurally and politically.

5. Conclusion

This research project has been concerned with the interaction between race, Black hair and representation in urban spaces, in an attempt to understand how the racialized subjectivity of Black women living in the Netherlands is constructed and articulated in Dutch capital cities. In order to answer the research question: *How is race articulated in urban Dutch cities through the imagery of Black hair salons and the experiences of Black women living in the Netherlands?* I divided the research question into two sub-questions. The first sub-question focuses on how the debris of the colonial legacy manifests through Black women's racialized hair experiences and practices in urban spaces. Further, this question helps unearth how racialized subjectivities as they are related to Black hair, influence Black women's positionality in Dutch society. The second sub-question investigates how Black cultural identity in the form of Black hair is represented through the imagery of Black hair salons in relation to the imagery displayed in White hair salons. The findings suggested that race is consistently articulated by dominant representations of White beauty and western aesthetics. Whereas, Black hair and Black beauty are undermined through their lack of representation. This suggests that the preservation of western beauty standards is implicit in the erasure of Black cultural representation in urban spaces. Furthermore, this erasure has significant implications on the positionality of Black women living in western societies. Implications that include acts of internalized inferiority, assimilation practices, feelings of *Otherness* and diminished social positions. These actions can arguably be characterized as degrading.

The findings of this academic inquiry highlighted the significant role of intersectionality as this concept pinpoints how the interaction between race and gender shapes Black women's social realities (Crenshaw, 1991). Through various dimensions of race and gender, it was evident that, although western societies like the Netherlands have advocated for a society free of race, some social structures are still imbued with racist ideology. In attempts to be non-racial, societies like the Netherlands are moving towards cultural homogeneity but the problem with that is "[this process] seeks to deflect attention away from or even excuse the oppressive, dehumanizing impact of White supremacy on the lives of Black people"(hooks, 1992, p. 15). In light of this reality, the

erasure of race in public discourse must be challenged because by not recognizing the traces of race as conceived in the colonial imagination, racist practices persist unnamed and therefore without consequence. This denial of race and the promotion of the idea of a post-racial society, presumes “that social equality can be attained without changes in the culture’s attitudes about Blackness and Black people” (hooks, 1992, p. 10). By reducing racially imbued practices to cultural forms of prejudice, this erasure negates the harmful role of race in the social construction of the realities of marginalized populations. It is especially important to note how these racialized realities are compounded for Black women as underscored in this thesis through the concept of intersectionality. It is thus imperative that this institutional practice of denial is revisited and contested.

With regards to the social and practical implications of this research project, Black hair salons owners, Black hair product store owners as well non-Black hair care providers could benefit from the insight gained in this thesis. This knowledge could potentially compel these establishments to be more aware of their role in reproducing racialized cultural hegemonic ideologies through their representational strategies. The findings from this study could also benefit local municipalities by providing knowledge that can contribute to helping these local institutions create better working and living conditions for diasporic communities, as well as address issues that affect Black women disproportionally. These local institutions can also be influenced by the findings to allocate funds to initiatives that help increase Black cultural representation in their cities. Additionally, educational material can also be produced to raise awareness about the persistence of racially imbued microaggressions related to Black hair that are exercised in social and professional environments. This could be beneficial for non-Black members of Dutch society as this awareness could contribute to more conscious behaviour. This thesis has primarily focused on local representation and municipal change, however, these findings could be of interest to national government officials and could contribute to structural change in the form of policy. Policies similar to the CROWN Act could also be introduced as measures to combat Black hair prejudice in professional spaces.

Despite the efforts to present detailed analysis of the interviews conducted and the images collected, this inquiry is not exempt from limitations. Aspects of this research that may have been limiting, include my position as a researcher, inclusion of more data and diverse perspectives as well as a longer length of time to dedicate to the research. Considerations must be made for my position as a Black woman with Black hair which may be deemed to be a weakness of the research because of the potential for bias, however, my position can also be perceived to be advantageous because of my knowledge of the subject and the access I have to participants. Although the focus was on Black women who frequent Black hair salons, the research could have benefited from interviews with Black and White hair salon owners to provide their perspectives on racial representation. Since the thesis was limited in the time available to conduct the research, more images of hair salons over a longer period could not be collected and analyzed. Considering how the display windows of hair salons change over weeks or months, observations over a longer length of time would have produced more in-depth findings of representational strategies. Notwithstanding the limits of this research, these limitations can be seen as potential research avenues.

Moving forward, I believe that there are many opportunities for research avenues concerning the subject of Black hair, the Black female experience, and diasporic communities in general, especially in a European country as diverse as the Netherlands. The concept of intersectionality as defined by Crenshaw (1991) is foundational in theorizing the Black female experience. The coupling of *urban politics of representation* and *intersectionality* could potentially yield more insight into representations of Black women in urban settings in other European countries. These research inquiries could explore the impact of these representations on the socio-political position of Black women in western societies. Moreover, the insights gained from this research project could be used to conduct further research into the experiences of Black female subjects in the Netherlands. It could be beneficial to extend the scope of study to other disciplines or research methods. Methods or disciplines that can measure or quantify the extent to which race and Black hair politics impede the development of Black women's socio-economic status in the Netherlands. Additional research avenues related to Black hair could involve investigations into the impact that

online Black hair influencers are having on discourses concerning Black hair and Black cultural identity.

As highlighted in this thesis, Black women are often undermined in professional spaces or in their pursuits for employment, specifically in urban environments. The experiences of Black women are often dismissed in European academic research projects. With this in mind, it is imperative to foreground Black women in academic inquiries because theorizing the Black female experience in the Netherlands as well as in Europe, is an attempt to, “uncover, restore, as well as deconstruct, so that new paths, different journeys, are possible” (hooks, 1992, p. 172). Considering the current social climate, insights into the discourses of race as they pertain to the representation of Black hair and Black cultural identity can be used by members of Dutch and other European societies to advocate for social change.

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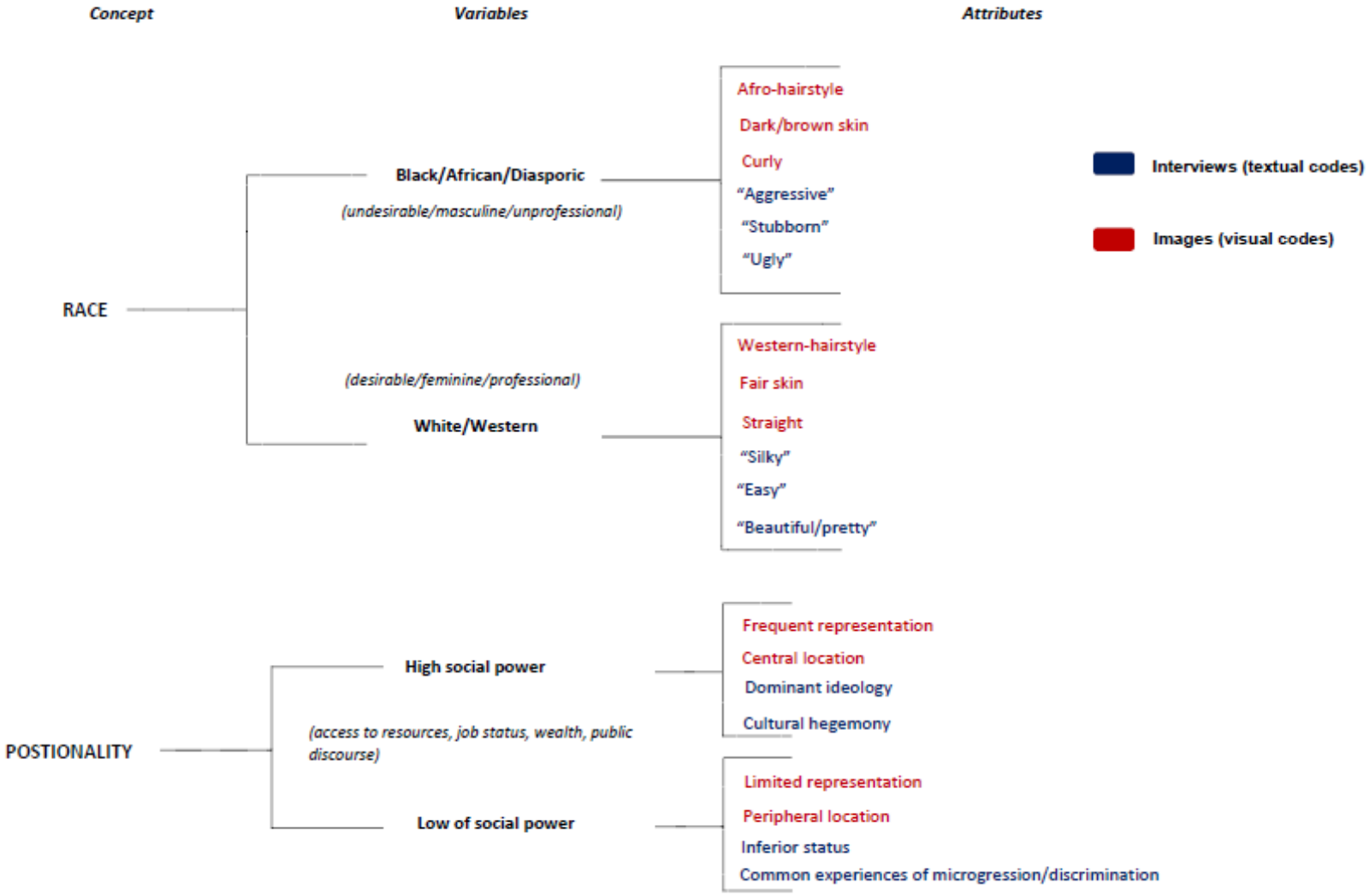
Appendix A: Overview of Research Participants

No.	*Name*	*Age*	*Nationality*	*Place of residence*	*Length of Interview*
1	Martha	24	Guianese Dutch	The Hague	00:35:23
2	Danai	24	Zimbabwean	Amsterdam	00:56:13
3	Georgina	25	Ghanaian Dutch	Amsterdam	00:50:22
4	Joyce	27	Ghanaian Dutch	Amsterdam	00:46:15
5	Cynthia	27	Surinamese Dutch	Rotterdam	01:03:93
6	Sylvana	21	Surinamese Dutch	The Hague	00:59:00
7	Maria	27	Curaçaoan	The Hague	01:11:26
8	Yvonne	25	Nigerian Ghanaian Dutch	Amsterdam	00:59:08
9	Selam	26	Eritrean Dutch	Rotterdam	01:31:27
10	Mayra	27	Portuguese Dutch	Amsterdam	01:40:01

Appendix B: Concept Tree



Appendix C: Data Analysis Code Frames

	Themes	Categories	Guided questions	Interview Samples	Image Analysis
How is race articulated in urban Dutch cities through the imagery of Black hair salons and the experiences of Black women living in the Netherlands?	Gender	Femininity	*Why it is important for Black women to be able to go to the hair salon?* (What is the function/role of Black hair salons in urban settings?)	"I think just in general, the way Black people, especially Black women, have been **criticized** for their hair, you need to have a space where you can ask questions, feel **safe**. Like, feel like your hair is **appreciated**. And that's only a place where you, like, almost a **Dutch free** place where you can feel **beautiful** despite how society looks at your beauty" (Sylvana, The Hague).	How do objects/elements in the images depict femininity/beauty? (gender of models, grooming activities, "feminine" colours)
		Spatial Identity	*Describe your experiences of going to the Black hair salon in your city Netherlands?* (What is the symbolic significance of Black hair salons in urban settings?)	"I think for a lot of Black people **not fitting in** and always having to have this sense of **double consciousness.** Feeling like this...this country, or of always having to, **reduce your own identity,** just to belong or to get	What do the objects/elements in the images indicate about the setting of the hair salon? (location,neighbourhood,surrounding area, accessibility)

				accepted, to get doors open in a **safe space** where you can just laugh out loud without having to be charged, like talk about things and talk your own language and **feel safe**"(Maria, The Hague).	
	Race	Black Cultural Identity	*How do Black women think their hair is connected to their cultural identity?* (What aspects of Black hair attribute to Blackness and why?)	"When I have my **natural hair out** and I let it be. I have the **wash and go** and the curls are out and **flourishing**. And it tells whoever is around me that I am **an African woman"** (Danai, Amsterdam).	What objects/elements in the images depict Black cultural identity? (afro hair, Black models, cultural symbols)
		Otherness/inferiority	*How do you think Black hair perceived in Dutch society?* (What aspects of socialization	"...**western** hair is **better** than Black hair because it's **silky**, it's **straight** and Black hair is quite **stubborn**" (Georgina, Amsterdam).	How do objects/elements in the images depict Black cultural identity? (Black dark-skinned models, Black light-skinned, models, White models, straight hair, long hair, afro hair)

			influence these perceptions?)		
	Positionality	Representation	How do Black women feel their hair, as an expression of their Black cultural identity, is being represented in their cities? (What representational modes or experiences influence their perceptions?)	"Why is **Black culture only limited** to just being in the **Bijlmer**?"(Danai, Amsterdam).	How is Black hair represented through imagery displayed by Black and White hair salons? (Are there differences in the representations? What are those observable differences?)
		Erasure	Can you explain why it is important for you to see the representation of Black hair salons in your city?	"It's not just, you know, a hair store, but it's like you are also being **represented**. Your **culture**, your **hair**, like you, like you, like you are also being **seen**. You are also being **considered**" (Joyce, Amsterdam).	How frequently is Black hair represented in Black and White hair salons? (How commonly present/visible are elements of Black hair in comparison to White hair?)

Appendix D: Visual Analysis of Sample Images

Number	Image	Denotation (object/what is depicted)	Connotation (interpretation)
#1	 *Image #1a*  *Image #1b*  *Image #1c*	1. Iconography: - Name sign. - Posters/images - Mannequins - Weaves 2. Attributes: - Models with different hair textures (generally straight, wavy and curly). - Black light-skinned and dark-skinned) female models. - Wigs and weaves are straight, wavy and curly. - Name is big and bold, grey colour. - Several images of models (Black and White). -Display of different coloured wigs and weaves. 3. Settings: - Corner location. - Grey building. 4. Salience: - Windows featuring Black models has many wigs and weaves displayed. - Windows featuring White models is less crowded with wig or weaves display.	• Busy street. • Central area. • Straight or wavy hair is represented more. • White models are more accentuated than Black models in window displays.

#2	 *Image #2a*  *Image #2b*	1. Iconography: - Neon sign [open]. - Name sign. - Posters/images - Mannequins - Weaves - Outside board 2. Attributes: - Four visible white mannequins with straight wigs. - Images of pedicure (White), and female (White) being massaged, female having facial treatment (White), two males with haircuts (one Black and the other White). - Board of Black models and different hairstyles in front of hair salon. - Name in red and gold. - Logo has red and gold royal emblem. 3. Settings: - Next to other ethnic stores. 4. Salience: - Big images of two female models with straight hair.	• Crown and royal colours alluding to hair as crown of a women's head. • Black representation. • Black female foregrounded as she is in front of White model. • Afro-hairstyle as undesirable. • Straight hair as desirable.

#3	 *Image #3a*  *Image #3b*	1. <u>Iconography:</u> - Name sign - Posters/images - Fairy lights - Logo 2. <u>Attributes:</u> - Blue frame and red framed door. - Name in blue. - Logo of yellow circle between sketches of female (straight hair) and male. - Blue fairy lights framing hair salon. 3. <u>Settings:</u> - Local neighbourhood 4. <u>Salience:</u> - Large image of White, red-haired model.	• Eye-catching – very colourful. • Elements don't illustrate a cohesive theme. • Straight hair as desirable.
	 *Image #4a*	1. <u>Iconography:</u> - Name sign - Posters/images - Outside board - Logo 2. <u>Attributes:</u> <u>-</u> Name in bright blue. <u>-</u> Two Black (light-skinned) models (male and female).	• Eye-catching. • Light-skin as desirable. • Representation of afro-hairstyles.

#4	 *Image #4b*	- Board of Black models and different hairstyles in front of hair salon. - Male and female hair salon. 3. Settings: - Local neighbourhood. 4. Salience: - Images of both models.	
#5	 *Image #5a*  *Image #5b*	1. Iconography: - Name sign - Posters/images - Outside board - Logo 2. Attributes: - Logo: black and white sketched faces, triangle, Afro European Hairstyle and Beauty Salon. - Brown wooden frame salon. 3. Settings: - Local neighbourhood. - Next to ethnic shop. 4. Salience: Three grey coloured sketches of women on window: two with straight	• Services diverse hair. • Black and white logo suggests diversity. • The two images on the main window display are foregrounded while the afro-styled image is decentred – less emphasis on it. • Straight hair as desirable. • Afro-hairstyle as undesirable.

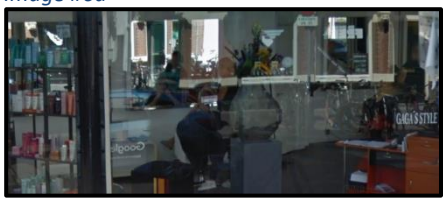
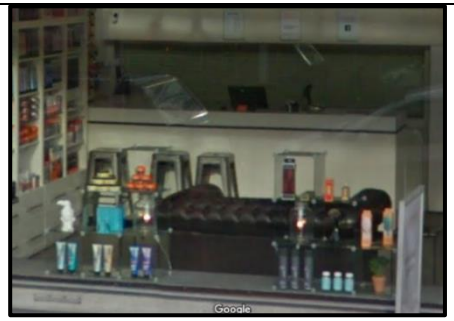
		hairstyles on main salon window and afro-styled woman on the side window.	
#6	 *Image #6a*  *Image #6b*	1. <u>Iconography:</u> - Name sign - Products 2. <u>Attributes:</u> - Salon name is small - Wide, transparent windows 3. <u>Settings:</u> - Corner location 4. <u>Salience:</u> - Products on display	• Central area. • Location garners traffic. • Minimalistic aesthetic. • Simple design.
#7	 *Image #7a* 	1. <u>Iconography:</u> - Name sign 2. <u>Attributes:</u> - Black & white aesthetic. 3. <u>Settings:</u> - Located around shopping goods. 4. <u>Salience:</u> - Name is presented in three different ways.	• Location garners traffic. • Minimalistic aesthetic. • Name is the brand.

	Image #7b		
#8	 *Image #8a*  *Image #8b*	1. <u>Iconography:</u> - Name sign - Products 2. <u>Attributes:</u> - Name on 3D block. - Wide, transparent windows. 3. <u>Settings:</u> - Busy street. 4. <u>Salience:</u> - Lots of products on display (turquoise). - An image of product is medium size and central.	• Location garners traffic. • Central area. • Emphasis on product branding. • Appeasing (warm) product colours. • Basic display.
#9	 *Image #9a*	1. <u>Iconography:</u> - Name sign - Products 2. <u>Attributes:</u> - Name in bold orange letters. 3. <u>Settings:</u> - Central area. 4. <u>Salience:</u>	• Location garners traffic. • Central area. • Emphasis on product branding. • Minimalistic aesthetic.

	 *Image #9b*	- Lots of products on display.	
#10	 *Image #10a*  *Image #10b*	1. <u>Iconography:</u> - Black, white and patterns in name board - Chalk board. - Price/service list. - White and blue vase. 2. <u>Attributes</u>: - Display of products in geometric shaped (glass) ornaments. 3. <u>Settings:</u> - Local neighbourhood 4. <u>Salience</u>: - Five little (A5 sized) cards of images of four White models with straight hair and one card (A4 sized) of Black female model in red dress and afro-styled/curly hair.	• Bohemian aesthetic is associated with unconventional European lifestyle. • The Black model is foregrounded as she is alleviated and bigger in size but there is more representation of the White models and their hair texture. • Straight hair as desirable. • Afro-hairstyle as undesirable.

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Interview Process

Hi, my name is Palesa and I am Media Studies MA student conducting research on the connection between black hair as cultural identity, urban settings and positionality. Thank you for participating in this research. May I please ask you to confirm that I do have your consent to participate in this research interview? May I please ask you to confirm that I have your consent to record this interview?

A. **Research Question:** How is **race** articulated in **urban** Dutch cities through the **imagery** of Black Hair Salons and the **experiences** of Black women living in the Netherlands?

I. **Sub-question 1:** How do black women **connect** their **experiences** of going to black hair salons to their **positionality** in society as racialized subjects?

Interview Questions

1. **Introductory Questions:**

    a) Can you please state your name, surname, level of education, city you live in and age?
    b) Can you please tell me a little more about yourself?

2. **Black Hair & Representation:**

    a) How often do you go to the hair salon?
    b) Do you go to the same hair salon every time or do you go to different hair salons and why do you do so?
    c) Can you describe what your experiences of going to the hair salon in your city or any other cities in the Netherlands? (Positive, negative, stressful, fun, enjoyable?)
    d) Can you explain why it is important for you to go to the hair salon?
    e) Do you think your hair is connected to your cultural identity, if so why?
    f) How do you feel that your hair, as an expression of your cultural identity, is being represented in your city?

g) Can you describe how you feel when you see black hair being represented in the form of black hair salons or black hair product stores in your city?
h) Can you explain why it is important for you to see the representation of black hair salons in your city?

3. Positionality in Society:

a) Can you describe an experience where you felt that you were being discriminated against or treated differently because of your hair?
b) How did this experience make you feel?
c) Can you recall or describe a time that you ever felt pressured or influenced to change hairstyle?
d) How did this experience make you feel?
e) How do you think black hair is perceived within Dutch society in comparison to non-black hair and why?
f) How do you think more representation of black hair salons could influence these perceptions?

4. Closing Questions:

a) Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Appendix F: Hair Chart

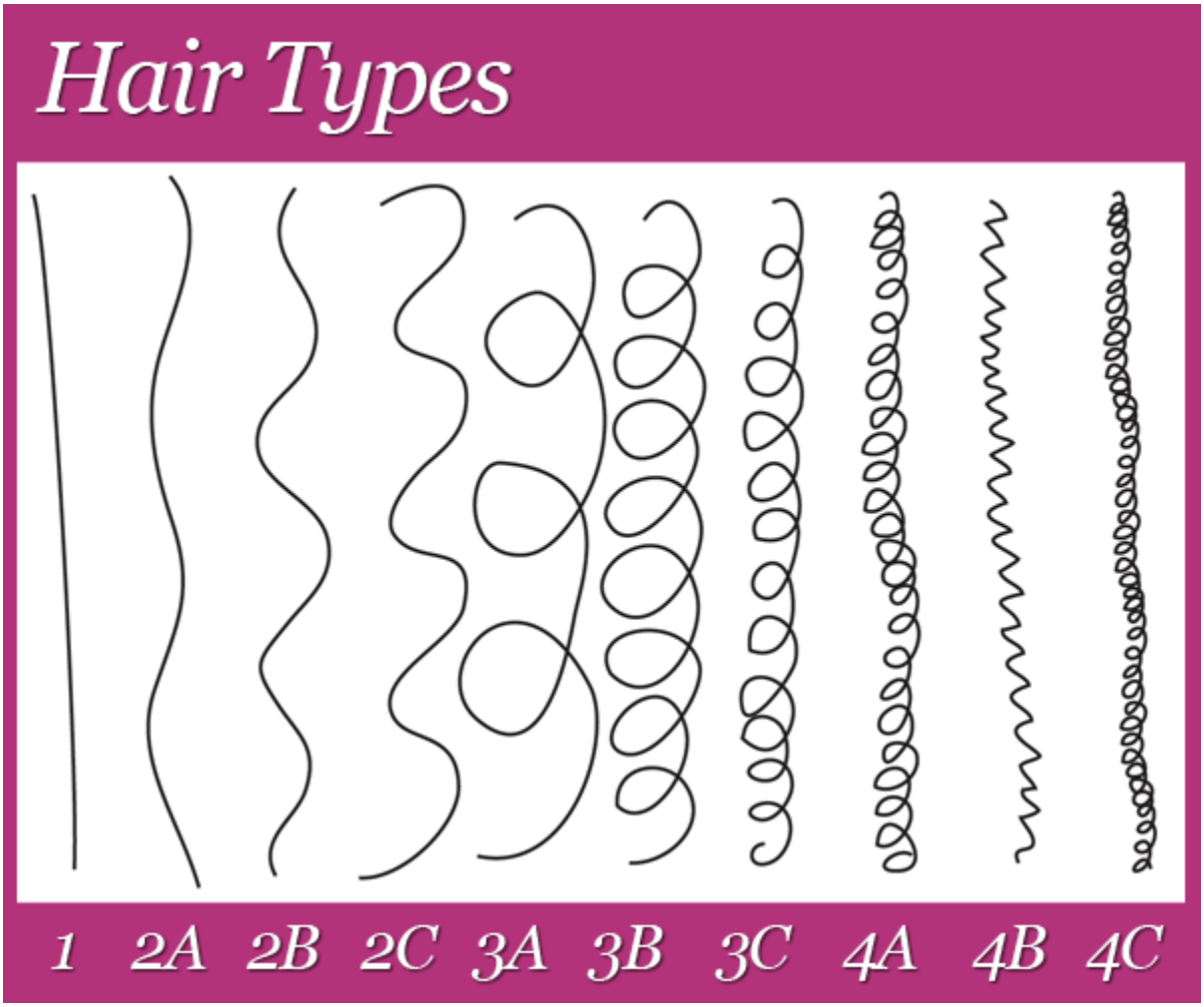


Figure 1: Hair types/hair grades chart. (Source: BGLH Marketplace website)