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AN INVESTIGATION INTO RESUME CONSTRUCTION AND HIRING
DECISIONS: PERCEPTIONS OF BLACK WOMENS NATURAL HAIR

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

This research examined how black women's natural hair was perceived in a professional setting. Expectancy violation theory (EVT) suggests that people create patterns of communication but that these patterns can be disrupted when a person violates the established expectations. The theory was applied to perceptions of black women's natural hair in a professional setting. An experimental survey was used to assess whether participants viewed natural hair in the workplace as a positive or negative expectancy violation. Participants were asked to view a resume and complete Likert-type scale items to evaluate the resume. The items measured the candidate's professionalism, likeability, attractiveness and expertise. The photograph on the resume was manipulated to ensure consistency. The same black female model was used and only her hairstyle was changed. The credentials and name on the resume also remained the same. The study found no difference between perceptions of natural hair and straight hair.

Keywords: expectancy violation, black women, natural hair, workplace, professionalism

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In 2018 the state of New York implemented new guidelines stating that the targeting of people based on their hair—whether at school, work or in public spaces—will be considered racial discrimination (Stowe, 2019). The guidelines specifically mention discrimination against natural hairstyles such as cornrows, dreadlocks, twists, braids, afros and bantu knots. Likewise, California Assembly Judiciary Committee passed a bill known as the C.R.O.W.N. Act (Create a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural Hair) which enforces the expectation that professional dress and grooming in the workplace and schools should not be Eurocentric but should be more inclusive of other cultures (Williams, 2019). For the first time in the United States, black women's natural hair is accepted by the mainstream so much so that legal protection is becoming more common. Policies such as those in New York are encouraging black women to embrace their natural hair.

Black women in America have been challenged throughout history to change their hair to meet societal expectations. In most cases, this refers to a black woman chemically altering her natural hair texture. In the black community, natural hair is often defined as hair that has not been straightened with the use of chemicals but allowed to grow in its naturally curly or kinky pattern. The most common form of chemical straightener is called a relaxer. This process became attractive to black women because it straightens hair for several months at a time, however long term use eventually damages the hair. Despite the chemical damage, relaxers were accepted by women because of the desire to meet expectations. The standard of beauty made black women override their hair's natural state in order to attain mainstream beauty (Patton, 2006).

The last time natural hair was widely popular was in the late 1960s and 70s during the civil rights movement. However, by the early 2000s it was reported that 20-30% of black women in America wore their hair in its natural state (Thompson, 2009). While the popularity of natural hair has gone through phases throughout American history, it is currently trending upwards, and it has become important for black consumers to see natural hair represented in advertisements (NYSCC, 2019). Thus, by 2016 a national survey found that 52% of black women reported wearing their hair in natural styles (Johnson, Godsil, MacFarlane, Tropp & Goff, 2016). In the past, among middle-class America, research indicates that hair that is chemically straightened, braided or cut short is considered more professional (Rosado, 2004), this is still the case. These subdued styles over time have become the expectation of black women in the workforce. Women are beginning to violate these expectations of subdued hairstyles by wearing their natural hair to work, but they are not always met with positive responses.

A theoretical framework that can be used to address this issue of non-verbal communication is Judee Burgoon's expectancy violation theory. This theory originally suggested that individuals create expectations about personal space and that there are occasions when these expectations can be violated (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). Over time the theory was expanded to include other forms of non-verbal communication behaviors such as message comprehension, interpersonal conversation and persuasive discourse (Burgoon, 2016). Expectations are built on social norms as well as established characteristics and when these expectations are violated they produce different communicative effects (Burgoon, 2016). The theory also suggests that not all violations are negative, and that positive expectations are possible (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). Burgoon theorized that positive violations would result in

more favorable communication outcomes and negative violations would produce the opposite (Burgoon & Hale, 2018).

Negative outcomes of black women's hair style expectancy violations have already been reported in mainstream media in the form of discrimination in the workplace (Thompson, 2009). The concern of workplace discrimination based on hair has been brought to the United States Supreme Court when a black woman in Alabama had a job offer rescinded after she refused to cut off her dreadlocks (Stowe, 2019). Even though issues surrounding natural hair has received considerable attention in the media, little research has been done on the perceptions of natural hair in the workplace. Much of the research about natural hair has been qualitative, from the point of view of the women themselves (Thompson, 2009). In fact, there is little research that explores expectancy violation theory in the workplace at all. Therefore, this study aims to use expectancy violation theory to examine violations in the work environment. Specifically, this research will focus on evaluating the communication outcomes when natural hair violates workplace expectancies from the perspectives of others.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

A Brief History of Black Women's Hair

Black women in the United States have had a turbulent history with their natural hair. Natural hair is a term used to describe the way a black woman's hair grows normally. The alternative is to use chemicals to relax the curls and achieve straight hair. Natural hair pre-dates American slavery and can be traced back to Africa (Randle, 2015). The styles black women wore on the African continent would represent an individual's status such as age, religion, ethnic identity, wealth, rank and marital status (Ellington, 2015). Many of the intricate styles worn then are popular among the natural hair community today. Twists, braids, Zulu knots, bantu knots, Nubian knots, and dreadlocks are all worn in modern culture and can be traced back to hairstyles worn by Africans before the slave trade began (Thompson, 2009). During slavery, black women were told for the first time that their hair was not good hair because it wasn't silky and straight like their white masters' hair. After North American slavery was abolished the standards for black women's hair shifted towards a style that could only be achieved with help. It became difficult for women to love their natural selves because their culture and identity was devalued (Thompson, 2009). Black women began to subject themselves to the ideals of beauty that were built by European standards (Jeffries & Jeffries, 2014). In 1905, Madam C.J. Walker developed a hair softener and straightening comb that allowed women to straighten their natural hair (Thompson, 2009). Later, in the 1940s, Jose Calva developed the chemical relaxer which allowed black women to look "presentable" for employment (Ellington, 2015). The relaxer, however, was not a permanent straightening treatment and required black women to apply the chemical several times a year to continue to maintain straight hair.

For nearly three decades after Calva's invention, using relaxers to straighten hair was the norm among black women. In the late 1960s, however, the civil rights movement put an emphasis on black pride, which empowered black women to embrace their natural hair and rebel against white beauty culture (Garrin & Marcketti, 2018). As the black community fought for equal rights, wearing their hair in its natural state became a means of pride and rebellion. During this time natural hairstyles became more mainstream and black women began to change preconceived hair norms (Ellington, 2015). Natural hair became a staple through the 1970s, but its popularity began to dwindle through the '80s and '90s. During the 1980s, the soft or curly perm also known as a Jherri-curl became popular among black women (Persadsingh, 2008). The Jherri curl was a style achieved by first chemically straightening the hair, then a booster was applied, and the hair was wrapped around perm rods. This process reformed the shape of the curls into "S" formations leaving the hair in wet-looking loose curls.

The 2000s, however, have seen a revival of the natural hair movement. Johnson (2009) suggests that black women's hair is no longer a political stance or means of rebellion, it is "just hair." In 2009, comedian Chris Rock produced a documentary titled "Good Hair" after being asked by his young daughter why she didn't have "good hair" (Catsoulis, 2009). Focusing on the history and culture of black women's hair, the documentary talks to black women in the community as well as celebrities about the routines and practices that they participate in to maintain their hair. More importantly, though, it stresses that there is no such thing as "good hair;" it empowers women to love their hair and do what makes them happy and not what others expect of them. Rock's documentary was released at the beginning of the 2000s natural hair movement, and the trend has continued to grow since its release. Following the documentary, Design Essentials, a hair care company, found that the number of women relaxing their natural

hair decreased by 36% in 2011 (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014). In 2011, the organization Curl Girl Collective was founded and in 2014 began hosting the largest natural hair and beauty festival in the world: “Curlfest.” The festival has brought thousands of people to prospect park in Brooklyn, New York, to celebrate the beauty of black women and their natural hair. The festival is evidence that natural hair is currently in its prime. Similar to the 1970s, black women are embracing their natural hair and sharing it with others. There are hundreds of women sharing their experiences through blogs and YouTube channels that are entirely dedicated to their hair routines and styles. More than three-quarters of black consumers have reported that they currently wear their hair in its natural state or have in the past (NYSCC, 2019).

While the natural hair movement has become popular among the black community, it is not as widely accepted in the workplace. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission enforces laws that allow employers to create dress codes that include regulating hair. This means that workplaces can call for “neutral hairstyles” (Abraham, 2018). Neutral hairstyles, however, is an entirely subjective term and allows employers and employees to create their own expectations. In 2007, a black woman was fired from her job at a West Virginia prison because her braids were deemed inappropriate (Thompson, 2009). Similarly, in 2010 the United States Supreme Court refused to review a case in which a black woman was offered a job but had the position rescinded because she refused to cut off her dreadlocks after the employer told her they could become “messy” (Stowe, 2019). In response to cases such as these, the U.S. military and Navy have overturned policies that previously prevented women from wearing dreadlocks, braids and large buns (Abraham, 2018). Policy reform such as this reflect that there is still stigma about natural hair but that society is trying to change these expectations in public spaces, schools, and workplaces.

Expectancy violation theory

A theoretical lens that may be useful in examining black women's natural hair in the workplace is non-verbal expectancy violation theory. This theory, developed by Judee Burgoon in the late 1970s, sought to examine the consequences of physical space being violated during conversational interpersonal interactions (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). Since the theory's original founding Burgoon has extended the expectancy violation theory (EVT) into other forms of nonverbal communication.

Expectancy

Expectancy patterns of communication are developed through interactions with groups and individuals (Burgoon, 1978). When people interact with others they begin to notice patterns of communication. They use the observed patterns to anticipate how future communication interactions should go. These expectancies can be general to a particular group or community but can also be specific to one individual (Burgoon, 1993). EVT suggests that communication expectancies develop from three factors: communicators, relationships and context characteristics. According to Burgoon (1993) *communicators* represents significant features associated with an individual such as “demographics, personality, physical appearance, communication style that lead one to anticipate how another will communicate.” The *relationship* factor includes characteristics that are used to describe the relationships involved in an interaction. Qualities of the existing relationship such as familiarity, liking, attraction, similarity, and status equality can be categorized as relationship characteristics (Burgoon, 1993). *Context* refers to environmental factors like privacy or task orientation. The influence of communicators, relationship, and characteristics in the workplace can be complex. Coworkers may understand a specific communicator, but a change in relationships or context characteristics may alter expectations. Elevating the status or authority of one individual can change an already

established expectancy pattern. The same may be true if a coworker were to violate the privacy of another by sharing information with others at work.

Expectancy violation theory suggests that there are two types of expectancies: predictive and prescriptive (Houser, 2005). Predictive expectancies are the behaviors that are considered typical, so individuals expect to see them, these expectations are developed through cultural stereotypes (Staines & Libby, 1986). In the workplace, predictive expectations are the behaviors that are demonstrated daily, to the point that those behaviors become predictable. Prescriptive expectations suggest that patterns are built based on how people believe behaviors should be carried out (Houser, 2005). Prescriptive expectations in the workplace can be described as behaviors that superiors feel they should see in their employees, not necessarily the behaviors they have already seen. Expectancies serve as a framing device that can be used to define and shape interactions, these allow individuals to plan and adapt for future communication (Burgoon, 1993). Individuals become accustomed to certain expectations that create patterns of communication among almost every person they come in contact with.

Violations

EVT labels any individual participating in communication as an “interactant” but the individual who disrupts or violates a communication pattern is a “violation” (Burgoon, 1978). When a violator disturbs the pattern, they are violating expectations of “reactants.” The reactant then forms new attitudes toward the violator based on the violation committed. Violations can be arousing and distracting, they can turn the attention away from one topic and focus on the violator instead (Burgoon, 1993). While the term “violation” has a negative connotation, the theory suggests that a violation is not always considered negative. “Violation valence” is the negative or positive value that one places on a violation (Griffin, 2011). A positive violation valence is defined as a prescriptive expectation that is surpassed by a violation (Houser, 2005).

In the workplace, this could be experiencing warmth from a co-worker who has previously established themselves as distant and uninterested in making a connection. This person has created a positive violation valence by positively violating the expectation that there would be no interaction at all. When a positive violation occurs, the reactant is hypothesized to shift toward supporting or having a more positive attitude towards the initiator (Campo, Cameron, Brossard & Frazer, 2004). Negative violations, in contrast, are prescriptive expectations that exceed the actual communication interaction (Houser, 2005). If a negative violation occurs reactants can experience negative attitudes towards the violator (Burgoon, 2016).

Reactants not only form evaluations of the violation, but they also have pre-existing attitudes towards the violator themselves (Burgoon, 2016). EVT has defined this violator assessment as communicator reward valence. Communicator reward valence is the attributes a reactant believes a violator brings to an encounter (Griffin, 2011). These valences are the combined sum of positive and negative characteristics. Reactants consider the potential that the violator has to reward or punish them during future interactions.

Propositions

Fundamental terms of the theory were combined to create primary statements, these statements were then coupled with critical assumptions to create these propositions (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). Burgoon, Stern, and Dillman (1995, p. 97) describe these propositions as:

1. Interactants develop expectations about the verbal and nonverbal communication of others.
2. Violations of communication expectations are arousing and distracting, causing an attentional shift to communicator, relationships, and violation characteristics and meanings.
3. Communicator reward valence moderates the interpretation of ambiguous or polysemous communicative behaviors.
4. Communicator reward valence moderates evaluation of communicative behaviors.
5. Violation valences are a function of
--(a) the evaluation of the enacted behavior,

--(b) the direction of the discrepancy between the expected and enacted behavior toward a more favorably or unfavorably valued position, and
--(c) the magnitude of the discrepancy.

Enacted behaviors that are more favorably evaluated than expected behaviors constitute positive violations; enacted that are less favorably evaluated than expected are negative violations.

6. Positive violations produce more favorable outcomes and negative violations produce more unfavorable ones relative to expectancy confirmation.

EVT in the Workplace

Black women's natural hair has made a return to popular culture in the last decade; however, it has not become a popular topic in research. The majority of research involving natural hair focuses on the women and their attitudes connected to their hair. There remains a large gap in the current literature regarding how natural hair is interpreted by observers. This research will attempt to close this gap by providing relevant information for women in the workplace as well as employers. Previous research involving EVT addresses a variety of interpersonal communication topics, but the only research this author could locate that directly applies EVT to workplace situations investigated use of swear words at work (Johnson, 2012). Swearing in the workplace was primarily perceived as positive. The researcher found that when reactants had a positive perception of the violator beforehand they then felt more positively about them after the swearing (Johnson, 2012). They also found a positive association between swearing and positive attitudes when the swearing was seen as appropriate or effective in the conversation. Although Johnsons' research uses EVT in the workplace, it does not directly relate to black women and their appearance in a work environment; however, it provides some insight into investigations of behaviors in the workplace.

Women's Appearance in the Workplace

Although there has not been much research using EVT in the workplace, there is an abundance of literature that examines a woman's appearance in a work environment. Previous research has shown that dress in the workplace influences perceptions of intelligence,

competence, and professionalism (Peluchette & Karl, 2018). Women who are perceived as dressing professionally are often considered to be more intelligent and capable (Glick, Larsen, Johnson & Branstiter, 2005). Netchavea and Rees (2016) found that women choose to adapt their appearance in order to appear more professional at work. Additionally, their research found that women saw makeup and clothing as tools they could use to positively affect perceptions of them in a professional environment. Dress can be a powerful tool for women to express themselves and increase levels of comfort and personal freedom (Reddy-Best & Pedersen, 2015).

A study conducted by the Perception Institute examined explicit and implicit attitudes toward black women's hair. Explicit attitudes were assessed by exposing participants to images of a model with natural hair styles and smooth hairstyles. Participants were then prompted to rate beauty, attractiveness and professionalism on Likert scales (Johnson, Godsil, MacFarlane, Tropp & Goff, 2016). A Hair Implicit Association Test (IAT) was used to assess implicit attitudes towards black women's hair. Participants were shown images of the same model with natural and smooth hairstyles. Participants were asked to associate the images they saw with pleasant and unpleasant words. For this study they hypothesized that fast associations with smooth styles and pleasant words, or rapid association of natural hair with unpleasant words, indicated implicit bias against natural hair (Johnson, Godsil, MacFarlane, Tropp & Goff, 2016). The researchers found that on average white women perceived black women's natural hair as less beautiful, less attractive and less professional than straight hair. They also found that women in the natural hair community and millennials had the most positive attitudes towards natural hair. Although the study found results relating to professionalism, it was not centered on perception of hair in the workplace.

The current study will evaluate some of the same variables without the use of an adapted IAT. The IAT claims that individuals have implicit or unconscious biases that they deny at a conscious level (Dasgupta, Greenwald & Banaji, 2003). These tests have made strong claims about successfully identifying bias, but there have been disagreements about its reliability. Blanton, Klick, Mitchell, Jaccard, Mellers and Tetlock (2009) examined previous research that explored the relationship between implicit bias and discriminatory behavior. The researchers found that IAT scores did not produce strong results when “impact of rater reliability, statistical specifications and/or outliers were taken into account” (p. 567).

Dependent Variables

I argue that black women’s natural hair likely will have implications on two major factors in the workplace: perceptions of their 1) likability and 2) professionalism. Each of these can be divided into two components. Chaiken and Eagly (1983) suggested likability is tied to attractiveness. Attractiveness includes attributes like likable, friendly, approachable, pleasing, modest, warm and unbiased. Attractiveness and likability are commonly linked in research because physical attractiveness has been found to increase likeability (Reysen, 2005). Attractiveness also plays an important role in the initial judgement of others (Ohanian, 1990). Previous research has found that increased physical attractiveness enhances positive attitude changes.

Professionalism is often paired with expertise. Much of the previous research associated with professionalism and women’s appearance in the workplace has been conducted in the medical and nursing fields. Wills, Wilson, Woodcock, Abraham & Gillum (2018) focused on the appearances of nurses in their uniforms and levels of professionalism perceived. Their study found that nurses’ appearance was directly related to how professional others perceived them. Similar to professionalism, expertise is closely tied to perception of attractiveness. While

researching source credibility Ohanian (1990) found that expertise was comprised of knowledge, intelligence and competence and had a positive impact on attitude change.

I posed three research questions arising out of EVT's proposition 6:

RQ1: Will a) likability, b) attractiveness, c) professionalism, and d) expertise be rated equally as positive for women with natural versus straight hair in the workplace?

RQ2: Will natural hair be evaluated as a positively valenced violation in the workplace?

I asked one research question arising out of EVT's proposition 2:

RQ3: Will natural hair elicit more attention to hairstyle than smooth hair?

Finally, based on the assumption that black participants would assign a more positive valence to the expectancy violation of natural hair, we predicted that:

H1: Black participants will have more favorable attitudes towards natural hair than white participants.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The study followed an experimental design. Participants were randomly assigned to read a resume with a photo in one of two conditions: natural hair or straight hair. After viewing the stimulus, participants were directed to a set of survey questions.

Participants

This study utilized Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to obtain participants. MTurk was used to ensure there was a similar number of male and female participants. MTurk will also serve to collect a similar number of responses from different racial groups. The only requirement to participate in the study was that individuals needed to be older than eighteen. There was a total of 227 participants, 116 female and 111 males, but only 203 were useable for final analysis. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 67, they were paid 50 cents as compensation for completing the survey.

Study Design

A pilot study was conducted at to test the measures as well as gauge respondent's awareness of the resumes and photos. Of the 60 participants that were a part of the pilot study only three used the word natural describe the resume photos. The other comments recorded described the natural hair as "curly", "a lot of hair", "textured hair", and "wavy".

Before beginning the survey, participants were provided with a brief introduction to the study as well as an explanation of exempt research document. Following the introduction, participants completed demographic questions including age, race, sex and occupation. Demographic information was asked first because sex and race would serve as independent variables in research questions and hypotheses. Participants were then instructed to review a

resume for an applicant for a receptionist position. They were asked to review the candidate's resume carefully because they would be completing a survey based on what they saw.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. Each condition was operationalized by means of a photograph at the top of the resume. One condition showed a mock resume and headshot featuring a black female model with a natural hairstyle (large afro or small afro). The only change in the second condition was that the model had a straight hairstyle (long straight hair or pixie cut). The same model and resume were used in all photographs. There were 97 participants who were shown the natural hair condition and 107 who were shown the smooth hair. Participants then answered the same set of survey items related to the mock candidate's professionalism, likeability, attractiveness and expertise.

Measures

Professionalism. Professionalism was measured on a modified version of a tool created by Wills, Wilson, Woodcock, Abraham & Gillum (2018). Their original instrument had responses based on a 4-point Likert scale. To remain consistent with the other measures in this study, it was modified to a 7-point Likert scale. The six items on the scale focus on aspects of the headshot with questions such as "I feel the picture showed preparedness," "I feel the picture shows trustworthiness," and "I feel the picture showed confidence". Distractor questions addressing the resume were added so as not to draw too much attention the headshot. This scale had a Cronbach alpha of .79.

Likeability. Reysen's (2005) Likeability scale was used to measure likeability. The tool was modified slightly for a workplace setting by removing one question that asked, "I would like this person as a roommate." This left a total of ten items that were answered on a 7-point Likert

scale (e.g., “This person is friendly” and “I would like this person as a co-worker”). Reysen’s likeability scale had a Cronbach alpha of .90.

Attractiveness. Attractiveness was measured using Ohanian’s (1990) source credibility scale. This measure uses six descriptors that have previously been associated with the attractiveness dimension: attractive, classy, handsome/beautiful, elegant and sexy. Ohanian created the scale to be easily modified for semantic differential scale, Likert scale and staple scale. To maintain consistency with the other scales, this study utilized the Likert scale version of the attractiveness measure. Example items on this scale are: “I feel the candidate is attractive” and “I feel the candidate is elegant.” The attractiveness scale had a Cronbach alpha of .83.

Expertise. Expertise was also measured using Ohanian’s (1990) source credibility scale. The expertise dimension used five descriptors: expert, experienced, knowledgeable, qualified, and skilled. Similar to attractiveness, this study used the Likert scale version of this measure to maintain consistency. Example items are: “I feel the candidate is experienced” and “I feel the candidate is qualified.” This scale had a Cronbach alpha of .88.

Violation. To determine if the model’s hair was evaluated as an expectancy violation two separate questions were asked. One question asked how often participants saw hair similar to the models in the work place. This question was on a 5-point Likert type scale and tried assessing if the styles were a part of the participants communication patterns. The second question was open ended asked, “What did you notice about the candidate’s appearance?”. Responses to this question were used to determine if the natural hair styles violated the expectations more than the straight styles.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This research aimed to explore perception of black women's natural hair in a work place setting. More specifically, the purpose of this study was to explore if natural hair was considered an expectancy violation and if the violation was positive or negative. A total of 97 participants viewed the natural hair condition and 107 participants viewed the smooth hair condition.

RQ1 sought to determine if a) likability b) attractiveness c) professionalism d) expertise were perceived as equally positive for women with natural hair as women with straight hair. Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to examine the difference between the styles. Levene's test for homogeneity of variables indicated equal variance could be assumed for all variables. No statistically significant differences emerged between the two types of hair in terms of likability, attractiveness, professionalism, and expertise. Results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of impression of woman with natural vs smooth hair

Item	Mean	SD	t	p
Likeability			-1.302	.194
Natural	5.25	.97		
Smooth	5.41	.89		
Attractiveness			-1.134	.258
Natural	5.05	1.24		
Smooth	5.22	1.06		
Expertise			-1.325	.187
Natural	5.34	1.09		
Smooth	5.51	.93		
Professionalism			-.937	.350
Natural	4.93	.88		
Smooth	5.03	.83		

*Note all measures on 7-point scale

RQ2 aimed to evaluate if the natural hair would be perceived as a violation as defined by EVT. To evaluate this the participants were asked if they often saw styles similar to the one in the photograph featured on the resume. An independent t test was run and found a 12.5% difference between the natural styles and the smooth styles. (See Table 2.) That is, participants reported seeing natural styles less frequently than the smooth styles in workplaces. While the natural styles were seen less often participants did not rate them as having less expertise, professionalism, likeability, or attractiveness. Though there was a slight difference, 12.5% was not a large enough to consider natural hair as an expectancy violation.

Table 2. Comparison of frequency with natural vs smooth hair

Item	Mean	SD	t	p
Frequency			-4.557	.000
Natural	3.14	.901		
Smooth	3.70	.830		

*Note all measures on 5-point scale

The final research question sought to conclude if natural hair would elicit more attention than the straight hair. Due to an editing error in the Qualtrics survey, the question meant to answer this question was worded incorrectly in the final survey taken by participants. Therefore, RQ3 could not be evaluated.

H1 predicted that race would play a part in the perception of natural hair, with black respondents rating natural hair more positively than white respondents. However, the survey did not gather enough black participants to compare perceptions against other racial groups. White participants made up 60 percent of respondents, 29 percent were Asian but only 2 percent of participants identified as black and 4 percent Hispanic or Latino. H1 could not be tested.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

In recent years there have been several cases of black women being discriminated against because of their hair, so much so that there has been a movement to create laws to stop discrimination based on hair (Stowe, 2019). Black women are fighting to ensure that they get fair treatment despite the style of their hair. This study applied expectancy violation theory (EVT) to a subject that has yet to be researched: evaluations of black women's wearing of natural as opposed to straight hair in the workplace. Results revealed no statistically significance significances between smooth hair and natural curly hair, however it is worth noting that all differences were in the direction suggested by previous literature.

This was a somewhat surprising finding, given the apparently sensed need for legislature such as the C.R.O.W.N. act to discourage discrimination based on hair (Williams, 2019). It contradicted findings by Johnson, Godsil, MacFarlane, Tropp & Goff (2016) which said that the majority of participants showed bias against natural hair. Nevertheless, I take these findings with cautious optimism. It is possible that growing acceptance of natural hair in black women has infiltrated even the workplace such that afros and other natural styles are no longer stigmatized as they were in the past. This possibility is supported by the finding that participants did not consider natural hair to be a violation of their expectations at work. This reflects the growing trends that natural hair is seen more often and is becoming normalized.

Limitations and future research

There are several limitations to this study. One of the goals of this research was to examine how black participants viewed natural hair in comparison to white participants. However, this was impossible due to the low number of black respondents.

Another limitation to the study was that the hair styles were either wigs or had to be photoshopped. Several participants made note that the model's hair looked like a wig in the photos. This may have been a distraction when it came time to answer questions about the model's hair. Additionally, there were many popular natural hair styles that were not used during this research. A future experiment could include more styles such as braids, bantu knots, or dreadlocks. Future research should address these limitations.

Conclusion

This study is significant because of the lack of research about black women's natural hair. There is prior research that focuses on the professional appearance of individuals at work, but hair has not been a priority. Hair is crucial part of identity in the black community and the way others perceive it can have lasting effects. By attempting to identify if natural hair was an expectancy violation, this research contributes to the range of applications of EVT in the workplace.

Women of all races use their hair as a form of self-expression but black women especially feel a sense of identity tied to their hair. If they feel they are judged or treated differently because of their hair it discourages the desire to wear their hair naturally. Natural hair is likely to continue growing in popularity among black women, natural hair is seen more often in pop culture and in day to day life. Black actresses are wearing their natural hair in movies and television shows. Hair is becoming a topic covered in books as well, with a wide variety of children's books that try to inspire black girls from a young age to love their hair and themselves. These changes in society reassures black women that their natural hair can be seen as acceptable and beautiful.

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Institutional Review Board

FWA00000351
IRB00001138
Office of Research
12201 Research Parkway
Orlando, FL 32826-3246

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

September 26, 2019

Dear Cassandra Kroon:

On 9/26/2019, the IRB determined the following submission to be human subjects research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Initial Study, Exempt Category
Title:	An Investigation into Resume Construction and Hiring Decisions
Investigator:	Cassandra Kroon
IRB ID:	STUDY00000754
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made, and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request so that IRB records will be accurate.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or irb@ucf.edu. Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Kamille Chaparro
Designated Reviewer

APPENDIX B: CONDITIONS



CONTACT

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HOBBIES

Reading
Movies
Sports
Pottery

TIFFANY MACDONALD

Receptionist

EDUCATION

[University of Central Florida]
[August 2012] - [May 2015]
Bachelors Interdisciplinary Studies
Hospitality
3.6 GPA

WORK EXPERIENCE

[Administrative Receptionist]
[August 2017]–[Present]
Supervised all aspects of front reception to assist customers and internal colleagues.
Checking in appointments and checking out when complete.
Face to face interaction and contact with diverse personnel.
Maintained cash drawer for client's payments.

[Receptionist/ Staff training]
[February 2016]–[July 2017]
Responsible for guest registration and communication between departments.
Trainer for new and existing front office employees.
Cashier/processing forms of payment.

[Customer Service]
[June 2015]–[January 2016]
Provided support on key accounts
Provided troubleshooting assistance for IT products
Worked with customers to resolve inquiries

SKILLS

Organization
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Problem Solving
Technology
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Survey

Start of Block: Informed Consent

Q5 You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you. Thank you for agreeing to participate in our research. Before you begin, please note that the data you provide may be collected and used by Amazon as per its privacy agreement. This agreement shall be interpreted according to United States law. Your survey responses will remain anonymous. You will be compensated 50 cents for the completion of the survey and it will be distributed through Amazon MTurk. Researchers may withhold compensation due to bots, Christmas tree, or time taken to complete the survey.

The purpose of this study is to examine the resumes of potential new hires and understand attitudes associated with perception.

You will be asked to view a resume and complete a survey. Each participant will be randomly assigned to a different resume before answering the survey questions. The online survey will take approximately X minutes to complete. The data will be stored at the University of Central Florida and will be destroyed when the project is complete. Your participation is completely voluntary, and all answers will be kept confidential. You may discontinue the study at any time. Only the investigators will have access to the information collected during this study.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints please contact Cassandra Kroon, Graduate Students, Mass Communication Program, Nicholson School of Communication at Krooncf@knights.ucf.edu or Dr. Ann Miller, Faculty Supervisor at Ann.Miller@ucf.edu

IRB contact about your rights in this study or to report a complaint: If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or have concerns about the conduct of this study, please contact Institutional Review Board (IRB), University of Central Florida, Office of Research, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901, or email irb@ucf.edu.

Q7 Do you wish to proceed to the survey?

- ☐ Yes, proceed with survey (1)
- ☐ Do NOT proceed with survey (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Q7 = Do NOT proceed with survey

End of Block: Informed Consent

Start of Block: Demogrpahics

Q1 What is your age?

Skip To: End of Survey If Condition: What is your age? Is Less Than 18. Skip To: End of Survey.

Q2 What is your gender?

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)
- ☐ Other (3)
-

Q3 What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ White (1)
- ☐ Black or African American (2)
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- ☐ Asian (4)
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- ☐ Other (6)
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino (7)
-

Q4 What is your occupation?

End of Block: Demogrpahics

Start of Block: Block 11

Q23 You will have 60 seconds to view the resume on the following screen after which you will be asked several questions about the resume.

End of Block: S4

Start of Block: Likeability

Q6 Select how strongly you agree with each statement about the candidate.

	Strongly disagree (15)	Disagree (16)	Somewhat disagree (17)	Neither agree nor disagree (18)	Somewhat agree (19)	Agree (20)	Strongly agree (21)
This person is friendly (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is likeable (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is warm (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is approachable (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would ask this person for advice (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like this person as a coworker (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to be friends with this person (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is physically attractive (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is similar to me (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is knowledgeable (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Likeability

Start of Block: Professionalism

Q8 Select how strongly you agree with each statement about the candidate.

	Strongly disagree (15)	Disagree (16)	Somewhat disagree (17)	Neither agree nor disagree (18)	Somewhat agree (19)	Agree (20)	Strongly agree (21)
I feel the picture shows professionalism (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel the resume shows creativity (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel the picture shows preparedness (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel the resume shows mastery (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel the picture shows trustworthiness (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel the resume shows organization (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel the picture shows confidence (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel the picture shows compassion (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel the picture shows laziness (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Professionalism

Start of Block: Attractiveness and Expertise

Q9 Select how strongly you agree with each statement about the candidate.

	Strongly disagree (22)	Disagree (23)	Somewhat disagree (24)	Neither agree nor disagree (25)	Somewhat agree (26)	Agree (27)	Strongly agree (28)
This person is attractive (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is classy (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is elegant (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is an expert (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is experienced (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is knowledgeable (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is qualified (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is skilled (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Attractiveness and Expertise

Start of Block: Block 7

Q16 What did you notice about the candidates credentials?

Q17 What did you notice about the candidates hair?

Q18 Select how you agree with the following statement.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
How often do you see hair styles similar to this in the workplace? (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q22 Select how you agree with the following statement.

	Extremely inappropriate (40)	Somewhat inappropriate (41)	Neither appropriate nor inappropriate (42)	Somewhat appropriate (43)	Extremely appropriate (44)
Do you feel this hairstyle is appropriate for the workplace? (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Block 7

Start of Block: Debrief

Q11 The responses in this study are de-identified and cannot be linked to you.

Dear Participant;

During this study, you were asked to view a resume then complete a survey. You were told that the purpose of the study was to examine the resumes of potential new hires and understand attitudes associated with perception. The actual purpose of the study was to examine how black women's natural hair is perceived in the workplace. We did not tell you everything about the purpose of the study because we did not want to draw attention to their hair specifically. You are reminded that your original consent document included the following information: Your participation is completely voluntary, all answers will be kept confidential. You may discontinue the study at any time. If you have any concerns about your participation or the data you provided

in light of this disclosure, please discuss this with us. We will be happy to provide any information we can to help answer questions you have about this study. Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints or think the research has hurt you: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints please contact Cassandra Kroon, Graduate Students, Mass Communication Program, Nicholson School of Communication at Krooncf@knights.ucf.edu or Dr. Ann Miller, Faculty Supervisor at Ann.Miller@ucf.edu IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact the Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901. Please again accept our appreciation for your participation in this study.

- ☐ Extremely happy (4)
- ☐ Moderately happy (5)
- ☐ Slightly happy (6)
- ☐ Neither happy nor unhappy (7)
- ☐ Slightly unhappy (8)
- ☐ Moderately unhappy (9)
- ☐ Extremely unhappy (10)

End of Block: Debrief

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