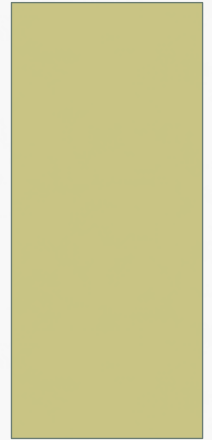


**SITUATING DESIRE IN SHIFTING
YOUTH IDENTIFICATIONS IN
SOUTH AFRICA**

EXAMINING BEAUTY AND ACCENT



INTRODUCTION

- To examine how *desire* works in accounts of young South African women talking about beauty and accent
- Change? Iteration? Reproduction?
- Cultural/ideological dupe? False consciousness?
- Where identification “promises the fulfilment of desire, reason cannot compete” (Janks, 2002, p. 10).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Desire: “the force that both enables and limits human subjectivity and action” (Kulick, 2003, p. 124).
- Identification: “would compel research to decisively shift the ground of inquiry from identity categories to culturally grounded semiotic practices” (Kulick, 2003, p.123).
- Ideology: “ideology now operates in a more cynical way with an additional layer of surplus enjoyment which holds us to it when we know we are weaving it”; “it is the production of the problem that has to be unravelled” (Parker, 2002, p17).

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HAIR AND RACE

- R: I've been here 13 years of my life and most of the colour was white. And that's how I got to be like, I can try and be friends with the white people even when it was back then I remember now that even though they were white and I was coloured I still couldn't fit in with the white people...even if I grew up with them it was always she's coloured, she doesn't fit our expectations, we can't be friends with her. And it was like...and with the whole hair story, thank goodness they introduced GHD (straightner) for us coloured girls, cos I have very coloured hair when it goes "home" and stuff...
- T: ja you do...
- N: goes home... [laughter]
- T: goes back to its roots
- R: and then the thing is I would get teased for that, because I didn't have their hair and now that we have GHDs its like, now I can straighten my hair and everybody's like wow your hair looks nice like that, its like, now I fit in because now I fit in with you guys, kind of thing.

HAIR AND RACE

- You know when I die, and I'm going to ask god why in the world he gave black people such hair. Like I swear I was livid, I was livid, I was really angry and on the verge of tears and I was like, I don't understand why we have such hair. Cos its, honestly really unfair that you know, that you see these black women trying to put bonding in, and I do it as well because I wanna, I want to fit in, I want to have hair like Roxanne, you know like the girls in our school who shake their hair, some people are annoying when they do that, they shake their hair and they move it to the side, and I can't do that, cos I'm forced to relax it, its not the most expensive hair to maintain because you can do anything with it, but it's the most taxing, like it takes so much time to do it. So that's why, you know, you get your GHDs and I was like **thank goodness for human hair!** And like yes! I can do bonding! And look just like you guys, and my mother hates it, she thinks its...[...]

HAIR AND RACE

- *The people who have nice hair, and some people might say its not cos of that, its cos its in fashion but subconsciously the truth is it's because we've been told, that we need to look a certain way to be beautiful, we get women from America, who are not even pure black, they have some white in them, they have gorgeous hair, long hair, like Beyonce and Queen Latifa and all of them they have like almost coloured hair you know? And we have pure African hair and you know, we want to be like them, because they are closer to the white people who've got stunning hair, and can do whatever they want with it, and we also want to be like that.*

BEAUTY, RACE AND GENDER

- “a matter of *doing* , and thus its effects are not based on inherent attributes but rather the performative reiteration or citation of an ideological norm around racial categories” (Tate, 2007, p. 308).
- Identification and disidentification (Tate, 2007).
- Women characterised as completely free agents cannot account for why the resulting valued “look” is so similar – hairless body, slim waist, firm buttocks, etc.[we could add, straight, glossy hair] (Gill, 2003, p.104).

ACCENT AND RACE

- *Well yes it is, like, um, sometimes, like, obviously 'cuz Mark's family is colored,*
- *they'll be like, or my boyfriend's family's colored, there'll be things that always*
- *that like some of his family, um, speaks and then, his accent will kind of like*
- *change, like in the way that he talks, and then, like, or if he's on the phone*
- *here, then I'll be like "Well don't talk like that because that's not actually*
- *how you talk.*

ACCENT AND RACE

Natalie: I rate it's much better to speak English, 'cuz I remember, it's not only white people, or colored people that think we just black, because, um, when you go to Durban, when I was in Durban the black people there, which they predominantly Zulu, they expecting me to speak Zulu and I don't understand, I can't speak, I can try and speak it, I understand it, like, that's just not my language and they expect me, and the minute you speak English they think that you [are] being arrogant.

Tami: Or you're a snob . . . like Nats, 'cuz me and Nats would be considered part of the upper-class black people so . . .

Natalie: 'Cuz of the way we speak . . .

Tami: 'Cuz of the way we speak, and because we just don't take nonsense from anyone, including, like, our own black people . . . and . . .

Natalie: Like, right now I know, for one, the grade 9s look at me and Tami and the other black girls and think why are you guys speaking like that? Like, we actually really irritate them because of our accent, I remember the one time, I was saying something to Dudu [another girl] and they got so frustrated, like, "Oh my god, I can't believe that she's speaking like that!" And then they blocked their nose and they started speaking like that . . .

Lele: Like, you wouldn't want, like, you dating a black guy . . .

Thatho: I don't think I like where that's going . . .

Lele: But, like, honestly, I'm not going to step down on this, I don't want a black guy who can't, who won't be able to speak English properly. I need to go somewhere with you, and interact with other people and you can hold a conversation. And speak properly . . . you know?

Thatho: Why does it have to be English? His first language isn't English . . .?

Lele: It's not, ja . . .

Thatho: Society has placed something in our minds, that if you don't know how to speak English, then you are illiterate, you don't know how to . . .

Lele: But it goes with education. Hence, I want a guy who is educated. It indicates your level of education; first of all you can't go through . . ., if you went through high school, whether multiracial high school or purely black high school, you went to varsity and then you can't speak an ounce of English? There's something wrong. So they have to be able to hold a conversation and speak properly. I'm not saying twang, no, I'm not saying that (laughter) . . . just speak properly. You don't mind?

Thatho: (laughter) Okay, wait—no, I do agree with her. . . . I know I'd also want to interact with high-profile people and I wouldn't want my boyfriend, husband, or whatever to be there and embarrass himself you know, but why should it be a problem if a black person does not know how to speak English? And what are we doing about it to actually ensure that these people know how to speak English?

CONCLUSION

- Desire as producing “certain kinds of objects and [barring] others from the field of social production” (Butler, 1997, p.25).