

Spatial Realities of Salon Cultures Among Female Undergraduates of The University of Ibadan, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

University life reinforces the process of self-discovery and self-expression of students, which takes place across spaces within and outside the campus. The hairdressing salon is a cultural site and sphere of socialization where part of students' lives are also nurtured, yet it is largely ignored in scholarship. By inquiring into salon cultures, particularly underexplored dimensions of the transformations of salons into spaces transcending beautification purposes, this study questions how emerging salon cultures influence lifestyles and personalities of undergraduate students, representing the growing population of adolescents to womanhood. The study is organized as a qualitative research, supported by the Habermasian theory of the public sphere to provide a platform for discussing spatial realities of salons. The study cogently contributes to the hair discourse as central to the socialisation of girls and women in Nigerian cultural studies. By exploring the social forces and factors that female undergraduate students of University of Ibadan contend with while creating identities for themselves in the hair salon, wider sociological concerns discussed established their spatial awareness and cognition, with a conclusion that that how salon cultures are developed, deployed and imbibed could either protect or endanger the future of female students.

Keywords: Salon culture, Spatial realities, Undergraduate, Gender, Public sphere

Word count: 194

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of hair has been pointed out in numerous studies. Described as “our most 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 (1988:381) locate the significance of hair in a ‘self-presentation’ frame, and as a means of asserting an identity within a larger social context. Cooper (1971) has argued that hair serves as a ‘conveniently pliable form of sexual adornment and attraction’, and ‘an easily controllable variable to denote status, set fashion, or serve as a badge’ (cited in Soulliere, 1997: 41). Those who study the arts and aesthetics of peoples of African origin have always paid attention to their hairdos; as observed by Sieber and Herreman (2000: 56): who assert that “...all African and African American hairstyles, historical or modern, have a major aesthetic component...” Other scholars have pointed to the spiritual dimensions of hairstyles among Africans. In many African cultures, “The head is regarded as the seat of power” Negri (1964: 15). Likewise for Oti and Ayeni (2013: 26) “head occupies a pre-eminent place compare[d] with other parts of the body; so too, the hair that covers the head”. This perhaps informs the works of photographer, J.D. ‘Okhai Ojeikere (2014) who catalogued Nigerian hairstyles, and displayed them in contexts of social practice, such as important outings and festivals and even as ordinary day-to-day adornment. What is clear from the discussion so far is a focus on hairstyles as cultural indicators in traditional African societies. Hairstyling does not exist in a vacuum. How black women wear their hair is a major subject of racial debate, especially in the postcolonial era where international media and global beauty pageants have created a standard of beauty for women everywhere thereby reinforcing the question of ‘black beauty versus white beauty’ (see Patton, 2006). Related issues exist across Africa and indeed in Nigeria which is the focus of this paper.

While not ignoring how literature documents the traditional symbolism of African hairstyles and the aesthetics of female hair in Nigeria, this paper proposes that a more sociological, or even ethnographic, approach that presents the process of hairstyling and the wearing of hairdos within the context of salon culture can offer insights not available from other modes of investigation and discourses. There is more than aesthetic and cultural symbolism involved in hairstyling. People visit salons, not only to have their hair ‘made’, but for other hitherto underexplored purposes which regard hairstyling as a subculture, and the salons as communities with roving cast of members. The paper hereby examines salon culture among female undergraduates of the University of Ibadan in the understanding that the practices and discourses that take place within this gendered space can provide insights into how young university students who will become elite women in the future, create identities for themselves in the midst of various social factors, ranging from the personal to the political. Following this section are four additional sections: section II provides a background to salon culture; section III discusses salon culture among female undergraduates of the University of Ibadan; section IV presents spatial realities of modern salons cultures and section V is conclusion.

Salon Culture

There have been studies on hairdressing in Nigeria prior to this study. Ogunwale (1972) looks at traditional hairdressing among the Yoruba; describing hairdressing as an important form of cultural adornment and hair-making a prominent female occupation, he also describes some of the styles of plaiting, explaining their names, with less emphasis on deeper social issues. Lawal (1985) takes the hair analysis deeper by looking at the hermeneutics of the head and hairstyles in Yoruba culture. His understanding of the Yoruba concept of 'ori' is worked into his analysis of the symbolism that surrounds how both the head and hair are viewed by people in the society. In Nigerian cultural history as in in most African communities, hairdressing took place within family compounds and domestic spheres, however, recent commercialization of hairdressing necessitated a creation of specialized locations called 'salon'. This raises the question of what a salon is. Is it a commercial place; part of the public sphere; a private social gathering or all of these at once? While it may be said that hairdressing salons are private business centers Augis (2014) argues that they are constituted as 'internal publics' (possibly a secluded space within the public sphere), since much more than just economic transactions revolving around hair takes place in them. One may therefore describe the salon as a private social gathering, a commercial place, and a part of the public sphere.

The 21st century salon in Nigeria is now more popular as a place where people go to beautify themselves, unlike in 17th century Europe, (for instance in France) where the salon used to be a literary gathering; a sanctuary for conversation; the haven of intellectuals, serving as the venue for literary and philosophical gatherings for discourse away from the prying eye of authority, with the salonist acting as gatekeeper. In this regard, figures such as Madame de la Stael come to mind. Similarly, compared with the traditional spaces for hair grooming in traditional African communities, modern salons share and maintain the characteristic of providing a space for interaction between professional hair groomers and their clients, although the objectives, topics and modes of interaction are largely dissimilar. For both traditional and modern women, salons are centres for self-beautification and renewal of self-worth. While the salon in the 21st century Nigeria has been tagged with hairdressing and general beautification, they (salon) retain their discursive facilities and emotional labor. As was noted by Cowen et al. (1979) that there is a tendency for clients to share personal problems with their hairdressers. Hairstylists are engaged, not only to style hair but also as confidants, friends, and in some cases, therapists. Eayrs (1993) also emphasizes that hair stylists act as friends, confidants, caregivers and risk-bearers in addition to performing their hairstyling duties. Likewise, Gimlin (1996), points at the "emotion work" of hairstylists which involves listening to clients' personal stories and problems.

Salon culture may be examined from significant perspectives. The most popular is the bonding culture, where women create bonds and form friendships with each other (Black, 2004). These relationships emerge out of "women's talk (Alexander, 2003) and touch (Furman, 1997) which are both implicated in the care work performed by women beauty workers. Those with similar backgrounds, experiences and outlook on life often become closely knit at salons. This work identifies two other perspectives which are noteworthy: First is the affirmation or approval culture where women in the hair salon negotiate their relationships with one another by expressing or denying a sense of beauty expertise. The second is the class culture, where women develop caucuses based on factors including

economic status, sexual orientation and religious inclination among others. These three perspectives are key to discussion of salon culture in contemporary societies as they are confluent of concocting and entrenching public opinions. Also, earlier discussions on nature of salons as private, yet public spheres necessitate the following theoretical exploration based on Habermas' Public Sphere Theory.

Following the Habermasian Public Sphere theory, the public sphere is a domain of social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed. Access to the public sphere is open in principle to all citizens from different places to come together and discuss issues. According to Habermas (1964: 49),

A portion of the public sphere is constituted in every conversation in which private persons come together to form a public. Citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion; thus with the guarantee that they may assemble and unite freely, and express and publicize their opinions freely.

The salon, which also allows for such, encourages a person to form opinion and talk about diverse issues which sometimes involve personal talks. Khaldi (2010: 268) further explains Habermas' idea, arguing that;

The public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals convene to form a public body, regardless of whether these individuals assemble in salons, coffeehouses, clubs, reading and language societies, lending libraries, lecture halls, journals or newspapers. The salon is set apart from all other institutions by its conspicuously feminine character. The nature of the salon is thus crucial to women's endeavors to participate in the public sphere.

Inferences can be drawn from the above that: the hairdressing salon can be conceptualized as a site located within Habermas' notion of the public sphere and the salon as a space where the kind of open discursive exchange which Habermas says is characteristic of the public sphere takes place among women. Since the subjects of this study are undergraduates of the University of Ibadan who patronize salons, the notion of the public sphere becomes even more appropriate; for wherever undergraduate females meet, it can be expected that they would engage in discourses. This among other practices constitute the public sphere's engagement with salon culture.

Salon Culture among Female Undergraduates of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria

The population of this study covers female undergraduates of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria who patronize hairdressing salons either to have their hair made and do other bodywork and/or to take part in the interactions that go on in the salons. However, the study sample is drawn from population is limited to four salons which these students patronize, two on campus and the other two in the Agbowo area, the most popular, closest and busiest community around campus. The campus salons are 'Mummy Joy Beauty Salon' in Queen Idia Hall and 'Zion Beauty Salon' in Queen Elizabeth II Hall. The Agbowo area salons are 'Mummy Esther Salon' which is an open-air salon near the Christ Apostolic Church, Akintoba Street, Agbowo and 'Pablo's House of Beauty salon' located at Akinfala Street,

along Agbowo Express. The off-campus salons are included in order to compare data with its on-campus counterparts. The two off-campus salons have hairdressers who are specialists in braids and traditional styles, while the two on-campus salons specialize in Western styles that are in vogue. Given the topic, focus and aims of this study, qualitative method of data collection best enables the collection of the kind of rich and complex data that will illuminate the world of undergraduate salon culture, providing insights into the setting of the salons as places of social interaction on many levels. Following preliminary survey and deciding on the salons suitable for the research, the salon owners were approached for permission to use their places of business as sites for gathering data over a period of four months. For ethical reasons, the salon owners needed to understand the research objectives and the extent of 'intrusion' so that they could make an informed decision. Data were generated mainly by participant observation, supported by key-informant interviews conducted with the salon owners selected for the study, and with twenty students sampled from the undergraduates (clients) of the four salons, five from each salon selected. To ensure 'reliability and validity, triangulation – a technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources – was used in sourcing data from respondents during the research. Participant observation was very suitable for the research, as it allowed for entering the world of stylists and their clients and studying them at close range. It exposed other information about the salon interaction that would normally not occur to the clients who may see themselves simply as customers to be serviced. Participant observation also created an intimate space to become more involved in the clients' different life situations; sharing problems from which researchers could relate with the professionals and their clients from different angles.

The Key informant interviews provided detailed, qualitative information which could be either informally or more formally structured and has been used extensively because of its efficiency. Female undergraduates between the ages of 16 and 25 were selected for structured interview and informal one-on-one conversations were held with the students as they waited to be attended to at the salon. The responses of the respondents were also captured via voice recording and note taking.

The hair salon at Queen Idia hall is a big place located at Block C owned by a married woman called Mummy Joy. Her name and phone number is also written at the door net of her shop. *Mummy Joysco oni Zobo* as she is popularly called by the students, appears to be a very friendly, nice and experienced woman. She has a welcoming reception and interacts freely with the students. She does other beauty work such as pedicure and manicure. She is also famous for making and selling snacks and Zobo drinks to students. She makes different hairstyles which are in vogue and sometimes tells the students what hairstyles to make and what would fit them. Owing to her attributes, students freely discuss personal issues and take to her advice as regards certain issues. She usually has one experience or the other to share with the students, which makes her place lively. Students clients sometimes just go there to share gists and hear her stories. The salon has comfortable chairs which could keep the student client relaxed while waiting to be attended to and/or conversing. See Plate 1

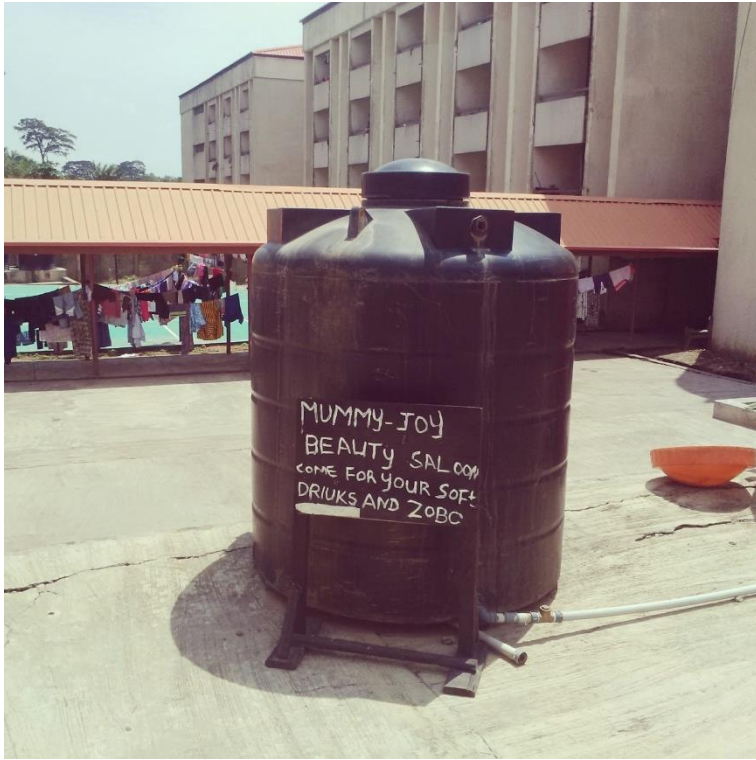


Plate 1: Signpost at Queen Idia Hall

Source: Authors' Original fieldwork 2016

Plate 2. Mummy Joy making the hair of a student



Source: Authors' original fieldwork 2016

The picture above shows Mummy Joy making hair of a student. The style is called twisted boom. It is one of the hairstyles in vogue and this is the 10th client she made this particular hairstyle for at the salon during the research.

The hair salon at Queen Elizabeth Hall was the second observed. Located behind the popular and only provisions store in the hall, it is owned by a woman named Mrs Olayiwola; an educated and devout Christian in her late 30's. Her salon is a small place named Zion Beauty Salon. She sells extensions and other hair products. She does retouch, washing, setting, hair fixing, weaving, 'Ghana'weaving, braiding, pedicure and manicure but specializes in fixing of hair which is what most students prefer her making for them. Undergraduate students who patronize her are mostly 100 and 200 levels. Her salon is not usually a busy one because many of the students in that hall make hair for one another. Students who patronize her mostly talk about their school work, their lecturers and classmates. Her hair charges are moderate. She advises her clients to concentrate on their schoolwork and 'leave boys' matter alone and therefore discourages them from having boyfriends at that stage of their lives. There was an instance of a student who came to tell her friend about a boy classmate who liked her and bought her gifts and asked for her opinion but before she could say anything, Mrs Olayiwola interfered and told them not to accept gifts from boys at this stage as it was a way of luring girls to bed. She even brought out her Bible and read some verses to them to stay holy and clean as that is what is expected of them as children of God.

Some students go to make hair on credit at her salon if they don't have money to pay at the moment, and they pay her later. She also makes free hair once in a while to regular clients as a way of encouraging them to patronize her always, and this has had positive impact on her business as the students look forward to when their hair would be done for free. Hair making is the major activity at Zion Beauty Salon and Mrs Olayiwola makes sure the students are satisfied with their appearance whenever they visit the salon.

Plate 3: View of Zion Beauty salon at Queen Elizabeth Hall



Source: Authors' original fieldwork 2016

Plate 4: Hair Fixing at Zion Beauty Salon



Source: Authors' original fieldwork 2016

The picture above shows one of the fixings done by Mrs Olayiwola at her salon. This hairstyle is called side-parting with the student's natural hair weaved into 'Brazilian extension'. The natural hair is only showing slightly at the top, the Brazilian hair dominates

because she wants more of the Brazilian hair to show. This style of fixing Brazilian hair is one of the choices most preferred by students.

The off-campus hair salon which is located beside Christ Apostolic Church Akintoba Street, Agbowo is an open place under a tree close to the road. The owner of the place is called Mummy Esther also married and in her early 30's. She calls her small space 'Mummy Esther Salon'. She has different competitors, each person to her respective space and they lobby for customers. They specialize in all kinds of hairstyles and there are different activities happening on that road. There is a pedicure and manicure space, a nail polish space, a food vendor space, a herb seller space, a shoe dealer space and a clothes dealer's space. Mummy Esther and a few other open salon owners specialize in just hair making. Her space is not conducive and is very small, but students patronize her because she is friendly and good at hair making. Clients sometimes visit her place for hair making because it is a very good place to observe street life with lots of information sharing going on between the people who frequent the place. Different kinds of people patronize her, and various conversations are held there on issues relating to fashion, latest hairstyles, sex, marriage, entertainment and politics. Although hair groomers lobby for customers who pass by on the street, Mummy Esther usually receives calls from her clients to fix date and time when she would be less busy to make their hair due to her busy schedule. Her place is a full-time commercial place and there is never a dull moment there. Hawkers stop by to advertise their products such as hair cream for natural hair growth, hair relaxers to soften the hair and other lady care products. Mummy Esther sells hair attachments to her clients at wholesale price and female undergraduate students residing off campus towards Orita Agbowo area patronize her and prefer making hair at her space because of her good customer relations and 'the gist' they get from her. They do not mind the openness of her space.

Plate 5: view of Mummy Esther's place



Source: Authors' original fieldwork 2016

Shown above is Mummy Esther at her space making braids for an undergraduate student. She does different trending hairstyle for students and also wears the hairstyles herself too. She is a specialist in a trending hairstyle made with two differently coloured attachments, as seen in this picture. This attachment mixture and hair braiding is very popular with students.

Plate 6: view of Ghana weaving hairstyle done by Mummy Esther



Source: Authors' original fieldwork 2016

The hairstyle above is *Suku* Ghana weaving made by Mummy Esther for an undergraduate student. *Suku* is one of the traditional hairstyles but this particular *suku* is the modernized version made with the addition of attachments, in contrast to the ordinary *suku* which is made with natural hair.

The second off campus salon that was used for this research is Pablo's House of Beauty Salon located at Akinfala Street, along Agbowo Express. It is owned by a young man nicknamed Pablo who has three hairstylists who work for him at the salon, one of whom is a male and the other two females. The salon has a glass entrance, with the salon's name on top of it in a signpost that shows pictures of the services rendered in the salon. It is accessible from the road. On entering the salon, one sees a receptionist with a chair and desk directly to the right who welcomes clients and receives money for the services rendered to them. She also has a book where the hairstylists sign when they resume and close for the day. There is a price list pasted close to the left of the mirror. There is also an inner room where hair cut is done for those who want certain hairstyles like 'Anita Baker' and any other short haircuts. It is a big, colourful and beautiful salon where all kinds of beauty work such as hair making, nail polishing, pedicure, manicure, makeup and 'gele' tying are done. Below is a picture showing the outside view of Pablo's beauty salon.

Plate 7: Outside view of Pablo's Beauty Salon



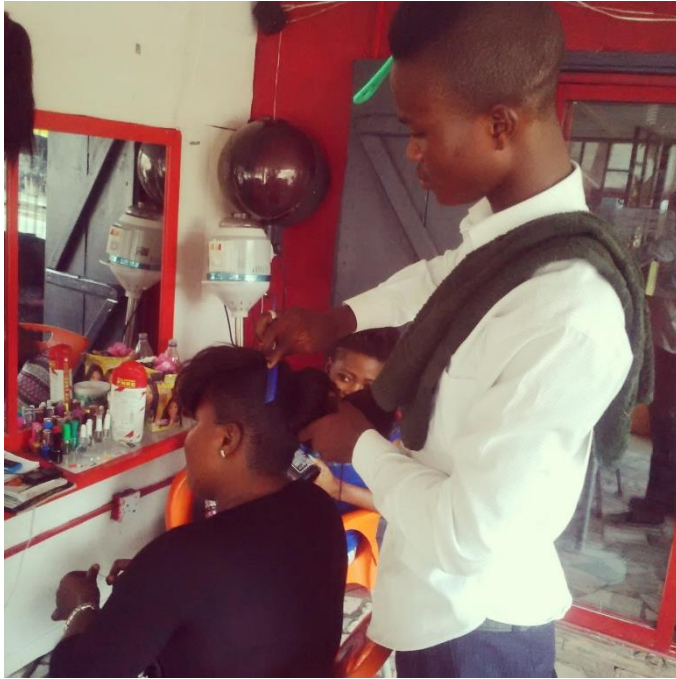
Source: Original fieldwork 2016

There is a waiting area to the right where chairs are set for clients to sit and magazines are available to customers for selection of hairstyles. The salon floor is tiled. It is a well-equipped place with a flat screen television, perm rods, Velcro rollers, hair dryer, curling iron, hair spray, hair washing sinks, air conditioner and comfortable chairs. The stylists are assigned to different sections. The male stylist is assigned to hair making while one of the females is assigned to nail polishing, pedicure and manicure and the third specializes in makeup and gele tying. The salon is usually busy with lots of activities. The hair and other services rendered there are quite expensive, but the environment is very comfortable. They make different voguish hairstyles like hair bonding, lace wig which is done with Brazilian or Cambodian hair, fringe hairdo, 'Rihanna' cut, braids, twisting, Anita Baker parking gel, colouring of hair, and many other styles. Undergraduate students who patronize this salon are a set of elegant students who want to socialize with fashionable and highly stylish people and they want professionals to attend to their beauty work. The stylists work as a team, often helping each other when less busy by offering to do the hair of waiting clients or holding the edge of the gele while it is being tied by the gele specialist. The hairstylists usually dress professionally in neat and stylish clothing.

Clients that come to the salon are mostly females from 21 years and above. They engage in various discussions mostly about fashion, hairstyles, hair products, designer shoes and

clothes, ‘boys talk’, education and the latest trend on social media. The stylists are friendly and get along easily with the customers.

Plate 8: Kola the male stylist making hair for client at Pablo Beauty Salon



Source: Authors' original fieldwork 2016

The picture above shows the male stylist at Pablo's Salon busy with a client's hair. The hairstyle is called 'parking gel with fringe' using a Cambodian weave-on extension gelled with natural hair. The client is an undergraduate student of the University of Ibadan who stays off campus and a regular customer at the salon. She prefers to make her hair at this salon because the environment is comfortable, and she gets to meet people who she refers as 'classy' and fashion-oriented with whom she can discuss and mingle with.

Spatial realities of modern salons

A major point of departure from the traditional salon setting is that modern salons now provide an avenue for creating and redefining self-image which transcends self-adornment into psychological issues. It is also worthy to note that the ancient Western conception of salons, where people meet up for discussions is beginning to resurface with women who now escape to salons for secondary purpose of freedom of expression and for more extensive discussion of personal and social issues which have far reaching effects, as against the primary purpose of self-adornment.

Considering how patriarchy has been argued to restrict women's access to space and participation in the public sphere, feminism furnishes an important perspective for looking at gendered spaces. Men are in control of power and women cannot reach certain levels in the society because of their gender. But to conceive of space as gendered requires that we look at those permissions and restrictions that are placed on men and women's access to certain

spheres of cultural life. For instance, many feminists and other scholars, using historical evidence, have questioned the idea of the kitchen as the woman's place (van Allen, 1972; Denzer, 1994). This is one case where access is seen as disempowering, perhaps because women were not the ones who assigned themselves to the kitchen in the first place, and perhaps because the work done by women in the kitchen is supposed to place them in a subservient position to men. Feminists have fought for women to have access to more space than the private spheres of the kitchen and the bedroom. However, women's access to the public sphere is not always limited in this way in every culture. For instance, in Yoruba culture, the public sphere of the marketplace is administered by a woman, as can be seen in the title of the Iyalaja (Mother of the Market). The Yoruba marketplace is, therefore, a recognizable sphere teeming with female agency (Olajubu, 2003; Oyewumi, 2011). This matter of female agency is important in feminism. And it is from this feminist concern for female empowerment and agency that the salon is theorized in this study as a gendered sphere.

Noting equally that undergraduate life is a special phase in the development of females, these transformations open up a psycho-social dimension to the discourse in two ways; first, is the spatial awareness dimension where the undergraduate, usually adolescents get self-conscious in space. Spatial awareness here also involves understanding the relationship of objects including salon owners, stylists, apprentices and other clients at the salon. The second is the special cognition dimension which is largely connected with how people acquire, interpret and use their spatial knowledge to fit into other spaces. The implication of both dimensions is that the physical space a person creates is key to their development through various phases of life. The salon has always been recognized for its sociological significance, and salon culture has been studied and theorized by authors who conceive of this site as a place for identity-construction, gender-making, gender-deconstruction and social discourses. This study has provided a much needed avenue for looking at the ways in which Nigerian women are able to create social spaces where they can do things they deem important to them. It has focused an underexplored aspect of salon culture in Nigerian cultural studies. By presenting salons as a unique site for watching female undergraduates grapple with a number of issues and factors relating to their social existence, it offers us a window into seeing these young women build an identity for themselves within the means available to them for doing so, as well as how they create the social networks of in-groups and out-groups which are a steppingstone to the future.

The results of this study would be considered using the three major salon cultures; bonding culture, the culture of affirmation or approval and class culture identified in the earlier section. Data generated from a cross section of female undergraduate students of University of Ibadan on hair care and salon culture show that: there are different ways to take proper care of the hair; hair care routines differ according to an individual's culture and the physical characteristics of one's hair and the hair care services offered in salons. It was found that the choice of hairstyle a student opts for is based on certain factors including social media. The hairstyles and weave-ons worn by foreign celebrities seen on social media are widely accepted and viewed as the best and most beautiful while traditional hairstyles are only seen as meant for cultural festivals. Some students go to the extent of expending a large chunk of their pocket money to get these expensive weave-ons seen on foreign celebrities. Some even go to any extent to get them in order to be seen as fashionable and classy. It was discovered in this research that the undergraduates rarely wear traditional hairstyles and only few are

comfortable with that style. The students prefer adding attachments, Cambodian and Brazilian weave-on to their natural hair to make it longer as their natural hair is short, devoid of softness. They also prefer the texture of these added weave-ons because it is silky. This could be attributed to several themes which appear quite often in hair care beauty magazines suggesting the inferiority of black female hair texture to relaxed or foreign straight hair.

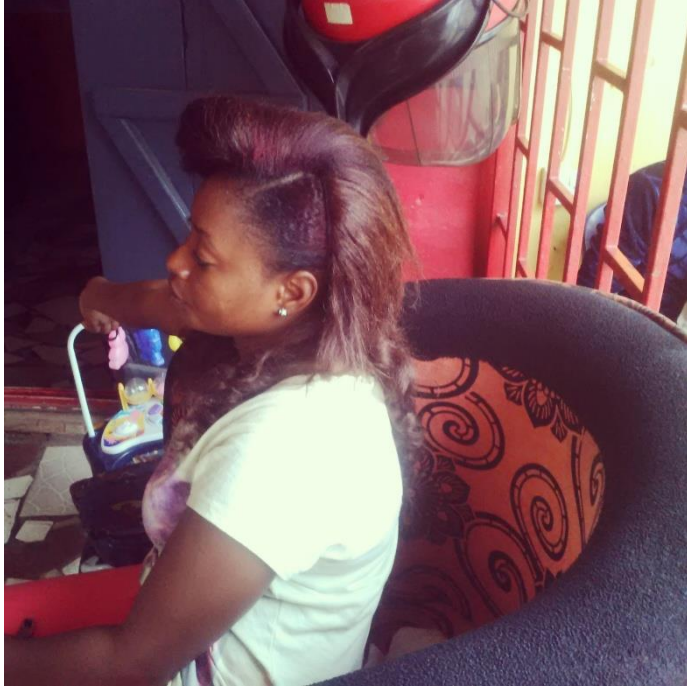
Plate 9: Picture showing Brazilian and Cambodian weave-ons



Source: Authors' original fieldwork 2016

The picture above shows a selection of different Brazilian and Cambodian weave-ons. They are silky and expensive and this is why most undergraduate students add them to their natural hair, believing it makes them look elegant and attractive. These weave-ons are mainly worn by foreign celebrities and this sometimes makes it the choice of most female undergraduate students as some of these celebrities are their role models. Some students change their choice of hairstyle when they get to the salon seeing a fellow student making a particular hairstyle or after been convinced by the hairstylist that using one of the imported hair extensions in the picture shown above would make them look better. These students sometimes might not have enough money to buy these weave-on, but due to the personal relationship they have with the stylist, they will agree to get the weave-on on credit and pay the hair stylist later. The picture below shows an undergraduate student at Pablo's Beauty Salon whose choice of hairstyle changed after seeing her fellow student use one of the Brazilian weave-ons shown above.

Plate 10: picture showing hairstyle done with Brazilian weave-on



Source: Authors' original fieldwork 2016

In an interview with a 100 Level student who wore her natural hair, she explained that she made the natural hair because she could not afford to buy those expensive weave-ons, and was left with no choice than to make the hairstyle she was wearing. She said she would buy the Brazilian or Cambodian hair when she had saved up or gathered enough money to get the weave-on. Even though the hair made her look more African and natural, she did not appreciate her look and only made the hair because she could not afford her choice of hairstyle yet. This shows the extent of the influence of westernization on African culture. The picture below shows the female student on her natural hair.

Plate 11: Picture showing African *Suku* hairstyle worn by a student



Source: Authors' original fieldwork 2016

It was discovered that in the salons used for this research, the students have a good relationship with their stylist and sometimes ask for their opinion on certain issues. They do not only go to the salons to make their hair, they engage in discussions about their school work and life after school, marriage, politics, fashion and many more. The stylist and fellow students share their experiences. These discussions have impacts on them and change their view and orientation about certain things. They also perceive the salon as a gendered sphere and a place away from men where they are free to share their thoughts. Students get to meet different people from different cultural background with different ideologies and from different field. They socialize and learn a lot. Some of the people they get to meet are of help to them one way or another. For instance, during this research, a student met a woman at Pablo's when she needed an IT placement and luckily for her, during a discussion at the salon about school work, she mentioned it and the woman offered her a placement in her office as her course was related to what is done at the company. This exemplifies the bonding culture earlier discussed, showing that there is more that goes on in the salon aside hair making.

Notably, environment is no barrier to conversation that goes on in the salon. Whether in an expensive (e.g. Pablo's) or low-charging salon (Mummy Esther), there would be discussions about certain matters, but it is left to the students to decide to be influenced positively or negatively and what information or advice to adhere to. Hairstylists are not only restricted to making hair and sometimes impact morals and values, students also influence them due to their educational level. Students teach hair groomers certain things such as the importance of hygiene and how some diseases can be prevented. For instance, by explaining that a needle should not be used for two different people and that a clipper needs to be sterilized each time

it is to be used on a client to prevent infections, students also discuss with the salon owners on how to improve on the way they handle their salon business to maximize profit.

Conclusion

Hair is important in the way female students perform their gender identities. Students depend on the stylists to help satisfy their desires in this regard. Certain hairstyles are seen to be ladylike, beautiful, girly, mature, womanish or masculine, and the undergraduates wear them as part of their identities. Sometimes, mistakes are made, and students and stylists have to work together to get the desired outcome. Undergraduate students who make their hair at the salons on campus often opt for girly hairstyles while those who make their hair at off-campus salons prefer ladylike hairstyles. For the latter, the case of a fair-complexioned undergraduate student at Pablo's Beauty Salon provides an idea of some of the factors responsible for the choices made. She came to make blond Brazilian hair and she had contact lenses on. When asked by the researcher what informed her choice of hair colour, she said it was a way of making her distinct and different from her female mates. She talked of wanting to be noticed whenever she enters the class or anywhere and said even from a distance the hair attracts people and makes them stare at her. The stylists suggest and encourage the students to make hairstyles they believe will make them look more mature, in vogue and beautiful. African traditional hairstyles are believed to make a girl look womanish, and many of these undergraduates do not want to be considered old. Certain hairstyles are thought by the students and stylists to be for occasions like party and festive period. For instance, some female students in Theatre Arts Department were seen discussing a particular hairstyle which is to put bead on their natural hair parked in *Suku* form, to be worn for their initiation week to distinguish them from the other female students that are not going to be initiated. Hairstyles like *galaxy* and *anita baker* are said to be masculine and when seen on a girl, there is an impression about her which suggests a tomboy and be compared to looking like a boy. Cambodian and Brazilian hairstyles when seen on a student portray class.

While the study has established that students are conscious of their look and the hair they wear, findings from the four salons studied establish that the salon is not meant for only beauty work and what happens there transcends hair making into a platform for identity making. The life of the undergraduate may seem to revolve around acquiring an education, but for the experience of the university to be worthwhile, the undergraduate, of course, does things beyond having to attend classes, write assignments, and take examinations. This follows the female undergraduates to places where they do things that are of importance to their lives as students and young women, and it tries to understand the social forces and factors that the students contend with in the course of creating identities for themselves in the hair salon. In all, styles worn by University of Ibadan female undergraduate students, their reasons for making those hairstyles and the type of relationship they have with their hairstylists were used to investigate wider sociological concerns. These are used to explain both spatial awareness and cognition of female undergraduates at the University of Ibadan, and the influence of encounter with fellow students and stylists. In its construction of gendered, classed identities, the study suggests that salon cultures in Nigeria alongside activities in the salons today could either protect or endanger the future of female undergraduates depending on how they are developed, deployed and imbibed.

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