In an expert's hands: Issues of self and personality as reflected in hair choices

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IN AN EXPERT'S HANDS: ISSUES OF SELF AND PERSONALITY AS
REFLECTED IN HAIR CHOICES

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2000

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

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Department of Educational Psychology
College of Education

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ABSTRACT

In an Expert’s Hands: Issues of Self and Personality as Reflected in Hair Choices

by

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This study developed an understanding of women’s sense of self. Using the Humanistic perspective of self image, which is one’s perception of one’s self that includes a person’s perception of his/her personality, ability and images of his/her body (Coon, 1992). This micro-ethnography included 21 female participants obtained from an expert hair stylist’s clientele. These participants were either interviewed, completed personality questionnaires and/or completed follow-up and member check questionnaires. Several analyses were completed with the acquired data which resulted in rich and descriptive data. Findings indicate that participants associated their hair with their sense of self. Personal freedom as it pertains to self image was restricted by outside influences. Implications of this research are discussed in terms of women’s understanding of self. Through this understanding, education can be impacted and, in turn, this could enhance the personal well being of women and their role in society.
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Finally, this is for Grandma Royer who graciously touched the lives of many and who was always her own woman.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study was to develop a rich understanding of women's sense of self related to hair choices by conducting research in the salon environment. First, the salon environment offered an opportunity to examine a woman's perception of her self and how it is reflected in her hair choices. This opportunity developed a deeper awareness of a woman's sense of self and how those around her are influential. This study also investigated how a woman's hair choice identifies a particular aspect of her personality. Furthermore, this research evaluated a woman's sense of body image and its connection to her hair choices.

Utilizing the humanistic approach, self image is a product of choices and experiences that develop the meaning of life for the unique individual. Two important contributors to humanistic psychology are Rollo May and Abraham Maslow who, individually, established theories that when combined present an opportunity for an individual to experience life at its fullest. Rollo May (1981) examined personal freedom and Abraham Maslow (1971) developed the theory of self-actualization. This study elaborates on a woman's sense of meaning by evaluating her notion of personal freedom through the choices she makes with her hair as well as her overall sense of comfort with her self.
As part of the individual’s self image, personality and body image are key factors (Coon 1992). Personality was examined through several dimensions as proposed by Costa and McCrae (1992), leading personality psychologists. The five factors are 1) neuroticism, 2) extraversion, 3) openness, 4) agreeableness, and 5) conscientiousness. Since the nature of this study was to develop an understanding of women and their experience, the humanistic approach was used. This perspective advocates conducting qualitative research that allows for a close examination of individuals.

Another important factor utilized in this study was that of an expert. Through a series of interviews, clients established their concept of an expert hair stylist and the extent to which they find an expert influential. Experts can be influential to other individuals when working collaboratively. Shannon, the participant hair stylist, is an expert and could be influential to a client’s self image through assisting the client with an appropriate choice in hair style. According to Glaser and Chi (1988), experts are capable of processing information in a more organized fashion that allows for easier recall. They are also proficient at monitoring their performance which makes them capable of producing information more effectively and with little error. From a previous study, Shannon demonstrated her extensive background knowledge of hair while dealing with clients who had problematic hair issues.

An additional facet of self image considered in the current study is a person’s sense of body image. Individuals are influenced by their perception of their own body image since it is a mental representation of the self as well as the opinion of those around them (Krueger, 1989). Due to these experiences, individuals may develop anxiety over their body which leads to an occurrence of anxiety when making changes to the body.
Because women's hair is considered part of their body and can be changed it is important that body image be included in the study.

Limited research is available in the area of salon psychology. Theories have been generated based on observations in the salon (Losoncy, 1992). Through further research, associations between theories and clients can be made more apparent with empirical evidence. This research leads to a deeper understanding of women and their perception of “self”. In addition, this study provides useful information in many domains, such as the hair industry and their clientele.

It was expected that a woman's self image would be reflected in her hair choices. To determine this association, participant's sense of personal freedom was established and her potential for self-actualization through examining her perceived self image was considered. Furthermore, it was expected that an expert hair stylist would also affect a woman's perception of self. It was also anticipated that there would be a trend between a woman's choice of hair style and Costa and McCrae's (1992) five factor model of personality. Finally it was expected that women would base their hair decisions on their sense of body image.

To develop these understandings, my research was conducted in a salon using Shannon's clientele as participants. Interviews were conducted while the participants were having their hair styled. In addition, questionnaires were completed to provide additional information as well as to triangulate the data sources. Triangulation involves examining several data points to provide a rich and thorough examination of the findings (Glesne, 1990). Once the data analyses were conducted for initial findings, specific statements were returned to participants for a member check. The member check
provided credibility to the study by obtaining the response of the participants (Creswell, 1998). Upon review of the statements, their interpretations were added and the data analysis was completed. This study is intended for those who wish to develop a deeper understanding of women and their perceived self.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study examined women in a culture that offers an opportunity for change to their outward appearance as well as their internal sense of “self”. In developing an understanding of women in this environment, the Humanistic perspective of self was utilized. With this approach, the individual’s sense of self includes: the person’s perception of one’s personality, ability and body image (Coon, 1992). Literature from each of these aspects was reviewed and discussed to establish the views of each domain. Additionally, literature in salon psychology associated hair choices with an individual’s ability to self-actualize which was also discussed in further detail. Gaining the knowledge about women as unique individuals begins with reviewing the literature on self-image.

Self Image

The Humanistic approach to psychology defines psychology as “the meaning(s) of experience and behavior for the individual person” (Wertz, 2001, p. 242). This approach attempts to understand the unique individual as one’s experience through choices and the underlying meaning of one’s life. Part of the unique individual is his/her self image which is an individual’s perception of one’s self (Coon, 1992).
Research from a Humanistic psychology perspective draws on both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. However, due to the nature of humanistic thought and the desire to study the meaning of life, the qualitative tradition allows for an opportunity to understand the individual. “Although the qualitative tradition is by no means exclusive within humanistic research, it generally is considered to be the optimal staging ground within which to situate most person-centered inquiry” (Schneider. 2001. p. 228).

An important contributor, Rollo May, one of the founders of the Association for Humanist Psychology was recognized as an existential-humanistic (Schneider. 1999, p. 353). May’s (1981) theory on freedom involves two factors: Freedom of Doing (choice/decisions) and Freedom of Being (belief for the choice) (p. 53, 55). He states, “Freedom is the possibility of development, of enhancement of one’s life; or the possibility of withdrawing, shutting oneself up, denying and stultifying one’s growth” (p. 5). May contends that an individual has the choice for personal freedom; however this freedom is dependent on a person’s self image.

Rollo May (1981) writes about personal freedom and the anxiety caused by making choices that are not within conventional thinking. He states:

Every human experiences this anxiety when he or she exercised the freedom to move out into the no man’s land of possibility. We can escape the anxiety only by not venturing—that is, by surrendering our freedom. I am convinced that many people never become aware of their most creative ideas since their inspirations are blocked off by this anxiety before the ideas even reach the level of consciousness. (p. 191)
Another important contributor to humanistic psychology, Abraham Maslow, is revered as "the single person most responsible for creating humanistic psychology" (Moss, 2001, p. 15). Maslow’s theory on self-actualization and the self became the foundation for other humanistic psychologists. Maslow (1971) viewed self-actualization as having life experiences through a progression of choices. In addition, self-actualized individuals are honest and aware of their self, mind and body. They understand the need to work hard by utilizing one’s intelligence and they have peak experiences (i.e. rhythmic experience, music/dance). Self-actualizing individuals are aware of themselves, their experiences and the choices they have in life.

Maslow created several stages (see Appendix A1) that need to be met before reaching self-actualization. His first level, physiological, is the need to satisfy hunger and thirst. This level is about survival. The next level, safety, requires an individual’s needs for shelter and stability to be met. The third stage, belongingness and love, is an individual’s need for companionship and family. The fourth level, esteem, requires an individual to feel competent as well as receive recognition from others (Liebert & Spiegler, 1994). The first four stages are deficiency stages and must be met to move to the next three growth stages. The first growth stage, need to know and understand, requires an individual to develop an understanding of the world which may lead to a quest for more knowledge. The next stage, aesthetic needs, requires an individual to appreciate beauty within the world. The final stage, self-actualization, describes an individual who experiences life to the fullest (Slavin, 1997). In the next section three key studies related to self-actualization are described.
A study was conducted by Leclerc, Lefrancois, Dube, Hebert, and Gaulin (1998) to determine the attributes of self-actualization by utilizing the Delphi method. The Delphi method employs a group of experts to generate an operating definition in a domain. This goal is completed by several rounds of communication between the experts until the generated definition is agreed upon. Once the researchers in this study determined there was considerable agreement between the experts they created the final operational definition for self-actualization. As determined by Maslow and this study, self-actualization is a continuous process and not just a state of being. Their operational definition is as follows: "self-actualization is a process through which one’s potential is developed in congruence with one’s self-perception and one’s experience" (Leclerc, et al., 1998, p. 79).

Another important aspect of Maslow’s (1971) theory on self-actualization is the understanding of one’s biological needs. A study by Sumerlin, Privette, Berretta, and Bundrick (1994) examined the relationship between the subjective biological self and self-actualization. They concluded there was a slight relationship between self-actualization and the understanding of one’s biological self through physical self efficacy. In addition, they were able to provide construct validity for Maslow’s theory on self-actualization.

Dominguez and Carton (1997) examined parental style and its influence on self-actualization. The researchers operated under Baumrind’s model of parenting. Her model consists of three styles of parenting which are authoritative, permissive and authoritarian. Dominguez and Carton found a significant correlation between college age students with authoritative parenting (democratic) and their level of self-actualization.
Those who had the lowest level of self-actualization classified their fathers as being authoritarian (militant). Mothers were also categorized in this manner, however it was at a lesser degree than the participant’s fathers. This study also demonstrated consistency with Maslow’s self-actualization theory and the behavior demonstrated by a self-actualizing person. These self-actualized participants were able to create productive environments based on their parents providing positive reinforcement and independence training.

Coon (1992) discusses the humanistic psychological approach to self image as a person’s entire perception of one’s self which includes the person’s perception of his/her personality, ability and images of his/her body. In addition, Polkinghorne (2001) contends that individuals who have a full knowledge of their “real self” are capable of making decisions within their environment that will lead to personal freedom. However he also concludes that individuals seek approval from others which influences their self and hinders the possibility of actualization.

The hallmark of humanistic thought is the belief that individuals have continuous growth through one’s own relevant choices which will lead to self-actualization. It is important to consider self image as part of this self-actualization process where every individual has the potential of living a fulfilling life that has meaning (Coon, 1992).

This study examines a women’s perception of her self image. The participants were evaluated for their sense of personal freedom and the anxiety felt with change to their appearance. In addition, the participants were evaluated using Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Determining the stage the participant was in, identified the participant’s perception of self and the influences involved with her perception. Furthermore, this
research also examined how a woman’s hair choice reflects her personality and portrayed image to others.

**Personality**

As discussed previously, self image is the reflection of an individual’s personality, ability and body image (Coon, 1992). This view recognizes a person’s personality as an integral part of self image. McCrae and Costa have made significant contributions to developing a dimensional view of personality (Liebert, 1994).

Over the course of the last 40 years, personality psychologists have been categorizing personality traits (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Costa and McCrae have established a model known as the big five model which includes five dimensions: 1) neuroticism, 2) extraversion, 3) openness, 4) agreeableness, and 5) conscientiousness. Costa and McCrae also developed the NEO- PI-R, an instrument based on this five-factor model. This instrument is the product of 15 years of research in both normal adult samples and clinical samples (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

To validate their instrument, McCrae and Costa conducted numerous studies. For example, McCrae and Costa (1987) examined their model and the validity of their instrument across different instruments and observers. The subjects in this study completed self-reports as well as provided a list of friends who could be their peer raters. The peer raters, having had at least 18 years of acquaintance, were knowledgeable about their corresponding participant. The peer raters completed questionnaires in regards to the participant’s personality. This was utilized for determining the correlation between peer and self-reports. McCrae and Costa (1987) first determined that the peer raters were
very consistent in describing their corresponding subject in the five dimensions across instruments. Next they reviewed the results of different peer raters with the same subject to determine consensual validation. Again, McCrae and Costa demonstrated significant agreement among the peer raters. In all five dimensions, they obtained statistically significant values that demonstrated consensual validation. An additional examination was completed to determine the correlations between the self-reports of the participants and the peer raters. Each domain had significant correlations with the exception of conscientiousness (there was only one rater). McCrae and Costa (1987) report “…all the correlations were statistically significant and many were substantial in magnitude” (p. 85). The final review of analysis was between convergent and divergent validation. With convergent correlation, there is an expectation of correlation however with divergent correlations, it is not expected to have a correlation. They found their divergent correlations to be less than their convergent correlations. Since high correlations were found between the peer raters and the participants who completed self reports, this demonstrates an effective model to be used in examining an individual’s personality. For an extensive review of validity studies see Costa and McCrae (1992).

Costa and McCrae (1988) improved on their five factor model through a six-year longitudinal study. In this particular study, Costa and McCrae established their five domains and demonstrated each domain’s stability in relation to self-reports. When the initial result demonstrated that individual’s personalities did not change, Costa and McCrae conducted a retest. Their results were conclusive: men and women over the age of 30 are stable within their personality.
Costa and McCrae’s personality inventory (NEO-PI-R) uses a Likert scale. It allows an individual to choose on a continuum between strongly agree and strongly disagree. The examiner can review a subject’s answers on a broad scale under the factors or within the domains of specific traits. This instrument is intended for those with normal personality traits and scores are compared to a representative norm and not the particular person (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

The five factors used in the NEO-PI-R are based on a continuum and, therefore, an individual does not necessarily have to be at either extreme of the factor. Their five factors are as follows (Costa & McCrae, 1992):

- **Neuroticism** describes an individual who is emotionally unstable. This factor would include the individual experiencing distress through “fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, guilt, and disgust…” (p. 14) while individuals on the other extreme would remain emotionally stable when experiencing a demanding or unstable environment (Sample item: “I often feel helpless and want someone else to solve my problems.”).  

- The **extraversion** factor identifies individuals as having outgoing and upbeat personalities as well as enjoying the company of other people. Extraverts also exhibit assertiveness, optimism and energy. The opposite of this domain, introversion, represents individuals who display reserved behavior. Although introverts do not appear to be happy, this does not qualify them as being sad (Sample item: “I’m known as a warm and friendly person.”).  

- The **openness** factor relates particularly to experience. These are individuals who have “active imagination, aesthetic sensitivity, attentiveness to inner feelings, preference for variety, intellectual curiosity, and independence of judgment…” (p. 15). Typically
open individuals are more inclined to live more experienced lives. The opposite individuals would be more predictable in behavior and conventional in their experiences (Sample item: “I often try new and foreign foods.”).

*Agreeableness* individuals are more cooperative and sympathetic to the needs of others. An individual at the opposite extreme would demonstrate competitive behavior and a concern for oneself (Sample item: “I think most of the people I deal with are honest and trustworthy.”).

*Conscientiousness,* involves being “purposeful, strong-willed, and determined...” (p. 16). These individuals are likely to obtain success; however a negative attribute is the tendency to become a workaholic. On the opposite end of this continuum, is an individual who lacks ambition and is unreliable (Sample item: “I have a clear set of goals and work toward them in an orderly fashion.”).

To understand the complete individual and self image, personality is a dynamic factor to be examined. With Costa and McCrae’s five factor model, they not only constructed an instrument in which to measure their model but also invested years of research to validate both the model and the uses of their instrument. In addition, they made a profound impact on psychology and how we view personality.

With these five factors as a foundation, participants in the current study were categorized through the use of a personality questionnaire created for this study. The questionnaire was utilized for simplicity in providing the necessary information to classify them at the extremes of the continuums in a componential analysis. This classification allowed for a comparison between women’s hair choices and their

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personality types. A better understanding of women, their self image and how it is reflected in their hair choices was developed.

**Pilot Study**

A pilot study for my thesis was conducted at Destination’s Salon and Spa. This observational study examined the trends between a person’s choice of hair cut and color while considering her personality. Using a componential analysis (see Appendix B1), participants were classified by their hair length and color and McCrae and Costa’s five factor model. Some of the noticeable trends that were found were participants with shoulder length hair and color were more secure, extraverted, open, and ambitious. Participants with ear length hair and color were more secure, independent, and ambitious. Creating the componential analysis allowed for comparisons of participants choice in hair length and color with their personalities.

Since personality is an integral part of self image, it is an important aspect to be examined within the context of this study. In addition, there is limited research in this area and the role of women’s personality through her hair choice needs further examination.

**Expertise**

In my pilot study, the role of expertise was briefly addressed. During an interview with Shannon, the hairstylist, I asked her if she was an expert and how she defined the term. She stated her expertise was based on having the best possible training in the field, having an understanding of a person’s hair, facial structure, and the hair’s response to
styling and chemical application. She also felt the number of years of experience was important. I also asked her if she felt that all hair stylists were experts and she responded that most were not. She later stated that although many hair stylists go to hair shows and seminars, they typically come back and do not use their new found knowledge, therefore, it becomes a loss. However when she returns from a seminar, she immediately begins using the new skills so that the new information becomes more automatic with time.

Expertise can have an important impact within any domain; however, the extent to which an expert hairstylist would affect a client’s self image is an interesting question that is addressed within this study. In addition, the client’s concept of an expert will be considered.

Even though this research is based on a self-proclaimed expert, Glaser and Chi (1988) provide seven characteristics of an expert which are capable of being generalized throughout different domains (p. xvii). They are as follows:

1) *Experts excel mainly in their own domains.* Experts have a large amount of background knowledge in a particular domain. Research has shown an expert does not usually transfer one’s expertise into another domain. As Shannon stated during the pilot study, she has a thorough background knowledge which she is able to access.

2) *Experts perceive large meaningful patterns in their domain.* Experts are proficient at organizing the knowledge they have attained which leads to better recall. Shannon also addressed this issue when she stated she immediately uses new information to help with remembering the technique which leads to better recall.

3) *Experts are fast; they are faster than novices at performing the skills of their domain, and they quickly solve problems with little error.* Since experts have had many
years of deliberate practice, their skill has become automatic. This ability reduces their cognitive load and allows for the processing of other pertinent information. As stated above, Shannon has had many years of practice and when learning a new technique begins using it immediately to add it to her background knowledge so that it will become automatic in recall.

4) Experts have superior short-term and long-term memory. The expert's ability in short-term and long-term memory results from effective encoding and recall. As mentioned previously, experts become automatic in some practices which allows for more room within short-term memory to process other information. In addition their ability to organize information in a more organized fashion allows for more effective recall.

5) Experts see and represent a problem in their domain at a deeper (more principled) level than novices: novices tend to represent a problem at a superficial level. Experts are capable of organizing their categories into abstract ideas whereas novices use tangible meanings in which to group their categories.

6) Experts spend a great deal of time analyzing a problem qualitatively. Experts attempt to have an understanding of the problem they are trying to solve rather than just solving it. This thinking pattern helps the expert develop a representation of the problem that can be placed within a larger scheme of the whole problem. When observing Shannon with new clients that previously had their hair damaged by another hair stylist, Shannon would examine the hair and explain to the client the process from beginning to end that would need to be done to have her hair corrected. Some of the clients wanted a "quick fix" which was not a possibility since their hair was so damaged. However,
Shannon helped them come to an understanding of the damage and how the “quick fix” would only lead to more damage. She had a thorough understanding of the problem and was able to convey to her clients the severity of the problem to help them also understand.

7) *Experts have strong self monitoring skills.* Experts are aware of their errors, why they are unable to comprehend and know when they should confirm their solutions.

Although Glaser and Chi represent these seven characteristics of an expert, Simon (1995) also offers another important aspect of expertise: time. He states that there are indications that being an expert requires 10 years of intensive study and deliberate practice in their domain. In a classic study conducted by Simon and Chase (1973), they determined that grandmasters in chess access thousands of patterns and the moves within that pattern. To achieve an understanding of these patterns, Simon and Chase (1973) determine that an individual would be required to complete many years of practice. In the pilot interview, Shannon also stated that many years of experience was required to become an expert.

In this study Shannon is a self-proclaimed expert; however, it seems that her reasoning for being an expert parallels many of the categories created by Chi, Glaser and Simon. For this reason, she will be considered an expert hair stylist for this study. In determining how women are influenced by others, this study examined how the expert hair stylist influenced the participants and their sense of self.
Body Image

Through the pilot study, participants mostly stated their hair was a reflection of their self. With hair being an important part of a person's body image, it is important to examine the influence it has on decisions made about the self.

As previously defined, self image includes the reflection of an individual's body image (Coon, 1992). Another important factor in the humanistic approach is an individual's experience. The experience an individual has can also influence one's body image. "The body image is a complex evolving formulation of an evocative mental representation of the body. Its developmental maturity is based on an individual's formation and perceptions of a series of internal and external stimuli" (Krueger, 1989, p. 11). Internal stimuli would be the development of one's self and one's perception of one's self in the world. External stimuli would be the perceptions of others influencing the self.

A study by Noles, Cash, and Winstead (1985) investigated body image, physical attractiveness and depression. Undergraduates participated in the study by responding to a set of questionnaires. In addition, a photograph was taken of each participant. Their hypothesis that depressed individuals would have a less positive body image than those who were not depressed was supported. In addition, they determined those who sought cosmetic surgery had a negative body image as well as depression. This study demonstrates those who have a negative body image also tend to be depressed. Similar to the study by Noles, Cash, and Winstead (1985), the current study examined participants in regards to their body image as well as their sense of self.
Another study investigating dissatisfaction with body image was conducted by Butters and Cash (1987). Undergraduate students were placed into either a control group or a treatment group and completed pre and post tests using body image questionnaires. The researchers found that after 7 weeks of intervention the treatment group had a better body image, in fact 2 months later they were still reporting greater satisfaction with their bodies. The treatment consisted of weekly 1 hour sessions where the participants reviewed the prior week’s homework on their personal beliefs about their body image. A 30 minute intervention followed. These interventions included the participants being in a relaxed state while listening to audio-tapes that discussed body image management. In addition, the participants looked at their body in a mirror. At the completion of each week’s session, the participants were given a new homework assignment. These subjects also reported being less concerned by their appearance and felt as though they were in the “norm” where previously they gauged themselves as being 25% bigger than their peers. The treatment also raised their self esteem and interest in physical fitness.

In regards to the current study, because participants look in the mirror while getting their hair done, they had the opportunity to assess their body images. Even if they do not look in the mirror during the hair styling process, at the moment of hair completion, participants must deal with their appearance they see reflected in the mirror which includes a person’s external self (as perceived by others) and her inner self (as perceived by her).

Regardless of creating mental representations of one’s body, another influence on body image includes reactions about one’s appearance from other people (Krueger, 1990). Since a person’s perception of his/her experience is critical to one’s self image.
one may be influenced by external sources. How individuals are affected by other individual’s perceptions of them relates to this study.

*Salon Psychology*

Generally, people find themselves at a salon to have their appearance enhanced. In a salon, individuals can have their hair, face, and nails done. The salon offers an opportunity to have outward changes but does this contribute to inward changes? According to Humanistic psychology, people are affected by their environments and their choices. If people are attending a salon, they have made a choice to have their outward appearance enhanced. What is the reasoning behind this decision?

Losoncy (1992) explains how each level of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs defines a type of client in a salon. The client who is in Maslow’s first level (physiological needs) would not “even be coming to a salon” (p. 115). Since the simple needs of the client are not being met, she is unable to concern herself with traveling to the salon. In the next level (Safety/Security Needs), the client is simply getting a trim, nothing more. This client is concerned with simple upkeep and can not indulge in all the benefits offered in a salon. At Maslow’s third level (Social/Belonging Needs), the client would like to try something new but within a certain framework. She will need to have approval from others and could possibly have a hair style similar to her friends. At the fourth level (Self-Esteem Needs), the client does not need to be accepted by others and will state what she would like done with her hair. At this point, the client is expressing her own needs. The client at the final level (Self Actualized Needs) has the best relationship with her hair stylist. Enough trust has been created that the client allows the hair stylist to make the
decision regarding the client’s hair. The client does not provide any limitations for the
hair stylist.

According to May’s perspective, women who have a negative self image do not allow
for change because this does not fit in with how they perceive themselves. Losoncy
(1992) proposes five reasons why women are not more accepting of change due to their
negative anxiety. The first reason he states is anxiety over monetary cost, however he
continues to state this reason is actually a mask for other undisclosed reasons. The
second reason women avoid change is the anxiety that comes from the change itself and
the possibility of not receiving acceptance from others. The third aspect of concern is
anxiety over whether a new service (e.g. perm) will work. The client may have
previously heard of a bad experience with this particular type of service. The fourth
cause for anxiety for the client is the change in identity/self image. She has concern that
her new look will not be her own but someone else’s. The final cause for anxiety is
whether the client feels worthy enough; should she have a low self-esteem, she will need
to be reassured.

Continuing with this view, there are particular points in life when women will be
more inclined to change due to positive anxiety (Losoncy, 1992). Women who have a
low level of readiness for change are content with their life, there is not an immediate
desire to change and they are not experiencing anxiety. At the moderate level of change,
women feel as though they are missing a part of their life however they may not have the
energy to expend on a new idea. They will consider a new hair style that is presented to
them but may need some encouragement. Clients in the highest level of anxiety are ready
for the change, possibly because of the changes they are having in their life. The motivation to change is greater than the high level of anxiety the clients are experiencing.

Although research has not been done to establish these theories, there is an opportunity for the examination of the role between the client, his/her hair and the hair stylist. In addition, anxiety is an important factor to be investigated within the context of personal freedom and whether this freedom can be enhanced.

Lanita Jacobs-Huey's (2001) study examines how narratives are influenced by previous experiences. She analyzed three different interactions at two observational settings in which both African-American women and European-American women were included. These two settings were at a hair show and a hair salon. Since she utilized narrative analysis, she was able to demonstrate an individual’s belief about an experience which embraced her past and present. Throughout her study, she allowed the reader to view sections of the transcript from her observations that were pertinent to her analysis.

She argues in her ethnographic study that hair stylists’ “narratives of hair are, in many ways, filtered through their experiences of marginalization as a collective of women who are under-represented in Eurocentric standards and representations of beauty. These shared experiences socialize them into similar ways of knowing and experiencing their bodies, particularly hair” (Jacobs-Huey, 2001, p. 336).

Her results demonstrate that women access previous experiences through their narratives. In addition, the dialogue created between the African-American women and European-American women is an attempt at a connection in experiences through their background knowledge and personal experiences. However this attempt creates an alignment between the African-American women and, unknowingly, the European-
American women are unable to make a connection with the African-American’s experiences.

Although this study was demonstrating the experience of African-American hair stylist in the European-American culture, it also provided an example of the importance women place on their hair and the expected identities that are involved. Jacobs-Huey also remarks on the importance ethnographic and discourse analysis played in attaining her results.

My interest in feminist research is developing the understanding of women as unique individuals and their perceived experiences. Since this study is based on a woman’s experience in the salon it involves the issue of feminist research. Reinharz (1992) states “One shared radical tenet underlying feminist research is that women’s lives are important” (p. 241). It is imperative to study women as individuals because they are vital contributors to society. Therefore, learning about their perceptions of them “selves” and their perceived environment will lead to a further understanding of their culture which will extend to future research.

Conclusion

Self image from a humanistic psychological approach is a person’s entire perception of one’s self which includes the person’s perception of one’s personality, ability and images of one’s body. Within personality, Costa and McCrae (1992) established a five factor model in which normal individuals can be evaluated. Self-actualizing individuals as described by Maslow have a great degree of awareness. Rollo May’s theory on personal freedom and the anxiety that can develop from outside influences can be
reflected in a person’s immediate decisions. Does a person hold back from the experience of life or did she take the chance that may result in abandonment and social recognition?

Expertise is also an important factor in psychology. The ability to effectively problem-solve and establish effective connections between information is important for all domains.

An individual’s body image is the reflection of a mental representation based on the perception of one’s self and of others. As Losocony (1992) theorizes, clients are influenced by hair stylists, their friends and family. An outside influence can provide hindrance in a participant achieving a positive perception of self which includes her body image. For this reason, it is important to examine body image and the connection it has with outside influences.

**Purpose**

The purpose of the current study is to examine women in an environment where they have an opportunity for change. The salon offers an occasion for change which could lead to personal freedom as well as an experience of self-actualization. Additionally, how a woman’s hair choice is reflected in her personality type was integral to developing the understanding of self. Another vital component of this study is examining the influence an expert’s opinion has on a client and to what effect body image has on a client’s hair choices.
Research Questions

Research questions for the current study are as follows:

1. How does a woman’s choice in hair style reflect her self image?
2. What are the developing trends between hair styles and personality traits?
3. How does a stylist’s expertise affect a woman’s view of her self image?
4. How does a woman’s hair choice reflect her body image?

My expectations were that if the client was able to self-actualize, she would trust her hair stylist as an expert. I also expected that I would develop an understanding of how a woman perceives her sense of self. In addition, I expected that choices made while being in the salon would also enhance the understanding of perception of others and the need for acceptance from society. Finally, it was expected that a woman’s personality and body image would be reflected in her hair decisions.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This study was based on the understanding of women through the Humanistic approach which is consistent with qualitative methods. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) state: "The qualitative researcher’s goal is to better understand human behavior and experience" (p. 38). This type of research is developed by examining a culture within its natural environment. The culture examined was in a private room within a salon where clients have their hair styled. Because this culture was a small culture within a larger culture (the salon) it permitted the method of micro-ethnography.

Micro-ethnography

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) state that micro-ethnography allows for the researcher to "... focus on intimate behaviors in a single setting" (p. 199-200). This circumstance provided an optimum opportunity to concentrate on Shannon’s clients and their personalities and body images while in an expert’s care. In addition, Spradley (1980) maintains that a micro-ethnography study can be completed within a shorter time period, even with the use of typical ethnographic techniques for data collection and analysis. Since a pilot study was completed, I received the additional benefits that contributed to a more focused approach to this study and collection of data.
Participant/Access

I conducted research in the salon environment on Wednesday and Thursday evenings and most of the day on Saturdays for several weeks. The group of participants included 21 Caucasian women over the age of 18 who attend the salon regularly for hair maintenance. Of the 21 participants, 5 key informants were “believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998, p. 65). The informants were chosen as a representative of their particular hair length. In addition, 2 participants were new to the study to gain additional perspectives. Between the rich information gained from the key informants and the information gained from the other subjects, I was able to complete an analysis that explains the “hair experience” felt by these women. In addition, my research creates an understanding of these women’s perceived self through their hair choices.

To collect this data, I first had to receive approval from University of Nevada, Las Vegas’ Institutional Review Board which was granted on August 19, 2002. My participants were Shannon’s female clients, Shannon, and her assistant, Lindsey. On the days of collecting research I would enter the salon, meet with Shannon, and her client to describe my study and request the client’s participation. If the client decided she would participate, I assured her of complete confidentiality and that her name would not be utilized anywhere in my research. She then signed the informed consent. For the clients not interested in participating, I exited the room so I would not hinder their salon experience.

Shannon’s role as a participant was important for many reasons. First, she perceives herself as an expert in her field which provided a valuable opportunity to discover the
effect she had on her clients. In addition, the relationship I have with her enhanced the communication about the environment. Glesne (1999) states that, “It helps to know an insider who is familiar with the individuals and the politics involved who can advise you in making access decisions” (p. 39). Shannon’s “insider” status led to valuable information for the current study.

Participant/Myself

As defined by Spradley (1980) a moderate participant, “maintain(s) a balance between being an insider and an outsider...” (p. 60). Since I do not have a cosmetology degree I was still an outsider; however, having the experience of being a client allowed me to be considered as an insider. I also determined from my pilot study that I received beneficial information when I participated in the conversation rather than sitting there writing everything down. Clients became more involved in the conversation I created and felt less conscious of my note taking. In addition, clients were more open about themselves when I participated in the conversation which allowed for the client to feel a sense of camaraderie.

Setting/Place

I conducted my research at Destination Garden’s Salon and Spa which is located in a shopping plaza next to Michael’s Arts and Craft store. Glesne (1999) writes: “Often, the selection of research place or places is built into the problem” (p. 28). This setting was an ideal environment to learn about women because in this setting there is an opportunity to examine a woman’s self image, and the two aspects of self image, personality and
body image. It also allowed me to observe an expert hair stylist and the effect she has with her clients' sense of self-image. In addition, Shannon's private room provided for additional confidentiality and a relaxed environment.

**Materials/Procedures**

*Interviews.* The basis of my collection of data was through the use of interviews (see Appendix D for interview questions) and questionnaires. After receiving approval from the client, I first conducted the interview by explaining the interview process. The interview was recorded in the private room so the client could be open with her answers while maintaining continued confidentiality. While conducting the interview, Shannon would also be in the room either cutting or coloring the client's hair. If the client was comfortable with this situation, I continued with the interview process. While interviewing the participant, I stood near the participant asking questions while she was sitting in the "client's" chair responding to the questions. Any questions the participant was uncomfortable answering were omitted. For example, participants were hesitant in answering questions regarding the life experience section.

Conducting an interview in this manner resulted from my pilot study where clients remarked about how relaxed they felt while getting their hair done in a private environment. In addition, the clients in the pilot study were very receptive to my questions. Since the clients remarked that they were in a relaxed and comfortable state, I believed this would be the optimal time to interview them about their hair. While completing interviews for this study, I found some clients to be quite reflective because they were able to look in the mirror while I was questioning them and be thoughtful in
their answers. These interviews are considered formal interviews, which are interviews scheduled with a particular set of questions (Spradley, 1980). Once the interview was completed it was later transcribed. Interview questions are located in Appendix A.

Utilizing questionnaires. Glesne (1999) suggests: “In considering options, choose techniques that are likely to (1) elicit data needed to gain understanding of the phenomenon in question, (2) contribute different perspectives on the issue, and (3) make effective use of the time available for data-collection” (p. 31). After being in the research environment it became apparent that questionnaires would not only help with the time but made it easier for the participant to complete if she were out in the open area. Those around her would not be aware of her activities which would not draw additional and unwanted attention. These questionnaires helped to maintain confidentiality while gaining the necessary information to complete this study.

Personality questionnaire. Making a simple personality questionnaire avoided participants having a testing situation while in the salon. In addition, the personality questionnaire was based on the framework of McCrae and Costa’s model and provided the necessary information that was relevant and useful for this study. Participants completed their personality questionnaire (Appendix C) in several areas of the salon. If time allowed after the interview, the participant would complete the questionnaire while still in the private room. If she was moved to the dryer, the participant would complete the questionnaire under the dryer. For continued confidentiality, the questionnaire did not offer a place for a name, it simply required the client to place checkmarks next to what she thought were her personality traits. When the questionnaire was given to the client, she was told to mark only those traits she felt were consistent with her personality.
Of the 16 participants interviewed, 15 of these participants completed personality questionnaires.

The questionnaire had 10 sections with a list of traits in each section. A group of traits represented one end of the factor’s continuum. Each of the factors from McCrae and Costa’s model were exemplified. For example, the first two groups had listed as traits: fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, guilt, disgust, unable to cope with stress (group 1-neuroticism), calm, even-tempered, relaxed, able to cope with stress (group 2-not neurotic).

To score and analyze the personality questionnaire, each trait received a score of 1 if checked and a 0 if it was left blank. The points were added and then divided by the total possible points to determine the score of each end of the factor’s continuum. These percentages were examined to determine where the majority of participants were within the five factors. For an example, see Appendix B2. Participants with long hair had six possible extraversion traits and three introverted traits they could mark. Since there were three participants with long hair who completed the personality questionnaire, it made a total of 18 extraverted traits and 9 introverted traits. The long hair participants marked 10 out of the possible 18 extraverted traits and 2 out of the 9 introverted traits. For this continuum, long hair participants had a percentage of 55% for the extraversion end of the continuum and 22% for the introversion end of the continuum.

*Follow-up questionnaire.* To confirm and obtain additional findings from the first round of participants, a follow-up questionnaire (see Appendix C) was provided to 3 established participants and 2 new participants. The 2 new participants offered additional perspectives as well as support to previously obtained data. This questionnaire relied on
a 10-point Likert scale (1 being the lowest in importance/happiness and 10 being the highest in importance/happiness) as well as several open ended questions. The participants would complete the form in either Shannon’s room or under the dryer. After completing a few questions about their appearance and their happiness with their appearance, participants were given a series of photos of women in which they were asked to describe the woman’s personality according to their hair style. There were a total of four 8 ½ x 11 photos and they were all were shown independently and in the same order. The participants were instructed to complete the form to the best of their ability and not to allow other factors (i.e. a woman’s particular clothing or makeup) affect their answers. The four photos had the hair lengths that are a focus of this study (in order of presentation): long, chin, shoulder and short. Following the set of photos, the participants finished the questionnaire by describing themselves and how they would like to be perceived by others. Since the participants were allowed to provide their own words to describe themselves as well as the women in the photos, this offered an opportunity to compare and contrast the follow-up questionnaire’s answers to the personality questionnaire.

Member check questionnaire. The final step of data collection included a member check with Shannon, 2 clients who participated in the study and 3 clients who were not part of the study. Utilizing participants who were not in the original collection of data allowed for an outsider’s view. In addition, it was important to verify findings with those who had previously participated. Therefore, accessing both types of participants provided a more rounded view of the position on the connection between “self” and a person’s hair style. The purpose of this member check was to verify findings from the
original data collection. As Creswell (1998) states, a member check "...involves taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account" (p. 203). This verification was accomplished by revealing the initial data analysis from each section to the participants and obtaining their feedback. The feedback was incorporated into the analysis as additional comments to highlight the new information gained and confirm already established findings.

The member check participants were provided with a questionnaire (Appendix C) that listed 11 statements that used a 5-point Likert Scale that ranged from 1 being strongly agree to 5 being strongly disagree. The participants were to either write or state their response to each statement. Of the participants, 4 of the 5 stated their responses which were recorded and transcribed for analysis. One participant preferred not to be recorded and wrote her own answers. The questionnaire focused on statements that emerged from the first phase of data analysis that include: the connection between hair and self, hair length and personality traits, body image, and outside influences including an expert.

The member checks were completed either while the participant’s hair was processing under the dryer or outside on the patio, in a one-on-one type of interview. Prior to providing each of the participants with the questionnaire, I reviewed my research and requested they complete the questionnaire. For the 3 new participants, an informed consent was signed; the other participants had informed consents on file. All participants were informed that they would be recorded and they would have absolute confidentiality. As they completed each statement the participant would circle their choice on the Likert scale and discuss their answer. While the participant was responding I compared their
answer to their choice on the Likert scale and would check with them if they were happy with their answer or if there was conflict. At the completion of the member check, each participant was thanked and the questionnaire filed for later analysis.

Summary

Data were collected on several levels. Most participants were interviewed and completed questionnaires. The questionnaires allowed for additional information to be gathered. Once the data was obtained, additional information was gained through a member check. The role of these participants was to establish verification of the research results. Since there was a combination of sources, the data points could then be triangulated. Glesne (1990) writes, "...the more sources tapped for understanding, the richer the data and the more believable the findings" (p. 31). Having obtained the data through these several measures, it was then important to utilize analyses which would maximize my data for interpretation. These analyses allowed for determining whether the research collected from the participants supports or contradicts the proposed hypotheses. The results from these sources of information will be discussed in further detail with the appropriate research question in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This study attempts to understand how a woman's choice in her hair style reflects her self image. A client's perception of self is also based on the perception of others which will be examined including the influence of an expert hair stylist. In addition, this research explores the trends between a client's personality and body image with her hair choices.

Research Questions

The four main research questions for the current study are as follows:

1. How does a woman's choice in hair style reflect her self image?
2. What are the developing trends between hair styles and personality traits?
3. How does a stylist's expertise affect a woman's view of her self image?
4. How does a woman's hair choice reflect her body image?

To answer these questions, I went to a salon where I obtained the data to determine to what degree hair is representative of the "self".

In this chapter, the findings from the data analyses will be presented. These results will include information about self image, personality, body image and the effect of an expert's knowledge base on hair decisions. In addition, the participants' responses will
be introduced to highlight aspects of the data analyses and results. First, it is important to begin with examining how the data were analyzed.

**Analyses**

With the data collection complete it was necessary to utilize data reduction methods to reduce the data into several mediums which include: tables, categories and diagrams. Merriam (2001) suggests: "making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people said and what the researcher has seen and read-it is the process of making meaning" (p. 178). To analyze my data, several procedures were employed, one of which was creating taxonomies to determine associations in a domain. In addition, a componential analysis was created which allows for examining trends within particular attributes (Spradley, 1980). Data that were not categorized in the above methods were sorted and placed in simple tables for cross examination. The following section describes, in more detail, the analysis utilized for each data point.

**Interviews.** The first procedure in analyzing the interviews was to collect the interview data and transcribe the information. An example of a transcribed interview is in Appendix D. This was followed with a domain analysis where a researcher classified terms within a particular domain. For example, “went to a professional”, “wore a baseball cap”, and “traveled, begged, pleaded for someone to fix it” are all types of action in resolving a bad haircut. From the domain analysis a taxonomic analysis was created which separates a domain analysis into smaller sections under the main idea (Spradley, 1980). An example of the bad haircut and/or color taxonomy is located in Appendix E. In the taxonomy of a bad haircut and/or color, there are two categories, action and
feelings. These two categories branch out to additional subsets. Information retrieved from the interviews was analyzed and resulted in taxonomies. After the taxonomies were developed, they were further separated into categories of length of hair to determine if there was additional information found through different lengths of hair. These taxonomies provided the necessary information in examining how women view them “selves” as well as how they feel others perceive and influence them.

**Personality questionnaire.** A componential analysis, is a “…systematic search for the attributes (components of meaning) associated with cultural categories” (Spradley. 1980. p. 131). A componential analysis was used for the personality questionnaire to demonstrate relevance between personality factors and hair lengths. The questionnaires were sorted by the four hair lengths examined which were long, shoulder, chin and short. Initially, five componential analyses were created for each factor (1 neuroticism, 2 extraversion, 3 openness, 4 agreeableness, and 5 conscientiousness), with the corresponding trait listed from the personality questionnaire. The traits listed across the analysis were given an X only if the participant marked the trait on her personality questionnaire. For an example of a componential analysis for an individual factor (extraversion) see Appendix B2. These five componential analyses were then combined into one group componential analysis examining only the personality factors’ continuum. The group analysis was completed by computing the averages and obtaining a percentage for both ends of the continuum within the five factors. These percentages were placed in the group analysis which compared hair length with the five personality factors on a continuum (Appendix B3). For example, participants with shoulder length hair marked
13 out of 24 possible traits in the extraversion factor which is 54% compared to the 5 out of 12 possible traits, 41% on introversion.

*Follow-up questionnaire.* The analysis involved for the follow-up questionnaire was to place the information obtained into a table with the questions listed vertically on the left and the participants' answers across the top. This allowed for quick comparison of answers for a particular question. Since some of the questions were open ended, the answers were written in their entirety but the important words were placed in bold. For example, if looking at the description of the photo of the woman with long hair, going across the table, the same descriptive can be seen as having been used by the different participants. This simple analysis was applied to confirm findings from the information gained through the interviews and componential analysis. When examining previous data, the table was accessed to determine the association between the interview and personality questionnaire data with the follow-up data for consistency.

*Member check questionnaire.* The final step for analysis was completing a member check which provided additional evidence to established results. Merriam (2001) recommends “...taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible” (p. 204). The member check questionnaire utilized two methods for analysis. First, the results from the Likert scale were placed in a simple table. The questions were listed vertically in the column and the participants names are listed across in the row. The score from the Likert scale was placed in the corresponding box and allowed for a quick and informative comparison of answers to a particular question. Additionally, the participants' responses to each statement were transcribed in interview form. The participants' verbal/written answers to
the statements were imperative in determining whether there was confirmation and/or contradiction to the original findings. To analyze the transcriptions, each participant's answer for each particular question was reviewed independently with the appropriate section of original data. After determining whether there was support or contradiction with the original findings, notations were made to enter the new information within the necessary context. These findings are separated and addressed as member check results throughout the remaining chapter.

*Summary.* Due to the combination of data sources, the data points were triangulated to provide additional verification for each of the research questions. The taxonomies developed from the interviews provided information for all aspects of this study. The componential analysis examined the trends between hair length and personality. The follow-up questionnaire allowed for additional remarks on personality, body image, and aspects of the "self". The member check reviewed main points from each section of the research and offered either supportive or contradictory views. To achieve a full understanding of the results, an analysis of these data points were reviewed as a whole.

*Results*

The four aspects explored while in the salon included, the self, personality, the influence of an expert and body image. Each of these aspects will be identified and the findings discussed from the data obtained through the different sources. If a source of data is not mentioned, pertinent information was not obtained through that particular measure. To ensure continued confidentiality, pseudonyms have been created for the participating clients. First, the environment will be examined to develop the sense of the
client and her surroundings while conducting this research. This will be followed with examination of each topic within a research question which includes: aspects of self image, personality, expertise and body image.

Setting

The salon. When a client approaches the salon, after finding a parking spot, she would enter by the front two glass doors with the salon's logo on it. Once going through the doors, she would have the option of going straight down the hallway that leads to the manicurists, massage therapists, other hair stations, patio or approaching the receptionist desk off to the right.

A client usually checks in at the desk. Those who continue and walk past the desk are usually affiliated with the salon. The reception area is filled with different products as well as large photographs of models with different possible hair options. Also, off to the left side in front of the receptionist desk is a cart filled with coffee and different snack items that can be purchased. Once the client has made it known she has arrived, she can wait in either the chairs or benches in the reception area and hallway.

When the hair stylist comes out to meet the client they go through the doorway off to the right of the receptionist desk. In this small hallway area is a closet where the client can put away his/her jacket, sweater, or item that h/she changed out of. Once the client has put on the bronze button down smock, he/she is taken straight to the sink area where his/her hair is washed. To progress to Shannon's room, the client leaves the sink area, and turn left, going down the hallway passing stations on the right. When reaching the door on the left, they turn into Shannon's private station.
Shannon's room. Shannon has furnished her room with a stereo that has continuous random music, an aromatherapy burner, and a running fountain. In addition there are Chinese characters above her large mirror as well as other Chinese characters on her side wall.

As with most hair stylists, she has a main mirror in front of the client's chair as well as one in the back of the room that also doubles as a place to hang purses; usually there were many. Underneath that mirror are two stools for any additional guests. Next to this mirror is a white storage cabinet in which Shannon keeps her products and supplies.

In Shannon's enclosed area, we had only the noise that we created. Out in the salon area, it would sometimes be difficult to hear due to the level of noise that included music, hairdryers, other people talking and the central vacuum running. Shannon's room offered serenity due to its quiet and laid back atmosphere.

Going to the salon. All 21 participants in the study had been to Shannon prior to my visit. The 16 participants who were interviewed all stated they had regular hair maintenance which fell between an every 4 week schedule to every 3 months. In addition, all the participants interviewed found the experience in the salon relaxing and pampering. None of the participants interviewed made a negative comment about the salon environment; however two participants did state interesting reasons for visiting the salon. One felt coming to the salon was a necessity and the other stated it was therapy. On observation, the clients were very forthcoming with information about themselves and Shannon was very knowledgeable about them.

The remaining chapter presents the results of the data analyses. Findings will be discussed in terms of each of the research questions and includes sections on self image.
personality and hair length, expert hair stylist, and body image. These results were obtained from the previously discussed methods of data analysis. The results from the member check are placed accordingly and noted as such to offer additional support or contradiction to the main findings.

Self Image

The first research question ("How does a woman's choice in hair style reflect her self image?") was examined using information gained from the interviews and follow-up questionnaires. Self image, as previously defined, is an individual's perception of one's self (Coon, 1992).

Importance of hair. With the participants' hair representing part of the self, it was essential to determine the importance these participants placed on their hair. A third of the participants felt their hair was not very important regardless of their scheduled routine hair care.

To develop an understanding of their hair in general, the participants were asked to describe their feelings about their hair. With the exception of participants with short hair, the participants portrayed their hair negatively. For example, participants made statements that their hair was either too thick or too fine. Some found their hair just annoying in general as stated by Rachel. However, the participants with short hair described their hair as an asset and ultimate accessory. As the interview progressed, participants were asked additional questions about their hair and positive aspects of their hair and selves were evident. They stated their hair was special to them because it made them feel good, in that it is different and offers comfort due to its consistency especially
when other things are not. Continuing with this positive notion, the clients also stated their hair has given them a different perspective which has taught them about their “self.” Paula remarked that she found she was, “a little bit more fun and free because (she) took a risk with (her) hair.”

In the member check, participants were asked if hair is important to a woman’s sense of self and if it reflects her personality and body image. Four participants agreed with the sense of self and personality. Sheila stated that, “...people are very serious about their hair reflecting who they are.” Renee remarked, “It can change how we see ourselves and how others see us.” In contrast, Dana commented that she does not look at her hair as being part of her body image. This concept will be discussed in more detail later.

*Personal freedom.* When asked how their hair reflected their identity, participants were across the board in descriptions. Some focused on their own personality traits, stating that their hair was either very dramatic or practical yet not boring which they felt exemplified themselves. Others found their hair reflected their identity because of its mood. Jessica explained, “your mood, how it’s (hair) done, you’re in a good mood. bad hair day, you’re not.” Another interesting comment made from Rachel was that she felt her hair was a trademark. This notion was also confirmed by another client, Chloe, who stated, that hair “…can be a brand for some women.” Rachel continued that she found her hair to be a comfort and felt she needed as much hair as possible. She was, “…afraid to go get it all cut off cause maybe too much of (herself) is exposed so its like (her) little security blanket.” Hair being a source of comfort was also repeated by other participants.
**Freedom of choice.** Some participants admitted to significant others playing a role in their hair decisions and others stated that their hair decisions were affected by fashion and Hollywood.

After completing the data analyses, it was clear that these participants were influenced on many levels, although they were not quick to admit who influences their hair decisions. First and foremost, the largest influence was the woman’s own thoughts as to how her hair should be styled. This was quickly made apparent by almost all of the participants. Another person who the participants found to be influential was their hair stylist. This influence was dependent on the relationship the participant had with the hair stylist. The effect an expert has on the participant will be later discussed in more detail.

Significant others and society affected a participants’ final decision about their hair style. Significant others were influential to participants when they vocalized to participants what they expected and preferred as a hair style. Society affects hair decisions through fashion and trends but also through employment. Some participants felt that they needed to keep their hair a certain style due to the demands of their job. Samantha gave details on the situation created by society and the workplace. She stated due to, “... the type of job (she) had and because it influences (her) income (she) had to conform to a certain look because that was most profitable for (her).” Samantha, employed in the service industry, had to maintain longer hair in her work environment to ensure her income which is based on tips. Upon leaving that setting she cut her hair to a short length she was happy with.

The participants from the member check also felt they were free with their hair choices yet were influenced by others. For example, Renee stated that she decides what
she wants however she also finds her family’s input to be valuable. Alicia also stated that she makes, “...the choice that I want about how I like my hair.” yet she also stated that she “...would like to be stylish or what the style society thinks is cool.” This continues to demonstrate the tension between feeling as though there is personal freedom and yet finding oneself in the confines of other’s impressions.

Anxiety. Another concern with self image is the anxiety provoked by making change. Participants changed their hair for many reasons and some did so to change their sense of self. For example, Megan stated she would change her hair so she could, “wake up and see someone new....” Some participants found when confronted with a crisis, they would cut off their hair. Making this dramatic change to their hair helped the participants with their life experience. These women discovered they had a better attitude and more confidence. Sarah stated she cut her hair off and colored it red which, “…made me feel more power...in (an) uncontrollable situation.” In fact, most participants, stated they had a life experience where they cut their hair off which helped them in the situation and made them feel more in control. In addition, participants found changing their hair was a discovery mission for themselves. Katie stated she, “always had this long hair. I always felt like I looked stuck at 20 or 21, then when I got my hair cut I felt more mature. I felt like it fit the role that I was playing, a mother, career, wife”.

Participants would also make a dramatic change to their hair because of relationships. Emily, like others, commented that a reason for changing her hair would be because she was not, “…feeling very good about myself, (or had a) break up with a boyfriend....” Another reason participants stated they were receptive to change was due to boredom.
Although these participants have many different reasons for changing their hair, the foundation for the transformation is seeking out a new identity.

When making changes to their hair, the participants remarked they had limited levels of anxiety. In fact participants felt more anxiety when a significant other was involved or they had fear of the unknown. Mostly, these participants concern was for their hair not to look bad; especially if their significant others played a role in communicating to them what looks best.

The member check participants also found they had limited anxiety when making changes to their hair. The main reason for their anxiety they stated was that they wanted to look good. As with how others influenced their anxiety when making changes, the participants were not in agreement. Two participants stated they had anxiety based on whether their spouse would find their hair attractive. The participant’s prior knowledge of a spouse’s dislike of a particular hair style provoked anxiety for the client. On the other hand, Renee disagreed with having anxiety induced by significant others, because, “they always support my changes and want me to feel good.” This opposing view suggests how a person’s anxiety may or may not develop based on outside influences.

Self-actualization. It can be assumed that all of these participants are at least in the third stage of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Their simple needs are being met and they have the resources to visit this particular salon and hair stylist. The amount of outside influences a participant allows will affect the stage they are placed in. As Paula stated, the only influences on her hair decisions are herself and her “expert” hair stylist. However, she later stated that if others have a positive perception of her hair then it makes her feel good. This need for affirmation from others does not place her high on
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. In fact many participants remarked that they look for confirmation from someone significant in their life. Another participant, Melissa, has self-actualized, in that she allows her “expert” hair stylist to do as she wishes. She has moved past the need for outside influences such as her spouse or society and is satisfied with her life. Losoncy (1992) writes the client who is self-actualized has “…no limits to how (the hair stylist) can help this client, who has no limits” (p. 116). To further examine outside influences, participants were asked their opinion of other women to establish how expectations are developed within society.

Overall, participants were categorized in the fourth level of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, which is esteem needs. This is based on the participants needing affirmation from significant others and society in general. Participants who have reached self-actualization, have spent years visiting Shannon which has developed an important trust relationship which allows for their collaboration on making the appropriate hair decisions.

*Perception of another woman.* Shannon’s clients were asked to comment on other women’s hair during the interview process. These participants were candid about their feelings towards other women’s hair. The basic response from participants was whether the other woman had really “good” or “bad” hair. Some participants stated they were jealous of a woman they saw who had a “good” hairstyle. When discussing another woman’s hair, Melissa wondered, “how long they have the same hair cut. if it’s something that they realize is so important.” While, Erica mentioned she was concerned about the amount of time the person spent on achieving a particular hair style. Sarah remarked on a woman’s hair as being part of their image. She stated, “I think it’s really
important, I think it reflects how they feel about themselves.” Although Emily did not
find her hair to reflect her own identity she does enjoy when others “have really funky up
to date cool haircuts.” This demonstrates how as a society women affect other women
with their hair decisions in that they develop concepts of how one another should look.
Even though, these participants were able to vocalize their concerns about another
person’s hair, they did not necessary feel that society was influential in their own hair
decisions. In addition, these views continue to demonstrate how a woman’s hair has an
association to the self.

Negative self image. There were previous moments when a participant received a
hair cut and felt as though she did not look good. These perceived bad hair cuts sent the
participants into a whirlwind of negative emotions. Not only were they upset they paid to
look this way but they were angry and depressed. Nancy summarized this best when she
stated that she, “…felt ugly, less secure, I felt heavier, every part of me, every negative
part of myself seemed to be enhanced.” To remedy this difficult situation, participants
went to a different hair stylist, tried rectifying it at home, which only made it worse, or
simply hid it under a baseball cap or bandana. These types of moments establish how
emotions are affected by hair choices. As previously mentioned, participants remarked
that when they have a good hair day, they are feeling good and how having a bad hair day
can result in a bad mood.

Summary. Overall, findings indicated that hair choices are based on the perception
of one’s self as self image which includes a participant’s sense of personal freedom
through the choices she makes. Part of her decision-making process is based on the
surrounding influences which includes significant others and society. In addition, the
anxiety involved in this decision process seems limited in nature. The anxiety that does develop revolves around the general concern for wanting to look good and making those around the participant happy with her hair. A participant’s self image is also based on the perception of others which, as noted previously, participants were capable of developing an opinion of another woman’s hair. Since hair was associated to the participant’s sense of self, it is important to look at the aspects that define self image which include personality and body image.

**Personality**

Self image is the reflection of an individual’s personality, ability and body image (Coon, 1992). Having developed an overview of a woman’s self image through her hair choices, it is important to examine the individual facets within self image. The first facet to be examined is the participant’s hair choice and her personality. As previously discussed, participants were provided with a personality questionnaire on which they marked traits they felt described their personality. These traits were established from McCrae and Costa’s five factor model which includes: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. These factors will first be examined on an individual basis.

**Neuroticism.** The personality checklist utilized individual traits that were on either end of a continuum. For the neuroticism continuum, the following traits were listed: (neurotic) fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, guilt, disgust, unable to cope with stress versus (non-neurotic) calm, even-tempered, relaxed, and able to cope with stress. On this continuum, only women with chin length hair had the majority percentage on the non
neurotic side of the continuum. These percentages were 80% versus 28% (neurotic). The other women had less discrepancy between their continuum percentages. As an entire group of participants, their overall percentage was 48% (not neurotic) versus 7% (neurotic) on the continuum. This suggests the participants overall do not demonstrate neurotic behaviors. For the neuroticism analysis, refer to Table 1.

**Extraversion.** The traits listed for the extraversion end of the continuum were: assertive, active, talkative, upbeat, energetic, and optimistic. At the opposite end of this continuum the following traits were listed: reserved, independent and shy. Within this continuum, the participants in all hair length categories had even percentages on both extremes of the continuum. In addition, the participants as a whole also had even percentage on this continuum suggesting they did not have as a whole the extreme personality trait of extraversion. For the extraversion analysis, see Table 2.

**Openness.** The openness continuum utilized the following traits on the personality checklist: active, imaginative, attentive to inner feelings, intellectual curiosity, and independent judgment. Whereas, the opposing side of this continuum listed: conventional in behavior, conventional in thinking, and familiar experiences as traits. Only short hair length participants had the majority. These participants had 86% (open) versus 0% (not open). When examining the participants as a whole, there was not an uneven distribution of percentages within the continuum. Refer to Table 3 for the openness analysis.

**Agreeableness.** The agreeable continuum accessed the following traits: sympathetic to others and believe in others. On the other end of the agreeable continuum, skeptical of others and competitive in nature were listed traits. Two types of hair lengths had a
Table 1 Neuroticism Continuum Analysis

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Table 2 Extraversion Continuum Analysis

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Table 3 Openness Continuum Analysis

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<td>Short /Overall %</td>
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<td>X</td>
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majority percentage on this continuum. The first group of participants, those with shoulder length hair, had 75% (agreeable) versus 12% (not agreeable). In addition, participants with chin length hair had a majority of 90% (agreeable) versus 0% (not agreeable). Looking at the participants as a whole, another majority was found with the participants overall scoring 70% (agreeable) versus 27% (not agreeable). See Table 4 for the agreeableness analysis.

Conscientiousness. The traits listed for the final continuum, conscientiousness, were: purposeful, strong-willed, and determined. The opposite extreme of this continuum had the following traits listed: unorganized, undependable, unreliable, procrastinate, and unmotivated. Several hair lengths had a majority percentage on the conscientious side of the continuum. Participants with shoulder length hair received 50% (conscientious) versus 10% (not conscientious). Participants with chin length hair had a majority of 80% (conscientious) versus 24% (not conscientious). Participants with short hair also had a majority percentage of 67% (conscientious) versus 13% (not conscientious). As a group, these participants did not have a majority percentage on either side of the continuum. Refer to Table 5 for the conscientiousness analysis.

Summary. The componential analysis examined revealed a connection between hair length and personality traits. To continue to develop this idea, follow-up participants described photos of four woman with four hair lengths, long, shoulder, chin and short length hair. These descriptions are to follow and continue to establish the results previously mentioned. In addition, the componential analysis will continue to be accessed in examining hair length across traits. This will determine if any particular hair
Table 4 Agreeableness Continuum Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clients</th>
<th>Sympathetic to Others</th>
<th>Believe in Others</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Skeptical of Others</th>
<th>Competitive in Nature</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoulder /Overall %</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>13</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
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Table 5 Conscientiousness Continuum Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clients</th>
<th>Purposeful</th>
<th>Strong-Willed</th>
<th>Determined</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Un-organized</th>
<th>Un-dependable</th>
<th>Un-reliable</th>
<th>Procrastinate</th>
<th>Un-motivated</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
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lengths demonstrate overall extreme personality traits opposed to the above specific trait with specific hair length.

*Hair Lengths*

Although it was important to examine the individual personality factors within the componential analysis, it is also imperative to view the results across the factors by hair length. The hair lengths were sorted by long, shoulder, chin and short. These hair lengths continued to be examined through the percentages gained from the personality continuums’ averages. This view of the analysis will establish any extreme traits within a particular hair length. Appendix B3 illustrates the percentages obtained in examining the five factors as a whole across a particular hair length.

Personality traits were also examined with hair length by participants describing other women’s hair by photos provided to them as part of the follow-up questionnaire. In addition, these participants also described themselves in a simple open-ended question allowing them to choose their own words. These descriptions continued to substantiate the association between personality and hair length. Reviewing the results from both the componential analysis and the descriptions will establish the trends between hair length and personality traits.

*Long hair.* As a group, participants with long hair were very even in their averages on both ends of the combined continuums from the personality questionnaire. The percentage on the left extreme of all the personality continuums was 35% versus the right extreme of 35%. This suggests that the participants with long hair do not have extreme
personalities. See Appendix B3 for overall personality continuum for participants with long hair.

When the follow-up participants described the photo of a woman with long hair, they used the following terms: down to earth, natural person, easy-going, comfortable, not a big risk taker. Examining the componential analysis, participants with long hair did not score drastically on any extreme, suggesting they are not big risk takers and are easy-going.

A participant in the follow up questionnaire with long hair, Paige, wrote her hair demonstrated that she was cute and stylish and she wanted others to perceive her as having these characteristics. These traits do not demonstrate anything extreme within her personality and continued to establish this view of long hair women as having an "easy-going" personality.

Shoulder length hair. Participants with shoulder length hair, as a group, also had an even distribution of their percentages with the overall personality continuum; having 25% on the left extreme versus the 37% on the right extreme. Again participants with shoulder length hair do not overall demonstrate any extreme traits. See Appendix B3 for overall personality continuum for participants with shoulder length hair. However, as shown within the individual personality traits, these participants tend to be more agreeable and conscientious.

Participants writing about the photo of the woman with shoulder length hair used the following descriptions: peaceful personality, professional, striking, adorable, a little shy, secure, wants acceptance, conservative. These descriptions illustrate consistency between the two types of participants: those who were provided with the personality
questionnaire and the participants who examined photos of women in the follow-up questionnaire.

One of the follow-up participants, Renee, has shoulder length hair and wrote that she would like for hair to, “...portray a pleasing image....” In addition, she wants to be perceived, “…as being comfortable with who and what I am… (as well as) convey a confidence in myself....” Participants with shoulder length hair want acceptance while appearing confident. These findings are substantiated by the mentioned data analyses.

**Chin length hair.** As a group, participants with chin length hair also did not demonstrate any overall extremes with their personality. Their left extreme percentage was 49% versus their right extreme percentage which was 42%. Even though the overall personality percentages do not show any extreme behavior with the personality continuums combined, they had majority of traits in the individual factors of non-neuroticism, agreeableness and conscientiousness. See Appendix B3 for overall personality continuum for participants with chin length hair.

The follow-up participants described the woman in the photos with chin length hair as outgoing, daring, confident, risk taker, very secure, and she knows her own mind. Brianna was a follow-up participant with chin length hair. She wrote that she wanted to be perceived by others as out-going and confident, in addition to hoping this was how her hair portrayed her. This coincides with the information gained from the descriptions of the photos in that chin length participants want to be viewed as confident and secure.

**Short hair.** Participants with short hair, as a group, also did not have a large difference between their two extreme percentages from their combined personality continuums. Their percentage on the left extreme was 57% which is marginally higher
than their right extreme of 27%. See Appendix B3 for overall personality continuum for participants with short hair. These clients did have majority percentages within the individual traits which were the openness and conscientiousness traits.

The final photo of a woman with short hair was described as outgoing, secure, adventurous, carefree, wild, energetic, and confident. Several of the traits listed by the follow-up participants suggest a person who is open when using carefree, wild, and adventurous. The follow-up participant with short hair, Sarah, wrote that she wanted to be perceived by others as confident, smart and fun. These traits continue to establish the connection between hair length and personality. Participants with short hair are confident, carefree and adventurous which are aspects of the openness and conscientiousness traits.

Other connections to hair choice. Other commonalities were developed between the descriptions of the photos and the componential analysis. The first established connection was with shoulder, chin and short length hair. The follow-up participants described these three hair length pictures as all being secure, and participants with these hair types all had a majority on the conscientiousness trait. In addition the participants with shoulder, chin and short hair types who participated in the follow-up questionnaire all wrote they wanted to be perceived as confident. Another trait that crossed hair lengths was agreeableness. Both the shoulder and chin length women had a majority percentage in that they were sympathetic to others and believed in others. Interestingly, both the shoulder hair length and chin length hair participants had similar traits which suggests the closeness of their personality types would be why they have hair lengths that more similar to each other than any of the others (short to long).
From the member check, the participants were hesitant in stating hair length was a connection to personality and preferred to say that hair style was a connection to a person’s personality. Sarah was the only participant to agree that hair length reflects personality traits. She stated, “...Not everyone can wear short hair or is willing to wear short hair....” Alicia strongly disagreed because she felt hair length was reflection of a person’s lifestyle and in fact she keeps her chin length hair style to save time in the morning preparing for work. Even though Alicia disagreed with personality traits and hair length, she prefers to be practical and stated her hair length was practical for her life. So an aspect of her personality is still being displayed in her hair choice.

Summary. Participant’s hair length does seem to be related to their personality traits. These participants chose the hair length that is most comfortable for them and this seems to be related to their personality. Participants with short hair were more open than the other participants, which was demonstrated in their non traditional hair choice as well as in their personality questionnaire. Participants with shoulder and chin length hair had similar personality traits as a result of their hair lengths being closer in length than the two other extremes (short and long). Although there was some conflict with the member check, the end result was that a person’s hair length is chosen based on aspects of a person’s life which includes their personality. Alicia did not agree that her hair length was a reflection of her personality, however, she prefers to be more practical in nature and so her hair is easily managed. This demonstrates an aspect of her personality.
Expert Hair Stylist

This section focuses on developing the effect Shannon has on a participant’s self image based on her expertise. The research question was “How does a stylist’s expertise affect a woman’s view of her self image?” The data analyzed for this research question was obtained from the interview in which participants were asked their definition of an expert hair stylist. This question was followed by a question asking to what extent the participant would allow an expert hair stylist to make changes to her hair. By focusing on the responses from this section of the interview, a participant based definition of an expert hair stylist was obtained.

Definition. Of the participants interviewed, all provided their definition of an expert hair stylist which resulted in a spectrum of answers. The definition Shannon provided at an earlier time and was reiterated by some of her clients was an expert hair stylist examined the whole picture, considering skin color, shape of face, condition of hair as well as an expert is up to date on the latest styles and training.

Some participants could not describe an expert hair stylist and simply stated Shannon as their definition of an expert hair stylist. Others classified an expert hair stylist as someone who is confident, consistent, and appears together. Jessica maintained that an expert hair stylist is, “someone that communicates with you, listens to your needs.” These factors seemed important to being an expert, however, they do not reflect a person’s ability. Therefore it is possible to be confident and not be an expert. Finally one participant stated she determines an expert hair stylist by his/her personality. Again, this does not demonstrate a necessary characteristic of an expert.
Combining the participants' individual definitions of an expert hair stylist results in defining an expert hair stylist as a person who is confident and consistent in examining the whole picture, which includes a person's skin color, shape of face, and condition of hair. It is also important for an expert to be current with the latest styles and training which will assist in communicating to the individual what would be best for him/her to meet maximum potential.

In the member check, all participants agreed on the provided definition of an expert hair stylist and stated it was the hair stylist's job to know what was best for the client. One participant stated that, "I think Shannon is a good example of this kind of knowledge level." This further substantiates the participants' view that Shannon was an expert under their definition of an expert hair stylist.

Influence. Once a participant has determined she is in an expert's hands by her definition, this does not necessarily mean that the expert hair stylist has free reign. Only a few participants stated Shannon had complete control over designing their hair. Melissa stated she was Shannon's, "...palette, her canvas;" this participant has self-actualized with her hair and stylist. Melissa, as previously discussed, also has a positive self image. Others placed limitations on the extent to which they would allow total freedom by an expert hair stylist. Cheryl wanted some control over the decision making processes and remarked, "...we come to some agreement, she knows what I want, then she can know what I really need and take it from there." This demonstrates that the participant is willing to look her best but only within her comfort level.

In the member check, the participants agreed that they placed limitations on an expert in making hair decisions. Sheila stated that she allows the hair stylist to make most of the
decisions but she would put limits on if she felt anything was too bizarre for her. The other participants echoed these sentiments with the exception of Dana who does not place any limits on an expert hair stylist.

Summary. Although participants stated that they had been in the presence of an expert hair stylist, they still limited themselves to the influence the expert could have on them. Most of the participants were confined to what they felt was best for them and only after that did they allow for the expert to make changes. In addition, for this research, Shannon has been considered an expert and based on the participants’ perception; she is also an expert by their definition. Shannon was able to provide participants with a change in self image by changing the participant’s hair style but only when the participant had the willingness to change. Only a few of the participants described this moment of change. One participant’s readiness for change will be examined in further detail later.

Body Image

How does a woman’s hair choice reflect her body image? This is the final research question and was examined through analyses of the interview and follow up questionnaire data. One problem that was presented immediately was that participants were not associating their hair with their body image. For example, Kimberly stated that hair is connected to body image because, “it’s a whole package (and) …you should be concerned about your hair and your body.” But when asked if changing hair was changing your body image, Kimberly stated no. Most participants did not make a connection between their hair and body image, yet while having their hair styled, they
would think about the need to lose weight and that a particular hair style would help them seem not so shapely. In fact, Sarah remarked, "...I'll cut it really short when I think I'm thin."

*Concerns about body image.* As previously mentioned, the interviews immediately demonstrated that the participants were defining body image as something other than their outward appearance. Rachel explained her body image was more about her health than her hair. When answering other questions regarding body image, participants did voice concerns about their hair length and weight. Chloe stated that she is, "...hoping the longer my hair is offsets how big my hips are."

In the member check, participants were asked if longer hair made a person appear thinner. All of the participants disagreed with this statement and Renee remarked that longer hair could, "...make people less attractive or look rounder or heavier...." Yet in other questions regarding body image, weight and hair were apparent issues. For example, Alicia is concerned that her current hair style is not flattering for her current weight situation.

Continuing with body image and the original definition provided for this study, Paula's remarks about body image and hair were more accurate with this study when she stated, "...I think it's other people's perception and my own perception so if they like it they make me feel good." Another participant, Melissa stated her hair was an "accessory, (she thought) it adds an extra benefit...." She goes on to explain, though, that when you change your hair you should also change something about your clothing or make-up.

*Additional information on body image.* Since there was difficulty in determining the connection of body image with hair due to what seemed like participant confusion with
the definition on body image, the follow-up questionnaire focused on body image using the word appearance. Having made this correction, participants answered questions on a Likert scale regarding their appearance and their hair. All the follow-up participants marked an 8 and higher to the importance of hair to their appearance. In addition, 4 out of 5 participants agreed that when changing your hair you are changing your appearance. These 5 participants also marked high scores for the importance of their appearance as well as their happiness with their appearance.

The member check participants were asked if changing your hair also changed your body image/appearance. Three participants agreed and one participant strongly disagreed. The other participant was in the middle on this issue stating, changing your hair is changing your appearance and not your body image. She considers body image as appearing fatter or thinner. The participants that did agree stated that their hair changes were dependent on their weight changes. On the other hand, Dana disagreed and stated she does her hair in the mood she is in, rather than concerns for changing her image.

**Summary.** Overall, participants were conflicted with the idea that hair and body image were connected and this resulted in their inconsistent answers. Although they were not ready to admit their hair was part of their body image, participants later would respond they choose hair styles that they felt were appropriate for their body shape. In addition, Shannon also concurred that women sometimes change their hair in response to their body image. This demonstrates that although there is confusion regarding body image, most participants do consider their body image when considering different hair styles.
Personal Narratives

To further demonstrate corroboration within the several data points, two participants will be examined in detail. The first participant to be examined, Rachel, was categorized as not being actualized and, in fact, seemed to have several issues with her “self.” The other participant, Melissa, was categorized as a self-actualized client.

Rachel was interviewed and completed a personality questionnaire. She did not demonstrate behavior that would lead to self-actualization and in fact thinks that most women find their hair as annoying as does she. She has very long hair and has no intentions of cutting it shorter. She does not take as much care of her hair as she would like to but thinks it is important to her. She admits concerns about cutting her hair shorter because, “…maybe too much of myself is exposed, so it’s my little security blanket.” Although cutting her hair may reveal too much of herself, she also finds her hair irritating. She thinks that her long hair as it is sends a message that she is approachable and has a softer touch. She is easy going with people and does not want to shock anyone. Her definition of an expert relies mostly on the stylist’s personality and not their abilities. Since she keeps her hair simple this could be the reason why she is not concerned with a stylist’s ability in cutting her hair. Once when going through a difficult period, she cut her hair off herself to release some anger. She found that it helped her situation. She does not see her hair as part of her body image, in fact, she associates her health with body image.

In Rachel’s personality questionnaire, she marked embarrassment on the neurotic continuum and even-tempered, relaxed and able to cope with stress on the opposite end. In the extraversion continuum, she marked optimistic but shy. She did mark attentive to
inner feelings and independence of judgment which conflicts with her interview statements. She may be attentive to her inner feelings and is trying to hide them or does not understand her sense of self. At the opposite continuum, Rachel marked that she was conventional in behavior and had fear of the unknown. Keeping her hair long to be approachable fits in traditional standards set by society. Rachel also marked that she was competitive in nature (not agreeable) which conflicts with her idea of being appealing to others. In the conscientiousness continuum, she marked strong-willed and unorganized and procrastinates. Overall, Rachel marked traits on both ends of the continuums which was not consistent with her interview comments.

One of her final interview comments was that she was happy; however this seems inconsistent with her personality questionnaire and interview answers. The fact that she uses her hair as a source of comfort and is afraid of cutting it because she will expose herself suggests that in reality she is not attuned with her sense of self. In addition, she seems to be aware of men preferring long hair when she discussed her hair as a trademark. Finally, based on Losoncy (1992), Rachel is not moving towards self-actualization. I believe she has some issues of “self” that have not been dealt with and to handle the problem, she admittedly, hides behind her hair.

Melissa also participated in the interview and personality questionnaire. It is important to examine her more in depth because she offers a view of a participant who has self-actualized based on Losoncy’s (1992) theory. Melissa’s current hair style is a short cut and when asked how her hair reflects her identity, she stated, “Ever changing, from calm to wild.” She allows Shannon complete control with the understanding that Shannon will provide her with the best style for her. Although she does not set any
limitations on her changing hair, at one point she did try to please her husband with longer hair when he said, ‘‘...don’t cut your hair, I like it long....’’ He mentioned to her on several occasions that he would prefer for her to keep growing it longer, until she could not handle it any longer and had it cut how she wanted. Melissa also referred to hair as an accessory which she found to be an ‘‘extra benefit.’’ During this interview, she also discussed how she allowed her children to experiment with their hair because she recognizes its importance.

Melissa’s personality questionnaire substantiates her previously mentioned demeanor. She did not mark any of the neurotic traits and, in fact, choose calm and relaxed out of the neuroticism continuum. As far as the extraversion continuum, she marked assertive, active, talkative, upbeat, energetic, optimistic and independent. All of these were touched on either within the conversation from the interview or her general behavior during the interview. For example, she was very positive and upbeat during the conversation. She also marked all the traits listed in the openness continuum and the agreeableness continuum leaving the opposing end of the continuum blank. For the conscientiousness continuum, she checked purposeful and strong-willed.

Melissa’s traits actually correspond with the person interviewed. She was very enjoyable to talk to due to her understanding of the significance hair has on a person’s sense of self. In addition, she conveys this sense of personal freedom through her children in allowing them a sense of expression. She has a good concept of herself and how those around her can be influential yet she also understands how to control those outside influences. Melissa has self-actualized because she allows Shannon control based
on developed trust with the understanding that Shannon will provide her with the best hair style for her.

These two in-depth examples further demonstrate how personality, body image and the influence of an expert reflects a participant's sense of "self." It also reveals the importance of developing a better understanding of women to help them learn more about themselves. With this understanding, women could have more meaningful lifestyles where they are happier by making choices that lead to personal freedom.

Conclusion

To establish findings, it was important to develop an understanding of women through interviews and questionnaires. After analyzing the data, results could be determined in conjunction with the research questions. Upon evaluating the several aspects of self which include personality and body image, it can be determined there is a connection between hair and a woman's sense of self.

Although participants felt they had personal freedom in their hair choices, they were easily influenced by others which included their significant other and society. In addition, most participants experienced some anxiety while making changes to their hair which was a result of changing the self. A facet of the self is personality, which established a connection with hair length. One can access aspects of a these participant's personality by their choice in hair length which can also be viewed as hair styles. In addition, participants were also concerned about how their hair choice would influence their body image. Although there was difficulty in participants associating body image with their hair, most mentioned an association with their weight and their hair choices.
The self was also influenced by an expert hair stylist when the participants allowed for the opportunity of change. Participants were able to agree on a definition of an expert however they did not agree on the amount of input the expert has on the participant's hair decisions. Participants felt as though they had the knowledge of what was best for their hair. This further demonstrates concerns about self image and how the self is reflected through hair choices.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

After obtaining the data and conducting analysis it is important to determine how these results provide information about the original research questions. In addition, these results will be reviewed in comparison to other research in the field. It is also important to examine the limitations of this study and how future research can further the understanding of a woman’s perceived self.

The following section includes the main research questions of this study and briefly summarizes the overall findings.

How does a woman’s choice in hair style reflect her self image?

♦ Participants viewed their hair as part of their “self.”
♦ Outside influences contribute to a participant’s sense of self.
♦ Participants made changes to their hair in hopes of making changes to their “self”.
♦ Participants experience limited anxiety when making changes to their hair, especially if they are influenced by their significant other.
♦ When participants experience a bad haircut or color they do not feel good about themselves.
What are the developing trends between hair styles and personality traits?

- Participants did not demonstrate neurotic traits.
- Participants, as a group, were not extremely extraverted or introverted.
- Participants with short hair tended to be more open than not.
- Participants with shoulder length hair and chin length hair were more agreeable.
- Participants with shoulder, chin and short length hair were conscientious.
- Participants were consistent in describing personality traits.
- A participant's hair length demonstrates her comfort level with her "self" which includes her personality.

How does a stylist's expertise affect a woman's view of her self image?

- An expert hair stylist is a person who is confident and consistent in examining the whole picture, which includes understanding a person's skin color, shape of face, and condition of hair. An expert should be current with the latest styles and training which assists in communicating to the client what would be best for him/her to meet their greatest potential.

- Even if a participant regards the hair stylist as an expert, this does not necessarily mean she will have a great amount of influence over the participant.

- In acknowledging the stylist's expertise, a few participants gave her complete control.

How does a woman's hair choice reflect her body image?

- Participants mostly associated body shape with body image.
Participants chose hair styles that they perceived to benefit their body shape.

Some participants saw their hair as an accessory to the body which could contributed to their feelings of "self".

The following section of this chapter reviews the findings associated with self image, personality, expertise and body image. It also considers the limitations involved in conducting this study. This study also has implications in feminism and educational realms. In addition, this research is not comprehensive, therefore future research would be beneficial to understanding women and their sense of "self." Since women are an important percentage of the population, it is crucial to develop an understanding of their view of self and the ramifications this information has within our society.

Self Image

A woman's choice in hair style is a reflection of her self image as defined by Coon (1992) who states that self image is an individual's perception of one's self. Participants stated that looking good meant feeling good. In addition, a participant's perceived comfort level with herself would also influence her choice of hair style. This includes how she feels others perceive and influence her in conceptualizing her "self". This was further established when participants examining another woman's hair mirrored how they saw themselves. To make decisions regarding "self" requires a sense of personal freedom as discussed by Rollo May.

Rollo May's (1981) theory on personal freedom involves anxiety produced from making choices that are not within a person's conventional thinking. He states:
Every human experiences this anxiety when he or she exercised the freedom to move out into the no man's land of possibility. We can escape the anxiety only by not venturing—that is, by surrendering our freedom. I am convinced that many people never become aware of their most creative ideas since their inspirations are blocked off by this anxiety before the ideas even reach the level of consciousness. (p. 191)

Participants felt that they were free to make their hair choices as long as it was within their comfort level. They did not consider anything that they would have classified as too "bizarre" for their own hair choice even if it would enhance their appearance. Additionally, those around the participant were influential in providing their opinion of the participant's hair and affected the participants' perceived level of comfort. This suggests that most participants did not have a considerable degree of personal freedom, since they were confined by their own "self" and the perception of those around them. These influences also increased the likelihood of a participant having anxiety while considering a particular hair style, especially if the participant did not feel it would have been well received.

Losoncy (1992) discussed why women do not commit to change due because of their negative anxiety. He listed five reasons of which only two were confirmed in this study. The first type of anxiety was not being accepted by others. This concern was discussed by many of the participants, for example Cheryl commented, "I want to look like I'm with the in-group...." The other reason was concern over change in identity. Both of the reasons limited the participants in making beneficial changes. The other listed reasons which were not substantiated in this study were: 1) monetary cost, 2) whether or not the
service will work. 3) not worthy of the change. These three types of negative anxiety were not confirmed because they were not addressed as issues when discussing anxiety with the participants. The lack of obtaining this information suggests they are not vital reasons for these participants.

Losoncy (1992) further describes the positive anxiety that facilitates change. He suggested three levels of anxiety which are low, moderate and high. Within this study, participants were either on the low end of anxiety in which they had no interest in change or in the high level of anxiety. These participants were making changes to their hair because they were motivated by the experiences they were having within their lives. It did not appear as though any of the participants were on the moderate level of positive anxiety where they feel as though they are missing a part of their life but do not have the energy to expend on a new idea. When discussing their anxieties, most participants they either committed to change (resulting in the positive high anxiety) or were not committed to change at all (resulting from a low level of positive anxiety). Due to the extreme representation from participants, the moderate level of anxiety was not discussed or developed further.

Continuing with anxiety and sense of personal freedom, Polkinghorne (2001) states that, individuals who are knowledgeable of their “real self” can make decisions within their environment that leads to personal freedom. However, he also concludes that individuals who seek approval from others influences their self and hinders the possibility of actualization. Polkinghorne (2001) writes: “The voice of one’s actual self as a force or growth and actualization of positive possibilities can be drowned out by conceptual schemes imposed by society and enforced by significant people in one’s life” (p. 83).
Participants from this study allowed for significant others to play a role in their decision making process about their “self” which resulted in anxiety about change. Dana admits to having, “…induced feelings of anxiety, I am always nervous about how (my husband) is going to like it.” Those who did not feel influenced by others expressed personal freedom through choices made and according to the literature were self-actualizing.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs also provides a framework for the concept of self-actualization which includes seven stages. Due to the demographics of the participants, the first three stages in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs was not an issue. If participants were unable to provide food and shelter, they would not spend the money required to get their hair styled. It was possible for participants to be in the third stage of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs which is belongingness and love. However, during the interviews, it did not appear that anyone was having difficulty with companionship. of course, this may have been information not divulged. Participants not capable of achieving personal freedom due to the influence of those around them, fall in the fourth level of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Based on this study, most of the participants are in this stage because their prior needs of physiological, safety and belongingness are being met. However they still needed to receive acknowledgement from others which, according to Maslow, holds them back from progressing through the next stages.

The next two stages in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs are growth stages which includes need to know and understand and aesthetic needs. Due to the interview questions from this study, participants were not categorized in either of these two stages. The participants were assessed for their sense of personal freedom and the influences they allow in their decision making process.
Only a few participants seemed to have reached the final stage of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs with their hair choices in that they understood self and allowed the expert to take them to their greatest potential. Losoncy (1992) writes that, “There are no limits to how (an expert) can help this client, who has no limits” (p. 116). As defined previously by Leclerc, Lefrancois, Dube, Hebert, and Gaulin (1998), “self-actualization is a process through which one’s potential is developed in congruence with one’s self-perception and one’s experience” (p. 79). These participants did express personal freedom as well as positive notions about all aspects of their “self”. An example of a self-actualized participant is Brianna, who described her hair as awesome and did not create any limitations when changing her hair. She allowed Shannon to work without hindrance to achieve her ultimate style. As stated by Losoncy (1992), a client who is self-actualized is someone who “…is moving toward expressing (herself) fully in life and becoming what (she) is capable of being-actualizing (her) potential” (p. 111).

This study confirms that a participant’s hair style is a reflection of self image. For example, participants chose hair styles that were comfortable. Alicia prefers to be practical and has a hair style that is easy for her lifestyle. Several factors within self image were examined with the first being the perception of personal freedom. Participants considered what they wanted as priority, however, what they wanted involved influences from their significant others as well as society. In addition, these outside influences also created anxiety for the participants when they were considering hair changes. If the participant was able to make decisions without being affected by these influences, she would be more likely to self-actualize. Self-actualization requires an individual to have an understanding of “self” and to make the choices in life that lead
to a more meaningful experience. As previously determined, only a few participants were self-actualized, whereas most were influenced by others where, "...one conforms to others' standards" (Losoncy, 1992, p. 110). These findings are consistent with the self-actualization literature previously mentioned.

*Personality*

It was important to examine personality since it is an integral part of the "self". The participants' personalities were examined utilizing traits listed from McCrae and Costa's five factor model. "What we have been calling personality- enduring dispositions in the domains of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness- thus forms only one part of the self, although certainly a major part" (McCrae & Costa, 1990, p. 162). Several trends were established between hair lengths and the personality traits previously listed. Since participants chose their own hair styles, they very likely selected styles that were comfortable for them. Their comfort level reflected an aspect of their personality which is an important component of "self."

Having developed an understanding of how hair is connected to a participant's personality also assisted in determining other aspects of a person. For example, a majority of participants with short hair displayed openness traits. As McCrae and Costa (1990) write: "...the enduring personality disposition of Openness to experience is in part characterized by the ability to keep an open mind, to consider new opinions, and, at least occasionally, to change attitudes and values" (p. 157). The traditional expectations of men and larger societal views of women are with longer hair which goes against the participants with short hair. Since the short hair participants demonstrated they are open
to experiences explains how they are able to cope with the ramifications of going against a traditional style.

Participants also voiced concerns about changing their “look” because they were then changing their “selves.” McCrae and Costa (1990) discuss that a person’s ability to make personal choices may change that person’s life direction. This reiterates May’s theory of anxiety with change and the constraints provided by others as a result of being influential in the decision making process. As discussed previously, Polkinghorne (2001) assesses that a person’s self can be lost by the influences of others. Participants not reaching their greatest potential were also not leading fulfilling lives. They are limited by the opinion of others and are not able to make the personal choice for change.

Having identified several trends formulated between personality and hair length it was important to examine the basis this information had with a participant’s sense of self. As discussed with self image, participants choose hair styles that were within their comfort zone. In addition, it was determined that making personal choices could lead to new directions. However if the participant is inhibited by the opinion of others, she will be less likely to have a full sense of personal freedom. Rachel, as discussed previously, is a good example of someone who has not ascertained a full sense of personal freedom.

**Expertise**

Since this study viewed Shannon as an expert hair stylist, it was important to determine the participant’s perception of an expert hair stylist. As defined by the participants, an expert hair stylist is a person who is confident and consistent in examining the whole picture, which includes: a person’s skin color, shape of face, and
condition of hair. It is also important for the hair stylist to be abreast of the latest styles and training which would assist in communicating to the individual what would be best for him/her to meet their utmost potential. The participant’s definition was the basis for determining whether an expert is influential in hair style decisions. Although a myriad of definitions were proposed for an expert, most participants felt Shannon was a good example of an expert as reiterated by Nancy. When asked how influential she was in their hair decisions, participants were limited in the control they allowed Shannon.

Again, participants preferred to stay within a comfort level where they would allow for some leniencies in hair changes. However, if the expert offered a style outside of their level of comfort, the participant did not even consider the idea regardless of the benefits. Therefore, even though it would potentially be an improvement and help the participant’s self image, the suggestion made by the expert hair stylist was not executed. Since most participants were not comfortable with allowing an expert total control this suggests that these participants are not entirely comfortable with their sense of self. Losoncy (1992) discusses these constraints when he writes, a person “...is ready for something new but only if it is safe” (p. 116).

Since the expert has received the education within her field and has reached classification among her clientele as an expert, she has the knowledge to make suggestions that would be beneficial to the client. If a client has self-actualized, the two would work collaboratively in maximizing the client’s hair style.

The requirements of an expert as defined by Glaser and Chi (1988) are: 1) Experts excel mainly in their own domains, 2) Experts perceive large meaningful patterns in their domain, 3) Experts are fast; they are faster than novices at performing the skills of their
domain, and they quickly solve problems with little error, 4) Experts have superior short-
term and long-term memory, 5) Experts see and represent a problem in their domain at a
deeper (more principled) level than novices; novices tend to represent a problem at a
superficial level, 6) Experts spend a great deal of time analyzing a problem qualitatively.
7) Experts have strong self monitoring skills (p. xvii).

When defining an expert hair stylist, participants did not necessarily use the
previously mentioned qualifications. However, they did feel it was important for the hair
stylist to be educated and utilize their knowledge effectively. Even though Shannon was
a self-proclaimed expert, she fulfilled several definitions of an expert, that of her
participants and of those provided by research. First, many participants used her as an
example after providing their definition. In addition, Shannon does satisfy several of the
characteristics of an expert as mentioned by Glaser and Chi (1988). For example, based
on observations, Shannon has a thorough amount of background knowledge which was
utilized when confronted with a problem. She understood the problem situation and
conveyed the information to her clients, so that the client had an understanding of the
situation. For example, Shannon begins her session discussing with the participant their
hair and the condition that it is in. Moreover, she explains to them what is necessary to
maintain healthy hair. In addition, Shannon immediately accessed new information, so
she could retain the information to a point where it was automated. Finally, Shannon has
been in the industry and studying hair for over 10 years, the amount of years suggested
by Simon (1995) that it takes to become an expert.

Expertise as defined by the participants included several aspects that when combined
offered a general definition of an expert hair stylist. Additionally, participants did not
give Shannon free reign when making their hair decisions unless they were self-actualized. As determined by the characteristics listed from Glacier, Chi and Simon. Shannon does fulfill some requirements of an expert. Shannon plays an active role in obtaining knowledge and providing this knowledge to others in an ongoing effort to retain the information for automatic recall.

**Body Image**

Although there was difficulty for the participants to associate their hair with their body image, they did make comments about choosing a type of hair style that seemed appropriate for their body shape. There were also a few participants who stated that their hair was part of their body image which involved the perception of one self as well as the perception of others. These participants also stated that when changing your hair you should also change other parts of your image, for example, clothing. The concept of body image, as defined in this study, is “...an individual’s formation and perceptions of a series of internal and external stimuli” (Krueger, 1989, p. 11). Internal stimuli are considered to be the development of one’s self and one’s perception of one’s self in the world whereas external stimuli are the perceptions of others influencing the self. Participants viewed their body image mainly in terms of body weight. Typically, these concerns about body weight were not positive associations and the participants wanted a hair style that complemented their perceived body shape and weight. Steinem (1992) discusses the influences society has on women’s conceptualization of body image and body weight. She states, “...women with body-image or eating disorders are not a special category, just more extreme in their response to a culture that emphasizes thinness and
impossible standards of appearance for women instead of individuality and health” (p. 228). She continues to state that women with a positive sense of self also have a positive sense of body image.

A study by Noles, Cash, and Winstead (1985) investigating body image, physical attractiveness and depression, hypothesized that depressed individuals would have a less positive body image than those who were not depressed. Their study demonstrated that those who have a negative body image also tended to be depressed. In the current study, similar results were found in that participants who gave negative descriptions about their hair also had negative concerns about their body. The participants who were satisfied with their hair did not address these concerns. For example, Melissa and Brianna, both self-actualized participants, did not mention any concerns about their body and seemed generally happy with their overall sense of “self.”

Similarly, Befort, Nicpon, Robinson Kurpius, Huser, Hull-Blanks, and Sollenberger (2001) examined the effects a romantic partner has on a person’s body image and self esteem. To complete this study, they used 116 female freshmen who completed numerous measures that included a Self-Esteem Scale, a Body Consciousness Scale, a Weight and Appearance Scale and a Contour Drawing Scale. In the discussion of their findings, they remarked: “As a woman receives weight-related criticism from a romantic partner, she may generalize this disapproval to her entire self, thereby experiencing more shame” (p. 415). Along these same lines, the researchers concluded that the more involved in the relationship, the more the participant’s sense of self is attributed to the relationship which could result in these negative feelings about self. The current study demonstrates how participants can be limited by their body image especially if a
significant other is involved. If the participant’s sense of self is defined within her relationship, she would be less likely to have an independent sense of self which includes her own perception of her body image. For example Dana stated, “It’s more important that the way he looks at it (her hair) than the way I look at it.” She continues to discuss how her husband is very influential in her hair decisions, which is an aspect of body image.

Body image includes the perception of one’s self as well as the perception of others in relation to one’s self. Most participants found body image to consist of their body shape and were concerned with having a hair cut appropriate for their body shape. Participants with a positive sense of self did not discuss any negative issues with their body image however some participants not happy with their hair, also felt negatively about their body. This could be the result of outside influences affecting the participant’s perceived “self.” If her sense of “self” is identified by the relationship she is in and the views of the other person, this could allow for additional negative views of “self.”

Upon review of the findings, there is consistency with the literature among the topics. Additionally, choice was a key factor in a person’s sense of self. If the participant is making her own hair decisions, she is more likely to have personal freedom as well as being self-actualized. However, participants who rely on outside influences have a limited sense of personal freedom. These participants also rely more on the perception of others to characterize self. Shannon’s role was vital as an expert in this regard. She can be a positive influence when a participant is ready for a change by assisting them in developing their sense of self. Personality and body image are both aspects of self and are vital in a person’s sense of self. Personality has a connection to personal freedom in
that the choices made, could lead to a new life direction. Finally, the participants define body image as it relates to body shape or body weight. Therefore, when discussing body image with participants, many of them responded about their weight issues.

Limitations

Qualitative Research. As defined by Merriam (2001), “Qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (p. 5). Employing this type of research results in information being specific to the culture examined and therefore can not generalize beyond the participants that participated in the study. The goal of this study, however, was to understand a woman’s sense of self as related to her hair choices which required access to a naturalistic setting. Merriam (2001) wrote that, “Rich, thick description is a defining characteristic of ethnographic studies” (p. 156). With little research available in this area, it was necessary to access this type of qualitative method which allowed for a deeper and richer understanding of the environment.

The current study was considered a micro-ethnography and this has its limitations in that it assesses only one social setting. Although it has limitations, this method provided an understanding of the participants as a group and allowed for obtaining rich and descriptive data. For example, had another form of qualitative research been conducted, the story of Shannon’s clients would not have developed. For example, using a case study method would have resulted in only researching Shannon as the focus and therefore
confining my research to examining one factor within the setting. This research was
developing the sense of self in many aspects within one social setting.

Importance of Findings

This study provides a glimpse of how women view them “selves” and how women
can be influenced by others. This research is informative for several domains. For
example, Hugo (2000) recognizes the possibility of individual differences among women
as learners. She states: “Feminist researchers strongly urge practitioners to think anew
about what a woman’s “self” is and what shapes it” (p. 205). The concern is to better
understand the individual to maximize their learning environment and acquiring
knowledge. This research provides different aspects of how these participants view them
“selves” which could be informative in a learning environment. For example, Butters
and Cash (1987) provided a successful treatment program to help students. Their
subjects reported a more accurate sense of body image resulting from the treatment then
at the beginning of the study where they stated they were 25% bigger than their peers.
Having the necessary information regarding the differences among women and their
perceived environment would lead to developing effective educational programs aimed at
improving self image. These programs would result in women being more confident in
their learning environments (e.g. college) and developing a stronger sense of self.

This research is also important to feminism, in that, it evaluates the views of women
and the experience involved in the situation. Reinharz (1992) writes, “…feminists are
interested in women as individuals and as a social category” (p. 241). To greatly impact
future generations as well as individual women, it is advantageous to understand a
woman’s sense of self and the impact it has on society.

Additionally important to feminism and developed within this study is further
understanding of women. Although the goal of this research was not to generalize, the
voices of the participants may reach others who have the same sentiments. This research
would be valuable in educating women about who they allow to be influential in their
lives and the effects it has on their perception of life. When a woman recognizes how
others contribute to her decision making process (positively or negatively), and gains
control of those outside factors, this may lead to a sense of personal freedom as
discussed, for example by Rollo May, Maslow, McCrae and Costa. In obtaining personal
freedom, women can lead life experiences that are more meaningful and develop a
complete sense of self.

Another important aspect of this research could affect the hair industry. Salon owners
and hair stylist can examine this information in determining how women may respond to
different treatments. Receiving additional training on understanding the client’s sense of
“self” will help the hair stylist maximize a woman’s experience in the salon. With the
knowledge of a client’s “self,” the hair stylist can make suggestions on hair changes that
are within the client’s comfort range. This will allow for the hair stylist to be more
effective in their work environment as well as provide additional satisfaction to the client
for a successful hair change.
When reaching a certain level of frustration about external influences (i.e. husband, society), a few participants in this study decided to ignore this outside pressure and cut their hair. In doing so, they were much happier with the choice made. This raises questions about what extent does a person have to be aware of external influences to make actual changes that enhance personal freedom? Were these clients aware at the time that making this one decision would lead to the sense of freedom they are enjoying now? Or, were these participants ready for change but were unaware of the reason for the change? Understanding the catalyst for making changes to the self which, in this case, goes against society’s expectations would also enhance the understanding of women and their relationship with society. Future studies could address these important questions.

With little research in the area of salon psychology, additional research is needed in this area to fully understand the connection between the beauty industry and a woman’s sense of self. Steinem (1992) recommends, “We need to take the politics of beauty seriously because it affects every part of our lives, from our vision of who can be powerful to the comfort of our feet and the freedom of our hair” (p. 220). Hair styles are recognized as being essential to the unique individual, however, little empirical evidence is available but plenty of thought provoking information is available in the popular media. For example, John Sahag, a New York City celebrity hair stylist was quoted as saying, ““The shape of a cut is almost an extension of your soul, it should capture your personality. It’s about feeling. It is personal. Looks are very individualized—it should suit the person’s image.”” (“In the Mood”, 2002) To help the client visualize a new hair
cut suited for her and with the advancement of technology, a program demonstrating a new hair style to a client before the change is permanent would be interesting to examine. Would women be more likely to change their hair if they can visualize the suggested outcome and as a result have a more completed sense of self.

This study was conducted with participants who maintained their hair regularly and paid salon fees. It would be necessary to examine women who do not visit the salon regularly. These women may not associate self with their hair which would be an opposing view to the information presented in research. In addition, these participants live in a metropolitan area which may result in different views of their “self” than those in a rural area. Research would also have to be conducted in rural areas to determine if geography is a factor in a woman’s sense of self as related to hair choices.

The participants in this study were all Caucasians which may have resulted in different concepts of their “self” in regards to their hair than those from another culture. For example, Jacobs-Huey (2001) examined the conflict involved in different “hair” cultures and its role in identity. It would also be important to examine the cultural differences involved in a person’s sense of “self” and how it is portrayed with the body.

Many of the participants made reference to how men affect their hair decisions. It would be important to research how men perceive women and their expectations of the opposite sex. It would also be valuable to conduct future research on a larger scale with men and women participants to determine the affects of the significant other in making decisions about the “self.”

In addition, future research would provide necessary information to those who educate women in the work force or in the classroom. As defined by Tisdell (2000),
feminist pedagogy is the “interactive process of teaching and learning, particularly in relation to what facilitates women’s learning” (p. 155). To maximize a woman’s learning environment, first, the individual must be understood and appropriate programs be created to provide a successful learning environment.

Not only is it important to understand and educate women but also adolescent girls and their sense of self. Gaining knowledge on the adolescent’s sense of self within social contexts and how these affect perception of self is important in terms of education. Furthermore, it would be essential to examine the changes incurred through developing the self and how it affects learning. It would also be beneficial to providing knowledge to parents about how their child perceives herself and how they can benefit her learning environment and self discovery. A parenting style can be conducive to a child becoming a self-actualized college student. In Dominguez and Carton’s (1997) study, they determined authoritative parenting had a significant correlation with college students self-actualizing. When parents are prepared and understand that the home is also a learning environment, they can provide structure that encourages learning which will continue through the student’s life. It is important to understand women at all ages and provide education for growth at all ages. At some point, all women are learners as well as teachers, may it be in the classroom, in the home or in the work environment.

Since research conducted on adolescent girls may result in different findings due to a lack of significant other, it would be interesting to examine a longitudinal study. After gaining knowledge on adolescents’ sense of self and their influences to their perceptions, a program could be facilitated to encourage a more accurate and centered sense of self which would not be based on the influences of others. To complete this research a
follow-up study of their relationship with others and their sense of self within society would be examined. Would they be more advanced in their thinking than the participants in this study?

Conclusion

Conducting research in the salon environment developed a rich understanding of the culture within Shannon’s room. This study examined and reviewed how participants viewed their sense of self and the aspects within the self. In addition, a deeper awareness developed of how these participants are affected by those around them which is influential in developing their sense of self. This study also examined two aspects of self image; personality and body image. Both aspects were identified as affecting the participant’s hair choices. The main concern when choosing a hair style was based on levels of comfort with self and the outside influences (i.e. significant others). An additional influence can be an expert however, the expert has the knowledge base to provide women with suggestions that can lead to better hair styles which can provoke a positive sense of self. As mentioned in the previous discussion, there is limited research on this topic and additional studies are required to further develop this concept as well as show consistency between views of men and women. This research is also important to those in the salon industry wishing to further their understanding of their clientele. It is also important to the study of women and developing the sense of “self” which is useful in many learning environments. Understanding the differences in women and creating an environment that maximizes their learning potential will give them the knowledge to be more in touch with their “self” as well as their surroundings. When a woman has an
accurate understanding of self, she will have a fulfilling life experience through making the choices that maximize and benefit her sense of "self".

The salon environment contributed to inward changes in helping women make decisions that are appropriate for their uniqueness. An example of this is Katie who was originally conflicted with her choice in hair style and felt the daily demands of trying to work with it. However, it never felt right nor did she feel that it looked right. On one particular day while upset with her husband, she cut her hair. Of course, his initial response was that she should not have cut her hair shorter. Katie's sense of conflict at this point was resolved. She realized in that moment that his opinion did not matter. Finally she had a cut that fit her so much so that she felt she was more mature and "...fit the role that I was playing, a mother, career and wife." Interestingly, her husband came to like her hair choice after they both received affirmation from their group of friends including other males. In other words, Katie's husband found her hair cut to be acceptable after he saw the social acceptance she received from friends. Katie, however, liked her hair cut immediately and did not need any social reinforcement. Katie is a perfect example of how choices made can increase a sense of personal freedom.

Choice plays an important role in the literature on self image (e.g. May and Maslow) and within this study. The choices one makes can lead to a sense of personal freedom if the person is not overly influenced by others. However, if the choices made by a person are dependent on the views and perceptions of others, he/she will be conflicted due to the demands and expectations of society and significant others. This study examined how women are unique, especially when they make choices based on their awareness of self.
When utilized, these choices contributed to personal freedom which leads to a richer and more fulfilling life.
APPENDIX A1

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

- Self-Actualization Needs
- Aesthetic Needs
- Need to Know and Understand
- Esteem Needs
- Belongingness and Love Needs
- Safety Needs
- Physiological Needs
## APPENDIX B1

### COMPONENTIAL ANALYSIS FROM PILOT STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clients</th>
<th>Stability</th>
<th>Extra/Introvert</th>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Agreeableness</th>
<th>Conscientiousness</th>
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<td>Insecure</td>
<td>Talkative</td>
<td>Quiet</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Conforming</td>
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<tr>
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### APPENDIX B2

**EXTRAVERSION COMPONENTIAL ANALYSIS**

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<th>Talkative</th>
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<th>Energetic</th>
<th>Optimistic</th>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Samantha</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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APPENDIX B3

GROUP COMPONENTIAL ANALYSIS

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<tr>
<th>Clients Hair Length</th>
<th>Neuroticism Continuum</th>
<th>Extraversion Continuum</th>
<th>Openness Continuum</th>
<th>Agreeable Continuum</th>
<th>Conscientious Continuum</th>
<th>Overall Personality Continuum</th>
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<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>0.166</td>
<td>0.555</td>
<td>0.222</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoulder</td>
<td>1/28</td>
<td>6/16</td>
<td>13/24</td>
<td>5/12</td>
<td>8/20</td>
<td>3/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.375</td>
<td>0.541</td>
<td>0.416</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chin</td>
<td>1/35</td>
<td>16/20</td>
<td>16/30</td>
<td>7/15</td>
<td>18/25</td>
<td>7/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.533</td>
<td>0.466</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.466</td>
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<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>0.416</td>
<td>0.722</td>
<td>0.444</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall Factor</td>
<td>8/105</td>
<td>29/60</td>
<td>52/90</td>
<td>18/45</td>
<td>45/75</td>
<td>14/45</td>
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<td>Continuum</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.577</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.311</td>
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</table>

L = Left Extreme of Continuum
R = Right Extreme of Continuum
APPENDIX C

Personality Questionnaire

Please check any of the following that applies to Your Personality

___ Fear
___ Sadness
___ Embarrassment
___ Anger
___ Guilt
___ Disgust
___ Unable to cope with stress

___ Calm
___ Even-tempered
___ Relaxed
___ Able to cope with stress

___ Assertive
___ Active
___ Talkative
___ Upbeat
___ Energetic
___ Optimistic

___ Reserved
___ Independent
___ Shy

___ Active
___ Imaginative
___ Attentive to inner feelings
___ Intellectual Curiosity
___ Independence of judgment

___ Conventional in behavior
___ Conventional in thinking
___ Prefer familiar experiences

___ Sympathetic to others
___ Believe in others

___ Skeptical of others
___ Competitive in nature

___ Purposeful
___ Strong-Willed
___ Determined

___ Unorganized
___ Undependable
___ Unreliable
___ Procrastinate
___ Unmotivated
Follow-up Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions using a scale of 1 to 10. 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest.

1. How important is your appearance?  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
2. How happy are you with your appearance?  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
3. How important is your hair to your appearance?  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
4. How happy are you with your hair?  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
5. When you change your hair, are you changing your appearance? Explain.


Using the attached pictures of women, please describe each woman’s personality according to their hairstyles.

6. 


7. 


8. 


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9. ________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

10. What does your hair say about yourself?

_____________________________________________________________________

11. How do you want others to perceive you, and your hair?

_____________________________________________________________________

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Member Check Questionnaire

Please read the following statements. Circle whether you agree or disagree with the statement and write your reaction on the line provided. If you need additional space, please use the back side of this paper. Complete sentences are not necessary. Your response is very valuable and will provide necessary feedback about the information obtained during this research study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am free with the hair choices I make.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Hair is important to a woman’s sense of self and reflects her personality and body image.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. When changing your hair you are changing your body image/appearance.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A women’s hair length reflects her personality traits. For example, a women with short hair is less conventional and more open.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The longer the client’s hair is, the thinner she appears.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. When I make changes to my hair I have some anxiety.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Significant others induce feelings of anxiety when I make changes to my hair.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I place limitations on an expert hair stylist when cutting or coloring my hair.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. When making hair decisions, I am influenced by significant others.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
10. When making hair decisions, I am influenced by society.  

11. I perceive an expert hair stylist as someone who is confident, consistent and abreast of current styles and training. She examines the whole picture which includes: a person's skin color, shape of face, and condition of hair. Her expertise can bring me to my maximum potential.
APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

1. How many times or years have you been to Shannon?
2. How often do you get your hair done?
3. On a scale of 1 to 10 how important is your hair? 1 not important. 10 very important
4. Describe your hair with your gut feeling?
5. In general, are you happy with your hair?
6. How do you think women's hair is part of their image?
7. What do you think when you see other women's hair?
8. If you like their hair will you approach them?
9. Do you like to receive comments on your hair from strangers?
10. Men?
11. Loved ones?
12. How do you think your hair is a reflection of your identity?
13. How would you define an expert hair stylist?
14. Does an expert hair stylist influence your hair decisions more?
15. To what extent would you allow an expert hair stylist to make changes on your hair?
16. Who else influences your hair decisions?
17. Does society affect your hair decisions?
18. What type of experience are you having when you get your hair done?
19. If you made a dramatic change to your hair what would be the reasoning?
20. Do you have anxiety when making changes to your hair? What is the cause?
21. When you are getting your hair done and looking in the mirror what do you think about?
22. Do you think about your body?
23. How do you think your hair is connected to your body image
24. When you change your hair are you changing your body image?
25. Are you happy with your overall look?
26. Do you feel you can be free with your hair decisions, there are no boundaries?
27. Have you had any life changing experiences?
28. Would you say they were good or bad experiences at the time?
29. Did you make major changes to your hair during that time?
30. How did it help with your life experience?
31. Have you ever had a bad hair cut or color?
32. What did you do to fix your hair?
33. Do you remember how you felt at the time?
34. How do you use your hair to express yourself?
35. What has your hair taught you about yourself?
36. What makes your hair special to you?
37. Do you believe your hair is the best it can be?
A Transcribed Interview

Q. How many times or years have you been to Shannon?
   A. 1 year

Q. How often do you get your hair done?
   A. Once a month

Q. On a scale of 1 to 10 how important is your hair?
   A. 10

Q. Describe your hair with you gut feeling?
   A. Too Thick

Q. In general are you happy with your hair?
   A. Yes

Q. Do you think women’s hair is part of their image?
   A. Yes

Q. What do you think when you see other women’s hair?
   A. They either need help or it’s really good (laughs), it usually one extreme or the other, you feel sorry for them, they need Shannon

Q. If you like their hair will you approach them?
   A. Yes

Q. Do you like to receive comments on you hair from strangers?
   A. Yes

A. Men

Q. What do you think when you see other women’s hair?
   A. Now that I’m married uh, sure

Q. Loved ones?
   A. Yes

Q. Do you think your hair reflects your identity?
   A. Well I hear that my grey hair is a trait of my Native American ancestry so maybe its like has to do with my heritage the dark thick long hair maybe

Q. How would you define an expert hairstylist?
   A. To me someone you’re always happy with your hair when you leave, you don’t have to go home to re do it, so that way they understand you and your hair

Q. Would an expert hairstylist influence your hair decisions more?
   A. Yes

Q. To what extent would you allow an expert hairstylist make changes on your hair?
   A. I would say probably 80 percent free reign.

Q. Who else influences your hair decisions?
   A. I would say whatever the current styles or trends are in Hollywood that’s what you see picture of.

Q. How does society affect your hair decisions?
A. It does because that what I said you look at people still stuck in the eighties you just think do they not see what’s going on in the world, that styles have changed. so yes if you have any fashion conscious or style you know it definitely influences it cause they always have the latest styles.

Q. What type of experience are you having when you get your hair done?
A. Its relaxing because you’re pampering yourself.

Q. If you made a dramatic change to your hair what would be the reasoning
A. Just change cause I get bored real easily, so that’s where I think Shannon made the comment that she found my wild side, it’s my hair cause I like to change it a lot.

Q. Do you have anxiety when making changes to your hair?
A. No

Q. When you are getting your hair done and looking in the mirror what do you think about?
A. Finished product.

Q. Do you think about your body?
A. No

Q. How do you think your hair is connected to your body image?
A. It’s a whole package I guess, I mean you should be concerned about your hair and your body.

Q. When you change your hair are you changing you body image?
A. Not my body image, no.

Q. Are you happy with your overall look?
A. Sure.

Q. Do you feel you can be free with your hair decisions, there are no boundaries?
A. It depends on if I am working or not, like if I’m in a professional environment, now me moving to Korea or say if I lived in England I could probably go real wild I could fit right in but in a professional office I do have to watch my image.

Q. Have you had any life changing experiences?
A. Finally.

Q. Would you say they were good or bad experiences at the time?
A. Both.

Q. Were going to do good then bad.
A. Some were good some were bad, looking back.

Q. Did you make major changes to you hair during the good time?
A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember what you did differently?
A. Well now I look at them all as good back then I looked at them all as bad.

Q. Okay then lets do them as they were bad.
A. Yes I did dramatic changes, Yes.

Q. Do you remember what you did differently?
A. Yes

Q. What did you do?
A. I cut it off very short and I bleached it

Q. Did it help with your experience?
A. Oh sure, at the time.

Q. Were you trying to find something by doing this?
A. Yeah myself.
Q. Have you ever had a bad haircut or color?
A. Yes.
Q. What did you do to fix your hair at the time?
A. I went to a professional and had to cut it.
Q. How did you feel at the time?
A. Horrible, depressed, didn’t want to go to school.
Q. Do you use your hair to express yourself?
A. Yes.
Q. Has your hair taught you anything about yourself?
A. Yes.
Q. What makes your hair special to you?
A. Well everybody wishes they had it because its thick, but special to me. I guess if I feel I’m having a good hair day then I feel good about myself and vice versa so it does play a big role in how you feel.
Q. Do you believe your hair is the best it can be?
A. No, there’s always room for improvement.
APPENDIX E

**Bad Haircut and/or Color**

**Action**
- Went to a professional
- Went to a new hairdresser
- Traveled, begged, pleaded for someone to fix it
- Lived with it
- Rectify it myself
- Made it worse
- Wore a baseball cap
- Wore a bandana

**Feelings**
- Negative Emotions
  - Upset that I paid for it
  - Horrible, Depressed
  - Mad, Anger
- Disappointed, Upset
- Better than what I had
- Negative Image
  - Like Crap
  - Ugly, less Secure, heavier
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