WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY EXPOSURES OF BLACK HAIRCARE PROFESSIONALS IN SOUTH LOS ANGELES

Teniope Adewumi
Environmental Health Sciences
Industrial Hygiene
MS Student
INTRODUCTION
HISTORY ON BLACK HAIR

Understanding the history around Black hairstyling is important in understanding significant cultural implications of Black women’s hair.

Multi-faceted and infused with race, class and political influence.

Research around Black hair and health intersects with the deep history and current attitudes around what Black hairstyles represent.
Black hair styling can be traced as early as 500 BC in elaborate artwork showing African women in twist braids and other hairstyles.

In 1900, Sarah Breedlove McWilliams Walker better known as Madame CJ Walker revolutionized the hair industry by retooling what is the modern day hot comb, as well as a line of product that help straighten women's hair. Walker's hair products were so popular, she became the first Black self-made millionaire.

Starting in the early 1920s, chemical straighteners came on to the market, providing more permanent solutions to hair straightening. These chemical straighteners have not changed much from their original recipes.

The 90's represented what The Color Complex, The Politics of Skin Color in a New Millennium, calls the neo-soul era which was marked with a variety of hairstyles from natural, and short cuts to weaves and chemically processed hair.

In the early 1800's black women used mammy legs, known to most now as a stocking cap and grease, to help ease their hair flat onto their heads.

From the 1950's on, weaves, wigs and other extensions help aid women, and particularly black women, in hairstyling. Straight hair was held up as the ideal, with pressure from both within the black community and from outside it, to confirm to this standard.

In the 1960's, black natural hairstyles re-emerged, most prominently as Afros. Afro's not only signified a change in hairstyle preference, it signified a more radical ideas around rejection of the dominant ideas in western culture around straight hair. Whether trying to make a political statement or not, for Black women, wearing their in afro or other natural styles signified a type of political thought.

Current times with #teamnatural and #teamrelaxed

Source: Natural Hair Revolutionary Report- Black Women for Wellness
Black women make up the largest amount of beauty product consumers—spending nearly 5 billion annually (twice as much as any other ethnic group)

The industry is expected to reach upwards of 500 billion in several years (taking into account an increase in online marketplaces)

Hair and beauty products such as relaxers and skin lightening creams marketed to Black women contain some of the most toxic chemical ingredients

- Endocrine disruptors
- Carcinogens
- Neurotoxins
- Allergens
Black hair professionals are most at risk because they are exposed to these products multiple times daily and on themselves.

In addition to product exposure hair care professionals also face a wide range of occupational health and safety issues:

- Ergonomics
- Ventilation
- Respiratory disorders
AREAS OF CONCERN
SKIN AND EYE IRRITATIONS

The most frequent contributing factors to skin damage include water, shampoos, detergents, conditioners, hair dyes, bleaches, permanent wave solutions, and components of gloves.

Studies estimated that around 7 out of 10 hair stylists will likely suffer a form of work related dermatitis in their careers.
RESPIRATORY ISSUES

Studies have shown that one of the most prevalent health issues facing hairstylists are breathing and respiratory disorders.

Chemicals such as formaldehyde, ammonia, and bleaching agents have been known to lead to breathing difficulties such as coughing and wheezing, heightened sensitivity, and in some cases occupational asthma.

Asthma and the Black community (almost three times more likely to die from asthma related causes that Caucasians)
ERGONOMICS

Poor posture, standing for long periods, working long hours, and working through breaks are risk factors that lead to increased MSD risks.

Hair styles done by Black stylists can take upwards of to eight hours to complete and many are standing the whole time, working through breaks.

MSDs are the greatest illness burden in the United States contributing to unnecessary pain and suffering, stress, and ultimately loss of income.
REPRODUCTIVE DISORDERS

Studies have shown hairdressers had higher rates of giving births to infants that were small for their age, had major malformations and suffered from early infant death when compared with non-hair professionals.

A recent study determined that the use of hair relaxers is linked to uterine fibroids in young Black women and girls, something that is estimated to affect 80% of Black women over their lifetime.

Women who reported using hair oils and hair perms were 1.4 times more likely for early puberty after adjusting for race, ethnicity and year of birth.
Almost one-third of all products on the market contain one or more ingredients classified as possible human carcinogens.

Women of color in general, particularly Black women, often times use cosmetic products that are more toxic (when tested) than the general population.

In a report by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, occupational exposures of hairdresser or barber are probably carcinogenic to humans.
INVESTIGATIVE FRAMEWORK
OVERVIEW

OHIP

Black Women for Wellness

Me
OVERVIEW

Focus groups
Hair professional surveys
Outreach materials
Future research
FOCUS GROUPS

Overall Health and Wellbeing

Environmental

Occupational
FOCUS GROUPS 2009-2010

Seven focus groups about what specific groups within the Black community knew about chemicals and hair products

- Parents
- Ages 40+
- Black Women
Access to healthier product options

Lack of research

Lack of information dissemination

Willingness to use safer products

Willingness to spend more
FOCUS GROUPS 2014
How long have you all been doing hair?

What is your definition of natural hair?

Do you consider the hair products you use safe? Why or why not?

Have you heard any stories of anyone getting ill or hurt from using certain hair products?

What type of training do you receive when using chemicals in hair products? Do you think it was enough?
“I know women that did full service back in the 70s they had respiratory problems, TB and breast cancer from pressing their hair and breathing it in, they didn’t know back then... so I try to stay away from the chemicals.”

“My friends don’t have fingerprints anymore... my friends can’t go to the DMV and put they hand down and have fingerprints anymore.”

“I wear gloves if its something that I think may affect my health I put on gloves” “We use masks for the chemicals... the chemicals were so strong they give you a headache.”

“I had one perm in my life and my hair fell out, so I knew not to mess with chemicals from that experience.”
When did you have your first perm?
7, 10, 12, 13

Are the hair products you use safe?
I was sold believing in perms. Then it started breaking and its over processed. And it eventually changed the texture.

_Sometimes they label things as safe and then it changes down the line._ I know that the people who make the products want to make money- so there are probably some shortcuts. And in the US they’re allowed to get away with so much.

If the products are not safe, what will get you be able to use the product and why?
If it is effective for the task (curling, sleek)
Price
If I’m not using what I want, its probably price
My products are pricey, but it’s an investment and longevity- but eventually it was worth it and it lasts long.
2011-2013 SURVEY DATA

40 surveys completed
- 80% female/15% male/ 5% gender non-conforming
- 45% 30-44 yo
- 2% 25-29 yo
Services Provided

- Press & Curl: 25
- Hair Dye: 20
- Sister Locs/Twists: 25
- Permanent Waves & Texturizers: 25
- Natural Hair: 5
- Permanent Straighteners or Relaxers: 25
- Hair Extensions/Weaves: 25
Harmful Health Symptoms

- Headache: 11
- Chemical Burn: 10
- Nausea: 10
- Dizziness: 11
- Eye Irritation: 8
- Tiredness: 10
- Skin Irritation/Rash: 9
- Respiratory Problems: 6
- Reproductive Problems: 6
- Chronic Dermatitis: 7
- Miscarriages: 1
- Low Birth Weight: 1
- Infant Death: 1
- Aching Joints: 1
- Back Pain: 1
- None: 1
- Other: 1
Importance of Health Effects on Clients

Protection Methods for Stylists

- 5: Very Much (84%)
- 4: A lot (11%)
- 3: A Little (5%)

- Creams (36%)
- Goggles (32%)
- Aprons (29%)
- Gloves (3%)
2014 CANVASSING

South Los Angeles for Black hair salons:
• Leimert Park
• Baldwin Hills
• Inglewood
• Hollywood

Community Events
• Nappywood
• Afrolicious
• Sangria Sip

Survey incentive
• Coffee shop gift card
Outreached to over 60 salons
- Walk-ins
- Phone calls
- Emails

Collected 22 surveys
- 17 female/5 male
- 48% 30-44 yo
- 40% older than 45 yo
- Experience 5 months to 34 years of service
- 65% learned trade in cosmetology school
- Over 60% worked 30 hours or more a week
Natural hair services
- 61% twists
- 22% sister locs
- 44% locs
- 43% short natural services
- 30% press and curl (on natural hair)
- 35% assorted natural curly styles
PRODUCT USAGE

Half of stylists surveyed created their own products.

Major store bought lines:
- Motions
- Jane Carter
- Mango and Lime

Reasons why stylists choose certain products:
30% of the stylists surveyed indicated that product ingredients and how well a product worked was most important in making a decision about purchasing a product.
57% of the stylists we interviewed indicated that they believed the products they used to very safe

17% believed the products they used were somewhat safe or not safe

61% of hair care professionals indicated that they never received any training on the potential health effects of chemical hair products

65% indicated that they always wear aprons

83% never wear protective eye wear

78% never wear face protection

35% always wear gloves,

35% rarely wear gloves

13% never wear gloves
HEALTH EFFECTS

Have you experienced any of the following health symptoms while working in the salon?

- Other
- Chronic pain
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Dizziness
- Difficulty breathing
- Migraines
- Headaches
- Fatigue/tiredness
- Nausea
- Eye irritation
- Nose irritation
- Skin irritation
Have you experienced any of the following physical injuries while at work?
Do you have a medical history of any of the following health related problems? Check all that apply

- Asthma
- Carpal tunnel
- Chronic dermatitis
- Breast cancer
- Cancer
- Uterine fibroids
- Difficulty conceiving
- Miscarriage
- Low birth weight
- Premature birth
- Birth defect in child
- Other
29. Does the salon have any of the following forms of ventilation? Check all that apply.

- Table fan: 16 (70%)
- Salon ventilation system: 10 (43%)
- Ceiling fan: 8 (35%)
- Window: 10 (43%)
- Second door that opens: 13 (57%)

30. Are you interested in learning more about a safer and healthier workplace? Please check one.

- Yes: 19 (89%)
- No: 2 (10%)

31. Are you interested in meeting other workers or owners to share and talk about a safer and healthier workplace? Please check one.

- Yes: 17 (74%)
- No: 4 (17%)

32. Would you be interested in possible air monitoring at your workplace? Please check one.

- Yes: 9 (36%)
- No: 11 (46%)
OUTREACH MATERIALS

How to disseminate stylist survey information?
How to disseminate information to consumers?
How to address health and safety information gap?
Stylin’ Safely
Healthy Hair Initiative by Black Women for Wellness

shopping for safer products

- Check the label! Look for short labels with ingredients you recognize. For more information on ingredients visit: www.ewg.org/skindeep
- Look for products with key words such as raw and unprocessed
- Consider making your own!

DMDM Hydantoin is a preservative found in several hair and body products used by Black women
DMDM Hydantoin has been known to cause skin irritation such as dermatitis
Check labels and avoid beauty products that contain this chemical

Funded in part by:
California Wellness Foundation
(323) 290-5955
bwvla.org
P.O.Box 292516, Los Angeles, CA 90029
Stylin' Safety
Brought to you by the Healthy Hair Initiative Team at Black Women for Wellness
Black Women for Wellness cordially invites you to:

Stylin' Safely
A beauty advocacy training for hair professionals in the Los Angeles area. This intimate training session will include the latest research on beauty products, best practices for healthy salons, and more.

Monday December 8th
10am-3pm
Breakfast and Lunch served
TO RSVP PLEASE CONTACT US AT (323) 290 5957
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
Black Going Green

Healthy Salon Recognition Program
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
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Dr. Wendie Robbins
For more information visit: Bwwla.org
Paid Summer Internship Opportunity

Gain Hands-On Experience with Workplace Safety & Health Issues

Internship Dates: June 15 - August 14, 2015
Deadline to Apply: Friday, February 20, 2015 (Applicants Notified by mid/late March)

Organization Description

The Occupational Health Internship Program (OHIP) is a national summer program dedicated to help students learn about the field of occupational safety and health (OSH) from those most at stake: working people. Since 2004, OHIP has played a key role in training, mentoring, and inspiring a new generation of OSH professionals to prevent job injury and disease through partnerships with worker and community based organizations. A project of the Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics (AOEC), OHIP has training sites in the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, San Diego, New York City, Chicago, Boston, Marshfield (WI), and New Orleans. Our 2014 projects included the investigation of hazards and the impact on Latino temp workers in manufacturing, the examination of chemicals of concern in black hair products at black hair salons, the improvement of worker health and safety through safer alternatives to toxic paint removers, and the examination of the workplace health and safety issues among immigrant workers in dairy agriculture.

Position Description

Teams of two students are placed with a union or worker organization to investigate job-related health and safety problems among workers, often employed in an under-served or a high hazard job. Projects are designed to maximize interaction between workers and students. OHIP is an applied research experience, where students learn about the OSH field from the workers' perspective. Project work emphasizes worker interviews and worksite evaluations. At the end of the project, teams provide a "give back" product to the workers and their host union/worker organization, present their project at a national NIDSH videoconference, and produce a final report. Commitment is full-time, including possible evenings or weekends.

Qualifications

Graduate and undergraduate students can apply; some stipends are restricted to US citizens. Non-US citizens must supply documentation of permission to work in the US. Undergraduates must have completed two years, preferably in a field related to public health, environmental studies, or public policy. Graduate students in public health, medicine, nursing, or a related field are encouraged to apply. We are looking for students with experience or interest in working with unions or social justice organizations, are organized and self-starting, have good team skills and ideally speak a second language such as Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, etc. We encourage underrepresented minority students to apply.

Compensation

Undergraduate Students = $4,000 stipend
Graduate Students = $5,200 stipend

To Apply

For eligibility info, on-line application and program details go to www.aoe.org/ohip. Additional questions? Contact administrator coordinator Ingrid Denis (idenis@aoec.org, 1-888-347-2632). For further program information, visit www.aoe.org/ohip or email program coordinator Sarah Jacobs (sjacobs@irle.ucla.edu).

For more information visit: aoec.org/ohip