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‘KEEP THAT SAME ENERGY SIS’: AN EXPLORATION OF BLACK WOMEN’S USE OF
OFFLINE RESISTANCE STRATEGIES

by

GABRIELLE A. DONALDSON

Under the Direction of Sarita K. Davis, PhD

ABSTRACT

In the West, Black Women’s bodies have historically been regarded as excessive, hyper-sexualized, and deviant for their curvaceous and often fuller appearance. While these black figures have been deemed socially unacceptable, popular culture depicts a conflicting narrative that welcomes these physical attributes when placed on the white body. A variety of studies exist that consider Black Women’s feelings and use of virtual coping strategies in response to these contradictions; however, few empirical studies exist that discuss how Black Women are employing strategies outside of the virtual to resist these inconsistencies. In response to this shortage of research, this study informed by a phenomenological and qualitative lens gives voice to 8 Black Women between the ages of 18 and 35, to answer the following question. (1) What strategies are Black Women utilizing other than social media to resist popular culture’s contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic?

INDEX WORDS: Appropriation, Black women, Popular Culture, Kimberly Kardashian, Body Perception, Resistance, Curvaceous Aesthetic, Social Media,

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GABRIELLE A. DONALDSON

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2020

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2020

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OFFLINE RESISTANCE STRATEGIES

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my village, both immediate and distant. Thank you all for your reassurances, unwavering support, and abundant prayers. Without your presence physically and spiritually, this journey would have been unimaginable.

Suggies, I love you all with everything in me. Thank you for listening to my long rants and for encouraging me to see the light at the end of this long tunnel. You all have made this process one I will never forget. It's only up from here. I love you all!

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To my chair Dr. Sarita Davis, I would like to thank you for all of the early morning emails and the long late-night phone calls. This research would have been a thousand times more difficult to produce without your calm and patient demeanor.

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Prologue

My mother has five daughters. All of various shapes, sizes, and complexions. All beautiful, capable, and complex women in our own right. The oldest in her youth, lean long-limbed and modelesque, now thick hipped, full-breasted, and boasting a full and rounded behind. The second, then, and even more so now a brick house, with hips you can see from a mile away, voluminous breasts, and the tiniest of waists. My twin, once so slender, one might have even labeled her petite, now although still small in frame, boasts fuller breasts and a rounder behind. The baby who is no longer that possesses the most robust long toned legs and a behind that sits higher than the heavens themselves. Then there's tiny breasted, and once size nine wearing me, who now displays a significantly slender frame. We five, collectively represent an overall assortment of figures that have fluctuated throughout time and space, all seemingly overnight.

From as early as I can remember, I have been fascinated with our bodies. The unprovoked shifts and effortless reconstruction of proportions seemed related to some remote "womanly" magic. Reflecting now, I realize that this prolonged interest also partially derived from the insecurities I developed in response to the ways people acknowledged them. Of my sister's different physiques, the reactions garnered from my second sister seemed to remain a constant within my mind. When I think of the ultimate curvaceous aesthetic, I think of her: full breasts thick hips, nearly nonexistent waist, and a rounded and full behind. Whether dressed up or dressed down, her curves always seem to lead. There is and was simply no hiding her figure, and there never seemed to be a shortage of people who would allow her to forget this fact.

Growing up, I was deeply insecure about my own curvaceous body. My thick legs, in particular, I swore, would be my undoing. The attention I received from them only seemed to sexualize, devalue, and dismiss me as an object. Holding all of these frustrations in, and not

possessing the tools to channel them appropriately, I began to align the sentiments people gave my second sister about her body, with these negative implications. Whether she agreed with these interpretations or not, I held them to be true. As flawed as this stance is now, a part of me cannot seem to escape these residual feelings. Reflecting on an encounter she had when I was about 13 years old, I recall a young boy saying to her, "Damn girl, you so thick, I'll take you to the bathroom right now." Although this boy believed this to be a compliment, for me, then and even more so now, it never truly was. In fact, it appeared to be a remark that refused to add value in her being. It was an acknowledgment that highlighted the contours of her body as an object purely to be sexualized. Through this secondary encounter, the notion that the curves on a Black girl's body were primarily for sexual desire was reinforced. Adding insult to injury, I continuously found myself heavily bombarded with the media's emphasis on the elusively majestic and idolized "slender" woman.

Considering those varied and overwhelming experiences, I now understand that they assisted in casting an uncertain shadow over my understanding of beauty, and where I resided as a thick-legged Black girl, with siblings whose bodies fluctuated between slender and curvy with ease. The curvaceous aesthetic for me, began seamlessly to represent hyper-sexualization, being "too grown," attention-seeking, and a figure unable to fit neatly into society's rigid standards of beauty, unless it was for a sexualized purpose. According to Kelly Mishelle in her think piece entitled "Why Can't Black Girls Be Innocent? Even In Elementary School, I Was Never Seen As A Child," this is a sentiment that many Black girls grow up possessing (2018). Mishelle maintains that black girls grow up with a variety of insecurities concerning their curvy bodies and the attention, and characterization it influences (Mishelle, 2018). These insecurities Mishelle addresses do not simply vanish overnight. This particular brand of uncertainty has a way of

taking root and spreading throughout time. It has taken many years for me to come to terms with the outlandish parameters that make up this Black curvaceous journey. In many ways, I still find myself deeply submerged within its complexities, tirelessly attempting to carve out space where it is routinely denied. This endeavor to create and hold space around Black Women's curvy bodies has driven me to consider how the curvaceous aesthetic is currently being engaged.

Growing up, I was well aware of the complex and ever-shifting beauty ideals of the mainstream, especially as it pertained to the curvaceous aesthetic. I understood that the "blonde bombshell" Marilyn Monroe, and the "Queen of pin-up" Bettie Paige ruled the 50's as fuller figured women. I was even aware of the mass use of bustles in the nineteenth century that was used to achieve a "fuller" look. However, I simply could not wrap my head around how Black Women were still being diminished, although some of them naturally held these fuller figures. Today, in contemporary popular culture, there is an influx of non-Black Women with curvaceous bodies. These women boast figures comparable to the ones I grew up alongside and even at one point possessed myself. These Kimberly Kardashian-esque women with hourglass frames: rounded hips and ample bosoms positioned them on level with the Hottentot, yet they still somehow reside leagues ahead.

As I began to bear witness to the massive rise of these unconventional figures, confusion started to set in about the contradictory nature of it all. I began to ask myself, how are these non-Black women whose bodies emulate the contours of the ridiculed Black curvaceous body, not vilified by their peers, who condemn these proportions on a Black body? How are their enhanced hips, behinds, and breasts considered chic, sexy, fashion-forward, and even innovative, when curvy Black Women seem only to occupy the overly sexualized, fast, or animalistic markets? Considering the variety of spaces Kardashian and women like her are allowed to exist in with

their curvy bodies, and Black Women's inability to possess that same ability has shaped the countenance of this study. These historical complexities and contemporary contradictions have driven this research to examine how Black Women not only respond to these particular issues but how they actively resist them.

1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter discusses the background of the research problem. It addresses the purpose of the study, which is to understand how Black Women are utilizing strategies outside of social media, to resist popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic. It then

highlights the problem statement, the research's overall significance, and the nature of the study. Finally, it concludes with a glossary of terms utilized within the study and their corresponding definitions.

1.1 Background

Historically, the white middle class has regarded Black Women and their bodies as vile, grotesque, and animalistic. As a result of these categorizations, these Black bodies have been situated "outside of the sanctified universe of obligation" (Wynter 1992, p.45), and rendered strangers, misrecognized, and an altogether different species (Wynters, 1992). This violent relationship between Black Women's bodies and the white middle class European Americans can often be seen through depictions that maintain "middle-class, heterosexual, white femininity as the standard" (Hall, 2017, p.78), and Black Women and their curvaceous bodies, as "genetically inferior, and sexually primitive" (Jackson & Weidman, 2005). The most notable example (which this research goes into further detail about later) is South African Khoikhoi woman Saartjie Baartman. A woman whose curvaceous body, particularly her buttocks which was imagined as large and outside of the norm, was paraded around Europe as the not fully human Hottentot Venus, for the entertainment of White Europeans (Anderson et al., 2018). Beyond Baartman, this devaluing, and overt sexualization of Black Women and their bodies can be traced back to slavery and expressed through the unrestrained control White slave masters possessed and enacted over their bodies (Francois, 2013).

Under Article 1, section 2 of the U.S. Constitution 1787, African American slaves represented three-fifths of a person (Anderson et al., 2018). Symbolic of their status as subhuman, Black people were frequently subjected to all manners of abuse and mistreatment by

their white counterparts (Anderson et al., 2018). According to Dionne Blasingame, representations of Black Women during the period of enslavement were limited to a rhetoric that primarily encompassed their sexuality (2012). Viewed as erotic, sexual figures, who ultimately were living, breathing, "breeding grounds" for their masters (Francois, 2013), the discourse surrounding their trauma and rape became instantaneously minimized (Blasingame, 2012). In response to this diminished representation, Black Women and their bodies quickly became alienated from "the sanctity of white womanhood," and thus rendered sexually aggressive and animalistic (Blasingame, 2012). To further push this dehumanization, and devaluing of Black Women and their bodies, stereotypical images such as the Jezebel emerged.

The Jezebel represented a tempting and hyper-sexualized African American woman whose value relied primarily in her sexuality (Anderson et al., 2018 & Donovan, 2007; Jewell, 1993). According to Joel R. Anderson et al., the Jezebel exists as an object of pleasure for others (Anderson et al., 2018 & Jewell, 1993). Implemented during slavery in the 17th century, to justify the rape of enslaved African women by their White enslavers, the jezebel stereotype portrayed Black Women and their bodies as deviant and insatiable. Rendered no more than a body, the Jezebel was considered a "worldly seductress" (Anderson et al., 2018 & Jewell, 1993). However, despite this painfully historic and demeaning relationship between Black Women's bodies under European influence, contemporarily, there has been an influx of this formerly vilified, curvaceous aesthetic on non- Black Women across popular culture landscapes.

Since the early 2000s, there has been a substantial rise of famous white women turned into icons who have established, expanded, and maintained their foothold in the realm of popular culture through the commandeering and manipulation of the curvaceous aesthetic. Possessing a combination of Eurocentric features such as long straight hair, light or white skin tones, and the

heavily vilified curvaceous aesthetic such as curvy hips, thick lips, ample bosoms and large behinds, these women are at the precipice of desire, and achievement in the realm of popular culture. Researchers Rokeshia Renné Ashley and Jaehee Jung, in their study #BlackBodiesMatter, maintain that "White women who modify their bodies to obtain Black Women's culturally appropriate features are respected or applauded more than Black Women with similar features" (2017, p.248). This display of partial respect can be seen rampant throughout popular culture in a variety of ways. For example, in 1979, after her break-out performance in the film *10*, People magazine cited Bo Derek as the catalyst for the crossover of the cornrow craze (Davis & Jones, 2015), and in 2017, Kylie Jenner's plump pout set the internet ablaze. For all intents and purposes, these women had either originated or made these styles popular, and they received the accolades for them while Black Women remain on the margins for them. It is thus abundantly clear that this rising phenomenon of the curvaceous aesthetic within popular culture is one that is not historically reflective of how the West has received Black Women and their curvaceous bodies.

With the oversaturation of women like Kardashian, and her contemporaries across all spheres of popular culture, it is safe to say that the fascination with the curvaceous Black body coupled with the "overvaluing of the European aesthetic" (Awad, Norwood & Taylor, 2015), has resulted in a merging of aesthetics that perpetuate and encourage the picking and choosing of Black Women's features that are suitable and acceptable for the world, and white bodies, but not for the Black Women who possess them naturally. With this contradiction so blatant, this study seeks to understand how Black Women are resisting popular culture's contradictory narratives regarding the curvaceous body. Taking this a step further, it aims to examine how Black Women are utilizing strategies outside of social media to accomplish this feat.

1.2 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to understand how Black Women are utilizing strategies outside of social media, to resist popular culture's contradiction of the curvaceous aesthetic. With this research focused primarily on Black Women and the curvaceous aesthetic, it is easy to attribute Black Women only to this body type. According to Deborah Willis and Carla Williams in their book *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History*, Black Women's image historically has been combined with "colonial possession and domination" (2002, p7) . However, that is not the intent of this study. This study understands that not all Black Women possess the curvaceous aesthetic, and that does not render them any less Black or any less of a woman. This study focuses solely on this particular aesthetic, to emphasize the frequency with which this shape has been transferred between other races (Akams, 2017) for trend and Black Women's resistance of this phenomenon outside of social media platforms.

Exploring resistance strategies outside of Social media is essential to this study because it allows the researcher to arrive at a comprehensive conversation concerning Black Women's bodies and forms of resistance. It is important to note that Social media takes lived experiences and teleports them to a digital realm, a virtual reality that does not exist on its own. This virtual reality is in relation to the physical reality people in the world are positioned in. By focusing on the physical resistance as opposed to the virtual, context can be given that ultimately tethers the concept of virtual resistance to our lived experience.

Participants were solicited from Georgia State University, social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), and through snowball sampling. A total of 8 cis-gendered Black Women participated in one on one interviews, where they were asked questions regarding their

perceptions of the curvaceous images they encounter, and resistance strategies born from their social media experiences. Participants were also asked to discuss how these strategies crossed over into non-virtual platforms. The answers they provide to these questions offer insight into Black Women's perceptions of resistance.

1.3 Problem Statement

Several studies and think pieces exist that consider Black Women, their aesthetics within the realm of popular culture, and their various forms of resistance strategies. Historical research highlights multiple Black Women as strategic in utilizing their platforms and voices for resistance. According to Rana Emerson, "Female Blues culture was grounded in Black feminist consciousness" (2002, p. 117). Blues women such as Ma Rainey, Ethel Waters, and Bessie Smith in the twentieth century consistently offered in their performances and music, sexual subjectivity, and empowerment (Emerson, 2002). The most notable Blues artist Nina Simone verbalized her resistance to dominant hierarchies based on gender, skin tone, and hair texture through songs such as "Four Women," "Backlash Blues," and "To Be Young Gifted And Black" (Le Genre). However, despite the vast historical content that speaks to Black Women's various engagement with resistance strategies, contemporarily, there is a shortage of information when looking at resistance strategies outside of virtual platforms. More specifically, there is a shortage of research that highlights Black Women's non-virtual resistance to pop culture's acceptance of the transference of the curvaceous aesthetic between other races (Akams, 2017) for trend.

In response to popular culture's contradictions concerning the curvaceous aesthetic, we can look to virtual movements #BlackGirlMagic and platforms such as Black Twitter as spaces

Black Women have utilized for resistance; however, an in-depth assessment of resistance strategies outside of the virtual are minimal within the discussion. As such, there is a lack of representation of the full scope of Black Women's resistance experiences, which may hold implications for Black Women who strive to combat this contradiction outside of the virtual realm.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study seeks to contribute to an emerging body of literature on Black Women's use of resistance strategies in response to popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic. Much of the previous research conducted regarding popular culture's fascination with the curvaceous aesthetic, leaves a deficit when considering the effects of its acceptance of non-black women who assume "the Black woman's culturally appropriate features" (Ashley & Jung 2017, p.248), on Black Women's sense of self. This research seeks to examine the complexities between popular culture, the curvaceous Black woman's body, and Black Women's ability to resist these contradictions outside of virtual platforms. Through an Africana perspective, this research attempts to reshape conversations surrounding Black Women's forms of resistance and bodies. This, in turn, will add to liberatory practices and provide implications surrounding understandings of body perception and resistance for Black Women.

1.5 Nature of the Study

Qualitative methodology is the most appropriate method to utilize for this study on understanding the perceptions and experiences of Black Women who use strategies outside of social media to resist popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic. With a focus on collecting data from an unmanipulated environment, the qualitative approach to inquiry

demonstrates a deep level of interest in the study's participants. Additionally, the analysis of data from an unaltered environment aids the researcher in establishing themes that focus on the precise reflection of the voices of the participants (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). In this study, the use of one-on-one interviews allowed the participants the opportunity to use their voices to answer questions, and ultimately shape their stories.

1.6 Research Question

The primary research question guiding this study is as follows:

1. What strategies are Black Women utilizing other than social media to resist popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic?

Resistance is of great importance to this study. Given popular culture's blatant contradictions regarding Black Women and their curvaceous bodies, this research question aims to explore how the participants in the study engage in resistance against these contradictions. More specifically, it seeks to understand the participants' use of offline resistance strategies. Situating social media space Black Twitter and the viral hashtag #BlackGirlMagic as virtual spaces for resistance, this study also examines the participants' understanding of their virtual resistance, in order to evaluate their use of non-virtual resistance strategies.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Although mounting interest in popular culture's effects on body perceptions have created a space for comprehensive research in disenfranchised populations, much of that same work studies pieces in isolation, that have a significant impact on other parts of one's social position.

Individuals are multifaceted and are thus influenced by their multiple identities. As a result, this study seeks to understand the persistence of Black Women's resistance, through the lens of Black feminist theory.

1.7.1 Black Feminist Theory

The primary focus of Black feminist theory is to resist oppression in all of its forms while actively eliminating the ideas that perpetuate it (Collins, 2000, p. 22). Black feminism maintains that sexism, racism, and gender identity are intertwined through "interlocking systems of oppression" or rather intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989. Crenshaw asserts that intersectionality is, "like an accident or a collision and came from the idea that if you are standing in the path of multiple forms of exclusion, you are likely to get hit by both" (Thomas, Crenshaw 2004, p.2). This concept of intersectionality thus refers to the understanding that Black Women's multiple and varied experiences work together to inform their identity.

Black feminist theory plays a vital role in this research because of its emphasis on assessing Black Women's experiences through an intersecting lens. Acknowledging that there are multiple factors at work in forming identity serves to validate the understanding that Black Women, their experiences, and internalizations are marginally different from that of the dominant culture. According to bell hooks, the authors of the text "Black Looks" Jacqui Roach and Petal Felix, argue that Black Women have their own gaze, their own histories, and their own realities (1992). Realities that see and engage the world differently from everyone else (Hooks, 1992). Not only does Black feminist theory acknowledge this difference, but it also privileges Black Women in the establishment of ideas and knowledge about their lives and lived experiences (Reynolds, 2001). It also highlights the notion that Black Women have a particular perspective that does not often reside within that of the dominant or mass culture (Reynolds,

2001). Most importantly, Black feminist theory places value on what Hein (2017) states is the "lived experience as opposed to a worldview which is predicated on positivism" (Hein, 2017, p.2). Meaning that it focuses on the daily experiences of African American and Black Women, not the depictions and assumptions placed upon them by popular culture and the world at large.

In order to ground this research from a culturally relevant perspective, this study seeks to center the experiences of a group of 8 Black Women, which allowed for more in-depth insight into Black Women, their bodies, and notions of resistance. By allowing the participants the opportunity to voice their own opinions, and take control of their personal stories, this study privileges the participant's perspective in the development of knowledge regarding their lives. To the researcher's knowledge, there has been no other study conducted on this particular subject utilizing this specific framework.

1.8 Definitions

In the following section presented in alphabetical order, are what I have identified as the key terms of the study, coupled with their corresponding definitions.

Black Women - "People having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa" (Hacker, 1992, p. 23).

Keep That Same Energy/‘KTSE’- Is a call for consistency in behavior. Colloquially, it refers to maintaining the exact same enthusiasm (or lack thereof) that you have with a person, place or thing. In the context of this study, it is utilized within the title as a way to inquire if Black Women are as active outside of social media platforms as they are virtually.

Resistance (More specifically productive resistance) “Productive resistance is played out by repeating things differently, reloading objects/bodies with new meaning or reversing different stereotypes” (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2018, p. 212).

Social Media –social media is considered a variety of internet channels that allow users to interact with one another in real-time, virtually (Carr, Hayes, 2015).

Virtual – an imaginative set of locations where data is stored. It is imaginary in the understanding that it is not a concrete area where you can physically store data however, information does reside there (Beal).

1.9 Delimitations

Within the field of African American studies, there is a variety of research that considers Black Women's bodies and their notions of resistance. As a result of this wide scope of knowledge, it is essential to note that this researches' primary interest is in addressing Black Women and their use of non-virtual resistance strategies. Although it serves future implications to expand the study's interpretation of Blackness, its distinction of women, and its concept of virtual resistance, the boundaries of those additions would make this study unmanageable. As a result, the parameters are posed as such.

1.10 Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to the study. It began with a description of the background of the research, highlighting how Black Women and their bodies were perceived through slavery and contemporarily, as well as the shift in acceptance of the curvaceous aesthetic when placed onto non-Black bodies. Next, it explained the purpose of the study, which is to understand how Black Women are utilizing strategies outside of social media, to resist popular culture's contradiction of the curvaceous aesthetic. It then highlighted the significance of the study to the field, maintaining that it will add to liberatory practices involving Black Women's bodies, and notions of resistance. Finally, all key terms were identified and defined to ensure readability and understanding of the content to follow. The next chapter includes an in-depth discussion of the literature related to Black Women, body perception, appropriation, and resistance.

2 Literature Review

Not fitting neatly into the parameters of a primarily European standard of beauty, Black Women have routinely experienced violence, exploitation, and marginalization for their curvaceous figures. Despite this tumultuously historical relationship, within the realm of popular culture contemporarily, we can see this aesthetic being praised, glorified, and made lucrative by non-black women. In response to this glaring contradiction of beauty standards, Black Women have attempted to resist and reclaim their bodies, and aesthetics through a variety of virtual

movements and platforms. However, what is not clear is whether or not Black Women are "keeping that same energy" outside of these social platforms. In other words, if they are utilizing strategies outside of social media platforms, to resist popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic. In order to address this gap in the research, the following chapter discusses the literature surrounding the study.

This section begins with an examination of the historical and contemporary Eurocentric standards of beauty. Next, it defines the concept of popular culture, in order to situate African American's as culture creators and European Americans as consumers. Then, it highlights how Black Women's (curvaceous) bodies have been appropriated within popular culture, Black Women's awareness of this appropriation, and their overall responses. Finally, it addresses Black Women's use of virtual resistance strategies like #BlackGirlMagic, through social media platforms such as Black Twitter. These sections work collectively to answer the following question, How are Black Women utilizing strategies outside of social media to resist popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic?

2.1 Eurocentric Standards of Beauty

Historically, there has existed a violent relationship between Black Women's bodies and the Western world. This relationship, inherently voyeuristic and eroticized in nature, is bound by the power and domination of the white male gaze (Ponzanesi, 2005). This white male gaze is one that insists on depictions that measure physical attractiveness primarily based on a European beauty standard. As a result, Black Women and their bodies have been categorized as the hypersexualized, grotesque, and appalling antithesis to a European beauty standard. According to *Ebony* writer Michael Harriot, as a result of Black Women's brown skin, kinky hair, and

curvaceous bodies, they stand in direct opposition to the straight-haired, porcelain white, and angular body shaped women who represent the European ideal of beauty (2016).

This idea that Black Women were less appealing is one young Black girl's learn at an early age and has been communicated consistently through a variety of popular culture platforms, (Awad, Norwood & Taylor, 2015) both historically and contemporarily. These platforms encompass genres such as music, social sites, and even television. In response to these strict representations garnered from the West, that continued to portray heterosexual, middle-class, white femininity as the standard (Hall, 2017), Black Women have been forced to feel considerable amounts of shame, degradation, marginalization, and exploitation for their diverse, and often fuller and curvier features (Harriot, 2016). This form of exploitation and degradation can be traced back to South African Khoikhoi figure Saartjie "Sara" Baartman, formerly known as Hottentot Venus. A woman whose historical experiences inarguably inform the foundation for our contemporary understanding of the objectification of the Black female body (Ellison & LaVouille, 2018).

Lured into Europe in 1810, Baartman was marketed as an exhibition in the United Kingdom and France, that combined both science and sideshow (Spies, 2014). Forced to endure the stares, and poking, and prodding of strangers (Spies, 2014), in a display centered on the anomaly of her voluptuous body and enlarged behind. Baartman's show aided in claims that suggested to Europeans that Black Women were both primitive and inferior genetically (Jackson & Weidman, 2005). The anomaly of Baartman and her body quickly become a trend in entertainment for the wealthy and upwardly mobile in London so much so that Berta Spies asserts private showings were often arranged (2014). In an excerpt from "The Vénus Noire," Deborah Willis and Carla Williams argue that the combination of repulsion and eroticism in

Baartman's display was powerful (2012). Scientifically denounced as immoral and deviant, yet viewed as exotic and enticing (Ellison, 2018), an object of sexual enjoyment, Baartman represented a curious contrast for spectators.

This anomaly and overt objectification surrounding Baartman and her body followed her well into the grave. After she died in 1815, Baartman's remains were retained in France for dissection by zoologist Georges Cuvier. Later, her skeletal remains were placed on display at Muséum d' Histoire Naturelle, and Muséum d' Histoire Naturelle d'Angers, until the mid-1970s, to be ogled and appraised. Her body remained in France under heavy scrutiny until March of 2002 when, after years of struggle, they were released to her home country (Qureshi, 2004).

When considering the West's historical depictions of Black Women's bodies, many begin and conclude their scrutiny here with Sara Baartman. According to Zine Magubane, after Sander Gilman published his analysis of Saartjie Baartman in his article "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature" in 1985, Baartman was catapulted to fame (2001). Baartman quickly became an icon in both academia and popular culture, a figure intriguing to those interested in examining the process of "othering" (Magubane, 2001). However, despite this fascination with Baartman's body, it is essential to note that the objectification of Black Women and their bodies extends far beyond her and has remnants throughout both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

2.1.1 A Snapshot of Black Women's Bodies in the Early and mid 20th Century

During the Early and mid-twentieth century, there were social and political class differences emerging within the Black communities in the United States. Middle-class Blacks

began to separate themselves from "lower" class Blacks through an emphasis on Respectability Politics. A term coined by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham in her text, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (1993), the politics of respectability refer to, "the belief that respectable public behavior by African Americans would earn 'esteem' from white Americans" (Byars, 1994, p.333). According to Laretta Byars, with this desire to reach and maintain white middle-class standards, there became overwhelming pressure on everyone but more specifically the "lower" class Black community to meet ideals regarding "temperance, industriousness, thrift, manners, and Victorian sexual morals" (1994, p.333).

With the push for a more Victorian sexual moral, emerged the concept of Black Victoria. According to Shirley Carlson, Black Victoria, similarly to her white counterparts, was a mother and a wife committed to the domestic (1992). She was dutiful, loving, morally invincible, and above all, virtuous and modest (Carlson, 1992). She was a lady who shared and maintained the dominant society's ideals regarding "true womanhood" (Carlson, 1992). This class pursuit of Victorian ideals -"Black Victoria" regarding sexual morality from the Black community reinforced the thought process that Black [women's] bodies and sexuality, was rampant with notions of inhumanity, immorality, and perversion. It upheld the idea that Black Women inherently lacked the concept of "true womanhood" and needed to work hard to match their White contemporaries to acquire it. Ann DuCille, in her article "The Occult of True Black Womanhood," argues that this fascination with Black Women and their bodies in the twentieth century worked as an "erotic icon in the racial and sexual ideology of Western Civilization" (DuCille, 2001, p. 592).

According to Barbara Welter, four categories allowed one to be considered a "true woman"- "piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness" (1966). Focusing on this concept of "purity," Welter argued that without it, there was a net of unfemininity that was cast over the subject, that rendered her inhuman, and belonging to a "lower order" (Welter, 1966). It is important to note that from the moment African women were taken from their villages and set sail on ships to the West, they were rendered socially impure. Never having had the opportunity to possess purity partially due to the exposure of their curvier body structures on the auction block, Black Women were immediately cast as the grotesque and sexualized other. According to Candice Renka, the improper exhibition of their bodies on the auction block "denied slave women access to any of the virtues of True Womanhood" (2002). Being displayed on the auction block was an action that withheld any possibility of their morality and rendered them Jezebels in the eyes of European society (Renka, 2002).

Black Women and their bodies were under intense scrutiny in the twentieth century. Living under white standards that denied them acceptance into humanity and womanhood, coupled with the pressure from a Black middle class to perpetuate respectable Victorian ideals of sexuality, Black Women's bodies were routinely disparaged. Dorothy Dandridge and Josephine Baker can be flagged as twentieth-century performers whose Black bodies were regularly degraded and labeled animalistic, sexually available, and provocative (Ellison, 2018). These two performers can also be categorized as women who were periodically balancing and denied proper "respectability" as a result of their blackness and bodies.

According to Alicja Sowinska, civil rights activist, and famed banana skirt entertainer Josephine Baker of the early 1920s spent the majority of her career nestled between the

classifications of civilized and savage, and human and animalistic (Sowinska, 2006). Her most notable routine, referred to as a "representation of African primitivism," the banana dance, took place in 1927, in a jungle setting with Baker sporting solely a banana belted skirt (Ruiz & Isabel, 2012).

According to Maria Isabel, and Romero Ruiz, there was a widespread interest in the Blackbutt (Ruiz & Isabel, 2012). This fascination was so deep that the exotic dances like Baker's banana skirt routine were portrayed as a wild, exotic, and indecent depictions of a more inferior culture (Ruiz & Isabel, 2012). Reviewer's often defined Baker using words such as "savage," "exotic," and "primitive" (Ruiz & Isabel, 2012). Her performances were often likened to images of animals and beasts such as monkeys, snakes, giraffes, and panthers (Ruiz & Isabel, 2012). Baker was not seen as human, or even a dancer, she was an embodiment of the fetishized, eroticized, and the elusive other (Sowinska, 2006).

Isabela and Ruiz maintain that in response to these depictions, Baker embraced animals as her symbol (Ruiz & Isabel, 2012). She was often seen walking through the streets of Paris with her pet, cheetah indignantly maintaining, "people have done me the honor of comparing me to an animal" (Jefferson, 2006, p.4). Although brazen with her rejection of these overly sexualized and animalistic depictions surrounding her appearance and craft, these images stuck with Baker, following her well into her career and beyond. Baker reveling in her body and her craft was not alone in juggling these animalistic representations. We can also look to Dorothy Dandridge as another instance of a Black woman whose body was controlled and labeled by the way the world around her perceived it.

Dorothy Dandridge was a famed actress, singer, and dancer from the early 1930s to the mid-1960s. According to Marguerite Rippy, Dandridge's wide swept charm and status as the "sex-goddess" of her time, was a result of her ability to represent both Blackness and Whiteness (1997). Although frequently billed as the Black Marilyn Monroe, Dandridge was received in an entirely different light than Monroe. According to Rippy, Dandridge was aware of her distance from the white "sex-goddess," and that her status as a sex symbol, unlike Monroe's, was synonymous with that of a whimsical prostitute, and not of a woman in search of love (Rippy, 1997). Despite Dandridge's innate ability to dwell in both realms - black and white, she was still often depicted as possessing untamed and animalistic sexuality as a result of her blackness (Rippy, 1997). In the 1950s, the idea of Dandridge's femininity reigning supreme or even parallel to the White starlets she stood alongside, was unattainable. According to Rippy, "where the white woman becomes an idealized, inaccessible object of desire, the body of the Black woman is perceived as the accessible, material means of attaining carnal satisfaction" (1997, p. 30). Operating in what Melanie McFarland maintains is "the shadow of an uneasy sexual history between white men and Black Women" (1999), Dandridge, throughout her career, could not escape roles that positioned her like many Black women, as sexual objects of desire (McFarland, 1999). Referred to often as the "tanned songstress," Dandridge, who engaged in sexual affairs with white men, was often depicted as being "driven by her natural sexual appetite" (Enzerink, 2012). As a result of her skin, body, and relations, she was almost always rendered as the promiscuous and immoral Black woman — the antithesis of white womanhood (Enzerink, 2012).

Shifting away from the elusive "respectability" that was the push in the early twentieth century, it is evident that there has been very little change in the complicated relationship

between Black Women's bodies and the West. Black Women, much like Baker and Dandridge, still routinely face categorizations that render them as inhumane, animalistic, and an overtly sexualized other.

2.1.2 A Snapshot of Black Women's Bodies in the 21st Century

Contemporarily, when considering the Black female body within the vast spheres that encompass popular culture, it is hard to escape the apparent depictions of hypersexuality, and amorality. Like Baartman, Baker, and Dandridge, Black Women in the twenty-first century are routinely objectified in ways that focus on parts of the body. Mainly, their bottoms are put on display, which renders them a spectacle and ultimately deemed nonhuman (Appleford, 2016). Although this research highlights nineteenth and twentieth-century performers as widespread examples of this objectification, and hyper sexualization of Black Women's bodies, it is essential to acknowledge that this form of vilification was and is, not only limited to performers. This condemning phenomenon rings true for the "ordinary" or "everyday" Black woman in the workforce as well. In fact, within the twenty-first century, we can look to Atlanta based fourth-grade teacher Patrice Brown, referred to as #Teacherbae, and Texas news reporter Demetria Obilor as more everyday contemporary examples.

Patrice Brown went viral in September of 2016, for posting a picture to her personal Instagram account inside of her classroom wearing a pink midi-length figure-hugging (body contouring) dress. Patrice Brown went viral in September of 2016, for posting a picture to her personal Instagram account inside of her classroom wearing a pink midi-length figure-hugging (body contouring) dress. Ordinarily, an image like this would fly under the radar and remain nondescript, however, enter Brown's curvaceous body with her ample bosom, and large behind,

and the narrative shifts entirely and finds itself situated in the Baartmanesque realm. According to *Essence* writer Demetria Lucas D'Oyley, this controversial "gawking at the largesse of some parts of Brown's figure, holds Saartjie Baartman undertones" (D'Oyley, 2016). Brown, in her form-fitting dress and ample curves, quickly became the center of a wide variety of popular culture backlash and debates surrounding dress codes, respectability, and Black Women's body shapes. Controversies that resulted in many commentators questioning Brown's competency as an educator and calling her out for lacking professionalism in a school setting. Critics argued that Brown is a very curvy woman and wearing clothes that hug her curves inside of the classroom, was unbecoming of a teacher because she would run the risk of distracting her very young students (Uwumarogie, 2016). Other critics argued that Brown needed guidance in what is acceptable to wear within her job description. Soon after these harsh appraisals became public, a statement was issued by the Atlanta Public School system (APS) to Fox 5 news. In this statement, APS maintained that they had given Brown "proper" guidance regarding the APS Employee Dress Code, their requirements for the use of social media, and the Georgia Code of Ethics for educators (Blay, 2016). Brown has since been "cooperative" in addressing her presence on social media, by applying more restrictive measures to her personal account, rendering it private.

While there is nothing inherently unprofessional about Brown's choice of dress, as it hits right above the knee, and provides ample coverage of her chest, she is still vilified and condemned for how she looks in it. The "problem" here, according to Damon Young, writer for the Afrocentric and progressive online magazine *The Root*, isn't that Brown is dressing inappropriately. It's that she's dressing inappropriately to others for her curvaceous figure. Young argues that if Brown were a less curvy woman, and wore the same dress, and posted the same

picture, this would not be an issue (Young, 2016). What is really considered unprofessional here is not the dress but Brown's curves, her body itself. According to *Huffington Post* columnist Zeba Blay, the negative responses Brown received are a perfect example of how Black Women very rarely have control over their bodies being needlessly oversexualized in nearly any context (Blay, 2016). This overt sexualization and inability to control how their [Black Women]bodies are looked upon can also be highlighted in the case of Texas traffic reporter Demetria Obilor.

In 2017, Demetria found herself in a situation reminiscent of that of #teacherbae Patrice Brown. While delivering the morning traffic report, in a form-fitting red dress, critics via a variety of social platforms proceeded to vilify Obilor for her attire. Comments that focused on her body size and shape and her choice to wear form-fitting clothing that does not hide her figure. One critic, in particular, harshly took to Facebook and expressed the following:

Has anyone seen Channel 8's new morning traffic reporter? Her name is Demetria Obilor & she's a size 16/18 woman in a size six dress, and she looks ridiculous. I understand that when I watch Channel 8, I'm going to get biased reporting and political correctness, but clearly, they have taken complete leave of their senses. I'm not going to watch Channel 8 anymore (Brown, 2017).

Obilor wasted no time responding to the critics, maintaining that this is the way she was built, the way she was born and that she refused to be shaken or moved (Brown, 2017). However, the damage was done yet again. Despite Obilor's powerful and unyielding response, we must look at how she, like Brown, Baartman, Baker, Dandridge, and Black Women across the diaspora, have been and are continually battling against unwarranted and unsolicited critique about their bodies, and how they choose to dress them. Not necessarily because of their size, but because of their shape (Brown, 2017). Both Obilor and Brown are "pear" shaped, light-skinned Black Women.

Their very existence in the bodies they were born into is easily fetishized. With their small waistlines, prominent hips, and large butts, they occupy the seemingly most ridiculed, othered, and sexualized body type.

In spite of this historically complicated relationship between popular culture, and Black Women's bodies, a beauty trend has emerged within the realm of popular culture, which brings about a glaring contradiction. A trend that embraces glorifies and even propels the curvaceous aesthetic to immaculate heights when it is associated with non-Black women.

To thoroughly examine this phenomenon and fill the gaps in the research, it is essential first to define what this research is referring to when it discusses popular culture. The following section provides an in-depth description of popular culture, its multiple meanings, and the one best suited for this study.

2.2 Popular Culture Defined

It is essential to consider and provide an adequate understanding of what is meant when discussing the concept of popular culture. First, it must be noted that popular culture is a vague concept that may never truly be able to be defined. However, it remains relatively easy to identify when we see it (Parker, 2011). According to Holton Parker in his text "Toward A Definition of Popular Culture: History And Theory," there are six definitions that need to be considered when engaging with the concept of popular culture. The six meanings derived from a combination of thought from sociologist Tony Bennett, who established the initial four ways, and Professor John Storey, who often expanded on Bennett's work, resulting in two additional perspectives, which formulate the six definitions.

Bennett and Storey's first definition of popular culture takes a quantitative approach by measuring it based upon the number of people who like a collective thing. According to Parker, they argue that popular culture is a culture which is widely favored or well-liked by many people (Bennett, 1980) & (Storey, 2006). This definition, at its most basic, acknowledges the masses, and in doing so, highlights another point to be considered. The fact that when speaking of "many people," it does not take into consideration those [minority] voices and perspectives who will be effectively "cast out from the realm of the popular" (Parker, 2011).

Their second definition, as opposed to the numerically driven approach of their first, takes an interest in measuring quality. In this description, Bennett and Storey declare that popular culture is "what is left behind after we have established what high culture is" (Bennett, 1980; Storey, 2006). Within this context, high culture reflects the preferences of the elite and renders popular culture as merely the residue of those choices.

Their third definition becomes synonymous with notions of mass culture. They argue that popular culture is a "commercialized, commoditized culture industry" or rather, "the culture made possible by technological change, by the use of the means of mass cultural production" (Bennett, 1980; Storey, 2006). Popular culture, in this definition, moves away from the people and becomes focused on production as its fundamental source.

Their fourth definition, the most modest of them all, finds itself re-centered on the people. Bennett and Storey argue that popular culture is simply a "culture that emerges from the people" (Bennett, 1980; Storey, 2006). Although the simplest, and most direct of the definitions, it is crucial to consider who qualifies for inclusion in the category "the people." Often in the West, "the people" commonly refer to a male European upper-middle-class majority, with the intentional exclusion of minority groups (Bennett, 1980 & Storey, 2006).

The fifth definition is Storey's expansion to the popular culture concept, which engages it as a place of friction. He argues that popular culture is "a site of struggle between the 'resistance' of subordinate groups in society and the forces of 'incorporation' operating in the interests of dominant groups in society" (Storey, 2006). Popular culture viewed within this context becomes important because it personifies the struggle between industry and the marginalized.

In the sixth and final definition, Storey considers popular culture within the context of postmodernism. He allows popular culture to function as "postmodern culture," which "is a culture that no longer recognizes the distinction between high and popular culture" (Storey, 2006).

Of the six definitions provided by Parker's analysis of Bennett and Storey's definitions of popular culture, this research will utilize the fifth. The fifth definition best suits this study because it situates popular culture as the site of struggle between the marginalized population, (Black Women and their bodies) and the dominant group (European Americans), whose distribution and industry feeds their interests solely.

This definition of popular culture also easily allows this research to segue into its next section, which argues that marginalized Black people create culture, and Europeans consume this culture, and ultimately turn it into a commodity that ensures their benefit.

2.3 Culture Creators and Consumers

When engaging with the complex space that is popular culture, it is essential always to acknowledge the complexities of the power imbalances that are actively at work. Within the realm of popular culture in the West, this can be personified through the existing tension between African Americans as the producers of culture, and Europeans as the distributors and consumers (Flynn, 2011). According to *Ebony* writer Michael Harriot, Black people have historically been

the source of anything fresh, creative, and culturally significant (2016). Inarguably, almost every aspect of popular culture in the West can be traced back to roots from the African American community. In a reflection written by Joseph E. Flynn entitled *Who Leads This Dance: Reflecting on the Influence of African Americans in Popular Culture*, Flynn argues in favor of the domination of African Americans in popular culture by highlighting their importance, and influences on the culture. He maintains that the Black influence in today's popular culture is incontestable, and states that "regardless of the media stream, the presence and voices of African Americans can be seen in myriad and powerful ways" (Flynn, 2011, p. 32). From the misrepresentation of Blackness and Black culture to the commodification of Black bodies and Black images, African Americans have, for decades, held an essential role in the fabric of American culture (Njee, 2016). As a result, according to Nyambura Njee, Blackness serves as a "sharecrop that is simultaneously consumed and criminalized" (2016, p. 120). He argues that this "sharecropping" and criminalization is a form of exploitation that manifests itself through Black bodies selling items and aesthetics yet being disproportionately represented within criminal justice systems (Njee, 2016).

In a society that is driven by White male consumerist culture, any aspect of one's body and or identity can be devoured. According to Nyambura Njee (qtd. in Hooks, 1992), established during slavery, white supremacist discourse recognized that "control over images is central to the maintenance of any system of racial domination" (2016, p. 129). Controlling the image, and the means of production of the Black body has thus allowed Europeans the ability to sustain and maintain unlevelled power dynamics. The most notable example of this domination and control can be seen through popular culture's leading entity, hip-hop.

As an urban culture with roots that stem from Africa (Coleman & Ross, 2011), and Latin America, hip-hop is a part of Black culture. Hip-hop culture, since its debut in the mid-1970s, has grown exponentially. Speaking to the rapid growth, and production of hip-hop by the African American and Latin American community, Marcyliena Morgan in her text, *The World is Yours': The Globalization of Hip-Hop Language*, declares that "while we were sleeping, hip-hop had not only penetrated the language, conversations, hearts, and minds of the U.S., it had also quietly begun to control the world around us" (Morgan, 2016, p.134). Mainstream Hip-hop inarguably is tightly integrated into American culture, our music, fashion, film, art, politics, and society as a whole (Boyer & Graham, 2016). However, despite being originated in both the Black and Latin communities, it is a genre partially controlled by a European American majority.

Concerning Black Women's bodies, we can see this unbalanced power dynamic running rampant through popular culture platforms via icons that rebrand and sell Black image, and aesthetics to a mass-market comprised of White consumers. These figures include women such as Kimberly Kardashian, who manipulates her body for profit (Sastre, 2013), white figures who undergo surgery to obtain a rounder and plumper butt and wear and maintain their discovery or development of hairstyles Black Women wore historically and were often ridiculed for (Akams, 2017).

Being establishers, creators, and ultimately the producers of culture, and not necessarily the individuals who have the power to create the space for its distribution, places Black people, their bodies, and products, in very controversial circumstances. It forces Black people to dwell in a realm that allows for the commodification of Black culture, while simultaneously allowing European Americans the ability to appropriate Black culture with little to no regard for the discomfort it places on Black people (Hooks, 1992, pg. 154 & Njee, 2016).

The following section will take what has been discussed above further, and explore how, through the commandeering of the curvaceous aesthetic, Europeans have been appropriating Black Women's bodies within the realm of popular culture, with no concern for their comfort.

2.4 Appropriation of the Curvaceous Aesthetic in Popular Culture

“Blackness is rampantly consumed, commodified, and appropriated...”

- (Nyambura Njee, 2016)

Appropriation, according to Eloise Michael, is defined as the seizure of intellectual property, expressions, artifacts, ways of knowing, and histories of a culture that is not your own (2013). This ability to appropriate another culture exists extensively within societies plagued with racism, inequality, and power imbalance (Riley & Carpenter 2016, p.864). These intolerant and biased communities are reflective of those within the West. While considering this concept of appropriation, and its lasting influence on marginalized and vilified communities, it is equally important to reiterate that not all Black Women possess the hourglass curvaceous aesthetic, and that does not render them any less Black or any less of a woman. However, it is equally important, and the purpose of this study, to highlight the frequency with which the curvaceous aesthetic, (which has historically been linked to Black Women) has been transferred between other races (Akams, 2017), allowing non-Black women the ability to reach icon status for possessing what black women have held with ridicule for centuries (Akams, 2017), and Black Women's response to this phenomenon outside of social media platforms.

Many black girls have grown up isolated, condemned, and ridiculed for their hair, dark skin, big lips, and big butts. Currently, European Americans and non-Black Women are filling their lips to massive proportions, spray tanning to acquire a sun-kissed glow, transferring fat or

acquiring implants to achieve a fuller butt, and even wearing similar hairstyles (Akams, 2017), and calling it fashionable, or even the "new" trend. Researchers Rokeshia Renné Ashley and Jaehee Jung, described this fascination with Black Women's bodies as "the appropriation of culturally appropriate features" (Ashley & Jung, 2017 p. 248). According to Katherine Appleford in her text, *This Big Bum Thing Has Taken over the World: Considering Black Women's Changing Views on Body Image and the Role of Celebrity* although both Blackness and fatness have been excluded from the dominant (European) categorizations of beauty, the Black body is not rendered any less meaningful in the overall social development of beauty ideas (2016). In his think piece for *Ebony* magazine, Michael Harriot maintains that Black Women's bodies represent the last reservoir of cultural appropriation (Harriot, 2016). Black Women's curves are a source being rapidly consumed and commodified contemporarily by white women across the popular culture platform. Lip fillers, transfers of body fat, and silicon to the behind, and breast augmentations have assisted these white public figures in reaching their goals of gaining profit and exposure from this once stigmatized and grotesque silhouette (Alvarado, 2018). Popular culture icon Kimberly Kardashian who stands at 5'3, with a Baartmanesque physique – 42-inch (107cm) butt, 26-inch waist, and 95-inch bust (Heightline, 2015), is the leading image considered when discussing the contemporary appropriation of Black women's bodies in popular culture. Taking bits and pieces of black culture and black physiques, and adding it to her own body, Kardashian embodies the curvaceous aspects of black sexuality that enable her the ability to be classified as sexual but not sexually deviant (Appleford, 2016).

Kimberly Kardashian, the daughter of the late, affluent defense attorney Robert Kardashian, and socialite Kris Jenner gained notoriety in 2007 when she burst onto the scene in a leaked homemade sex tape (Sastre, 2013). Following the leaked tape, Kardashian went on to

partner with E! television network to establish a reality show about her and her family's life. A show that would prove so successful, it would later branch off into individually lucrative enterprise and branding for Kardashian and her four siblings. Throughout her rise to fame, Kardashian, as well as the media, has placed ample, if not all, of their attention on her curvaceous body, in particular, her bottom (Appleford, 2016). This fascination can most notably be seen through Kardashian's appearance in Paper magazine.

On November 11th, 2014, New York-based style magazine *PAPER* unveiled their latest double cover, which boasted the goal of "breaking the internet." Breaking the internet refers to someone or something trending throughout social media platforms at an excessive and usually worldwide level for an extended period of time (Robert, 2015). *PAPER* editors maintained that for this goal, there was no other person who could have accomplished this task but Kardashian. They argued that she is what makes the internet move (Benzinga, 2015).

The first of their two covers attempting to reach this goal featured an oiled-up Kardashian with her naked behind on full display for the camera. The second, a remake of Jean-Paul Goude's "Champagne Incident," shows Kardashian fully clothed while balancing a glass of champagne on her butt (Butler, 2014). The original image featured nude black model Carolina Beaumont, and appeared in Goude's highly criticized 1982 book, entitled *Jungle Fever*. (Butler, 2014). This shoot was received with mixed reviews; some critics slammed Kardashian for being a mom and exposing herself in such a manner, while a host of others praised her for letting her curves all hang out fearlessly. Critics remarked, "Whatever you think about the photos, you've gotta give the girl credit for owning her curves and sharing her body confidence with the world. Let's face it; the woman knows what people want" (Gilbert, 2017). An interesting note to grasp is that throughout all of the criticism, few were about how unappealing her behind was for its enlarged

and oiled up appearance. In fact, the largeness of her butt was very rarely commented on negatively. Kardashian's ability to broadcast her butt in all of its glory, and receive not only empathy, but notoriety as the icon who broke the internet for her booty, personifies pop culture's inclination to celebrate, honor, and give leeway to white women for their bodies, styles, and art while refusing to allow Black Women the same leverage (Butler, 2014).

Outside of Kardashian "breaking the internet," with her behind, this praise for white women and their commandeering of Black Women's bodies and aesthetics can be seen through popular fashion magazine franchise *Vogue*. In 2014, *Vogue* boldly declared that we had officially ushered in "the era of the big booty" (Butler, 2014). This declaration completely unacknowledged the dozens of Black girls and women who have toted around these big booties for decades.

With popular culture's, endless portrayals and acceptance of white women like Kimberly Kardashian, who have been credited for ushering in the era of the booty, and breaking the internet with their butts, Black Women, the genesis of these figures, have been forced to witness this "glory" from the margins. Although positioned on the outskirts, and denied acknowledgment for their work as society's muse, Black Women have maintained their awareness, and strong feelings towards these contradictions surrounding the curvaceous aesthetic. The following section provides insight into this understanding and varied emotions Black Women have expressed across the field, and throughout the realm of popular culture.

2.5 Black Women's Awareness of Popular Culture's Appropriation and Contradictions of the Curvaceous Aesthetic

With a variety of figures similar to Kim Kardashian running rampant throughout the popular culture sphere, it is hard to maintain that Black Women are not socially aware of their

presence and of their status as being more respected (Ashley & Jung, 2017) than they are themselves. The fact that women like Kardashian have found financial success, and visibility through the commandeering of the historically marginalized and excluded curvaceous aesthetic, has seemingly caused resentment by members of the black community (Sastre, 2013).

In 2017, Rokeshia Renné Ashley and Jaehee Jung, conducted a study that explored both Black and African Women's incentives and desires to participate in body modification. Of the many findings obtained from the participants, a notable one emerged, which suggested Black Women's awareness of how white women who alter their physique to obtain Black Woman's culturally appropriate features, are praised and respected far more than Black Women with similar characteristics (Ashley & Jung, 2017). The participants then went on to cite the inauthenticity of non-Black celebrities with big butts, such as Kim Kardashian. Corroborating this finding, one participant maintained:

you know culture appropriation, and how like they use to talk about like, what was that woman's name who was like put on display cause she had that huge butt, huge breasts, and the black vagina was different, I feel like now all this stuff was like disgusting before, now it's like maybe I do want my lips to be bigger, so now like Angelina Jolie, people love her lips, Christina Aguilera loves her breasts, Kim Kardashian oh she's a white girl with a fat ass so like these are things that black people have had since the beginning of time like just like the sun has been shining since God created the Earth, black people have had these features and now all of a sudden oh it's OK, cause she got a little tan and a big butt (Ashley & Jung, 2017).

This sentiment does not stop here with these participants and this individual study. Similar responses can be found from a variety of Black Women across a multitude of research and

popular culture platforms. The replies garnered from these Black Women solidify not only their awareness of this contradiction but of their frustrations with it as well. For example, In a study conducted by Christina Capodilupo, and Sarah Kim titled *Gender and Race matter: The Importance of Considering Intersections in Black Women's Body Image*, participants expressed feelings of frustration at white models for commandeering their aesthetics. The participants maintained that "they are taking our body characteristics and using them, but not allowing Black models who have the thick - who are born with the thick lips, big butts, and big breasts" (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014) to be highlighted. In this same study, another participant expressed that "they're [white women] taking our stuff, what makes us beautiful and unique, and they're not acknowledging us. And it goes to our men too" (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014). Taking this frustration, and awareness Black Women have been building a bit further, we can see it reach new heights, through the short-lived television show *H8R*.

H8R was a CW program that matched celebrities with their biggest 'hater'/ person who strongly dislikes/disagrees with the particular star in question (Sastre, 2013). Deena, the 'hater' in question, chose to address Kim Kardashian for being 'fake,' and essentially intruding on the territory of Black Women, in the way she cultivates her public body (Sastre, 2013). Deena maintained:

There's a few of us who feel like she's stealing our shine. When the black guys are like, 'who's this Kim Kardashian, she's got a fat ass,' I'm not gonna lie, I feel a little jealous. She comes out of nowhere; people have been giving me shit for my shape since I was young. When you see Kim and her family benefitting on a grand level, making six million dollars a year, of course, I'm jealous (Sastre, 2013).

Despite these documented responses of Black Women's feelings of frustration, irritation, and resentment regarding popular culture's depictions of their curvaceous aesthetic, historically, they have not allowed these emotions to fester silently. Black Women have, in fact, routinely provided a variety of responses to these portrayals.

2.6 Black Women's Varied Responses

Black Women across history have routinely positioned their voices in discussions regarding popular culture's portrayal of their aesthetics. These responses vary from creating new narratives about Black female bodies to challenging the existing ones, and sometimes even outright embracing them. No matter the position, Black Women have ensured that they have left ample remnants of their perceptions throughout these conversations.

According to Tanisha Jackson in her study, "Defining Us: A Critical Look at the Images of Black Women in Visual Culture and Their Narrative Responses to these Images," Black female artists frequently confronted ideologies concerning their body images (2010). Citing artist Betye Saar's "The Liberation of Aunt Jemima" (1972), and Renee Cox's Cibachrome's "Liberation of Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben" (1998), Jackson argued that these artists' artistic responses were intended to challenge the stereotypically "fixed" images of Black Women's bodies (Jackson, 2010). This attempt at responding in a manner that establishes counter-images is not limited to Black female visual artists. Rana Emerson in "*Where My Girls At?*": *Negotiating Black Womanhood in Music Videos*," argues that Black Women performers in the 1990s such as Erykah Badu, Missy Elliot, and Lauryn Hill had musical responses that "situated the Black woman and her body as independent, strong, and self-reliant agents of their own desire, [and] the masters of their own destiny" (2002, p.116). These female artists' (across genres of art and music) responses were steeped in refusal. They rejected popular culture's implications

of their bodies and aesthetics and challenged the ways Black Women's bodies were viewed. Most importantly, they provided alternatives that they felt were essential to associate with Black Women and their bodies. While some Black Women's responses aired on the countering side, others take the approach of embracing popular culture's imagery of the Black female body.

More often than not, it is reported that Black Women respond to the overt sexualization of their femininity negatively. According to Morgan Jerald in *Respectable Women: Exploring the Influence of the Jezebel Stereotype on Black Women's Sexual Well-Being*, Black teenagers who receive sexualized images of their bodies, are more likely to engage in drug or alcohol use, sex with multiple partners, and they may have negative body perceptions (2018). However, in spite of this research, and other studies like it that highlight these negative responses, many Black Women are deciding to embrace the sexualized Black female images within popular culture. Maintaining that "There's nothing wrong with being a 'hoe' (Blaec) 'The Lily' writer Jagger Blaec argues that carefree black girls who embrace and reclaim their sexuality are on the rise (Blaec). Exploring the podcast "Inner Hoe Uprising," Blaec sites Akufa Genfi (one of the show's hosts) as a woman keeping the conversation about embracing and reclaiming sexuality turning (Blaec). According to Blaec, Genfi maintains that Black Women need to:

Take back and redefine terms like “hoe” and “thot” to illustrate that Black Women aren't dichotomous. We aren't just good girls and hoes. I can be a hoe — a sexually liberated woman — and still, own a business, get a degree, or work at Walmart (Blaec).

Black Women openly accepting, and continuing past these depictions, which have historically and contemporarily rendered their bodies objects, is the push with this particular response, and often ones like it as well. Through a discussion of Jamaican dancehall culture in “The "Batty" Politic: Toward an Aesthetic of the Black Female Body,” Janell Hobson continues this

discussion of Black Women embracing the sexualized portrayals of their aesthetics within popular culture. Hobson argues that although male-focused music forms (reggae, soca, calypso, hip hop) situate Black women's bodies (behinds) as objects, Black Women still manage to assert their sexuality through their dancing (2003). Hobson maintains that in these dancehall spaces, "Urban Bush Women celebrate the sexual provocations of Black Women's rear-end-shaking" (203, p. 102). In these responses, the sexualized, and grotesque depictions of Black Women's bodies are embraced and ultimately reloaded as forms of empowerment.

In order to provide a distinction between the findings above and the intent of this study, it is essential to acknowledge the following. The studies, books, and think pieces discussed above, highlight Black Women's varied responses to their aesthetics within popular culture. While thinking through these responses, several strategies Black Women have utilized to assist them in orchestrating their responses have emerged. Platforms such as art, music, dancing, podcasting, etc. help in answering questions about strategies Black Women have historically and contemporarily utilized for responses. However, they do not answer the precise question that this research is attempting to answer. This study is primarily interested in how the curvaceous aesthetic is contradictorily transferred between other races (Akams, 2017) for trend and Black Women's resistance of this particular phenomenon outside of virtual platforms. This research is aware that contemporarily, Black Women across a variety of virtual platforms and spaces have found strategic online ways in which to cope with and ultimately resist this contradiction. The following section discusses in length, these virtual resistance strategies.

2.7 Virtual Resistance Strategies

Rendered sexually deviant, and animalistic for their curvaceous bodies, Black Women have been consistently excluded from the dominant culture's celebration, and acknowledgment of beauty and femininity (Hobson, 2018). However, within popular culture spaces contemporarily, White women have commandeered this aesthetic and have amassed a vast amount of fortune and success from it. As a result, beauty for Black Women becomes a notable site for resistance (Hobson, 2018). Beauty becomes a space where they actively attempt to redefine and claim ownership of their bodies from the mainstream, through a wide variety of artistic expressions (Aduonum, 2004). In contemporary culture, we see this form of resistance take shape more often in viral movements such as #BlackGirlMagic, and virtual safe spaces such as Black Twitter.

Coined by CaShawn Thompson in 2013, 'Black Girl Magic' or #BlackGirlMagic has taken social media platforms by storm. Colloquially #BlackGirlMagic is understood as a form of social praise given from one Black girl to another, as a form of acknowledgment for any accomplishment big or small in an attempt to show solidarity, and recognition in a world that does not normally appreciate Black Women. It can also be used as an outward or inward recognition of one's accomplishments against the odds pitted against you, no matter how large or minuscule. In an interview conducted with the creator of #BlackGirlMagic entitled, Why Everyone's Saying 'Black Girls are Magic' by author Dexter Thomas, the #BlackGirlMagic movement is defined as "a platform where women of color can stand together against the stereotyping, colorism, misogynoir, and racism that is often their lived experience" (Thomas, 2015).

Critics of the movement are not on board with the notion that the #BlackGirlMagic movement assists in eradicating stereotypes. Instead, they argue that the use of the term “magic” works to remove Black Women's humanity and perpetuates the strong Black Women archetype. According to *Elle* magazine writer Linda Chavers, the strong Black woman stereotype promotes the idea of the black woman who suffers in silence (2016). The flaw with this type of resistance, according to Chavers, is that the idea that Black Women can survive and withstand it all implies that they are something other than human (2016). It suggests that they are superhuman (Chavers, 2016). According to Moya Bailey and Izetta Mobley, Black Women are often locked inside of doctrines that consider them superhumanly strong (2019). These beliefs often result in attitudes that suggest they are tireless and sexually delinquent (Bailey & Mobley, 2019). In a 2016 article for *Elle* Magazine, writer Linda Chavers brought these complaints to a head citing the #BlackGirlMagic movement as positively engaging the narrative that suggests that Black Women are not, in fact, human but superhuman. Chavers maintains that this movement is accomplishing the exact opposite of what it has set out to do. Instead of bringing about liberation, it appears as "smothering" and "stunting" (Chavers, 2016). Chavers contends that "one of our most collectively celebrated images of a black woman is the black woman who perseveres, who survives, who continues- in pain, and suffering. It is the beautiful, tragic epitome of that strong black woman type we also collectively celebrate and simultaneously criticize" (Chavers, 2016). This image of a Black woman who continues in pain is a concept that Chavers vehemently disagrees with promoting.

In an interview conducted with Dexter Thomas for the *LA Times*, creator of #BlackGirlMagic and the “Black Girl Magic” movement CaShawn Thompson breaks down her use of the term “magic” within the phrasing of “Black Girl Magic,” arguing that it does not refer

to magic in its literal sense and would therefore not absolve Black Women of their humanity. Thompson elaborates on her meaning by explaining that magic itself is an entity that people cannot always comprehend and likens this notion with Black Women's success. Thomas states, "Sometimes our accomplishments might seem to come out of thin air, because a lot of times, the only people supporting us are other Black Women" (Thomas, 2015). This research acknowledges this form of resistance in this manner, from this lens of Black girl to Black girl consciousness and upliftment. Outside of this virtual and social movement that is #BlackGirlMagic, another site of resistance for Black Women, is the place in which this hashtag thrives, Black Twitter.

Black Twitter is a social media platform that grants Twitters Black community a space to engage social issues affecting their communities. As a culturally specific platform, it can, and has often been considered a virtual safe space. According to JeffriAnne Wilder, Black Twitter is the "social mouthpiece" of the black community and has been responsible for raising consciousness and public awareness surrounding crucial racial issues (2017). This platform has gifted the African American community with the ability to take control of their own narratives and perspectives, while simultaneously allowing them space to influence and redirect the media's often stigmatizing imagery. Black Twitter, as this virtual haven, deconstructs perceptions that render whiteness as the standard, and everyone else as the unacceptable "other" (McDonald, 2014). Utilizing Black Twitter, and creative hashtags like the #BlackGirlMagic hashtag discussed above, users (Black Women) can challenge oppressive ideologies (Lee, 2017), which serve as a coping strategy, and an overall platform for activism and resistance (Wilder, 2017).

Despite these various virtual strategies Black Women employ to resist popular culture's contradictions surrounding the curvaceous aesthetic, what is not clear is, how they are responding to these contradictions outside of these platforms.

2.8 Summary

This chapter focused on the literature concerning the turbulent relationship between Black Women's bodies and popular culture. Centering Saartjie Baartman, it began with an assessment of the historically Eurocentric Standards of Beauty inherent in the west, that has rendered Black Women and their bodies as deviant, and less attractive. It then proceeded to work through several definitions of popular culture to arrive at the one best suited for this study, which maintains that popular culture is the site of struggle between a marginalized population, and the dominant group. From there, it continued to engage literature that speaks to African American's being creators of culture, and European Americans the consumers. Then, through an analysis of the popular culture icon Kimberly Kardashian, who has been credited for her voluptuous behind, and curvy body, the literature detailed how Black Women's curvaceous bodies have been appropriated contemporarily within the realm of popular culture. Next, it engaged work that gave voice to Black Women's awareness of popular culture's contradictions surrounding the curvaceous aesthetic. In this subsection, the literature proved that Black Women-maintained feelings of frustration, irritation, and resentment, at their aesthetics being valued when placed on European or non-Black bodies. Next, it addressed strategies that Black Women historically employed to respond to the use of their aesthetics within popular culture. Finally, this chapter concluded with an assessment of how Black Women are utilizing virtual strategies #BlackGirlMagic and Black Twitter to resist the contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic

within popular culture. After the literature has been exhausted, what remains clear is that there is a gap in the research. This gap is concerning how Black Women are employing strategies outside of social media, to resist popular cultures contradiction of the curvaceous aesthetic. The following chapter will present the methodology for this study in hopes of addressing the gap presented.

3 Methodology

This study seeks to explore how Black Women are utilizing strategies outside of social media, to resist popular cultures contradiction of the curvaceous aesthetic. In order to obtain a largely diverse data set, this research uses a qualitative approach to explore the following question: How are Black Women utilizing strategies outside of social media, to resist popular cultures contradiction of the curvaceous aesthetic?

The following chapter addresses both the goal and design of this study. It aims to demonstrate how the qualitative approach of Transcendental Phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994), and one-on-one interviews were conducted. It also highlights the characteristics of both methods, indicating why they are particularly appropriate for the present study and the population studied. In order to accomplish this, this chapter first introduces the significance of a Qualitative approach and the importance of Transcendental Phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) to the study. It then proceeds to discuss the participants involved in the study and the significance of a one-on-one interviewing approach. Finally, it concludes with an explanation of the data collection strategies, and the analysis employed.

3.1 Design of the Study

According to John W. Creswell, qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meaning people assign to a variety of social and human problems (2014, p.32). When taking a qualitative approach, researchers generally make interpretations of data they have acquired firsthand in the field (2014, p.32). The qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because its goal is to assess how Black Women are responding in their everyday lives to popular culture's contradiction of the curvaceous aesthetic.

There are five specific qualitative approaches to inquiry that Creswell (2007) maintains provide an in-depth insight into a participant's lived experiences. Those approaches are Phenomenology, Ethnography, Narrative, Grounded Theory, and Case study. Of the five approaches, the Phenomenology approach, more specifically, Transcendental Phenomenology best fits this research.

A phenomenological approach is an approach that focuses on allowing the participants the opportunity to engage with and share their experiences with a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). It also seeks to understand and study participants from a philosophical point of view, which allows the participants involved the opportunity to interpret and ultimately define reality for themselves. This approach, in particular, is befitting of this study because, its goal is to enable the participants to explore how they respond to the phenomenon within popular culture where the curvaceous aesthetic is valued, praised, and rendered lucrative for women of other races, and cultural ethnicities but not for Black Women.

Transcendental Phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) is an approach that relies heavily on the descriptions of the participant's experiences and less on the researcher's interpretations (Moustakas, 1994). This specific approach is vital to the current study because it allows the

participants the opportunity to place their experiences at the center of the study. Centering the participants' voices and situating the researcher's voice behind will provide a narrative for individuals whose stories aren't often shared.

3.2 Participants

When conducting a phenomenological study, in order to maintain validity, Creswell (2007) suggests that 5-25 interviews be conducted. For this study, eight interviews were held with Black Women who, through self-reported demographic information, identify as being a part of the diaspora, and at least 18 years of age, but no older than 35. Participants were also required to identify as cisgender women (i.e., "I see myself as a female"), who actively engage with social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, etc.). Participants were also of various socioeconomic statuses and educational backgrounds. Although this sample size is not reflective of the entirety of Black Women, eight participants were selected for interviews because it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the small nuances of these women's experiences, which would have otherwise been overlooked with a larger sample size. Participants were primarily recruited from predominantly African American meeting locations. These spaces include but are not limited to African American studies courses and Women and Gender studies courses at Georgia State University, a post-secondary institution located in downtown Atlanta. Participants were also acquired through a variety of online social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Participants were also obtained through snowball sampling techniques. The participants selected to engage in the study were primarily from the Atlanta and Los Angeles areas. Participants hailed from these two locations because, it was a sample of convenience based on the researchers proximity and connections to the target population.

Despite the researchers' push for strength in recruitment, possible limitations may occur with the sample. Participation in this research requires that all participants identify as cisgender. This requirement will exclude women in the transgender community, who self-identify as women and have experiences utilizing various forms of resistance in response to popular culture's contradiction of the curvaceous aesthetic. The researcher is also aware that selecting participants who are located primarily in the Atlanta and Los Angeles area may potentially skew the data because, perspectives and experiences may differ depending on geographic location. The researcher is also aware that participants with partial or full experience with African American studies courses, and Women and Gender studies courses may have specific knowledge or perspectives that influence their views on forms of resistance and the curvaceous aesthetic.

Due to the potentially sensitive nature of this research, participants can be challenging to acquire. In response to this difficulty, it was determined that the method best suited to obtain participants for this study is snowball sampling. Participants who agreed to participate in this study were informed of the purpose of this research, which is to understand how Black Women are utilizing strategies outside of social media, to resist popular culture's contradiction of the curvaceous aesthetic. Once participants had a concrete understanding of the study, two consent forms were handed out. One form for the participant's record and the other signed and returned to the researcher. A demographic questionnaire was then handed out to be completed. Upon the successful completion of all demographic and consent requirements, interviews were conducted.

3.3 Measurements

Resistance:

Black Women's awareness of and engagement in resistance strategies is a central point within this research. In order to accomplish measuring the participant's notions of resistance, a

series of questions were generated by the researcher. Questions such as, "Do you feel the need to resist the images of curvy non-Black Women you come across, why or why not"?, "If you do feel the need to resist them, how do you resist them online"? And, "Do you participate or engage with body resistance/reclamation organizations or tactics outside of social media? If so, how? Where? What does it look like? How often? These questions aid the researcher in understanding how Black Women rewrite or push against popular culture's commandeering, and contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic.

Demographics:

Participants will complete a demographic form that will confirm their age, education classification, racial/ethnic identity, sexual identity, and employment.

Body Perceptions:

Due to this researcher's interest in the curvaceous aesthetic, it is essential to assess how Black Women view and understand the curvy body. To accomplish this, the researcher compiled a series of questions concerning body perceptions. The questions vary from "what do you consider a curvy body, and why"? To "what do you think about the ways curvy Black Women are viewed in society"? And, "what do you think about the ways curvy non-Black Women are viewed in society"? These questions and those similar to them were designed to allow the participant to critically assess how they see and engage the curvaceous image intimately and externally.

3.4 Data Collection

All participants who agreed to engage in this research were immediately informed of the purpose and intent of this study, which is to explore how Black Women utilize strategies outside of social media, to resist popular culture's contradiction of the curvaceous aesthetic. Next, all key terms and concepts were operationalized for participants during the introductory explanation. Once all participants were in agreement with all terms outlined in the informed consent form, and demographic questionnaire, signatures were acquired, and interviews commenced.

One-on-one interviews with the participants and researcher were recorded using a cell phone with access to a recording app. One-on-one interviews were selected for this study over a group interviewing style because, according to Daniel Turner (2010), they "provide in-depth information pertaining to participants' experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic" (2010, p. 754). The aforementioned in-depth nature of one-on-one interviews serves the overall goal of this research, which is to focus solely on the participant's individual lived experiences, void of influence from other participants. During the discussions, the researcher took notes in order to analyze the conversations in-depth and to inform the transcription and coding process later. These notes were utilized to draw attention to patterns and similarities in participants' responses to accurately report emerging themes that may not have been initially considered. In order to ensure the researchers' accuracy with participants' responses, an additional auditor was employed.

Participant's responses are kept private to the limit allowed by law. The researcher has access to the information they have provided, and it may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly. A list of those people is as follows: The thesis chair of this study Sarita Davis, GSU Institutional Review Board, and the Office for Human Research Protection

(OGRP). The information participants have provided is stored in a secure setting (the researcher's phone and laptop with private passcode protection).

As a result of the potentially sensitive nature of these discussions elicited through the interview process, participants were granted the opportunity to choose the locations of the interviews for their confidentiality, security, and convenience. It is important to note that no compensation was offered for members' participation.

3.5 Data (Coding/Analysis) Process

This research aims to explore how Black Women are utilizing strategies outside of virtual platforms such as social media, to resist popular culture's contradiction of the curvaceous aesthetic. For this reason, the best coding format to use would be Emotion Coding. According to Saldana (2009), emotion coding is defined as "the emotions recalled or experienced by the participant or inferred by the researcher about the participant" (2009, p. 86). Saldana argues that Goleman furthers this definition by maintaining that emotion is "a feeling and its distinctive thoughts, psychological, biological states, and range of propensities to act" (Saldana, 2009, p. 86). It is essential to acknowledge that while there are plenty of words that exist to describe human emotions, according to Saldana, "what the English language contributes in diversity, and accuracy can also become a source of frustration for the researcher attempting to find just the right word to describe and thus code a participant's emotional experiences" (2009, p.87). Despite this complexity, Saldana maintains that "Emotion Coding could be sub coded or categorized in such a way that it allows for the analyst to discern which emotion occurs" (2009, p. 87).

Saldana (2009) maintains that the primary function of Second Cycle coding is to "develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, or theoretical organization from your array of First

Cycle codes" (2009, p.149). He also reports that "Similar codes are tied and assembled to create a pattern code" (2009, p. 150). With this researches' focus on understanding how Black Women are employing strategies outside of social media to resist popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic, the researcher will group participant responses, focal themes, and codes into groups that inform the initial information the research sought to acquire. In a later section, a visual representation of this information garnered from participants was developed in an operational diagram.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

To ensure accuracy throughout the interviewing process, and the validity and reliability of the study as a whole, the study utilizes a high-quality recording device to establish a common platform for coding and transcribing (Creswell, 2007). In addition, all transcripts, and codes are audited and examined by academics outside of the study, proficient in qualitative studies, more specifically the Phenomenology approach. It is imperative to the validity of this research that an additional auditor be utilized to identify any potentially missing gaps in the study that could be addressed. Additionally, the participants were offered an opportunity to review all of the transcripts, recordings, and additional works related to them in the study. Participant feedback through clarifying questions, and comments, were also collected post-interview, to establish further credibility of the findings. With the assessment of an additional auditor, participants' accurate codes can be established for the possible use of furthering this research.

3.7 Limitations

First, it is necessary to acknowledge the biases I hold as the principal investigator of this study. As a Black woman who is fully aware of popular culture's contradictions surrounding the curvaceous aesthetic, it was vital that I did not allow my perspectives to interfere in the interview process. To address and ultimately ensure limited researcher bias, a second coder reviewed the transcripts, and their notes, along with my own, were compared. The use of a second coder was essential to this research because the goal of the study was to highlight the voices of the participants, not that of the researcher. It was also important to consider that the sample size was not entirely reflective of Black Women as a whole, and therefore will provide a smaller scope of understanding. Other limitations include the fact that the study required that all participants self-identify as cis-gendered female, meaning that (a person is assigned female at birth and identifies as a woman). The researcher is aware that this requirement excludes women in the transgender community that self-identify as women and have had experiences with body perception, resistance, and reclamation in popular culture. Finally, an additional limitation is that this study focuses primarily on women located in the Atlanta and Los Angeles area, and through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The researcher is aware that participant perspectives and experiences may differ depending on geographic location, and this may skew the findings.

3.8 Summary

This chapter discussed the research methods and design utilized within this study. It looked at the qualitative approach of Transcendental Phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994), and argued its importance to the study as an approach that relies less on the researcher's interpretation, and

primarily on the voices of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Also, discussed within this chapter was the utilization of social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook as well as predominantly African American meeting spaces including but not limited to Black student alliances, African American studies and Women's studies courses at Georgia State University, to gather participants. These spaces were selected because, they all provide a variety of perspectives and angles to address the resistance of Black Women. Finally, it emphasized the strategies and analysis of the study employed. It expressed the importance of one-on-one interviewing as a space to center the voices of the women experiencing the phenomenon, while also giving the researcher an in-depth and intimate understanding of themes garnered within the discussions of their experiences. The next chapter includes the findings of the study. Finally, it discussed the use of emotion coding as a platform that highlights the consistent themes found within the one-on-one interviews, which creates an opportunity to establish an innovative understanding of Black Women's resistance strategies outside of social media. The next chapter includes the findings of the study.

4 Findings

The purpose of this study is to understand Black Women's use of offline resistance strategies. The primary research question guiding this study is as follows:

1. What strategies are Black Women utilizing other than social media to resist popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic?

This study utilized a qualitative design and was conducted from December 16, 2019 to January 9, 2020. African American women between the ages of 18 and 35 were primarily

recruited through flyers, and snowball sampling techniques. Flyers were briefly posted on the researcher's Instagram story the week of December 9, 2019 and sent to women who inquired. The primary audience for this Instagram account is comprised of 1,040 of the researchers peers. Of those recruited, 8 women were interviewed for approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Face-to-Face interviews took place in a variety of locations which include private bedrooms, as well as public and college libraries. Interviews were also conducted electronically through FaceTime and Skype. At the conclusion of the interview, participants were thanked by the researcher. Participants received no compensation for participating in this study. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

Individuals who participated in the interview were asked to be contacted later in order to review their transcripts, and to provide follow ups to their responses. All participants gave permission to be contacted at a later date. Of the 8 interviews, three participants were contacted to clarify statements from their initial interviews. The researcher called and exchanged text messages with the three participants. Those phone calls and text messages were transcribed and included with the interview data.

The following Chapter has three distinct sections. The first is an individual profile on each participant listed in chronological order. In order to protect their privacy, and to ensure confidentiality, participants selected pseudonyms. The second section introduces the thematic findings of the data from the individual interviews. The final section provides a summary of the chapter.

4.1 The Participants

Eight Black Women who currently live in either Los Angeles or Atlanta participated in this study. All women identified as cisgender women, and actively engaged with social media

platforms (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, etc.). All participants were also of various socioeconomic statuses and educational backgrounds.

Individual Interviews:

Participants in the individual interview process were all diverse in age and places of birth. Their ages ranged from 21 to 33 years. All of the women identified as being Black, or a part of the African diaspora. All participants were high school graduates, five have successfully completed bachelor's degrees, one completed some college, one is currently in her 3rd year in an undergraduate institution, and another is finishing one course in order to obtain her bachelor's degree.

In the following section, a brief description of each participant is provided. In order to provide an insightful understanding of each participant and their persona, their words have been used verbatim wherever appropriate.

Coco. Coco is a 23-year-old single woman who graduated from a large university in Alabama, with a degree in Art History. Coco finished her degree within four years and moved to Atlanta directly afterward, to pursue an advanced degree. After completing the first year of her advanced degree, she decided to take a leave of absence to pursue art. Coco currently resides in Atlanta with her current boyfriend and roommate.

Coco is the oldest of two children. Her father, who hails from South Carolina, is active duty military, and her mother who is a Jamaican born immigrant, is a current stay at home mom. Her younger sister is currently working and completing her prerequisites at a local community

college in hopes of transferring to a 4-year institution soon. Coco's mother, father, and sister all currently reside in Florida.

While discussing her body composition, Coco began laughing, and expressed that "I don't fit what I think a curvy woman is." According to her, her body resembles what her father jokingly describes as a "crackback." According to her father, a crackback is "when like you ain't got no booty, so yo crack just goes up the back."

When probed about her thoughts on resistance, Coco maintained that resistance is important to her because she feels that she can choose. Going into more in-depth detail, she described, "I feel like, for instance, where you put your money into really influences the umm...the success and failure of certain businesses so just taking away your attention from something I feel like is really good for my mental health."

Moss. Moss is a twenty-six-year-old woman who has been in a domestic partnership for five years. She graduated from a small yet prestigious liberal arts college in Los Angeles in 2015, with a bachelor's degree in Critical Theory & Social Justice, with a minor in Art History, with an emphasis on Visual Art. Within the last several years, she and her partner have traveled and lived across several states in the U.S. they have currently relocated back to California so that she may continue her education.

Moss is the sixth of seven children on her mother's side. Her father and mother were never married. Her mother is from California, and her father is from a small township in Jamaica. Moss's father was never truly an active part of her life, but she does have several siblings through him, one a brother she partially grew up with and spent summers together with, and a twin sister.

While discussing her body image, Moss maintained that her body "is filling out." According to her, "I spent most of my life as a very twig slim girl, but now I feel like I've got quite a bit of ass."

When asked about the importance of resistance, Moss maintained that "the world is very unfair and fucked up... activism and reeducation and seizure of the narrative or whatever the fuck needs to happen."

Katie. Katie is a twenty-six-year-old single woman who graduated from a large university in the Bay Area of California. She received her bachelor's degree in the spring of 2015 in Politics. She currently works for an insurance company located in California. Currently, she lives with her mother in a large city in California.

Katie is the oldest of two children. Her mother has achieved an associate degree and her father has completed some high school. Her younger sister is currently finishing up her third year at a prestigious institution in Michigan where she will receive a bachelor's degree in Psychology.

According to Katie, she does not have a curvaceous body. She stated, "I have a very slim frame, I don't consider myself like thick at all, I don't get put in that category if there was a thick vs. skinny, I would definitely be in the skinny category."

When discussing her engagement in body image resistance strategies offline, Katie argued that she does not participate in any tangible organizations; however, she does feel some level of participation is essential. She explained, "... everything that we're learning outside were bringing to social media. Social media would not be what it is had; we not brought something

and contributed something to it, the conversation definitely starts outside of that it's definitely important."

Rene. Rene is a twenty-six -year-old single woman born and raised in California. After completing high school, she attended a local Community College for two years and has a few credits left to complete her associate degree. Although she has taken some college courses, she has not made any decisions about her career path. She does, however, enjoy working in customer service and has done so for a few years now.

Rene is the only child and has little to no contact with her father. Her mother, who is now deceased, completed high school and worked with Fiscal Recap. Since her mother's passing in mid-2019, Rene has been working tirelessly to provide for herself and her two pets.

Rene considers herself to be a curvier woman and believes so because according to her, "when you go to the doctor, and you have your checkups like everything is healthy, but I'm still considered like overweight for my size and my age, like for my height and my age."

When discussing resistance strategies offline, Rene maintained that "I think it's very important. If your gonna do it online, you should do it offline also."

Bianca. Bianca is a twenty-nine-year-old California native. She attended a public High School in California for two years, following those few years; she finished her high school career through homeschooling. After graduating high school, Bianca began taking some courses at a local community college. In 2013, she received her associate degree, and the following fall, she began attending a large state school in California. She is currently one class away from receiving

her Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and works for a growing company as their Strategic Partnerships and Growth Manager.

Bianca is the second oldest girl of her mother's seven children. Her mother and father were briefly married, according to Bianca for "I have no idea" how long. Her mother is currently pursuing an advanced degree, and her father, according to her knowledge, has completed some high school.

When asked how she describes her own body, Bianca giggled a little before stating, "yeah... I'm pretty curvy." In between uncomfortable chuckles, she continued, "I'm bottom-heavy for the most part, I'm a D-cup, so my waist is relatively small in proportion to the rest of my body." According to Bianca, living with a curvaceous body is "like fighting against being a trophy. Or whatever standard that is, it's like an absolute opposite I have to... I want to make sure I'm respected before I'm overtly sexualized, and it's a hard concept to sell because you see me before you receive me."

While discussing the importance of body image resistance outside of the internet, Bianca maintained that it was, in fact, essential. She argued:

I think it's more important because I feel like, I feel like in a world where everyone thinks this is an ideal body or an ideal stature or ideal look or whatever it is to have they assume that you don't have any insecurities of your own or, that you don't feel uncomfortable in it, it almost feels, it almost feels like you can't have those conversations because what people associate you as.

Kay. Kay is a twenty-one-year-old and originally from California; however, she divides her time between her father's home in California and her own home in Connecticut. Kay is

currently in her third year at a well-known university in Connecticut and will be receiving a bachelor's degree in English with a concentration in Theory and Literature, as well as a double major in African American Studies with a proposed minor in Dance. Outside of school, Kay is a dancer and is involved with four different dance teams whose dance styles range from Caribbean to hip-hop.

Kay is the youngest of seven, and the fifth of her siblings to attempt a college degree. Kay's mother is from California, and her father is from a small town in Jamaica. Her mother is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree currently and her father has completed up to a middle school education in his hometown in Jamaica.

Kay described her body with enormous enthusiasm as being curvy. Although her curves aren't what she describes as "hella dramatic" she still considers herself to be curvy. This classification does not only come from her own awareness, but she also maintains that her peers also contribute to this classification. According to Kay, "people tell me all the time that I have a big butt...[and] I know that my waist is tiny, my boobs are kind of big, it's a whole ting."

Kay also maintained that it is "110 percent" important that Black woman participate in movements that promote ownership and reclamation of their body/aesthetic.

Trish. Trish. Trish is a thirty-three-year-old master's student living with her partner in California. In 2018, Trish received a bachelor's degree in Human Services from a well-known State school in California. She is currently attending that same institution for her first year in the social work master's program. Trish now works in a variety of housing, and adolescent facilities in the heart of a large city in California.

Trish is the second oldest of seven siblings. Although she was born and raised in California, she spent a few of her formative years in Jamaica. Her father, a native Jamaican, to her knowledge, has finished little to no schooling at all. Her mother is currently enrolled in a University in California, to acquire her bachelor's degree.

When describing her body, Trish maintained that she has 'natural curves.' She argued, "I fluctuate between weight so I can either be really slim or really curvy, so it goes in between, but even when I'm slim, I'm still curvy."

When discussing resistance and reclamation strategies, Trish stated, "I think that it is very important to engage in that, if I had more time, I think I would be more involved."

Denise. Denise is a twenty-seven-year-old woman who graduated from a State school in Georgia with a bachelor's degree in Psychology. After graduating in 2014, she moved to the Bay area of California to complete a year of service working with "at-risk" elementary and middle school-aged youth. Denise still currently resides in the Bay area living with a trusted housemate and friend. She intends to one day build a school.

Denise is the youngest of two; her older brother is two and a half years her senior. She was born in Colombia, SC, and raised in Georgia. Both of her parents hold college degrees and have been married for 33 years.

When describing her shape, Denise maintained that she is a curvy woman because, according to her, "my bodily features can be seen whichever direction I am standing."

When asked about the importance of participating in body resistance strategies or organizations outside of social media, Denise denied its significance. Opting to highlight the importance of community awareness, she argued, "we all have a part to play in treating each

other with respect, communicating our boundaries, and educating the next generation to do better than us.”

4.2 Overview of Questions and Themes

The purpose of this study is to understand Black Women’s use of offline resistance strategies. The primary research question leading this research is as follows: What strategies are Black Women utilizing other than social media to resist popular culture’s contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic?

In order to properly engage the main research question, five broad questions were focused on. Within these questions, eight themes stood out in terms of the research questions. These themes are indicated in the chart below. It is also important to note that several other themes were highlighted throughout these interviews, and it would be beneficial to explore them in greater detail in later studies.

Table 1

<u>Broad Questions</u>	<u>Themes</u>
What are Black Women’s general feelings of Curvy Bodies	Deep respect and admiration
What are Black Women’s perceptions of the curvy aesthetic in popular culture	Racial divide in societal acceptance
How do Black and non-Black curvy images affect Black Women	Apathy Towards Curvy non-Black Bodies Overwhelming Appreciation for Curvy Black Bodies

Black Women's online resistance strategies	Refusing to Engage "Unfollowing" and "filtering" Simply Having a Presence Online
What are Black Women's offline Resistance strategies	Conversation/Engagement "The Everyday" 'Keep that Same Energy'

4.3 General Feelings of Curvy Bodies

In order to investigate what participants felt about curvy bodies, the researcher asked a series of questions that centered around what the participants considered curvy bodies, how they felt the curvy body had been treated both historically and contemporarily, and how they felt overall about curvy bodies. The participants' responses consistently centered around one specific theme: Deep respect and admiration.

Deep Respect and Admiration

All participants expressed a profound sense of admiration for the curvy body. Although they are all in various stages of womanhood and understandings of self, all of the participants maintained varying degrees of appreciation for the curvy body. Comments from Moss, a 26-year-old Black woman from California aptly expressed the participants' general feelings of curvy bodies:

I love it; I celebrate it, I think it's exciting, you know its titillating, I think that it's popular for a reason you know it's very, very stimulating, very titillating. I love to see how women dress themselves, and how they celebrate themselves and the fucking universal celebration that is shaking ass.

Twenty-six-year-old Katie echoed this general feeling of the participants when she stated: "I think that there's really like nothing that can compare." Explaining further, she maintained, "I'm not saying necessarily that you're a real woman just because you have curves but, I think it does give you a little bit more definition, and I think that it also in a way can make you seem more attractive." Additionally, Denise argued, "I think a curvy body is beautiful. I find it appealing to the eye, and I admire it on other women also."

While participants all maintained similarly positive responses about curvy bodies, some expressed a more nuanced affection that engaged racial and social biases. For example, 29-year-old Bianca, who adamantly proclaimed, "my glory is not in my ass" maintained "I always just equate it to being a black woman or being a woman period. Black Women have always been curvy to me whether it's like an athletic build or something, I've always associated curves and womanly figures to Black Women." Similarly, college junior Kay eagerly stated, "I love It because I feel like for mad long, it was like being skinny was only the tea." Diving deeper into her social analysis and appreciation of curvy bodies she continued: "I feel like it's so funny for me when I say that to people because I am skinny, so people are like girl, what are you talking about, but I love that now girls that are not as big as my pinky is out here on Instagram in they bras and panties because period! Do what you gotta do, and you look good. I love it; I'm here for it." Additionally, 26-year-old Rene stated, "because of my background and you know family friends, I don't think anything negatively, if anything, I think it's a great thing you know." Engaging the social complexities of curvy bodies, she continued, "I like the word curvy because before that it was probably like plus-sized or like overweight so curvy does put like a, like a blindfold over that."

4.4 Perceptions of the Curvy Aesthetic in Popular Culture

Questions created to examine the participants' perceptions of curvaceous aesthetics in popular culture yielded very similar results. It was apparent to the researcher that all participants felt that contemporarily, there was a significant racial divide in societal acceptance of the curvy body type. Participants expressed consistently that Black Women are often on the opposing end of this divide, often being overlooked, or disregarded altogether.

Racial Divide in Societal Acceptance

When asked to discuss the acceptance of different curvy aesthetics, all of the participants maintained to some degree that within popular culture, Black Women's curvy bodies are often posed as the lesser of the curvy aesthetics. Katie, when asked, immediately argued that:

There can be like a survey study on putting a Black curvy woman next to it, one that's not curvy I mean that's not Black, a non- Black curvy woman and still I feel like the masses would I guess in a way like gravitate more towards the non-Black curvy woman just because...and, and it could be just based on her perception, or her being Black and the non-Black woman is viewed as more beautiful or less problematic.

With a similar response, Georgia native Denise stated, "I think there's always been a lower level of respect for the Black woman, even if only slight in certain environments than for non-Black women." Continuing her assessment, she argued, "so I think the same applies in regard to curvy bodies." Following closely behind Denise's assessment, Bianca argued, "I feel like we're still second class when it comes to the beauty standard even though we are the model." Furthering her declaration, she maintained:

As black people, we have always had our own standards of beauty, but we still are chasing a different standard, a more worldly view of beauty, so we're kinda warping society but still kinda conforming to it too. So, it's cool that we change the status quo on like curviness and butts, and all those things are like cool to be like a woman like those are the standards of beauty now. You can't like erase that now, but it's not on us. Like, it's not on Black Women. Like the standard of it's like, amazing on Caucasian women, on Asian women, on Hispanic women, it's absolutely fetishized to a completely different level and standard where I feel like Black Women still take the brunt.. of something we naturally have.

Additionally, Moss argued, “I think, about it in terms of like again these rules that apply depending on how your body reads whether its sexy and youthful, and useful versus fat, grotesque, unacceptable and then I think that gets even more amplified when it’s you know you’re dark and it's ghetto and then you’re white or your Latina or you’re you know fairer skinned and its again sexy, so it’s the rules kind of get stricter and more vicious when you think about it in terms of like the commodification.” Furthering her assessment of this racially driven motif, she concluded:

Because I see it as like Black Women’s bodies are up for grabs. I don’t know if the word that I wanna use is up for grabs, but it does feel like everybody wants to buy an ass and look like Nicki Minaj or whatever the fuck, but you don’t have to live the pain, so it feels, it feels even shittier to see it in the realm of like popular culture. Black Women’s Bodies, or not exactly cuz I don’t believe that the curvaceous aesthetic fundamentally belongs solely to Black Women, but I think that Black Women have a very intimate relationship to the way that they physically present, how they are perceived, and how they are left

room to exist in the world. I think that your aesthetic definitely limits or creates space for the way that you move through the world. As hip hop and Black culture has like emerged into the cloud of popular culture, I see that culture that is interested in what is cool, what is hip, what is fun, what is bought and sold, what is valuable. I see aesthetics being slurped up into that, and where you know a look was ghetto, like all the ghetto Uncle Luke girls [women in the 80s and 90s who danced provocatively, exuded sex appeal and carefree “ghetto” culture alongside Uncle Luke and the 2 Live Crew] with their bamboo earrings, and their fucking twerking and maybe they’re on welfare or whatever the fuck, and like this is ghetto banjee, bad now they are signifiers of what is cool, hip, hot. So, I mean, I guess seeing that in the hands and on the bodies of white people, it is very frustrating, and it is shitty, and it sucks. Seeing it in the hands of Black people, I mean understanding that we have our own history of classism and fucked up interpersonal relations I guess, now they are being picked up and celebrated, I see it as beautiful but also I see the contradiction, and I see the ways of our bought and sold culture.

Similarly, twenty-three-year-old queer artist Coco echoed Moss’s sentiments exactly. In a simplistic and telling utterance, Coco argued, “I think that society views the Black body as something that can be easily imposed on.” She continued, “I think that society often tries to make me feel like my body’s not mine.”

4.5 The Effects of Black and non-Black Curvy Images

Probing questions were asked in an effort to assess how the participants felt they were affected by various curvy images. Participant responses centered around two distinct themes,

Apathy Towards Curvy non-Black Bodies, and Overwhelming Appreciation for Curvy Black Bodies.

Apathy Towards Curvy non-Black Bodies

When answering questions about the effects of non-Black curvy bodies on their day to day, participants generally displayed a wide range of apathy. Kay, who ensured the researcher understood that she self-identified as being skinny, argued:

They don't make me feel anything because most of the time, I will keep scrolling. So, like in the moment, if I like it, I would be like bloop or like if I know her cuz I'm not a hater I'll be like oh okay cute imma like it I guess, and keep it scrolling but most of the time doesn't make me feel anything.

Similarly, while exploring her feelings on the topic, nonchalantly, Trish asserted, "I don't have a certain set way of feeling when it comes to that." Bianca argued that "as a browner skinned Black woman," the non-Black curvaceous image is subconscious, according to her, like a "constant reminder that this is the world's preference." However, despite this fact, similarly to Kay, she also maintained that overall, these images did not affect her. She argued, "I don't know like it doesn't...I think I'm rooted more so in myself that it doesn't affect me in that way." Rene similarly expressed the following:

You know what it's sad, but I think it's become normal. We've been going through that our whole life, like my generation I feel like has gone through that our whole life, so it kind of becomes like oh that's normal you know.

Echoing Rene, Katie also acknowledged her indifference of this normalized aesthetic by stating, "I mean, I'm honestly indifferent about seeing it. Why? Because it's just become such a norm honestly."

Although Coco highlighted moments of mild annoyance with non-Black curvaceous images, for what she stated as seeing them "too often" or seeing them "too much," she similarly maintained a level of disinterest for this aesthetic overall. While explaining her position, she stated, "I don't really have a response because in the same breath how another woman's body looks doesn't really affect me, you know." Moss, who took up a very similar and generally neutral position, decided to approach her response very diplomatically argued:

I would say, in as much as I love women and I understand that it is difficult to be a woman, I am brought joy when I see images of women who have maybe not the socially acceptable body image like, I talk about my friend who started her plus-sized clothing line, and they are all curvaceous fully figured you know, women of all shades and I am happy to see that.

Although Denise also admitted to being unaffected by images of curvaceous non-Black women, she also expressed feeling as though she was watching a 'poser.' While explaining her perspective, she argued:

I feel like I'm watching a poser. Not all the time, but it feels like they are trying to steal a look that they weren't born with (regarding very exaggerated curvy bodies or also fake-acquired curves). If they are uniquely curvy or have exercised and taken care of themselves, and it turned out that way, I feel happy for them because it's not an easy goal to achieve being lean."

Overwhelming Appreciation for Curvy Black Bodies

While discussing how images of curvaceous Black Women made them feel, participants overwhelmingly expressed massive amounts of appreciation for these images. Rene, who took a moment to wonder aloud, about what she thought curvier Black Women had to "go through" to be in the limelight argued:

I love them. I love it. I get excited I'm like yes! Go! this is what we need, again representation. So that makes me feel like okay, we do have a chance, we are slowly, but surely knocking down the barriers. It's taking a little longer than I think anyone expected, but it's very eye-opening. It's even liberating. It's great it's liberating, and I think it should be celebrated a lot more.

Similarly, Kay, who was unable to contain her broad smile, and excitement at the mere mention of curvaceous Black Women, stammered through her description stating, "oh my gosh, I feel like it's so, no cuz it's so different. I'm like okay girl period you look so cute." Gaining momentum and regaining control of her voice, she continued, "It's like a whole different thing, it's like, I'm like wow! It's like heart, no, not even heart eyes. You know the emoji with the star eyes? That's what it is, and I'm like wow"! Echoing Kay's stunned sentiments, Coco expressed, "I just think, I think that I feel good I just feel, I think I just try to take the time and space to honor Black Women in general, so I feel like its ... I just be like, wow!" Moss, who was equally enamored and in support of curvy Black Women's bodies, insisted that she appreciates seeing Black Women of "all shapes and sizes," and "women with the shape of a woman" maintained, "seeing images of curvy Black Women makes me feel cozy. It makes me feel comfortable."

Although Katie revealed that she pays limited attention to curvaceous Black bodies due to some mild skepticism in regard to their "authenticity", her appreciation for the aesthetic did

not go unaddressed. Katie stated, "overall, umm... I think it's great"! Equally as appreciative and interested in the “authenticity” of Black curvaceous women, was Denise who maintained:

I am Proud of their accomplishment in health because they're usually people who are consistently exercising in my experience, and that's something I want to achieve for myself regarding health and body leanness. If it's not health-related and it's not their authentic shape they received surgery or something, I feel curious in terms of their choice in creating this body and if they're happy.

4.6 Online Resistance Strategies

A series of questions were asked to examine the participants' use and understanding of online resistance strategies. While coding, two dominant themes emerged, Refusing to engage or "blocking" and "Simply Having a presence online."

Refusing to Engage

'Not/Unfollowing' and 'filtering'

When asked to express how they utilize resistance strategies online, more than half of the participants maintained that they simply refuse to engage with specific content. In order to effectively disengage, participants expressed that they rely heavily on Instagram's filtering algorithm's and personalized "not/unfollowing" tactics." Bianca argued:

I feel like mine is more I don't block anything out in that per se, I just feel like it kind of- the algorithm kinda works in that way to where it's, it's keeping tally of what you like vs. what you don't like and kinda feeding you them images, of course, some things kinda peek through.

Katie, who openly grumbled about her boredom with social media as a whole, and its problematic influence on society, expanded on Bianca's explanation of Instagram's filtering algorithm by maintaining:

Instagram has this thing where like if you're on the explorer page, and you click on a certain picture, at the bottom of it, it's like a blue button, and it says like see more images like this, or you can see less images like this, a lot of the time I find myself clicking. You click that button, and I see like less of that content.

Continuing to list her methods of resistance, Katie argued, "also, I try not to follow too many pages, ones that just glorify the Instagram model type of disposition." Concluding her explanation, she stated, "I really try to stay away from following those types of accounts because I don't think that it's healthy. Honestly, it's creating an unrealistic perception of a woman's body." Coco, who agreed that certain Instagram pages create insecurities, maintained that it is important to begin "unfollowing anything that makes you feel insecure." She continued explaining that her online resistance strategies looked like "Unfollowing, blocking, just trying to change up whatever you see on your feed."

Similarly, 21-year-old college junior Kay maintained that she too is very intentional with her choice of unfollowing. According to Kay, this deliberate unfollowing takes the form of "not following white people okay" she argued, "I am very intentional about following black sources and Black people. Like ill follow a white person if I know them". Thirty-three-year-old Trish echoes these sentiments by declaring the following:

I don't really follow celebrities and things like that anyway, but I don't follow them, and if it's something that I'm just not in the mood for that day, I just keep scrolling, so I guess I have that leisure of engaging or not engaging.

Simply Having a Presence Online

For a few of the participants, online resistance took the form of them merely being present online, living, laughing, loving, and existing. Rene, who identified herself as a "talker," argued, "anything you know that I decide to support or do I would say would be it [online resistance], you know"? Moss, who described her social media identity as one who is an "appreciator of the conversations around her, and not a shouter out into the void" maintained:

I see like resistance tactics being like I don't know, having the audacity to be like I don't give a fuck about what anybody has to say to me, you know I'm myself and I love myself. I see resistance as being like anytime people challenge people, you know making a post with a very honest caption, or with an educationally geared caption or something that is you know pointing you towards something that is not geared or rooted in our oppression.

4.7 Offline Resistance Strategies

A series of questions were asked in order to assess the participants' engagement with resistance strategies offline. During their interviews, all participants discussed in length their understandings, interpretations, and distinct approaches. In an attempt to answer the overall research question, How are Black Women utilizing strategies outside of social media, to resist popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic, the participants were asked the following broad question: Do you participate or engage with body resistance/reclamation organizations or tactics outside of social media? If so, how? Where? What does it look like, and how often? Responses reflected two consistent themes: Conversation and the "Everyday" and 'Keeping that same energy.'

Conversation/Engagement and the “Everyday”

When asked to describe what their offline resistance strategies consist of in regard to body resistance/reclamation, all participants maintained that they do not participate in formal organizations; however, their resistance is steeped in their everyday existence. According to Bianca, “living our black experience outside of what the world thinks a black experience is, is resistance within itself.” Diving deeper into her own personal strategies surrounding what she refers to as “fellowship with like-minded [women] able to receive other women’s stories outside of their own,” she continued, “I feel like any conversation can ultimately lead into a fellowship, and if I’m comfortable enough and you’re willing enough to receive, then we gonna somehow someway come onto these conversations.” Rene, who equally agreed with the conversational aspect of her own resistance approach, maintained, “I’m probably just talking a lot, you know, like making it more aware. It’s probably more of a conversation, probably for me”. Similarly, Katie argued, “activism outside of the social media platforms looks like your everyday conversation with your friends or even people you don’t know.” Continuing, she declare

I think activism looks like addressing a problem when it occurs. I feel like activism should start right there. With you stepping up and you saying something at least bringing awareness to that person. Because let's be honest, a lot of the time, people are ignorant about it, so they say racist things or something because they are ignorant.

In agreement, Kay stated, "I think it looks like speaking up about things when you can. It's all the time. I think that you should always try to but also because we're human, it just happens that sometimes you're in a situation where maybe you can't speak up in this moment, but I think that if you're gonna be an activist if that's what you're going to call yourself, if that's what you wanna

do then I think that it's about speaking up as much as you can." Moss, who adamantly believes that the world is generally "very unfair and fucked up," agreed that she too actively attempts to resist curvy biases through her everyday interactions. Moss maintained that:

I don't know what scale it has you know in the activism piece but like on the base level of like community building, and like love and support, giving people what they need. I think that it more translates to a way that I conduct myself in life, and I try my hardest to leave room for my sisters, and when I say my sisters, I mean my blood sisters, but just also the women around me to be who they are. My little sister wants to be a sexy dancer; I'm going to support my little sister and let her be a sexy dancer you know what I'm saying? If you want to have your ass out, or you want to have your ass covered, or you want to sit down and talk or cry, or you know, I try to leave space for the women around me to be who they are, and I try to encourage them.

Moss was not the only participant whose everyday resistance strategy centered around carving out space for other Black Women to exist freely. In fact, Coco expressed very similar sentiments. Coco argued, "I try to support the Black Women around being their identity, and identity journey, and I think that I try to be encouraging of a positive and healing narrative with them. One that encourages them to challenge and challenge themselves, figure out what makes them comfortable and stick with certain things."

Although participating in body resistance/reclamation organizations or tactics isn't extremely important to Denise, she emphasized that "we all have a part to play in treating each other with respect, communicating our boundaries, and educating the next generation to do better than us." This thrust which Denise maintains is a daily and constant task, Trish abides by religiously. Trish, who divulged that she does not outright participate in body

resistance/reclamation organizations, maintained that where she lacked in physical participation, she gained through youth communication work. Trish stated:

If I had more time, I think I would be more involved but because I'm like such a busy person, and I know that's like no excuse you know, but I think that it is very important to engage in that and so that's why I always try and makes sure that I keep a level due to my career I'm actually heavily involved with the younger umm population so I can really engage with them and kind of give them the encouragement and the support that I did not have and the representation that I didn't have.

This support and encouragement Trish speaks of takes the form of what she refers to as daily "controversial conversation." She stated:

A controversial conversation that we always talk about is always these Kardashians, these damn Kardashians. So, they're like obsessed with Kylie and obsessed with her body and life and the things that she has, and they don't recognize that they have those exact attributes that they were naturally given. So, when they're in school and the boys cuz they're like highly into boys right now you know high schooler teenagers they're like really really into that, and the dating culture right now is different, so they feel they have to mimic that in order to be desired and wanting to be dated. I just try to redirect; I'm like very heavily into redirecting and circling back to who they are as a person and the qualities that they have. Not every black girl has a big butt, not every black girl has hips, not every Black girl has big lips or a big nose or whatever like you know what I mean but whatever it is that you have, it's kind of what you have to like kind of really just indulge in and love and appreciate within yourself, and then those who are right for you will come around to you.

'Keep that Same Energy'

While discussing their offline resistance strategies, several Participants highlighted the extreme importance of consistency in both on and offline behavior. Rene and this research referred to this behavior as 'Keeping that Same Energy.'

According to Rene, it is important to acknowledge that "social media again has brought a lot of awareness and things like that" however, she continued, "we also cannot forget like a lot of these people you don't know. Some of these people are downstairs in they grand momma's basement, they just internet thugs so I think it's very important; if your gonna do it online, you should do it offline also "Keep the same energy. " In this same vein, Trish, who describes herself as "not as heavily involved" in participating or engaging in resistance strategies as the "young kids" are, argued:

I think that it's very important that we participate [in resistance strategies], but not just in social media but in real life because we live our life so virtually these days that our esteem is measured by the internet you know what I mean? Like our esteem is measured by that, so I think that it's not only important to participate in that online but in our everyday lives. That's important.

Similarly, Kay identified with this feeling and expressed that she too strives continuously to keep a certain level of consistency throughout both her on and offline life. When explicitly asked about organizations she has partnered with to engage in some activism or resistance, she responded, "you know I think that I don't know if there's anything as explicit as like organizations or stuff that I'm in." Continuing, she expressed, "but like I think that like the same

way that I have that energy online, I try to make sure that that's how I move throughout the world.”

4.8 Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand Black Women's use of offline resistance strategies. The primary research question guiding this study is as follows:

What strategies are Black Women utilizing other than social media to resist popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic?

In order to understand what offline resistance strategies Black Women were utilizing to resist popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic, this study focused on participants general feelings of the curvaceous aesthetic, their perceptions of the curvy aesthetic in popular culture, the effects of various curvaceous images they consume, and their social media resistance strategies. Lastly, the participants' offline resistance strategies were discussed at length. These factors were presented in detail within this chapter and are discussed in the summary below.

Although each participant self-identified as possessing various body types ranging from skinny to very curvaceous, the general consensus amongst all participants was that the curvy body overall is one to be celebrated, appreciated, and loved. Participants with a more nuanced appreciation for this aesthetic highlighted its immediate connection to Blackness and Black Women.

In addition to possessing individual feelings of great admiration for the curvy body, participants highlighted their perceptions of the curvy aesthetic in popular culture. The general consensus amongst participants was that as Black Women, their curvy bodies are consistently and overwhelmingly classified as lesser to that of non-Black Women with curvy bodies.

Two major themes were exposed when participants began to unpack how specific curvy images affected them: Apathy for non-Black curvy bodies and overwhelming appreciation for Black curvy bodies. Regarding non-Black curvy bodies, participants identified their indifference as largely due to a desire not to address the ways other women exist in their bodies, as well as society's normalization of the aesthetic. With respect to images of curvy Black Women, all participants expressed that it is an aesthetic to be loved and or celebrated.

Participants were in general agreement with their use of online resistance strategies. More than half argued that they heavily rely on the filtering algorithms of social media sites like Instagram, or they 'unfollow' undesired pages. A few of the participants highlighted the importance of them merely having an online existence on these platforms as a form of resistance.

Many participants emphasized the importance of conversations and the “everyday” in relation to offline body resistance/reclamation. Participants sited daily interactions with peers, family, friends, and like-minded individuals as daily thrusts in their lives. Although all participants denied formal participation in active organizations in their respective areas, the general consensus was that there was an extreme importance for all to "Keep that same Energy" offline as they do online.

5 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand Black Women's use of offline resistance strategies. The primary research question guiding this study is as follows:

1. What strategies are Black Women utilizing other than social media to resist popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic?

Eight African American women between the ages of 18 and 35 were purposefully selected and interviewed. All participants were interviewed individually. These interviews were the primary source of data for this study. In order to understand Black Women's use of offline resistance strategies, a qualitative research design was employed, and data was analyzed using emotion coding (Saldana, 2009). Face to face and virtual, structured interviews were conducted. Participants were recruited through flyers, online, and snowball sampling techniques.

An analysis of the data revealed one distinct category related to participants' general feelings of curvy bodies: deep respect and admiration. Concerning the participants, perceptions of curvy aesthetics in popular culture, one category emerged: racial divide in societal acceptance. Two categories emerged from data analysis concerning the effects of Black and non-Black Curvy Images. Participants generally felt apathy towards curvy non-Black bodies and overwhelming appreciation for curvy Black bodies.

While examining the participants' online resistance strategies, two categories emerged. Participants reported tactics such as "Unfollowing" and "filtering," in order to resist engagement. Participants also expressed that merely having a presence online is a form of resistance. While exploring participants offline Resistance strategies, which is the primary focus of this study, two

distinct categories emerged. Participants indicated that conversation and engagement were their key factors, maintaining that their resistance is steeped in their "everyday" existence. Participants also highlighted the extreme importance of consistency in both on and offline behavior, what they identified as "Keeping that Same Energy." This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the general conclusions of the study, its limitations, and recommendations for future research.

5.1 Discussion

Based on the analysis of the data, three general conclusions were drawn from the findings.

The conclusions are:

1. Although Black Women deeply respect and admire the curvaceous aesthetic, they are aware of how it is scrutinized on Black Bodies but embraced on non-Black bodies, and as a result, they perceive it negatively when it is associated with non-Black Bodies.
2. Despite Black Women's acknowledgement of social media being a key platform for resistance, they are extremely aware and advocate the importance of being consistent in resistance strategies offline
3. Through everyday discussion both intentional and unintentional, Black Women are resisting popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic.

Although Black Women deeply respect and admire the curvaceous aesthetic, they are aware of how it is scrutinized on Black Bodies but embraced on non-Black bodies, and as a result they perceive it negatively when it is associated with non-Black Bodies.

The curvaceous aesthetic was well celebrated amongst participants in this study. Responses to the curvaceous aesthetic ranged from love to deep respect and admiration.

Participants such as Moss exclaimed, "I love it, I celebrate it, I think it's exciting," and Katie expressed, "I think that there's really like nothing that can compare." However, Despite this curvaceous celebration, Black Women are aware of the societal contradictions that accompany this aesthetic. Previous research highlights this awareness by engaging studies that considered how White women who alter their physique to obtain Black woman's "culturally appropriate features" (Ashley & Jung, 2017) are praised and respected far more than Black Women with similar characteristics (Ashley & Jung, 2017). Existing literature (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014) has also highlighted studies that emphasized Black Women's feelings of frustration and disapproval of white models for commandeering their aesthetics. The responses of the participants in this study support these findings in the literature and also takes them further. While reporting generally positive and uplifting perceptions of the curvaceous aesthetic, all participants repeatedly engaged in discussions centered on the racial divide in acceptance of this figure, and ultimately their negative associations with curvaceous non-Black bodies emerged.

According to earlier literature (Awad, Norwood & Taylor et al., 2015), the idea that Black Women were less appealing is one young Black girl's learn at an early age. Findings from this study support this claim and can be highlighted through participant responses that exude feelings of hopelessness and contemporary inferiority. Bianca, for example, argued, "I feel like we're still second class when it comes to the beauty standard even though we are the model." This feeling of subordination that Bianca expressed was not limited to her; Katie also described similar sentiments. Katie argued, "there can be like a survey study putting a Black curvy woman next to a non- Black curvy woman, and I feel like the masses would in a way gravitate more towards the non-Black curvy woman." Both Katie and Bianca's statements highlight what has been found in the literature. According to (Butler, 2014), there is a disparity of aesthetics in popular culture and

its inclination to celebrate, honor, and give leeway to white women for their bodies, styles, and art while refusing to allow Black Women the same leverage.

As a result of these contradictions participants believe to be evident within the realm of popular culture, and society as a whole, thoughts of indifference and frustration about seeing non-Black curvaceous bodies were prevalent. Previous literature (Sastre, 2013) argued that as a result of curvaceous non-Black Women acquiring financial success, and visibility through the commandeering of the historically marginalized and excluded curvaceous aesthetic, some resentment by members of the black community has emerged. Denise, whose claims support the literature, maintained, "I feel like I'm watching a poser." She continued, "not all the time, but it feels like they are trying to steal a look that they weren't born with." Similarly, Bianca argued, "subconsciously, you know that this is a preference, and being a browner skinned black woman, it's like a constant reminder that this is the world's preference."

Despite Black Women's acknowledgement of social media being a key platform for resistance, they are extremely aware and advocate the importance of being consistent in resistance strategies offline.

According to earlier literature (Hobson, 2018), beauty for Black Women is a significant site for resistance. Contemporarily, this form of resistance is often formed virtually through online safe spaces such as Black Twitter, and viral movements similar to #BlackGirlMagic. Black Twitter, according to the literature, is the "social mouthpiece" of the black community, responsible for raising racial consciousness and awareness (Wilder, 2017). In section 2.7 of this study, #BlackGirlMagic is defined as a virtual space of solidarity for Black Women, against misogynoir, stereotyping, and the isms: racism, sexism, colorism (Thomas, 2015). Terah J.

Stewart, argues that through engagement with social media, Black Women not only create counter space, but they also engage in a form of everyday resistance (2019). The results of this study affirm these claims and even takes them a step further. Although participants saw these virtual platforms as vital for engaging in resistance against popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic, many of them reported that it was equally, if not more important, to be resistant offline as well.

Participants shared sentiments that positioned virtual resistance through social media as "changing the narrative," "bring attention and awareness to the importance of Black woman," and a tool to aid in "building solidarity." Coupled with this praise for online resistance, other feelings began to emerge in relation to continuing resistance outside of the virtual realm. Participants expressed emotions that ranged from colloquial phrases such as "keep that same energy" to a strong urging. Trish, exuding the sentiments of many of the participants, expressed, "I think that it's very important that we participate [in resistance] but not just on social media but in real life. We live our life so virtually these days that our esteem is measured by the internet. It's not only important to participate in that online, but in our everyday lives, that's important."

This desire the participants expressed in order to engage in offline resistance is not a new concept. According to research conducted by Tanisha Jackson (2010), Black female artists frequently used their physical bodies and art to confront ideologies concerning their body images. Rana Emerson (2002) also argued that women performers in the 90s used their rhymes and raps to restructure perceptions of Black Women's bodies.

Through everyday discussion both intentional and unintentional, Black Women are resisting popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic.

Much of the literature highlighted above emphasizes Black Women's cotemporary use of virtual platforms such as Twitter and Instagram as a crucial tool for resistance. According to Kelly Macias, within the last three years alone, social media platforms have become an invaluable revolutionary tool within movements around the globe (2015). Kay, who claimed that it was "110 percent" essential to participate in online resistance for the sake of representation, supports this literature. However, despite this extreme prevalence and use of virtual platforms for resistance, many of the participants felt that there was a more pressing need to engage in physical everyday discussions as resistance. Reflecting on her curvaceous body during her individual interview, Bianca exuded these exact sentiments. Bianca maintained:

"In a world where everyone thinks this is an ideal body, or an ideal stature, or an ideal look or whatever it is to have, they assume that you don't have any insecurities of your own, or that you don't feel uncomfortable in it. It almost feels like you can't have those conversations because of what people associate you as. But, I feel like you have to have these physical conversations cuz it's almost as if I'm not allowed to feel uncomfortable in this body. No, it's not always large women's groups, but I feel like any conversation can ultimately lead into a fellowship. If I'm comfortable enough and you're willing enough to receive, then we gonna somehow someway come onto these conversations."

The desire to engage in these "physical" conversations Bianca emphasized during her interview was not limited to her alone. Rene equally as passionate in her response maintained that [physical] interaction in the real world is important. She argued, "you cannot go anywhere without that, you know; you have to grow as a person, love, learn, and fight! How are you gonna do that only on the internet or social media?" Similarly, the other participants vocalized responses that aligned with both Bianca and Rene.

Although the literature emphasizes the growth and importance of the virtual realm in regard to revolutionary tactics, these participants responses emphasize their current need to continue engagement through the sharing of their stories, and the use of their physical voices. According to feminist poet and activist Muriel Rukeyser, “The Universe is made of stories, not atoms” (1968). The participants’ responses personify Rukeyser’s idea of the universe being comprised of stories because that is what each and every one of these women desires and attempts to do. They all share their stories with other women like-minded or not, in order to resist popular cultures contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic, but also to carve out and maintain space for themselves. Conversation(s), whether daily, intentional, unintentional, formal, or informal, are the ways that Black Women are choosing to engage and resist this contemporary phenomenon outside of the virtual realm.

5.2 Limitations

The limitations of this research reside primarily in the methods utilized to conduct the study. The study's findings may have been affected by the small number of purposefully selected participants, the age requirement of participants, participant honesty, and the fact that all participants had to identify as cisgender.

Although participants were interviewed in-depth, and their thoughts were represented through their own words, the sample size of eight was small. Eight participants, although manageable for the study, were not entirely reflective of Black Women as a whole. Despite in-depth understanding being the primary goal of this study, I am aware that critics may see the smaller sample as providing a smaller scope of understanding.

Initially, there were sampling methods that appeared to be an asset to this study; however, they soon proved to potentially limit the conclusion. For example, when identifying a sample group for this study, selecting women between the ages of 18 and 35 within the Los Angeles and Atlanta area seemed like the ideal choice. However, the selection of this population may have minimized the opportunity to examine the differences between women of a more advanced age. Perhaps women who are a little older feel differently about offline resistance than the participants in the study. Selecting women from both Atlanta and Los Angeles was a sample of convenience based on the researcher's connection to both locations. However, it is essential to address that participant perspectives and experiences may differ depending on geographic location, and this may skew the findings.

Another limitation of the study is that it required that all participants identify as cis-gendered women, meaning that a person is assigned female at birth and identifies with that assignment. The researcher is aware that this requirement excluded women in the transgender community that self-identify as women. Excluding this population of women may have potentially limited the ability to examine the ways that transwomen experience body perception, and reclamation within popular culture. Excluding this population also could potentially limit the study's ability to explore how transwomen engage in resistance outside of social platforms.

Lastly, another potential limitation of this study was the lack of discernment regarding participant honesty while answering questions. If at any point, the participants were apprehensive about sharing their genuine feelings and opted to give socially acceptable responses, the data may potentially be skewed. For example, participants may have been hesitant to suggest that they do not find it essential to participate in resistance movements that promote ownership and reclamation of your body/aesthetic. Attempts to minimize this limitation were emphasized

throughout the study by emphasizing confidentiality and the use of pseudonyms. Despite the push in confidentiality, this may not have been enough to ensure that the participants were providing entirely truthful answers.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to understand Black Women's use of offline resistance strategies. A qualitative methodology was used to facilitate the exploration. Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed for future research:

- 1) Repeat this study with Black Trans women.
- 2) Conduct the study with older Black Women.
- 3) Explore how Black women are bridging the gap between on and offline resistance.
- 4) Focus the study on Black Women who solely identify as curvaceous.
- 5) Use extra methods of qualitative inquiry to explore themes that emerged in the study

A discussion of each of these recommendations is included below:

Repeat this study with Black Trans women.

This study focuses primarily on Black cisgender women. As discussed earlier in this chapter, it may be important to replicate this study with Black Trans women. Opening the study

to incorporate Black trans women, will add an additional layer of context to the study that will allow future researchers to understand how women whose bodies are undergoing change, are affected by popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic. Incorporating this demographic will also highlight how this population engages and influences resistance within the realm of body perception.

Conduct the study with older Black Women.

Although this study primarily deals with women between the ages of 18 and 35, it may be necessary to replicate this study with older Black Women. In the individual interviews, one of the participants consistently referenced age in relation to how her thought process had changed concerning her engagement with both resistance and the curvaceous aesthetic. Trish discussed this mental evolution when she spoke about how in her younger years, she did not care about resisting images of non-Black curvaceous women; however, now that she is older, she finds herself actively doing so. She stated: "you know what's interesting is that the older that I get, because I'm 33 now, but the older that I get, I do. I end up resisting that because I don't see representations of people that look like me glorified in that same way." If perception and notions of resistance change with growth and age, it is essential to understand all of the factors that contribute to Black Women's resistance. An assessment of the "mature" years may be the point for the most effective and long-lasting data.

Explore how Black Women are bridging the gap between on and offline resistance.

The primary goal of this study was to explore Black Women's resistance strategies offline. As a result of this intention, the research paid specific attention to notions of offline

resistance, only visiting online resistance to provide context. Although studying offline resistance proved vital to the existing literature on both Black Women's body perceptions and resistance, it could be extended further. Future studies could benefit from exploring how Black Women are contemporarily merging their virtual resistance with their offline resistance. Considering the research from this angle will allow future studies to examine the intersections of the virtual and physical realm, as it influences Black Women's responses to inequality.

Focus the study on Black Women who solely identify as curvaceous.

There were no physical qualifications or body type criteria to participate in this study. Black Women of all body types were encouraged to participate. With no expectation for a specific body type, data was vast. However, during interviews with Bianca, who adamantly identified herself as being "pretty curvy," it became immediately apparent that future studies could benefit from recreating the study with women who specifically identify as curvaceous. During her interview, Bianca stated: "I think it's more important [offline resistance] because I feel like in a world where everyone thinks this is an ideal body or an ideal stature or ideal look or whatever it is to have, they assume that you don't have any insecurities of your own, or that you don't feel uncomfortable in it. It almost feels like you can't have these physical conversations because what people associate you as." If curvaceous Black Women feel similarly and engage in resistance as a result of these feelings, this is important to explore them further. Examining how curvaceous women engage in resistance to popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic may provide data that will further literature on resistance.

Use extra methods of qualitative inquiry to explore themes that emerged in the study

This study utilized individual interviews in order to acquire data. Although the data was well detailed, further and more in-depth exploration could provide a greater understanding of each category and property described in Chapter Four. For example, a document analysis could have been conducted on images of popular culture icons, both Black and non-Black. A study of top curvaceous Instagram memes centered around discussions of curvaceous Black and non-Black bodies, lyrics of popular rap music, as well as top media sources could also be extremely valuable in gaining a realistic interpretation of popular culture's influence on the lives of Black Women. These explorations could further inform the design of future resistance initiatives. A majority of the participants emphasized popular culture, music, and the media as outlets that emphasize one aesthetic narrative. Participants openly acknowledged its impact on their own body perception and need or lack thereof for resistance. Additional investigation in this area could prove very constructive.

5.4 Summary

The purpose of this study is to understand Black Women's use of offline resistance strategies. The primary research question guiding this study is as follows:

1. What strategies are Black Women utilizing other than social media to resist popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic?

This study adds to the expanding body of literature on resistance and body perception regarding Black Women. It investigated Black Women's understanding and use of resistance strategies offline. Three general conclusions were derived based on the individual interviews of 8 Black Women. These findings included: (1) Although Black Women deeply respect and admire

the curvaceous aesthetic, they are aware of how it is scrutinized on Black Bodies but embraced on non-Black bodies, and thus perceive it negatively when it is associated with non-Black Bodies. (2) Despite Black Women's acknowledgment of social media being a key platform for resistance, they are extremely aware and advocate the importance of being consistent in resistance strategies offline, and (3) Through everyday discussion both intentional and unintentional, Black Women are resisting popular culture's contradictions of the curvaceous aesthetic. These conclusions, as well as recommendations for future research, were provided in this chapter.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Informed Consent

Informed Consent
Georgia State University
Department of African American Studies
Informed Consent Form

Title: “KEEP THAT SAME ENERGY SIS’: AN EXPLORATION OF BLACK WOMEN’S
USE OF OFFLINE RESISTANCE STRATEGIES

Principal Investigator: Gabrielle Donaldson

Purpose:

You have been asked to join in this research study to explore how Black women use approaches other than social media to resist popular culture’s contradictions about the curvy body. You have been asked to participate because you are a Black woman who identifies as

cisgender (meaning, you were assigned female at birth and think of yourself as a woman), you are between the ages of 18 and 35, and you are actively engaged with social media platforms (ex: Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest etc...). A total of 8 participants will be recruited for this study. Participation will require approximately 30 minutes to an hour of your time. All information collected in this interview will be confidential.

Procedure:

If you decide to join in the following study, you will be asked to meet with the researcher at a location of your choosing for a one on one interview, that will take about 30 minutes an hour to complete. Interviews will gather information about your beliefs about the curvy body in popular culture, and you're on and offline activity. The interview process consists of 6 sections, with between 3 and 8 questions each per section. You will not be named in the work. Instead, you will use an alternate name of your choice.

Risks:

If you are not comfortable talking about body image, there may be some risks. Please be aware that your confidentiality will be taken seriously. If at any point you are not comfortable with this study, you may deny or withdraw your participation, and all information will be discarded. Because this study asks you to think about how you and popular culture views the curvy body, there may be some triggered uncomfortable thoughts or feelings. If this does occur, ample resources will be provided for you below:

Crisis Text hotline: text HOME to 741741
www.crisistextline.org

Benefits:

Participating in this study does not offer personal benefits to you. There are no compensations granted with participation in this study However, the answers you provide during

your one on one interviews will add to existing research on body image that looks at Black women, their bodies, forms of resistance, and popular culture.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participating in this research is optional. You are not required to participate in this study. You have the right to drop out at any time of your choosing. If you decide to participate in the study, and then later decide to withdraw, you have that right. You may skip questions, or stop at anytime during the interview process. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits that which you are otherwise allowed.

Confidentiality:

Your records will be kept private, to the limit allowed by law. The researcher will have access to the information you provide. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly. A list of those people is as follows: The thesis chair of this study Sarita Davis, GSU Institutional Review Board, and the Office for Human Research Protection (OGRP). Substitute names will be used rather than your name on study records. The information you provide will be stored in a secure setting (the researchers' phone and laptop with private passcode protection). Your name and other information that might point to your identity will not appear when this study is presented or has its results published. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally.

Contact Person:

Please contact the researcher Gabrielle Donaldson at gdonaldson5@student.gsu.edu if you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Sarita Davis in the Department of African American Studies at (404) 413-5140 or email her at

saritadavis@gsu.edu. If you have any further questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may also contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 404-712-0720

Copy of Consent Form:

Please keep a copy of the following consent form for your records.

If you are willing to participate in this research, please sign below

_____	_____
Participant	Date
_____	_____
Principal Investigator	Date

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

Hello, my name is Gabrielle Donaldson. I am a current graduate student at Georgia State University, earning my master's degree in African American Studies. I would appreciate and value your participation in my study entitled ('Keep That Same Energy Sis': An Exploration of Black Women's use of Offline Resistance Strategies). The purpose of this study is to explore how Black women use approaches other than social media to resist popular culture's contradictions about the curvy body. This research is important to the field of African American studies, and larger society because, it will contribute to research in the field that highlights resistance in Black women, in the age of social media advocacy, while also addressing popular culture's influence on body perception.

In order to be a participant in this study you must:

1. Between the ages of 18 and 35.
2. Identify as Black, African American or part of the Diaspora
3. Identify as a cisgender female (a person is assigned female at birth and identifies as a woman)

There are two ways to contact me if you are interested in participating in this study:

If anonymity is of concern:

- Choose a pseudonym name for the study
 - Contact me at the following number: 323-392-8125
- Identify yourself by the name you have chosen the best number to reach you, best available times to call, and email address.

If anonymity is of no concern:

- Email me at gdonaldson5@student.gsu.edu.
- Identify yourself by the name you have chosen
- Please include your name, the best number to reach you, best available times to call, and email address.

Thank you for your interest and participation in this study!

Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

Age _____

Education: High School _____ College _____ Trade school _____ N/A _____

Employed _____ Unemployed _____ Self Employed _____ Student _____ Other
(Specify) _____

Occupation (if employed) _____

Were you born Biologically Female? (circle one) Y/N

Do you identify as a Woman? (circle one) Y/N

Do you identify as Black/ African American (or any other portion of the diaspora) Y/N

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Hello, Thank you for your participation in this study. Below are 6 sections of question created to focus on your understanding of the curvy body and on/offline activism.

Interviewee: _____

Interviewee Name/Pseudonym: _____

I will ask you a few opening questions about your Social Media use:

1. What social media platforms do you use often?
2. How many hours a day do you think you spend on these social media platforms? Why?
3. How many hours a week do you think you spend on these social media platforms? why?

I will now ask you questions about curvy bodies:

1. What do you consider a curvy body? Why?
2. Do you believe that you have a curvy body? Why or why not?
3. As a Black woman, what do you think of the curvy aesthetic/body?
4. As a Black woman, what do you think about the ways other Black women are viewed in society with curvy bodies?
5. As a Black woman, what do you think about the ways non- Black women are viewed in society with curvy bodies?
6. Have you ever experienced any negative/harmful/unsolicited attention or sexual remarks about your body, or parts of your body you consider curvy ? Do you know anyone close to you who has? How has that affected/influenced you?

7. Have you experienced any attention you consider positive about your body or parts of your body you consider curvy? How has that affected/influenced you?

I will now ask you questions regarding perceptions of images:

1. While on social media sites, how often do you see images of curvy non-Black women?
2. While on social media sites, how often do you see images of curvy Black women?
3. Do you feel that you see more images of curvy non-Black women more often than images of curvy Black women across popular culture platforms? Why or why not?
4. Do you believe that the curvy body is viewed more positively on women who are non-Black? Why or why not?
5. Can you describe a time when felt judged about your body?
6. How do you feel the curvy body has been viewed within popular culture currently and historically?

I will now ask you questions regarding the effects of these images:

1. How do images of curvy non-Black women make you feel? Why?
2. How do images of curvy Black women make you feel? Why?

I will now ask you questions regarding Resistance strategies born from your social media Experience:

1. What do you consider online resistance strategies?
2. Do you feel the need to resist the images of curvy non-Black women you come across on online platforms? Why or Why not?
3. If you do feel the need to resist them, how do you resist them online?
4. Are you Familiar with social media movements such as #BlackGirlMagic and Black twitter?
5. How active with these platforms and movements, or similar online movements would you say you are? why or why not?
6. Do you feel that it is important as a Black woman to participate in these movements, or similar online movements that promote ownership and reclamation of your body/aesthetic? Why or why not?

I will now ask you questions regarding your offline Resistance:

1. What does activism look like offline to you?
2. Is it important to you to engage in body resistance/reclamation organizations or tactics outside of social media? Why or why not?
3. Do you participate or engage with body resistance/reclamation organizations or tactics outside of social media? If so, how? Where? What does it look like? How often?

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Figure 2: Josephine Baker



Figure 3: Dorothy Dandridge



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Figure 6: Kimberly Kardashian



'Breaking the Internet' Paper Magazine Cover photoshoot

