

**CROSS CULTURAL COMPARISON OF BLACK WOMEN'S BODY IMAGE  
HIGHLIGHTING SAARTJIE BAARTMAN AND MOTIVATIONS TO  
ENGAGE IN BODY MODIFICATION**

by

Rokeshia Renné Ashley

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Fashion and Apparel Studies

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
ABSTRACT .....	viii
Chapter	
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
Purpose .....	7
Assumptions & Limitations.....	8
2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	10
Baartman’s Body .....	10
Family & Peers .....	14
Mental & Physical Health .....	19
Mass Media & Fashion.....	22
Body Modification.....	26
Research Questions .....	28
Theoretical Framework .....	30
Theoretical Assumptions .....	31
3 METHODOLOGY .....	34
Instrument Development and Procedure .....	35
Data Analysis.....	37
4 RESULTS.....	39
Questionnaire.....	39
In-depth Interviews.....	42
Relationship with Media.....	48
Messages.....	48
Idealized Images, Curvaceous and Slender Ideal .....	49
Curvaceous Ideal .....	50

Slender Ideal .....	54
Influence of the West.....	57
Variations of Black Women’s Body Image.....	59
Social Comparison.....	61
Options Stemming from Social Comparison.....	65
Body Modification.....	65
Cross Cultural Modification .....	69
Self Acceptance .....	71
5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS .....	72
REFERENCES .....	81
Appendix	
A IRB PROTOCOL .....	91
B IRB APPROVAL DOCUMENT .....	100
C IRB STAMPED CONSENT .....	102
D INTERVIEW PROCEDURE .....	104

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Thematic Coding Criteria for US & SA .....	43
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## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Media Outlets Frequented. ....	41
Figure 2	Most Messages Involving Black Women's Body Image.....	42

## **ABSTRACT**

An expanding volume of research on body image sheds light on the impact that familial influence, social pressures and cultural portrayals of beauty have on black women's physical and mental well-being. Variations in physical features among women of color are embraced and promoted in mass media, including fashion magazines and music videos. However, the contexts, products and personalities used to represent black women in the media vary to the extent of contributing to dueling images that have resulted in a lack of clarity of how a black woman should look. From this perspective, there is a need to assess Black women's attitudes and perceptions of the representative body images presented in popular media sources and to determine whether motivations exist for them to engage in body modification to attain an ideal image.

Saartjie/ Sarah/ Sara Baartman, a black South African woman, served as the stimulus for this project. Baartman was taken from the Cape of South Africa in the 1800s by a white South African because of her body's unusual shape and size. She was exploited and displayed in person and in various photos throughout Europe. The widespread use of her image expanded to have a major impact on how black women of African lineage would be presented and represented in the media, not only in Europe but also, throughout Africa and America. A cross-cultural study of black

South African and African-American women in their respective countries was conducted using questionnaires and in-depth interviews.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

In the 1800s Saartjie/ Sarah/ Sara Baartman's, a Khoi Khoi woman from the Cape of South Africa, naked body was exhibited throughout Europe. Because of her large buttocks, breasts, and elongated labia, Baartman became the accepted model among Europeans of what women of African descent should look like (Netto, 2005). White spectators viewed Baartman as a spectacle in public forums because she was the polar opposite of European forms of beauty, or the ideal white woman's body (Biney, 2013; Ko, 2014).

From the controversy of her existence to her death in approximately 1815, the visual legacy of Sarah Baartman expanded to have a major impact on how black women of African lineage would be displayed in the media throughout Europe, Africa and America (Netto, 2005). Ko (2014, p.1) argues that today's society suffers from the Baartman Effect, in which she describes that black women's bodies became "socially and historically relevant through slavery." From the images constructed and repeated in mass media there are three dominant stereotypic images that have been used to depict black women in popular media, including: "Mammy/Aunt Jemima" with features aligned with those of Baartman; "Sapphire", dark skinned, medium build woman popularized in the Amos and Andy TV show and "Jezebel/Peaches" reflecting

European features of light skinned long, straight hair, thin lips, thin nose, and a relatively slim body (Collins, 2000; Foster, 1973; Green, 1999; Jewell, 1993).

Historically, the wide variations in body size, shape, skin color and hair texture contributed to differential treatment among sub-groups of black women whereby those with body features that more closely matched those of the dominant culture fared more favorably both socially and economically (Glenn, 2008).

Currently, there are dueling images of how a black woman's body should look. Kelch-Oliver and Ancis (2011) found that some black women believe that the white standard of beauty is to be thin, and the black standard emphasizes shapely and curvaceous figures. The ongoing conversation is straddled between black women desiring a body that is pleasing to men, which is to have a full-figured body similar to Baartman, and assimilating to mainstream American beauty ideals of having a slender frame. Social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr, and music now recognize the black woman's full figure, which contradicts the traditional ideal slender body image of non-black American women. The message conveyed primarily by magazines and television is that to be accepted by society women must strive for thinness (Barko & Johnson, 2010). Nonetheless, mass media reduces black women to just big butts (Dines, 2014).

According to Evans and McConnell (2003), some black women feel that mainstream beauty ideals do not relate to them. However, awareness and internalization of the thin ideal and perceived pressures to be thin are factors that

affect some black women's body image dissatisfaction (Cafri, Yamamiya, Brannick, & Thompson, 2005).

A significant amount of pressure is put on black women from the perspective of these dueling images, leaving them confused and anxious and impacting their mental and physical well-being (Poran, 2006; Zhang, Dixon, & Conrad, 2009). Engeln-Maddox (2006) found that accepting the media's ideal beauty standard was significantly associated with positive life expectations if the person's body image was changed. It was also found that black women have resorted to eating disorders in order to comfort themselves and depict the "ideal" body image. As a result of these confusing images, some black women strive to be thin, while others strive to mimic images of celebrated black women in the media who have curvaceous figures (Kelch-Oliver & Ancis, 2011).

The number of African Americans participating in cosmetic surgery has increased. The American Society of Plastic surgeons reported that over 985,000 African-Americans experienced cosmetic surgery in 2009, a gain of 5 percent from 2008 (Jeffries, 2010). Delinsky (2005) suggested that surgery may be a common method for self-improvement and that the likeliness of engaging in cosmetic surgery is predicted by greater media exposure.

According to Selika Borst, assistant director of a plastic surgery research firm in Chicago, "Black women are just more conscious visually than ever before" (Jeffries, 2010, p.1). Borst attributed this to Black women being exposed to other black women engaging in the practice, like Kelly Rowland, Vivica Fox, and Vanessa

Williams. She also stated that many Black women wanted their stomachs and thighs to be thinner; thus, liposuction and tummy tucks are frequent requests. Some Black women want breast lifts or reductions, as Black women have fuller busts and want them to be tauter (Jeffries, 2010). Considering these figures, unfortunately, there has not been an equal growth of empirical investigations about attitudes toward cosmetic surgery to match the growth of cosmetic surgery profits.

There is now overwhelming concern revolving around body modification because of popularized occurrences that document extreme illness or even death for some patients. Some women who engage with the practice of body modification, for example butt injections can not afford the cost of going to a certified plastic surgeon, thus they go on the black market (Martin, 2015). According to the Dallas Morning News, a 34-year-old nursing home staffer died after receiving black market butt injections. To date, reported deaths related to butt-injections in the black market have happened in Pennsylvania, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, New York and Mississippi (Martin, 2015). According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (2015), buttock implants have increased by 98 percent and buttock lifts by 44 percent from 2013 to 2014.

As Sarah Baartman was exhibited throughout Europe because of her large buttocks and breasts she became the beacon of what women of African descent, black women, should look like (Netto, 2005). However, mass media, primarily noting magazines and television, influence this ideal by conveying that women should strive for thinness to be accepted by society according to white culture (Barko & Johnson,

2010). From this, society has placed a significant amount of pressure on black women to attain a dueling image, which can cause harm to their mental and physical health (Poran, 2006). Some black women have resorted to eating disorders in order to comfort themselves and depict the image given by society.

According to Biney (2013), Euro-American features have become the paradigm of beauty. Park (2005) notes that body image disturbances start at a young age and Ko (2014) notes that from childhood the perfect image of a woman can be coded as Snow White. But Baartman departed from this image of white femininity because of her unusual features (Ko, 2014).

Also, black women's bodies are marketed and sold to serve the current culture's need for sexuality (Biney, 2013). Black women have been marketed this way as a result of historical, global European colonization where whites marked black bodies as hypersexual (Ko, 2014). The hyper sexuality and promiscuous nature of black women is the dominant thought in America (Dines, 2014), it can be suggested from Baartman's experience that this ideology can be extended globally.

Again, considering this, Black women are forced either to mimic European features, which are genetically not appropriate, or assume the culturally endorsed image of a black woman. Because mass media does not show a large variety of diverse black women's bodies (Biney, 2013) there is a need to assess the pervasive images that are messaged to black women through mass media and social media. Henderson-King (2005) asserts that social networks, magazines, television and reality shows are areas where potential consumers are exposed to cosmetic surgery. Also,

Haikem (1997) notes that some may consider cosmetic surgery because they feel inadequate. Considering the arguments of Biney, Ko, and Dines, the image of black women has been culturally constructed and Ko (2014) suggests that Dines implies that “black women can’t envision themselves beyond the constructions that white people created” (Ko, 2014, p.1). Is this true? Ko (2014) agrees that whites have defined the image of the black woman’s body. Even so that Fuller (2011) argues that NBC sitcom Gimme A Break suggested that a black woman’s sexuality is potentially disruptive if a white man is present.

Ko (2014, p.1) also states that “We have tired theory that keeps resurrecting Baartman’s body to discipline black women from exploring their own.” So how do black women define themselves? There is a need to assess the perceptions and attitudes of how black women feel about their own body image, the body images that are messaged to them and if they know about the historical references to Sarah Baartman. Women are now showing the very parts that Baartman tried to cover up, and have successfully perpetuated the remnants of her past (Henderson, 2014). Given that there is a strong conversation in popular media concerning the depiction of Baartman, the historical figure of what a black woman’s body should look like, through modern women, there is a need to assess the perceptions of black women who have direct origins to her country of birth, South Africa (SA). Comparatively speaking, assessing black women’s body image from the country that dominants in perpetuating the image, United States (US), and the country that originated the image, SA, will make a significant contribution to literature.

As some black women strive to be thin, some strive to mimic images of celebrated Black women in the media who have curvaceous figures (Kelch-Oliver & Ancis, 2011). Although the literature discussed earlier touches key topics on the factors that influence Black women's body image issues, it does not assess whether Black women are so pressured that they want to alter their appearance cosmetically or surgically, it only highlights eating disorders. This is important to study because Black women can suffer mentally and physical if they succumb to pressures (Poran, 2006; Zhang et al, 2009) which may result in cosmetic surgery to fulfill the demands of society.

Also, body image can be defined as “reflects the level of satisfaction one feels regarding his or her body” (Dotson, n.d., p.1). Literature regarding black women's body image suggest that black women are more satisfied with their body image than white counterparts (Dotson, n.d.), but Smith, Thompson, Raczynski, and Hilner (1999) noted that black women are more interested in their appearance than white women. It can be argued that black women's body image should be studied from their own perspective and not comparatively with an opposing race.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to understand black women's attitudes and perceptions of body image, their willingness and motivation to engage in body modification to attain an ideal body image, and its possible connection to Saartjie

Baartman from a cross cultural perspective of black women in the United States (US) and black women in South Africa (SA).

This paper encompasses the details of these influences as they relate to black women. The researcher completed a cross cultural comparative study that examined the thoughts of Black women in various cities of South Africa and the United States on body image, media, body modification and Baartman. The purpose of this study is to understand Black women's attitudes and perceptions of body image, their willingness and motivation to engage in body modification to attain an ideal body image, and its possible connection to Saartjie Baartman from a cross cultural perspective.

### **Assumptions & Limitations**

An assumption of this study was that responses from both samples would be polar opposite because of geographical, political and historical differences. The researcher assumed that Western media would not be a pervasive factor in South African black women's body image.

Due to the limited sample used to conduct this research study, the evidence found that supports the given relationship between black women's body image, distributed messages by way of family, media and popular culture and the resulting possible engagement in body modification or self contentment, the evidence should not be generalized.

Also, for the purposes of this research study, the focus will be directed to the build and shape of the black woman unassociated with skin complexion, hair texture, and facial features.

## Chapter 2

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Baartman's Body**

According to Emmanuel and Henry (2012) and Holmes (2007), Baartman was born in 1789 in the Eastern Cape of South Africa and died 1815. For part of her life she was on public display throughout France and Britain, she became known as the Hottentot Venus. The term Hottentot was used to describe the Khoisan in a derogatory manner (Emmanuel & Henry, 2012). Baartman was sold into slavery after she had become an orphan after a commando raid by Dutch Boers. Holmes (2007) notes that her father was killed. However, Hobson (2003) asserts that Baartman was possibly separated from her parents and husband during warfare. Many accounts of Baartman's parents are contradictory (2007). Baartman worked as a nursemaid for Pieter and Hendrik Cesars (or spelled Peter and Hendrik Cezar), when a British doctor Alexander Dunlop noticed that Baartman could be profitable because of her elongated labia and enlarged buttocks (Emmanuel & Henry, 2012). It is not excessively noted how Dunlop and the Cesars found out about her private areas, however Murray (2010), notes that some female slaves from the Cape were forced into sexual relations with their masters.

Hobson (2003) noted that her body was also characterized as strange, grotesque, lascivious, unfeminine and obscene. During the early 1800s, British culture was consumed with exoticizing physical features that were anomalies. This created a negative attitude toward the buttocks of a black woman's body (Hobson, 2003). Baartman's body was noted as a condition of steatopygia (protruding buttocks) and having a Hottentot apron (elongated labia), which became symbolic of racial variation (Hobson, 2003; Moudileno, 2009). Thus, one of Baartman's first encounters with the fascination in British culture, was in 1810 when she arrived at 225 Piccadilly, London where she sang, danced, and was exhibited as a "freak" in a dehumanizing spectacle (Emmanuel & Henry, 2012; Hobson 2003; 2005; Moudileno, 2009;). As, her popularity grew, cultural ballads and cartoons were dedicated to her (Emmanuel & Henry, 2012). Also, in advertisements Baartman was characterized as the "most correct and perfect specimen of her race" (Hobson, 2003, p. 90), making her the culturally endorsed figure.

Court records show that Baartman testified to have agreed to conduct the exploitative work in London, although she died penniless at 25 years old (Emmanuel & Henry, 2012; Hobson, 2003). Baartman continued her journey of song and dance in Paris, but she struggled with financial and health issues. In France, it is speculated that during her last years she engaged in prostitution and alcoholism. Baartman died in 1815, her assumed cause of death was flu, bronchitis or pneumonia (Emmanuel & Henry, 2012). After her death, Georges Cuvier, a zoologist, naturalist and anatomist, dissected her brain and genitalia to justify inferiority of Africans, created a cast of her

body and hung her skeleton from a rack, where all were placed in a museum for viewers to see the “missing link” between animals and human (Emmanuel & Henry, 2012; Henderson, 2014; Hobson, 2003;). Curvier described Baartman’s features as being close to primates (Hobson, 2003). The dissection of Baartman’s body has resonated through the psyche of the people of South Africa (Youe, 2007).

Baartman’s body parts were on display until the 1970s. Moudileno (2009) notes that feminism resurrected her body with its associations with racial inferiority, sexual excess, travesties of colonization, racism, the exploitation and abuse of women and the influence of the West. Baartman’s remains were returned to South Africa in 2002 and buried in the Gamtoo River Valley. Returning her remains reconnected Baartman to her ancestors and gave her back her dignity (Henderson, 2014). Even after her death many Hottentot Venus, with other women who’s bodies resembled Baartman’s, exhibitions continued throughout Australia, Britain, America, Europe, South America and South Africa (Gordon-Chipembere, 2011; Hobson, 2003). Baartman is a transnational figure whose story is a prototypical experience of women in her time (Moudileno, 2009).

Baartman’s story is the historical and illustrative representation of African women’s exploitation and distorted sexuality, which has molded the prevalent ideas of black women’s hypersexuality (Emmanuel & Henry, 2012; Hobson, 2003; Tillet, 2009). Because of the extreme sexualization and negative attitudes toward specific features of the black woman’s body, the butt has historically removed black women from representations of beauty (Hobson, 2003). Baartman’s rear end has been quite a

characteristic of the black female body to emerge in popular culture and is a current topic of discussion in academic discourse (Hobson, 2003).

In Williams' (2002) ode to Baartman through photographs she bridged the connection between history and present by showing her body as representation of historical associations and meanings. Williams (2002) notes that Baartman's story is outdated but it still sets the precedents for how similar contemporary images of black women are respected, read and responded to. According to Moudileno (2009), Baartman's story has been represented in the visual arts, hip-hop, theatre and poetry in the United States. Henderson (2014) notes that her story still resonates through the commercialization of black women, where black women are always exposed, which disallows them to have agency over their body and life. In this way, black women's bodies are public property and continuously subjected to commentary by media personnel, which redistributes the mass-mediated cultural practices (Henderson, 2010). Thus it is necessary to study the remnants of her journey through today's black women because of the cultural strongholds of her legacy (Henderson, 2010). According to Madlala (2013), many young black women in South Africa are trying to replicate popular icons in the United States like Beyoncé. Because the West was influential in the development of her characterization and how it is embodied in modern popular culture celebrities of the US, it is imperative that a cross cultural study be conducted with women in South Africa and the US. Hobson (2005) notes that Baartman's story isn't one just situated in South Africa but belongs to the diaspora of black women who are subjected to the disabling condition of steatopygia.

## **Family & Peers**

Barko and Johnson (2010) found that black women are heavily influenced by early childhood experiences with family and school environment through in-depth interviews of black collegiate women. For example, a participant, Trina, did not become aware of her body until she transitioned to high school. Also, once she entered college she struggled with identifying with an ethnic group or felt accepted by peers who were black. Another participant Keisha reported that her family and community would contribute to her idea of ideal Black beauty, which is based on how a woman carries herself versus wanting to be thin. Thinness was not a factor of discussion for her because eating hearty meals was associated with family gatherings. From her experiences with her family and how they crafted her view on body image (Barko & Johnson, 2010), Keisha reported:

I feel like for, for the woman of color the look is like... thick thighs, you know fat butt and... a nice chest or something, but like a small waist...But other than that like, they [men] like, like want you to have meat on your body. Whereas like if you're in like pop [white] culture, it's like you need to be rail thin and like tall and lean looking, and you know, long hair, et cetera (p.704).

Keisha described a figure that arguably resembles Baartman. These features of having thick thighs, fat butt or small waist have been the model of what is culturally appropriate and endorsed for black women. Thus it is suggested that based on what culture, black or white, one identifies with they will want to attain the ideal image for

that specific culture. Childhood experiences with family and the school environment contributed to the participants' racial identity and body image perspectives. From this it was found that the subjects developed a set of beauty ideals that connect with being a part of black or white culture, a mix of both or have variety within self identification (Barko & Johnson, 2010). Given the experiences of subjects Trina and Keisha, it is assumed that identification with a culture will enhance or decrease satisfaction of body image in Black women.

Through a series of in-depth interviews of 24 obese Black women between the ages of 21 and 47, Baturka, Hornsby, and Schorling (2000) compared themes found in participants response to questions to body mass index categories (normal, overweight, and obese). The participants were not satisfied with their weight; however, their satisfaction fluctuated as a result of social and familial pressure to be self-accepting. Participants reported that negative comments surrounding their body image came from coworkers or community acquaintances not family members or close friends. Although the women felt these pressures and fluctuating dissatisfaction, a participant felt pressured by culture to "be happy with what God gave you," (Baturka et al, 2000, p. 235).

Nonetheless, Jefferson and Stake (2009) found that black women were more satisfied with their weight and appearance than European women. European American women compared themselves more to women in media who resembled Western beauty standards. The common European model of feminine beauty is currently defined as being tall and slender. Using the Distorting Television Image

Method (DTIM), Guaraldi, Orlandi, Boselli, and O'Donnell (1999) found that the majority of women in their sample of 78 want a taller and thinner body than their undistorted double. The participants also perceived their bodies to be taller and thinner, but were dissatisfied with their body dimensions. In comparison, according to Gipson, Reese, Vieweg, Anum, Pandurangi, Olbrisch, Sood and Silverman (2005), black women are more likely to desire a larger ideal body size than white women.

Thus, awareness of a thin ideal, internalization of a thin ideal, and perceived pressures to be thin are factors that affect body image dissatisfaction (Cafri, Yamamiya, Brannick & Thompson, 2005). Cafri et al (2005) computed the strength of relationships between each of these factors. Awareness of a thin ideal, internalization of a thin ideal, and perceived pressures to be thin had statistically significant relationships with body image. However, internalization and perceived stressors, like pressures from family, friends, significant others, and the media, had a significantly stronger relationship to body image than awareness of the thin ideal.

In South Africa black women have a high ambition to attain thinness and to be perfect (Wassenaar, Winship, & Lachenicht, 2000). Black women in South Africa also have higher BMI than their white or Indian/Asian counterparts. As the thin ideal permeates mass culture, dominant sources of beauty distributors are at the center of what causes women to respond negatively.

David, Morrison, Johnson and Ross (2002) imply that there are differing opinions involving body image when it involves a third-person context. Choi, Y., Leshner and Choi, J. (2008) wanted to clearly identify why women are affected

negatively by ideal body image from third-person perspective. Choi, Y. et al (2008), found that women assumed that male friends would be influenced by ideal body image rather more so than female friends.

Shefte and Koerber (2012) presented six American black women in video interviews and allowed them to share their thoughts on family, work, and body image. Towana Isom, CEO of Isom Global Strategies said, she wanted to lose a couple of pounds but maintain her shape. Isom said she liked the Beyoncé body and that black women tend to want to have a meatier/healthier body. Isom said black women do not follow traditional mainstream American ideals of beauty. Stacey Ferguson, a blogger, said culturally Black women like curves because our mothers, aunts and grandmothers are curvy, and may be overweight. Although in the media, there are bone thin white women on the runway and in Hollywood, and black women are not in that mindset. Kelch-Oliver and Ancis (2011) added to the limited discussion of black women's issues with body image by suggesting that media, and other outside influences, like family cause black women to be more concerned about their body type. This finding is consistent with Barko and Johnson (2010) and Baturka et al (2000).

Kelch-Oliver and Ancis (2011) completed three focus groups and conducted individual interviews with 16 black women from 23 to 34 years old earning advanced graduate degrees at a large southeastern university. The researchers chose these qualitative methods to gain more insight into the individual experiences of the women.

All participants completed a demographic questionnaire, an interview, and participated in one of the three focus groups. Prior to the focus groups being conducted, two participants were interviewed separately to assist with the development of focus group questions and analysis of the results. Interviews were coded prior to analyzing the data from focus groups and both were interpreted using standard phenomenological data interpretation procedures. The interviews lasted around 30 minutes each and there were eight questions asked during focus groups surrounding the topics of families, friends, dating partners, society, and culture as they relate to body image concerns. One of the questions was: *Do you think your identity as a black woman affects your body image? If so, how?*

Most focus group participants stated that they believed that the white standard of beauty was to be thin, and the Black standard emphasized shapely and curvaceous figures. This is consistent with Barko and Johnson (2010). Along with this, participants explained that family played both positive and negative roles in their body image identity and development (Kelch-Oliver & Ancis, 2011). Family variables can predict dissatisfaction of the body in black women (Harris, 1995).

The external influence of the media was a significant influence on their body image. Participants felt that particular women in media were shown as beautiful, like Beyoncé or Halle Berry, and these women have curves, lighter skin complexions, and good hair. Many participants felt they were not accepted by society and had to display self-love. Also, most participants felt their beauty was found in strength, confidence,

self-assurance, and physical health. Finally, participants felt they had conquered self-acceptance and others were trying to achieve this (Kelch-Oliver & Ancis, 2011).

### **Mental & Physical Health**

In an interview Duong (2013) questioned Sonya Renee Taylor, a national and international poetry slam champion who advocates self-love and acceptance about food justice and body love. Taylor responded that individuals should be “an advocate for your own well-being, your body ...” In this article, Taylor made it clear that some bodies are systemically valued and cared for, which suggests that people of color bodies are not valued. Taylor also emphasized that because of this people of color internalize this treatment and further disenfranchise bodies of color. Taylor also notes that this impacts mental health negatively.

Using figures from a survey of 176 adolescent Black girls, Gordon (2008) found that exposure to and connection with depictions of black women as sex objects add to black girls stressing the significance of appearance. Zhang, Dixon, and Conrad (2009) explored the results of media exposure on eating disorders with black women. Exposure to idealized figures can negatively impact women’s satisfaction of their bodies and this has a significant connection to psychopathological conditions, like bulimia and anorexia nervosa and body dysmorphia (Nabi, 2009). According to Schooler (2008), women have greater body dissatisfaction when viewing television programs like music videos and soap operas and recurrent reading of magazines. In the 2009 study the relationship between black women and the thin ideal presented in

rap videos was examined. The study “Rap Music Videos and African American Women's Body Image: The Moderating Role of Ethnic Identity” was completed using a sample of black women taken from an undergraduate university in the Midwest with a total number of 111 participants, from 18 to 34 years old. The researchers used a computer-administered survey to complete this study.

The questionnaire probed participants about their ethnic identity relating to their race and cultural classification, and their body image perceptions relating to how they perceive their own figures. The participants were also asked about how often they watch television and music videos (Zhang et al, 2009).

How participants felt about being Black was measured by the Multigroup Ethnic Identity measure. Body image dissatisfaction, drive for thinness, and bulimic tendencies were measured by three subscales from the Eating Disorders Inventory measure. To measure exposure to the thin-ideal in rap music videos, participants were asked to indicate how often they watched specific rap videos by using a 5-point scale.

Participants who had low ethnic identity were driven to achieve thinness when viewing the thin black models. There were no main effects of exposure to thin-ideal rap videos on body image dissatisfaction. Ethnic identity had a significant effect on black women’s drive for thinness, however black females with low ethnic identity and increased exposure to the thin-ideal in rap videos was associated with increased bulimic tendencies (Zhang et al, 2009). Biney (2013) suggests that culture should challenge the depiction of women in music videos and not support it.

Not only do black girls stress over appearance, it must be emphasized that body image is significant when considering eating disorders. According to Park (2005), approximately over 10 million women suffer from anorexia nervosa and about 25 million people succumb to bulimia nervosa. Poran (2006) discussed the pressures that young black women face dealing with body image. Topics included the pressure to be thin, attractive to ethnic men, competition with other black women, and misrepresentation of what a black woman should look like in the media. The study was completed using open qualitative methods, where the questions asked in the three focus groups were developed by the participants themselves and not guided by the researcher. The researchers were identified as listeners, or recorders, to try not to affect the dynamic of the focus group based on their race or assumed cultural experiences.

The focus groups started with participants noting what they loved or hated about their bodies. After this discussion faded out, participants were given poster boards with images of women from popular magazines to jump-start the next discussion.

The common factors that shaped the ideas formed by the participants were complexion, size, and shape. Participants noted their confusion, anxiety, and the pressure to be thin. The young women also expressed feeling that the pressure was dangerous to their mental health. Lastly, participants felt there was misrepresentation of black women in the media (Poran, 2006).

## **Mass Media & Fashion**

The media is a strong mechanism from which young women understand cultural beauty ideals, however media contributes more so to the development of white women's body image (Schooler, 2008). Considering this, DeBraganza and Hausenblas (2010) added to the discussion of body dissatisfaction and mood using two ethnic groups. Black and white women reviewed two separate sets of slides, that showed media ideals and controls, and completed a pre and posttest responding on their mood, including anxiety, depression, anger, and body dissatisfaction. DeBraganza and Hausenblas (2010) found that black women had no changes from pre to posttest. However, the black women possibly had no changes because they did not view slides of other black women.

Evans and McConnell (2003) exposed 54 Asian women, 52 black women, and 64 white women, to mainstream standards of beauty and had the participants compare themselves to the images. It was found that that black women did not find mainstream standards as related to them, and gave positive self-evaluations about their bodies.

However, grounded in social comparison theory, Frisby (2004) found that black women with low body esteem had lower self-satisfaction when exposed to advertisements of thin, physically attractive black models. When the black models were exposed to images of white models the participants were unaffected. Schooler, Ward, Merriwether and Caruthers (2004) also noted that through the use of social comparison theory, black-oriented media use is related to black women's body image.

Thus, resemblance or ethnicity of the models in images may have an effect on Black women's self-evaluations.

Barko, Johnson (2010) and Baturka et al., (2000) discuss culture and social pressures as the influencing factors of Black women's body image, the media is also a factor that contributes to the conversation of body image. Jung and Lennon (2003) found that exposure to media images in combination with appearance self-schema affected reaction on body image, self-esteem, and mood.

Crane (1999) studied how women respond to fashion photos and advertisements in *Vogue* magazine by using focus groups and a short questionnaire. Crane (1999) found that women were critical of the photographs, and shared negative comments on how the women in the photos were unrealistic. For instance, a black college student responded to a photo with a white model with:

This look is impossible for us to achieve. Genetically, that is not how we are mapped out and so if we are in the right frame of mind within ourselves, we know that it is going to be unlikely that we could achieve it through working out and what have you (p. 547).

In Western visual art, black women are showcased as the polar opposite of their white counterparts (Nelson, 2010). Schooler et al (2004), support that the beauty ideals in mainstream media primarily promote whites, which make the beauty goals unattainable for women of color.

The fashion industry also promotes this impossible image, as described by the black female college student. VV Brown (2013), a Black female recording artist

turned model, published an article with *The Guardian*, an online resource to news, on how limited Black models are in the fashion industry. Brown (2013) began her argument by suggesting that magazines showcase women and images that are unattainable for black women:

A 12-year-old girl opens up a magazine and gazes over the pictures that make her strive to be beautiful... She walks to the mirror and looks at her reflection, playing with her hair and pulling her face apart with the tips of her fingers hoping to mold herself into the 'unattainable'. But what do you see when you look into that mirror? Brown skin, brown eyes, full lips, curvy waist and that different shaped nose. No blonde hair and blue eyes. So does this mean I am not beautiful?

This is a common struggle for most black girls and black women, not feeling represented, beautiful or accepted by popular culture—the culture that defines the divine aesthetic. Even if Black women are featured in magazines or catwalks, Brown said that, “Excessive makeup is used to contour black features and lighten the skin to a more accessible ‘European’ look.”

To add to this, if black women are not suitable for a European look, editors may not feel that black women are suitable for an African look. In *Numero*, an international fashion magazine, Ondria Hardin, a blonde-hair, blue-eyed white American was photographed for an editorial entitled African Queen. Hardin had full body bronzing make-up to mimic an African woman.

David et al (2002) examined social detachment as it related to college-aged women and female counterparts of their particular race, opposing race, and women on the college campus. In this study, the participants were socially distanced by race, either black or white, meaning the participants could not find similarities or likeness with one another because their race differed from other participants. The purpose of the study was to find the perceived effects of advertising in fashion magazines on black and white college-aged women. In fashion magazines it is suggested that the ideal body image is to be thin. In this study, the psychological constructs of self-esteem and social physique anxiety were measured. Third person perceptions, perceptions from opposing race participants, were measured using an 11-point scale, where 0 = no influence and 10 = considerable influence (David et al, 2002).

Each participant was given the stimuli, magazine advertisements, to find out the perceived effects on how the sample of women view themselves and one another. Ten advertisements were chosen from *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Essence*, and *Ebony*. The advertisements equally showed variations of thin black and white models. The models in the advertisements were selected based on thinness, attractiveness, skin tone, hair type, and sexiness. Both black and white models in the advertisements were matched based on activeness, exposure of skin, style of dress, and the mood delivered by the model. The advertisements did not feature any well-known models.

Eighty female undergraduate students participated in the study for extra credit. Half of the participants were black, and half white. The advertisements were assessed and the participants rated the perceived effects.

Black students found black models more attractive, however, white models were rated thinner. White students found black models to be slightly more attractive than white models, but white models were rated thinner as well. It was found that black participants felt strong social identification when viewing black models, which is congruent with congruent with Frisby's (2004) findings. However, white participants did not feel social identification when viewing a white or black model.

Smith et al (1999) found that personal style and presentation impacts one's body image, but what happens when there are not styles and presentations that speak to black women in mass media on runways. But even when black women are featured on runways of fashion they are depicted as angry black women (Stodghill, 2013) or the Sapphire, as previously mentioned. As white women are portrayed as alluring, sexy or happy, black women are should as unkempt, ferocious and animalistic.

### **Body Modification**

Unkempt, ferocious and animalistic were characterizations that were associated with the historical image of Baartman (Hobson, 2003). Women are concerned with their appearance because they want to attain the social expectations of beauty and feel shame if they do not meet the expectation and will more than likely accept cosmetic surgery (Bartky, 1990; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Women are socialized to see themselves from the perception of others (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). In South Africa young black women are interested in having surgery to replicate Western beauty ideals (Madlala, 2013). Madlala (2013) notes that the black women want to

mimic the features of stars like Beyoncé, Nicki Minaj and Venus Williams. Hobson (2003) argued that modifying the female body through cosmetic surgery, exercise or dieting renders that the female body is viewed as abnormal, unfixed, unnatural, or unhealed.

Voelker and Pentina (2011) examined attitudes towards, and utilization of, cosmetic augmentation procedures among Generation Y individuals. Cosmetic augmentation is defined as the utilization of advanced technologies to augment the appearance of otherwise healthy individuals. Examples of cosmetic augmentation include plastic surgery and laser surgical procedures. A social exchange framework is advanced, suggesting that an individual's access to others who have utilized cosmetic augmentation increases the positive attitude towards cosmetic procedures. Findings support a social exchange model for intention to utilize laser cosmetic procedures as well as a positive relationship between the diversity of a subject's ego network and access to others who have utilized some form of cosmetic augmentation.

Engeln-Maddox (2006) studied college women's thoughts on how their lives may change if their outward appearance were the same as the media-supported beauty ideal. It has been suggested that a desire to look like idealized media icons may result in negative body image when those bodily ideals are not attained (Greenwood, 2009). It was found that accepting the media beauty ideal was significantly associated with positive life expectations if the participant's body image was changed. However, internalization connected expectations and appearance-related dissatisfaction.

As a result of cosmetic surgery profits rising, it is assumed by Delinsky (2005) that surgery may be a common method for self-improvement. Thus, Delinsky (2005) surveyed 302 undergraduate women. About nine of these women participated in cosmetic surgery and about 150 knew someone that had cosmetic surgery. It was found that the likeliness of engaging in cosmetic surgery was predicted by greater media exposure, reports of a peers' experience of cosmetic surgery, and improved importance of self-worth. Greater willingness to undergo cosmetic surgery is also associated with greater media exposure (Swami, Arteché, Chamorro-Premuzic, Furnham, Stieger, Haubner, & Voracek, 2008). However, media exposure (viewing advertisements or television programs, or reading articles about cosmetic surgery) as a factor affecting the likelihood of having cosmetic surgery has resulted in inconsistent outcomes (Brown, Furnham, Glanville & Swami, 2007).

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to understand black women's attitudes and perceptions of body image, their willingness and motivation to engage in body modification to attain an ideal body image, and its possible connection to Saartjie Baartman from a cross cultural perspective of black women in the United States (US) and black women in South Africa (SA).

The objectives of this project are to provide an understanding of: (a) Perceptions of the contrasting body types used to represent black women in print and popular media, (b) Descriptions of what they feel should be the ideal body type used

to represent the black woman (c) Feelings about methods of body modifications and forms they would use on themselves to achieve an ideal body and (d) how emerging messages concerning body image connect with the historical representation of Baartman.

This study focused on adding to the conversation of black women's body image, but made a new contribution by highlighting the motivations and perceptions about body modification, using plastic or cosmetic surgery, body modification devices or/and exercise, to attain the dominate images of a black woman that is perpetuated in the media

This study also emphasized the cultural differences and similarities between black women's perceptions cross culturally and by forging a connection between the historical figure of Baartman and its current reference to media and black women. It also aimed to shed light on the potential physical and mental harm that the culturally endorsed body images can have on black women.

Assessing the literature and popular sources that describe black women's body image, media, Baartman and body modification, the following research questions were developed. To fulfill the aforementioned objectives the following research questions have been developed:

1. How do black women identify a black woman's body?
2. How do black women interpret black women presented in popular media (including TV, popular source magazine, social media and music)?

3. Are black women motivated to engage in body modification as a result of media exposure?
4. Do black women recognize the connections and ancestral presence of Baartman in today's media?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The cultural perspective lends to the method of how individuals are formed by their environments, along with social and cultural factors. It classifies culture as a greater context in which some appearance messages are preserved through historical contexts, while other messages vary. Nevertheless, some ideologies persevere through appearance forms. This perspective will inform the connections between appearance codes and social relationships.

The cultural perspective is mixed with areas of women's studies, ethnic studies, anthropology, sociology, consumer behavior and cultural studies (Kaiser, 1998). This perspective will be used to assess the meaning of the black woman's body from a historical context, Baartman, to a modern context, also, the current black women's ideas, perceptions and attitudes. The cultural perspective works in a context of where people experience and evaluate their lives. Therefore, the researcher will assess how black women relate to messages about black women and what they do with them, potential engagement in body modification.

## Theoretical Assumptions

1. *“Collective values are produced and reproduced through cultural forms.”*

(Kaiser, 1998, p. 49)

- Therefore cultural materials, like images, have shared values within a culture, which are linked to belief systems that are entrenched in cultural ideologies. Thus, this will inform how people interact with one another. So, it can be assumed that there will be a general model for how all the black women will perceive themselves and it will be based in the cultural image of how a black woman should look, assuming the features of Baartman.

2. *“Cultural beliefs and values tend to be perpetuated when they are represented on a relatively unconscious level.”* (Kaiser, 1998, p. 51)

- Unknowingly the ideological message that encompasses black women’s body image dictates what images or body types are more valuable. Body types can act as status symbols. Therefore, it can be assumed that a woman has more disposable income, or higher status, if she has more freedom to engage in more expensive methods of body modification versus just exercise.

3. *“People have the potential to transform their own realities by manipulating the objects in their cultural worlds.”* (Kaiser, 1998, p. 51)

- Thus, black women may want to shift their realities by manipulating or modifying their bodies, by combining or juxtaposing images that are

not commonly seen with each other. For instance, a black women with blue eyes or blonde hair. Also these cultural conventions can be applied in a new way but carry the historical message. In this way, the black women engaging in this study will be viewed as participants, those who do not passively accept media and its use of cultural objects but actively develop interpretations of these messages.

4. *“Culture provides abstract pictures or representations of social life.”* (Kaiser, 1998, p. 53)

- Kaiser (1998) noted that in this assumption media images can depict hypothetical representations but could possibly not be the most accurate representation. In this case, images of black women’s bodies, the dominant images that are shown, which is the thin European ideal and curvaceous ideal, thus these two perpetuated images do not depict the true visual of a black woman’s body. She also notes that images can exaggerate and be stimulating to the imagination, which can give concepts for personal appearance management.

5. *“People use codes to decipher the meanings of cultural representations of social life.”* (Kaiser, 1998, p. 53)

- A code is the customary patterning of a meaning and expression; it’s an abstract arrangement. Within these codes, it is explained by guidelines of how one should think and interpret appearance messages. The codes also give rules to show how these symbolic materials and

messages should be put together from a cultural perspective. Thus, it can be assumed that the participants of this study will depict the black woman's body as a sexualized image that is curvy. This is going beyond the surface and provides an understanding of the underlying meanings of cultural representation and understanding cultural meanings.

Using the cultural perspective as the theoretical framework in conjunction with social comparison theory, where an individual strives to find an accurate self-evaluation compared to others (Festinger, 1954), it is suggested that social meanings are developed by cultural influence. Thus, there are meanings embedded in cultural context, for instance, appearance symbols are delivered and communicated by culture and we interact with one another in the context of cultural meaning (Kaiser, 1998). For example, what it means to be beautiful in American culture is to be thin, tall with European features, this includes complexion. Therefore culturally accepted ideals of beauty will cause black women to compare themselves to the given beauty standard and assess themselves (Festinger, 1954).

## Chapter 3

### **METHODOLOGY**

To complete this study, the researcher collected data using demographic questionnaires and in-depth interviews. This study was conducted in the United States (US) and in South Africa (SA). According to Hocking, McDermott and Stacks (2003), the in-depth interview is “one-on-one, you and the interviewee, process” or an interpersonal interaction (p.210). This method was selected because the researcher desired to give an account of the participants personal interpretations about black women’s body images in the media, it’s cross cultural significance and how it influences the individual.

Development of the questions that were used during the in-depth interview, were constructed using information found through scholarly journals and popular source articles. Online web searchers of news involving black women’s body images was used as well. The peer reviewed articles used in the review of literature highlighted the influence of mass media in the societal and contextual view of black women therefore, sources like the Washington Post, Huffington Post, New York Times, Essence, Ebony, Madame Noire, print, online newspapers and credible blogs were also used.

Sample

To be included in this study, participants had to be of African descent, identifying themselves as a black woman (biologically) living in various cities in South Africa or the United States. Participants' age ranged from 18 to 25 years old. The age range was restricted from 18 to 25 years old because this is the presumed period of when Baartman was showcased through out Europe (Netto, 2005). There were a total of 30 participants, 15 in the US and 15 in various cities of SA.

To recruit participants in South Africa and the United States, the researcher used chain sampling (Hocking et al., 2003). This sampling method started with the researcher contacting key informants to receive referrals to potential participants. To stimulate the chain sampling, the researcher asked the first participant in each country if they would refer other qualified participants. The emails or phone numbers were provided and the researcher invited the potential participants. A total of 37 invitations were sent out and 35 potential participants responded. The invitations, on the phone and email, included a brief statement describing the study, the participants' role, method of collection of data, estimated time of data collection and that participants would receive refreshments. The first 15 participants who accepted the invitations completed the in-depth interviews, this was done in both countries. Some participants were scheduled using Internet resource Doodle.

### **Instrument Development and Procedure**

Drawing on the literature reviewed from scholarly journals, peer-reviewed articles, and credible popular source print and online resources, the researcher

deducted that there were five main areas that should be addressed: black women's perceptions about their bodies, their perceptions of the body images presented in the media that depict black women, the role of body modification and the potential role of them wanting to achieve the body types based on the images presented in the media, also their perceptions of black women in the African diaspora in the specific countries of the US and South Africa, and the knowledge of and connection to body image of Baartman. A primary component that was used during the construction of the instrument was the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), where an individual strives to find an accurate self-evaluation compared to others.

For example, what it means to be a culturally accepted black woman is to be curvaceous. Therefore culturally accepted ideals of beauty will cause black women to compare themselves to the given beauty standard and assess themselves (Festinger, 1954). The in-depth interviews focused on understanding how black women perceived the image of the black woman in popular media (including TV, popular source magazine, social media and music), their interpretation of their own body type, the motivation or possibility of physical modification to alter their bodies and knowledge of Baartman. From these areas, the researcher formed questions that would prompt in-depth discussion. For example, concerning the role of body modification and the potential role of them wanting to achieve a body type based on the images presented in the media, the researcher asked, "*Have you deliberately altered your body (by exercise, body modification devices {i.e. waist shaper}, or cosmetic/plastic surgery) intentionally to achieve the image presented in media of a*

*black woman? Why?'"* (see appendix D). The in-depth interviews were structured using open ended and close ended questions, however the questions allowed for discussion of other topics. The researcher asked the same questions in the same order to ensure validity and consistency. The interviews were face to face and took place in a comfortable environment, commonly at the participants' place of work, the researcher's work office or a reserved space at a public establishment. The interviews lasted an hour on average. The interviews were recorded using AudioNote and transcribed.

Prior to conducting the in-depth interviews a questionnaire was completed by the participants to collect demographic information related to age, country of birth, county of residence, education level, household income, number of children, marital status, occupation, the forms of media the participants watches, reads, and/or follows and the level of frequency. Participants' identity was kept confidential; answers to the questionnaire were recorded by only first name or a pseudonym selected by the participant.

### **Data Analysis**

After completing interviews in the US and SA, the researcher analyzed the results by first transcribing interviews, then repeatedly reviewed data and made marginal notes and finally used a categorical coding matrix by developing categories that emerged from participants responses (Creswell, 2007).

The research developed a list of tentative codes and the list expanded overtime while the researcher read and reviewed the data. A frequency of codes appears in the thematic coding criteria found in the results section. From the thematic coding the researcher found four themes (messages, social comparison, self acceptance and body modification) with sub themes.

## Chapter 4

### **RESULTS**

#### **Questionnaire**

Among the United States sample there were a total of 15 participants. Of the 15 participants the average age was approximately 21 years old, with ages ranging from 19 to 23. The South African women, 15 total, average age of participant was 22 and their ages ranged from 19 to 25. Overall, the sample's average age was 22.

According to the participants' response, all women from this sample attained at least a high school diploma or its equivalency, 47 percent (n=14) was enrolled or had attended some college; and 20 percent (n=6) received a bachelor's degree. Therefore all women received some type of formal education. Of the 30 participants, 23 percent (n=7) reported to a job and 77 percent (n=23) were continuing students at various levels of education.

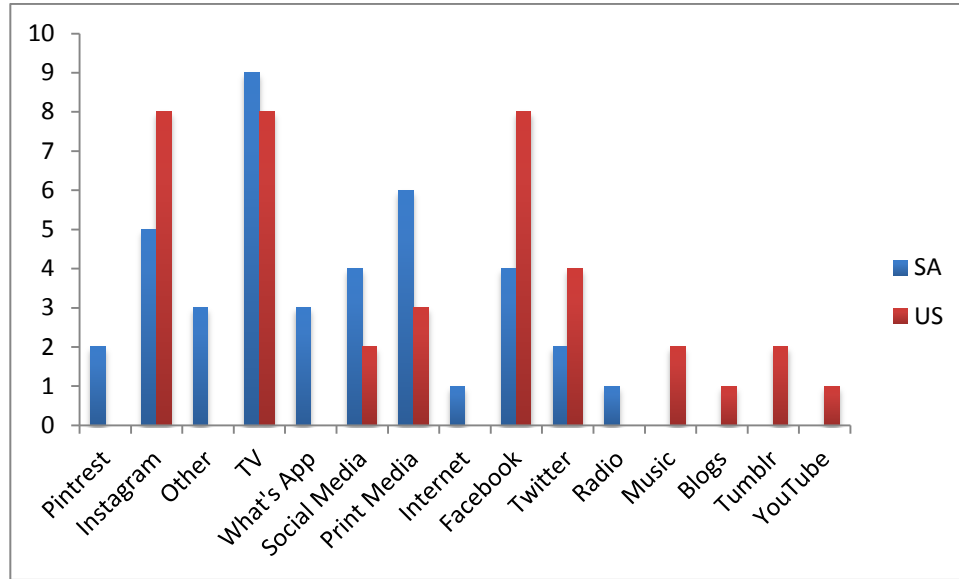
Only two (7 percent) participants from South Africa noted that they had children. However, 100 percent of SA women were single and 73 percent (n=11) of US women were single, with about 27 percent (n=4) not reporting marital status.

One SA participant documented that she had been born in another country, Malawi. All US participants noted the United States as their country of residence, 20

percent (n=3) of participants had direct connections to Africa by being born in the country of Kenya (n=1) or Guinea (n=2).

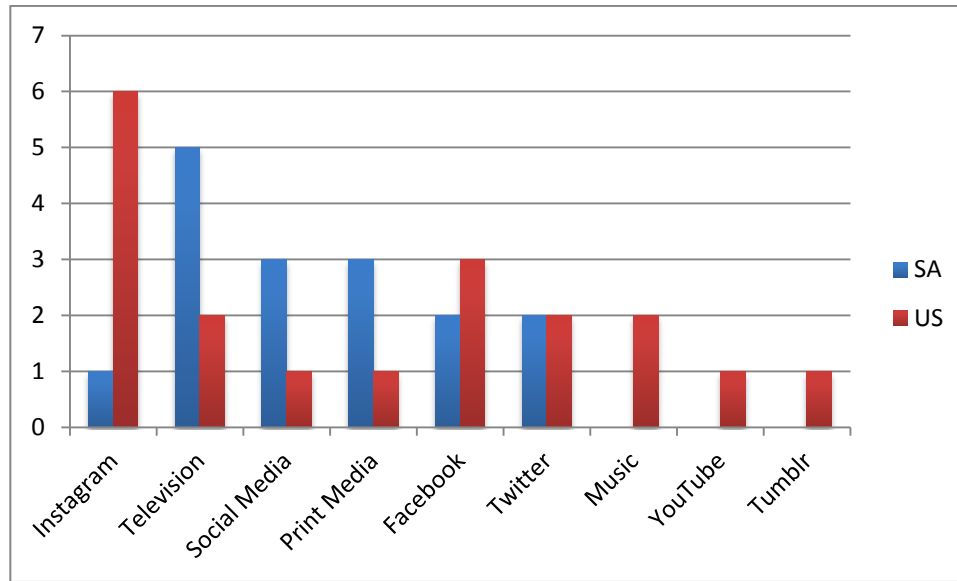
When queried about media exposure, it was found that all participants had engaged with some form of popular media. Over 73 percent (n=11) of SA participants noted that they read magazines (n=11 participants), watched TV (n=13), and engaged in activity on social media (n=14). Of the US respondents they read less magazines (n=9 participants) than SA participants, watched the same amount of TV (n=13), and all US participants engaged in social media (n=15).

Participants noted that they frequented the following social media and media outlets: Pinterest (SA n=2), Instagram (SA n=5, US n=8), TV (SA n=9, US n=8), What's App (SA n=3), Social Media (SA n=4, US n=2), print media (SA n=6, US n=3), Internet (SA n=1), Facebook (SA n=4, US n=8), Twitter (SA n=2, US n=4), Radio (SA n=1), Music, (US n=2), Blogs (US= n=1), Tumblr (US n=2), and YouTube (US n=1). Figure 1 shows a representation of the aforementioned figures. Television, Facebook and Instagram were among the most popular media outlets that SA and US participants frequented the most.



**Figure 1 Media Outlets Frequented.**

It was also found that SA participants received the most messages involving black women’s body image through television and US received the most messages involving black women’s body image via Instagram (Figure 2).



**Figure 2 Most Messages Involving Black Women's Body Image**

The participants' household income was recorded, but was not used while documenting this study because only 60 percent (n=18) of participants responded to the query.

### **In-depth Interviews**

The second part of data collection was in-depth interviews. The interviews in the United States, 15, and South Africa, 15, were audio recorded and transcribed into text data using Audionote – Notepad and Voice Recorder, an application provided by Luminant Software for Apple devices. The text data was then transferred to Microsoft Word documents where the researcher critically read the data numerous times and deductively made notes in margins to assist with creating the coding tool. The coding criteria was created in Microsoft Excel. The coding criteria, featured in Table 1

represents the categories discovered in academic literature (Gordon, 2008; Evans & McConnell, 2003; Frisby, 2004; Crane, 1999; Cafri, Yamamiya, Brannick, & Thompson, 2005; Baturka, Hornsby & Schorling, 2000; Kelch-Oliver & Ancis, 2011; Harris, 1995; Poran, 2006; Smith, Thompson, Raczynski & Hilner, 1999; Zhang, Dixon & Conrad, 2009; Park ,2005; DeBraganza & Hausenblas, 2010; Voelker & Pentina, 2011; Delinsky, 2005; Netto, 2005; Hobson 2003), popular source articles (Shefte & Koerber, 2012; Duong, 2013; Biney 2013; Brown, 2013) and marginal notes from transcription (Doing qualitative data analysis, n.d).

**Table 1 Thematic Coding Criteria for US & SA**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>When to use</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>SA</b>
Sexualization of black women's body	Information regarding the portrayal of a black woman behaving in a hypersexual manner	Use this code when the participants' response clearly identify the black woman's image or action as sexual, provocative; exoticizing of black women (Gordon, 2008)	10	11
Variations of black women's bodies	Details describing black women's body in variation	Use this code when participants' note that black women's bodies are different shapes and sizes	7	9

Table 1 continued

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>When to use</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>SA</b>
Comparison to other body images	Particulars that juxtapose the two or more body images	Use this code when participants compare their self image with others or idealized mainstream body images (Evans & McConnell, 2003; Frisby, 2004; Crane, 1999)	28	26
Idealized mainstream body shapes	Information regarding the popular images of a black woman's body	Use this code when participants identify the pear, apple, coke bottle or hourglass shape, as well as the curvaceous or thin ideal (Cafri, Yamamiya, Brannick, & Thompson, 2005)	24	28
Family/Tribe	Details describing the influence of family on body image	Use this code when participants describe their family interactions and contributions toward body image issues (Baturka, Hornsby & Schorling, 2000; Kelch-Oliver & Ancis, 2011; Harris, 1995)	6	8
Up bring, child rearing	Information regarding adolescent years	Use this code when participants recount their experiences as children or teenagers related to body image (Barko & Johnson, 2010)	8	7

Table 1 continued

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>When to use</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>SA</b>
Media	Particulars that discuss TV, magazines and traditional forms of media	Use this code when the participant mentions forms of media (Shefte & Koerber, 2012; Kelch-Oliver & Ancis, 2011; Poran, 2006)	23	25
Social media	Information regarding the images on or use of social media platforms	Use this code when the participants mentions Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram	7	4
Music	Details describing the influence of music or the portrayal of black women's body though music	Use this code when the participant mentions music videos, songs or specific genres of music (Biney, 2013)	12	8
Dress	Particulars describing the way black women wear their clothing	Use this code when participants mention the type of dress worn by black women, i.e. skimpy or modest (Smith, Thompson, Raczynski & Hilner, 1999)	10	6
Fashion industry	Information regarding the mass influence of the fashion industry	Use this code when participants describe the influence of the fashion industry by identifying the way clothing is tailored, options for black women and representation of black women in fashion (Brown, 2013)	19	16

Table 1 continued

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>When to use</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>SA</b>
Health	Details describing emotional, physical or mental response toward body image issue	Use this code when participants describe dramatically losing weight, mental or emotional stress (Zhang, Dixon & Conrad, 2009; Park, 2005; DeBraganza & Hausenblas, 2010)	11	12
Body modification	Particulars describing, exercise, surgery or body modification devices	Use this code when participants remark that they exercise to change their shape, express interest in changing body with surgery, engage in the use of body modification devices and express interest or intent to engage in body modification (Voelker & Pentina, 2011; Delinsky, 2005)	39	41
Cross culture	Information regarding country specific perspective or perception	Use this code when participants identify a country	27	39
Sarah Baartman	Details describing the historical figure's story, impact or current implications	Use this code when the participants speak about her physical features, history and current standing (Netto, 2005; Hobson 2003)	14	15

Table 1 continued

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>When to use</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>SA</b>
Acceptance of self	Particulars describing self love	Use this code when participants describe a self love, self acceptance or contentment with body image (Duong, 2013)	5	4
Natural	Information regarding a woman being natural, without modification	Use this code when participants reference a black woman's body as being naturally made, without modification that is not exercise, how God gave it to them	1	7

The findings from the in-depth interviews in SA and the US show a relationship of black women engaging with media at various points that include consumed messages, internalization of messages, comparison of images from messages and the overall end product of either self acceptance or body modification, which runs parallel with age.

The points of the relationships are the themes (messages, social comparison, self acceptance and body modification) that were deduced from coding text data. The data excludes findings regarding hair (length or texture) and skin tone (light or dark), for this study specifically focuses on the shape, build and body (form) of a black woman.

## Relationship with Media

As the data was coded a relationship between black women and how they consume messages related to black women's body images emerged, which shaped the interpretations of the patterns expressed by the black women. This process is ultimately an engagement that black women, who are exposed to media, unwillingly engage in.

### **Messages**

The genesis of this process begins with the messages that black women are exposed to and consume from prepubescent years. Black women from an early age are exposed to idealized body images of black women and they experience variations of black women's body image. Denise, a 19-year old student in the US and a native of Kenya, said:

*I think prior to that mostly you know when you're in high school or you're in junior high a lot of like the images of how black women's body should be is based on what you see in the media and what is being sold, so there's a certain shape that you think, oh this is the ideal one.*

The idealized body images that black women consume are a mixture of black women's bodies from the fashion industry and popular media. The variational messages concerning a black woman's body are seen through the women that the black women experience on a day to day basis. A South African artist and student, Gugu, said she learned about a black woman's body from variety of sources:

*Films, my mother, my grandmother, my sister, models, my sister's a model.*

*Ummm, yah. Media. Media, media, media, media. Social media, musicians, yah.*

This quote summarizes the comments of the majority of black women interviewed during this study. The common thread identified by black women was that they received various depictions of what a black woman's body looked like. It was found that black women recognized idealized images and variations of black women's body images: (1) a curvaceous ideal, represented by music, social media and popular media, (2) a slender ideal, represented by the fashion industry and (3) a variation of images of black women represented by their family and encounters during their upbringing. Nonetheless, it was noted that mass depictions of black women's bodies lacked variation.

### **Idealized Images, Curvaceous and Slender Ideal**

Concerning idealized images the majority of black women noted that there were two figures, a curvaceous and slender figure. Shyanne, a US participant said:

*There's two types you can either be really skinny or you can be this really shapely person and most people they really fit in that grey, they don't fit in that black and white, the extremes aren't there. That's a little frustrating.*

Both samples expressed thoughts on the two figures, curvaceous and slender, which are representations of black women's body image.

## **Curvaceous Ideal**

Research question one, *How do black women identify a black woman's body?* was answered where the curvaceous ideal overall was found to be the culturally endorsed image of a black woman's body, as described by participants in the US and SA. Norucebo, a 23-year-old student in South Africa, described the idealized curvaceous figure as:

*Big boobs, big butt, more shapely small waist, yah. That is basically how it's presented in the media.*

The curvaceous body type was also described in colloquial terms, by both samples, as the coke bottle, hour glass, pear or apple shaped. A student in the US, Nafi, said:

*When I think of black woman's body, I think like big butt, curvy, hourglass shape.*

This idealized body image was noted to be influenced by music, popular media and social media. Within music, many celebrity women, like Nicki Minaj and Beyoncé, were classified to have this figure and music videos featured women with this figure.

Like, Mandy, a South African student, said:

*In terms of shape, it's a lot of hourglass shape with it being big and a lot of like the pear shape, like the Nicki Minajs, we're exposed to a lot here.*

As black female artists were associated with this shape, other black women, like video models were noted to have this figure too. Monique, a US student said:

*In all, not all but most music videos, and they bring a girl in there, especially if she's a black woman, she's usually got like, I don't know where they're finding them, but she got like a huge butt, a smaller waist and still have the boobs.*

The girls in the videos that Monique referenced are the women who are playing a lead love interest in a music video or are featured among many other similar women in a music video, primarily in the genre of hip hop and RnB. When speaking in reference to the curvy figure of a black woman, Thandokuhle, a South African student, said:

*I'm going to base this on the music videos. The woman in the music videos of rappers and RnB singers in the United States, what they portray when I watch them, those, again a black woman needs to have curves, a black woman needs to have hips, and a hourglass shape and uh a slim waist, but a big behind you know.*

It was found that the majority of participants consider music and music videos to be a heavy contributor to the idealized curvaceous image of a black woman. Shyanne from the US, said:

*And a lot of times when I was growing up videos, actually, me and my sister used to watch a lot of BET videos and stuff like that, so that really kind of contributed to what I thought you should look like for a while.*

According to questionnaire findings, social media is an outlet that is frequently used by the black women who participated in this study. Specifically, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter were mentioned. Many black women mentioned a social media

platform that they used and how they encountered and engaged with black women's body images. Norcucebo in SA said:

*Recently been trolling Instagram, there's this account that's basically dedicated to big booties so I feel like that's trending.*

Also, Cheryl, a South African photographer said:

*I've noticed in, the, like on Facebook you'll find a lot of pages where like girls are showing off their bodies and all that stuff you know.*

Therefore, it was found that the black women who participated in this study felt that some social media platforms and its users reinforce the idealized curvaceous figure. Simone, a US student said:

*I'm just like scrolling through Twitter or Tumblr or Instagram or any type of social media, there's always those people like the ideal woman should have this type of body, she should be basically a coke bottle or it's like a very large butt, a very slim waist that doesn't even hold her organs, she should be like a coke bottle.*

In popular media, the curvaceous ideal is also very widespread. Nineteen-year-old Paula in the US said,

*I would say ummm definitely media it has a big role in developing a black female's body, uh just by what you see, you don't really see in like the spotlight, you don't really see a black woman who's bigger in size and who is just really like not as curvy as you want them to be. So I feel like the spotlight, media puts the spotlight on females who are thick to put it point blank, like I*

*would say the media is a big portion because I feel like the media also influences other perceptions.*

Overall the black women felt that the curvaceous ideal was very pervasive. Regarding the curvaceous image, the black woman had ill feelings toward the connotation and representation of a black woman. The participants noted that the image of a black woman in music, social media and popular media is a highly sexualized and exaggerated. Alexis, a 21-year-old building manager in the US said:

*They always have like, they always like, stacked with features like super like small waist and huge butt or they're like, I think they're either really like stereotypical like, what's that like vivacious or like just really like supersexualized like large breast big butt, like weave, or they're like the typical actress like skinny, small but they still have to have like, like how Beyoncé is, like she's fit but she still has like a tiny waist and huge curves.*

After consistently viewing these images, most of the women noted that they felt disturbed, saddened or disheartened by the images. Mandy from SA said:

*It's like so sexualized always, like and its disappointing cause it's not just the media that's doing it, it's black women who's doing it to themselves. And it's very, it's not even like, "Love your curves," it's just what, it's gone to a point where it's not "Love your curves." It's very sexualized and it looks ridiculous and I just, yah. I think the media's ruined the body image of what black people should be or should look like. You're suppose to look like this person who just jumped off a stripper pole but unfortunately we all don't look like that.*

The curvaceous, sexualized ideal is noted by participants to be more of a Western influence, while South African black women note that the country still recognizes that a black woman should ideally be curvy, the SA and US participants described these figures to be congruent. Monique from the US said:

*I think they're looking for women that are bigger. But, I'm not actually sure, I want to say that they're more toward the bigger woman than the smaller woman.*

Women on both continents described this bigger woman as being plump and rounder around the waist, but still carrying those trademark features, like a large posterior and large breasts. Most South African women agreed with this description, noting that it gave others the opportunity to make inferences about the larger but curvy women.

Ruth, a student in South Africa said,

*She's better taken care of in that sense. Maybe she eats better, umm her husband's healthy, not healthy, wealthy so in that sense it's a belief that if you're a curvy woman or you're slightly bigger you come from a rich home, yeah so in that sense.*

Other South African participants also reported that someone can make inferences concerning the woman's economic and social status from her figure and size.

### **Slender Ideal**

As previously stated, there are two idealized figures in the media that are recognizable for black women's body image, the curvaceous ideal and the slender

ideal. According to the majority of participants, there are these two images because each image stems from a different genre of media. Monique, a US student said:

*Well, it depends on the side of the media. When you're looking at stuff based on popular culture I think they're trying to make women want the larger curves, larger assets, but if you look at like the modeling world, they don't want you to, then you're plus size if you have too much of it, so it all depends on what you're looking for.*

Thus, the opposing idealized image is the slender ideal. Many of the participants from South Africa and the United States identify the slender ideal with the fashion industry. Most participants reported that they feel that this is the complete, polar opposite of the curvaceous ideal. Darnee, a student in the US said:

*I would say the fashion industry is actually the opposite when I see ummm.. women on the runways and the magazines, their body type is more I guess, my type more slender, tall, straight not as many curves, ummm... when I see like America's Next Top Model and you know, those types, magazines like Vogue those type of things, I usually see a more Caucasian typical body type.*

These two dominant images are noted to cause frustration and confusion by some of the participants. A fashion student from South Africa reported that the fashion industry is very influential and that it encourages a certain look for black women. This look is described as European-like by most participants, it is reported that the women should be very lean, tall, slim, without exhibiting voluptuous curves. Because black women are exposed to this image, Nomuuyiseko, a South African mother said:

*Yeah it impacts them negatively I would say, because they see no other way of fitting perfectly or staying thin.*

Some of the negative impacts that the idealized slender image, which stems from the fashion industry in opposition to the curvaceous ideal from the music, social media and popular media sphere, are women engaging in extreme weight loss. Ayanda, a South African model reported that her friend who was once curvaceous engaged in extreme weight loss after being heavily exposed to the fashion industry. Ayanda said:

*I wish I had my phone here I actually wanted to show you a picture that I saw of an old friend at the, when I was at this job now and she, she's gone, like she used to be, she was a little bit more curvaceous than her and she loved and embraced her curves and she was the most confident, big boned woman I'd ever seen, she made me wanna be like bigger, like more curvy not like round or you know, she made me want to have more meat on my bones even though I wasn't a very small girl when she was that size, to see her now she also joined the modeling industry cause she went to LISOF, you know LISOF, the London International School of Fashion, so they have a campus here in Johannesburg and yeah she went to LISOF to, she started LISOF in 2011 and now she's a fraction of what she used to be.*

Because black women referenced the need to be both idealized figure, it is heavily conveyed that they are straddled between the influence of the curvaceous ideal and slender ideal. Many of the participants noted that this contributed to confusion and frustration. The two idealized figures can be seen as polar opposites and opposites on

a scale. The middle of this scale can be seen as the variational images of black women's bodies, like the women the participants interact with on a daily basis, family, friends, etc.

### **Influence of the West**

When considering the media in the perpetuation of the images of a black woman's body, the participants alluded to a transnational message from country to country. However the messages imparted from the US to South Africa were far greater and more recognizable from both groups of black women. Binta, a Guinean born United States student said:

*I know with like the way Western world kind of like takes over or has taken over, it's a lot more likely to see images transferred from here to South Africa than like the other way around, I find that in the United States we're pretty much clueless about a lot of other happenings of the world but eyes are always on us or maybe we force eyes to be honest so.*

Binta's sentiments were true, according to Shyanne, another US participant, who agreed that South African black women possibly view the same media outlets as black women in the United States. Shyanne said:

*I don't live in South Africa, but probably the same thing if they watch the same shows we do, which I know a lot of shows we have over here broadcast in different countries but probably the same thing.*

The dichotomy of the image of a black woman's body presents the fantasy of a black woman, which is the direct result of the influence of Western media, music and fashion as reported by the participants. According to Ruth, a South African student, said that the United States gives the appropriate or most timely image of a black woman's body:

*The United States, I think that's where most of it comes from and we see stuff on TV in America and then it comes down to Africa and then we think "Ooo, that's cool." So umm, to answer your question I can perhaps say they give us the original view or opinion of what it should be like right now.*

Thandokuhle, a South African woman said that she sees a variety of body types of black women's bodies in the United States, however the majority of the participants noted the primary image featured from the United States is the curvaceous ideal.

Tiiseto, a South African woman said:

*From what we're seeing coming from America, I feel like that's where my whole ass thing comes from America. America perpetuates that black booty and black woman and because South Africa has the tendency of taking a type of America, copying and pasting it here, that's if you look at the music videos, you look at the movies, the songs. Uhh then you start hearing stories about butt implants, and you know, all that we hear from there. And so I feel like as for me personally, from what I've seen America always perpetuates the big booty on a black woman.*

Although a popular image of a black woman's body is the curvaceous ideal, the participants still recognize a figure that is considered the complete opposite of what the Western media exudes as a black woman's body, which is the slender ideal.

### **Variations of Black Women's Body Image**

A common thread repeated by participants is that there are only two heavily supported images in the media, the curvaceous and slender ideals. Many participants noted that there is a lack of variation of the black woman's body in the media and messages that are consumed. Shyanne reported that the common images presented are not representative of black women, she said:

*I feel like it's not really representative. I think it's not representative in a lot of ways, ummm it's not representative of women that are bigger, they're not representative of tall women. They're really not representative of really short women or really thin black girls who have more of an athletic shape so, my body type definitely isn't represented it makes me feel like they don't, like most media with most women's representations it kinda makes me feel like your pushing a perfect, your pushing perfect on people.*

The lack of proper representation noted by Shyanne is the variation of black women that the women in this study were exposed to, like their family and themselves. This lack of variation can be thought of as the middle of the scale, between the curvaceous and slender ideal. Antoinette said:

*I feel that there are two different types. There's the model black girl, in the magazines and stuff who's basically just slim, you can say that. And but still curvy in a way. And obviously there's like a video girl, like very voluptuous. Umm yeah, I feel like I'm just, not straight but like not a blob either. But not straight, if that makes sense, but yah.*

Thus, besides the model in the magazines and the video girls; in the middle is the variation of black women's body image. The black women who participated in this study recognized that there are many possible images of a black woman's body. For instance, Akilah, a US student, said:

*Well there's all different shapes and sizes, ummm they come in tall, like skinny, slender, curvy, uh yeah different varieties of it. Some have smaller torsos, I don't know I usually think of yeah when I think of a black woman's body.*

Many of the black women in this study reported that they learned about the variations of black women's bodies from the women they encountered, which primarily stems from the women in the participant's family or tribe affiliation.

Nikiwe, a South African technical assistant said:

*Like Tswana woman have smaller breasts. Zulu women have big breasts, you know and Tswana woman and Ndebele woman body shapes are more petite than a Xhosa, and a Zulu and Nguni woman's body, you know where as their figures are more fuller, they have bigger bums than a Tswana woman so, it also differs in terms of that, so I've never been exposed to only one type of black woman's body whereas I've been exposed to variations of black*

*woman's body for me, media would usually show a curvier black woman, black woman with a big bum and probably big boobs, but it's not, for me it's not typical. It's not a typical black woman, the typical black woman also varies.*

Therefore, it was found that black women notice variations of black women's bodies as compared to the idealized images from their family members. To further support this finding, Nikiwe also talked about her family specifically, she said:

*My household we're very small, not necessarily but compared to more fuller figured women, where my cousins and my aunts have curves they have bums, they have boobs you know whereas in my household my mom and I, we're very slender shaped so that's also black women for me but, ummm... a black woman's body is usually associated with a big bum a bit curvy and usually with a small waist, and then you have the boobs, yeah.*

Thus, besides women learning about their body image from mass media messages, they also learn about body image from the women around them, primarily their family. Black women consume these messages about the idealized images, variations of black women's bodies and begin to compare themselves, which results in the women who took part in this study to experience confusion and stress.

### Social Comparison

When the black women were queried about black women's body image, the women would compare themselves to the idealized images, variations of black

women's bodies and the most popular depiction of a woman, the white woman's body. The women responded by noting that they involuntarily compared themselves to these women and do not feel that their bodies were the same and that when comparing their bodies to white women, their bodies are completely opposite or that some white women are mimicking the ideal black woman's body, specifically the curvaceous ideal.

Foremost the majority of women said that their bodies did not look like the idealized images of a black woman. Thandokuhle, a South African participant said:

*Nothing like it, my body looks nothing like my interpretation or what I see in the media, I feel my body does not look like what I see on TV, yes, or in the media.*

The women who reported that their bodies were not similar to the ideal images of a black woman also reported that they experienced stress as a result of not having that ideal body. Morgan, a US student said:

*I feel pressured I guess to strive to have my body look like that so whether it's working out to get the smaller waist or what could I do, I wish I had the better genetics I guess to have the bigger butt or whatever. It kinda feels like if I don't have those attributes I'm not really a black woman.*

Morgan noted that the idealized images contributed to her questioning her genetic relationship to her race. The perpetuation of these idealized images also cause the women to experience self-esteem issues. Samukeliso, a South African woman said:

*Firstly, I felt like it also has an impact, it's getting to it's starting to have an impact on my self esteem so I felt like me being like this, imperfect is making me depressed and sad, because I'm not like the other girls so by me exercising or modifying my body is also to boost my self esteem to feel sexy again, to feel like you know appreciate the way I am, so.*

The evidence shows that as the women were exposed to the messages of the ideal body images of black women's bodies, there were negative affects. It was also found that some of the participants understood the possible affects and were concerned about younger viewers and how they would behave in response to the images. Binta, a 21-year-old US citizen, said:

*I feel like I tend to be very critical of the images that are constantly being put out there just because I know the dangers that it presents, especially to younger kids, seeing like this idealized version of what they're suppose to look like.*

As black women reported what they felt when seeing and comparing themselves to the images, they also reported that they felt that their was a (mis)representation of the black woman's body by white women. Most participants noted this as cultural appropriation and that white women are praised for the assets that black women have culturally and naturally possessed for years. Ayanda, a South African model said:

*Media has played a big role, in that, even dating all the way back to you know the Marilyn Monroe, Jackie O days, I believe that even in those days, the curves were a black woman trait, you know and for a white woman to still maintain her sex appeal and have that I thought that was a borrowed idea, I believe from you know the white race.*

Some participants talked about the dominance of white women replicating the features of black women's curvaceous bodies in the media. The responses from participants were so that they felt a certain level of disdain and dislike for this popular phenomena. Alexis, a US participant said:

*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 love 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, I'm sick.*

The black women described this unfair comparison, and ultimately reported that they felt a sense of rejection. The majority of black women felt there is essentially no way of being properly depicted, praised or accepted by popular media. Ayanda, said:

*Because when I look at a white woman who's lean, she's the perfect white woman and yet when I see a white woman who's got an ass, she's also the perfect white woman and that makes me angry because, I don't know, there's*

*also something just about black woman's skin regardless of the shape of their body that should play in to part, that I feel like the media neglects very often.*

From the time the black women are exposed to messages about black women's body image, preadolescent, they inevitably compare themselves to the images, adolescent, and when they are at an age where they can make changes or modifications that can alter their bodies, post adolescent, the women reported that there are two routes they can embark on that work together or separately, self acceptance and modification.

#### Options Stemming from Social Comparison

The result, reported by the majority of women from the study, of exposures to idealized figures of black women's bodies cause them to compare themselves and as a result, they engage in self acceptance or body modification. Participants reported that self-acceptance and body modification could happen separately or together.

#### **Body Modification**

The black women in this study overall reported that they engage in exercising to stay fit, for health reasons or to change their body to match an idealized figure of a black woman. Many of these women chose this method because it was viewed as more natural, or less invasive or fake. For example Ruth from South Africa said:

*Well I do work out a lot, that's because I do want to keep, uh I have what you call love handles, I always wanted to get rid of those to have a sort of straight and then curvy so, I think yeah I have, I do intentionally do, yeah.*

One of the primary exercises of choice noted by participants were squats. Most of the participants noted that squats would increase the mass of their posterior or make their rear end more shapely. The participants also alluded that they would feel better and have better social outcomes if they participated in this form of modification. Gugu, a South African participant, wanted to stay healthy for a healthy mind and body, but she said that women may engage in this practice for financial or romantic relationship gains. Gugu said and sang:

*Kanye West has that work out plan song as well. (Sings) "Thanks to Kanye's work out plan, I'm the envy of all my friends, see I pull me a baller man."*  
*That's what I think.*

Aside from working out to be fit or mimic the image of the idealized images of a black woman's body, some of the participants reported that they wanted their clothes to fit better. The participants also noted that they used body shaping devices, like spanx to modify their looks. Paula from the US said:

*I would go down the route of exercising, doing my squats because at one point I just felt like some of my outfits would look a little nicer if I actually had more of a round shape bottom or my hips would be a certain way or my legs would be nice and firm as opposed to like just being out of shape or because like the outfits would be more make it look a little better.*

Some women wanted to achieve a certain body type so that their clothes would look better, however, the fashion industry does not assist in comforting black women

either, because according to participants, the fashion industry does not tailor clothing nor fashion related media to Black women. Mandy from South Africa said:

*I honestly don't think they care because, not because maybe of black women or anything else but I think they have their template of somebody who's supposed to look a certain way and if you don't look that way they don't care and unfortunately black women we don't look that way, we are much bigger, more hips or whatever. We don't and we're shorter so I don't really think they care enough to translate it to black fashion and I think even if they do, I know Levis did it with the curves or whatever, but it becomes kind of offensive when every time you hear something they say, "it's curvaceous, it's a black person," every single time. I mean, don't white people become curvy? So I don't think the fashion industry cares at all.*

Other participants from both continents supported this by commenting on how they've made unsuccessful attempts in finding clothes that would fit their body type or reporting how different clothing companies like Levi Strauss & Co. or Woolworths customize clothing specifically for curvier women.

As some women make it a practice to engage in exercise, some have attempted and have not received the results aspired for, thus they self accept themselves. Nafi, a Guinean born US student said:

*I've tried but didn't succeed... I've done like squats and stuff to make my butt like lift but besides that I don't think that umm... I'm like loving myself more so I think that's what it is. But I think maybe when I was younger I was like, "Oh*

*that's nice to have like a big butt." Like when they kept talking about black girls and their butts and like in the hip hop videos you would see like oh she has a really nice butt and then you would want to get that butt, but now I'm just like what ever it's my body.*

Thus, because of this participant's unsuccessful attempt to modify her body, she deduced that she would accept her body for what it naturally is.

The women also noted that there were a variety of options to consider if someone, or even they wanted to construct a black woman's body. The women noted that people can engage in plastic surgery, which includes breast and butt augmentation, liposuction, fat transfers and butt injections. Although the participants knew of these different body modification methods, many said they could not engage in the practice because it was not financially possible. However, it was reported that if capital were available some of the women would use surgery as a method of modification. Also, the women reported that they would engage in surgery at a later point in life, primarily after childbirth, to rectify their bodies after the experience.

South African participant, Nikiwe said:

*The only thing I would ever think about, thought about changing is my tummy pop out after I have my kids I would go for a nip and tuck and I think that's the only thing I've ever thought of in terms of body modification, yah. I was like if I can't get, get back in proper timing, if it flabs after pregnancy then I would have a small job done there, if my breast become droopy after breast feeding kids, maybe I'll pick them up.*

The most noted time that these women would engage in invasive body modification would be after childbirth because of assumed weight gain or after an extreme tragic accident. Nonetheless, the women reported incidents where they have witnessed, via media, health related risks because of body modification. Mandy from South Africa said:

*I've watched shows and documentaries about how black women in the States are trying to, recently I watched a biased documentary about Miami black women in the States were trying to modify their bums and stuff and I think one lady she was a tranny, or a transvestite, to be her name, she, her name was Duchess and she went around obviously telling people she can do plastic surgery and a whole lot of people followed her and they asked her to do the surgeries and turns out she was putting silicone in there. Like raw silicon in their bums and people were having lots of complications due to that.*

It was thoroughly noted that some participants thought invasive methods of body modification were too extreme and would not want to risk their health, but have considered the method.

### **Cross Cultural Modification**

When queried about their counterparts it was clear that the Western (US) curvaceous ideal perpetuated in media of black women's body images are dominant and that there is less known concerning the depiction of SA black women's body image, which makes this study a worthy contribution to the literature documenting

black women's body image. Overall the consensus from both groups noted that it is perceived that black women in the US are modifying their bodies more than SA black women.

Most South African black women felt that some black women in the US modified their bodies to attain the idealized images or copy celebrities. A South African participant, Nikiwe said:

*I'm guessing they do get implants, boob, breast implants but I mean like there's such a huge obsession with the big bum and the Kim Kardashian bum and Nicki Minaj bum, that I probably can, I'm assuming so I could be making an ass of myself that there is bum implants that try to uh where they're trying to copy Nicki Minaj's bum or Kim Kardashian's bum but there's such a huge obsession on the black woman's bum.*

The women in the US thought that the women in South Africa probably modified their bodies because they are exposed to Western media. However, there was an overwhelming assumption by participants in the US that the women in SA were more natural and did not aspire to change themselves. Morgan said:

*I would hope or think that a black woman's body perception in South Africa would be more I guess accepting so whatever it is that you were born with that's what your body is, I would hope there isn't really one I guess standard like this is what a black woman's looks like in South Africa and then everyone else following to get like that. I would think that they would be more accepting than we are here in the United States but I honestly don't know.*

Overall, according to participants' response the majority of both sample either considered body modification or engage in body modification by exercising or using devices like spanx.

### **Self Acceptance**

Considering self-acceptance, the women noted that this is a happening that would come with age or after body modification attempts. Some of the participants remarked that they engage in body modification and then resulted in accepting their body the way it is. Like Cheryl, a South African participant said:

*I've gotten to a point where I think it's OK to accept your body the way it is, if it's think you can change it through exercise or wearing clothes that will enhance your body or cover up things you're not happy with that's fine you know, but surgery, that's a bit extreme.*

Experiencing self acceptance was not highly noted by participants, however it is documented as an outcome of the overall relationship that the women experience with the media.

## Chapter 5

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The literature documents that black women learn about their body image extensively through their family and peers. Also, it is documented that black women are heavily influence by early childhood experiences (Barko & Johnson, 2010; Baturka et al., 2000;). In the responses of the participants from this study, this was supported, however there was a more overwhelming response for how media is a primary contributor to how black women view their body image. Therefore, it seemed as though black women are more so influenced by mass media and social media when concerning their body image.

Because the media is pervasive in perpetuating idealized images of black women, Zhang, Dixon and Conrad (2009) examined the effects of exposure to media on black women and found that the media had a significant connection to psychopathological conditions, like bulimia and anorexia nervosa and body dysmorphia (Nabi, 2009). Although these findings are alarming, however in the context of this study, the women did not cite that they were at risk or had an eating disorder. The women in this study were more apt to body modification by exercise, dress and a future possibility of cosmetic/plastic surgery if financial feasible. Therefore, research question three was answer, which was *Are black women motivated to engage in body modification as a result of media exposure?*

Nonetheless, media still showcases unattainable beauty goals for women of color (Schooler et al, 2004). Considering Kaiser's (1998) theoretical assumptions, all were supported. The black women in this study heavily cited a culturally endorsed figure for black women, which is reminiscent of Baartman, representing the curvaceous ideal. This finding which is congruent with Kaiser's (1998) assumption, also answers researcher question one from this study, which was *How do black women identify a black woman's body?* Also, the women in the study did cite that involvement in body modification via cosmetic/plastic surgery would require that women would have a high disposal income, which supports Kaiser's (1998) assumption. The literature and findings from this study supports Kaiser's (1998) assumption that there are two dominant images of black women which do not accurately depict the true visual of a black woman's body. Also, the women in this study noted that the black woman's body is high sexualized in media and music, which was also supported in the literature (Zhang, Dixon, & Conrad, 2009), which supports Kaiser's (1998) cultural patterns assumption and answers research question two, which was *How do black women interpret black women presented in popular media (including TV, popular source magazine, social media and music)?* Finally, as a result of media exposure, black women in this study cited that they have considered changing their bodies to feel sexy and boost their self esteem, which supports Kaiser's assumption that the women would want to manipulate their bodies.

The assumptions of the researcher were surprising not fulfilled. The researcher noted that because of the samples being set in two difference countries, political and

social climates that the responses of the two groups would be opposites. However, it was surprising that both groups had nearly congruent responses.

Black women are forced to feel incomplete because there are no images that truly identify who they are. Given the results from black women in South Africa and the United States, there is a need for black women to be exposed to a variety of body types in popular media, social media and music. As represented in the data provided, it is clear that there needs to be an expansion of the depictions of black women's bodies. Biney (2013), supports this by suggesting that black women need to view more images that show diverse African beauty, because it's not viewed in mass media. Unfortunately from media, there is a current and very clear theme that the most prominent culturally appropriate assets of the black women is the butt. Images of black women are aggressively sexual and these images do not reflect the reclaiming of bodies. Black women should feel comfortable with their bodies, and not just comfortable with their sexualized bodies.

Because the black women were set in two different countries and two different cultures it was surprising that their responses were almost congruent. In documenting these critical silhouettes of black women participants from the study agreed that there is culturally endorsed figure, which perpetuates the curvaceous idea. The participants described this figure as hourglass, coke bottle or pear shaped. Many of the women in both groups did not feel that they accurately depict the culturally endorsed figure of a black woman. Overall, the women in both groups felt that the culturally endorsed image was developed from contributions of the mass media and popular culture, which

includes music, like hip hop and rap. Also, the messaging of the culturally endorsed figures of black women is featured in either scantily clad clothing or nothing at all. South African women felt that the women in the United States have a highly sexualized image. The fashion industry does not support the culturally endorsed figure of a black woman's body but contributes to the confusion of messaging that black women consume. Black women featured in the fashion industry are typically very slender and thin which distorts the acceptance of the culturally endorsed figure. The slender and thin build is not culturally endorsed by blacks but is the Westernized epitome of beauty. Nonetheless, the results do support the globalization of Western beauty ideals, which include the mainstream slender ideal and now the popular culturally endorsed curvaceous.

Thus, because of the converging and dueling ideals, the body image messaging is pervasive and some of the women have consider body modification, through exercise and invasive procedures. The women in SA feel that women in the US more so modifies their bodies than they do and the women in the US feel that the women in SA are more natural but some are engaged in Western influences so they may consider body modification. The primary motivations for the women to modify their bodies were life-altering changes, like childbirth or extreme weight gain.

Because black women have been conditioned to view the European model of beauty or the two dominant images of a black woman's body, which is the curvaceous figure or thin ideal, there should be clinical treatment of black women's over exposure to these images in the media since they are emotionally disturbed by the constant

consumption of these images. South African women perceived that because black women are excessively exposed to national celebrities like Nicki Minaj and Beyoncé, the women in SA do think black women in the US do modify their bodies. This homogenous perpetuation of beauty is detrimental to the mental and physical well-being of black women who are exposed to media. The evidence provided from the in depth interviews show that black women are so moved by the images that they have considered or are modifying their bodies, and in the future may engage in surgical procedures.

Through various readings of popular source articles and the comments from participants of this study, it is worthy to note that there is a possible connection between body enhancements and financial growth. Financial growth can be by way of a woman attaching herself to a partner who is well established or by using her body to gain more money, through escorting dancing, escorting, etc. This conclusion can also be supported by the comments made by some South African participants who claimed that women who are bigger tend to be happier and wealthy.

It is evident from the results that future studies can include comparative analysis on motivations to alter appearance, home methods to alter appearance, the motivations to exercise for black women and a study completed on the mental risk factors black women are susceptible to when altering their appearance. There should be an international case study documenting the psychological assessment of black women of the diasporas response to the mental conditioning of media. Also a scale of black women's sexuality should be developed to measure sexuality in future studies.

Future studies can include comparative analysis on motivations to alter appearance, home methods to alter appearance, and a study completed on the physical and mental risk factors black women are susceptible to when altering their appearance

It was surprising to find that many women in both countries did not have an accurate depiction, recollection, or have been exposed to the story of Sarah Baartman. Although, some South African participants mentioned that they received some form of education about the Khoisan people and specifically Sarah Baartman in their grade school education, they were not clear on her story and its contributions to the globalized modern image of the black woman's body.

However, among the responses cited by the black women on both continents in this study, the curvaceous ideal was connected to a historic figure in black women's body image. Previously discussed on earlier chapters, Saartjie Baartman, is described as the quintessential image of a black woman. Some of the participants said that there was a connection to the popular images of black women who represent the curvaceous ideal. Therefore, their responses answered research question four, which was *Do black women recognize the connections and ancestral presence of Baartman in today's media?* Tiiseto, a South African marketing strategist said:

*I was called Sarah Baartman, now and then, you know like teasing, teasing, teasing. Umm but I never really linked or thought that it would actually have an impact on how women are... I never really thought about it like that.*

*Because if you look back at history that would be the reference of the African trademark as a point of being big and curvaceous with ass and she's taken and*

*ridiculed and shown around and that actually has stemmed from that, that's a huge possibility actually.*

The women noted that there is an emergence of modern Baartmans. Modern Baartman's are described by the women as the women who reveal their bodies in a sexualized manner and have the curves that are similar to Baartman's historic figure. Shyanne, a participant in the US added to this idea by introducing an example in black media. Shyanne said:

*I definitely believe that now we've internalized that and have made it into a great thing if that's what our body looks like, unfortunately the problem behind it is that it's gotten so bad that we don't realize exactly where it began from, I think there is a connection back there, for example, I'm going to take it to BET. BET and their videos. OK BET usually portrays videos, hip hop, rap, all that stuff and in the video you always have a woman that's dancing, acting crazy, all half naked.*

Shyanne also alluded that the representation of black women in media, specifically music videos or television is a top down effect stemmed from major conglomerate organizations like Viacom. Shyanne said:

*I definitely think the way they portrayed Sarah Baartman, is definitely, that's how we act like now. We follow that. They portrayed her as, they portrayed her as a sex toy. Like an exotic sex toy, some one that, some one that has body parts they can't find in the white race and someone who we all know, like we*

*all know that from the beginning black women were and attractant for white men, since they came on, on the boat, they been raping em, we all know that.*

Overall the public and popular sexualization of black women's bodies are recognized denotes to the participants in the study that they feel the media is implying that, that is all that their bodies are good for.

This study shows that black women are not free from the historical baggage that comes with being a black woman which stems from European colonization in African ancestry. There is an imbalance of knowledge concerning this because the only images that are provided are from a skewed perspective from this white patriarchal past. From this, black women have unsuccessfully tried to assimilate to becoming an idealized figure and in actuality are exposing the areas Sarah Baartman wanted to cover. Therefore, educational and supplementary programming should be provided to black women to combat the images presented to black women by showing them accurate representations of the true images of black women and the representation of the black body pre-Sarah Baartman.

Due to the limited sample used to conduct this research study, the evidence found that supports the given relationship between black women's body image, distributed messages by way of family, media and popular culture and the resulting possible engagement in body modification or self contentment, the evidence should not be generalized.

Also, for the purposes of this research study, the focus will be directed to the build and shape of the black woman unassociated with skin complexion, hair texture, and facial features.

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**Appendix A**  
**IRB PROTOCOL**

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTOCOL

University of Delaware

Protocol Title: Cross Cultural Comparison of Black U.S. and Black South African  
Women's Body Image Highlighting the Hottentot Venus  
and Motivation to Engage in Body Modification

Principal Investigator

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Other Investigators:

N/A

Investigator Assurance:

By submitting this protocol, I acknowledge that this project will be conducted in strict accordance with the procedures described. I will not make any modifications to this protocol without prior approval by the IRB. Should any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects occur during this project, including breaches of guaranteed confidentiality or departures from any procedures specified in approved study

documents, I will report such events to the Chair, Institutional Review Board immediately.

1. **Is this project externally funded?**  YES  NO

If so, please list the funding source:

2. **Research Site(s)**

University of Delaware

Other (please list external study sites)

University of Pretoria

University of Cape Town

University of Pennsylvania

Is UD the study lead?  YES  NO (If no, list the institution that is serving as the study lead)

3. **Project Staff**

Please list all personnel, including students, who will be working with human subjects on this protocol (insert additional rows as needed):

NAME	ROLE	HS TRAINING COMPLETE?
Rokeshia Ashley	PI	Yes

4. **Special Populations**

Does this project involve any of the following:

Research on Children?

No.

Research with Prisoners?

No.

If yes, complete the Prisoners in Research Form and upload to IRBNet as supporting documentation

Research with Pregnant Women?

No.

Research with any other vulnerable population (e.g. cognitively impaired, economically disadvantaged, etc.)? please describe.

No.

**5. RESEARCH ABSTRACT** Please provide a brief description in LAY language (understandable to an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student) of the aims of this project.

An expanding body of research on body image sheds light on the impact that familial influence, social pressures and cultural depictions of beauty have on Black women's physical and mental well-being. Variations in physical features among women of color are embraced and promoted in mass media, including fashion magazines and music videos. However the contexts, products and personalities used to represent Black women in the media vary to the extent of contributing to dueling images that have resulted in a lack of clarity among Black women. From this perspective, there is a need to assess Black women's attitudes and perceptions of the representative body images presented in media sources and to determine whether motivations exist for them to engage in body modification attain their ideal body image. The researcher will conduct a cross-cultural study of Black South African and African-American women in their respective countries in-depth interviews in each country. The purpose of this study is to find the ideal image of a Black woman, if Black women are motivated to engage in body modification to attain the ideal image, if the aforementioned is affected by nationality and if Sarah Baartman's body image affects Black women's body image.

**6. PROCEDURES** Describe all procedures involving human subjects for this protocol. Include copies of all surveys and research measures.

### **In-depth Interviews**

One-on-one in-depth interviews will be conducted with volunteer participants. Prior to the in-depth interviews, participants will complete a written survey to determine demographic information related to age, country of birth, country of residence, education level, household income, number of children, marital status and media resources.

The interviews will take place in a secured University of Pretoria, University of Cape Town, University of Pennsylvania or University of Delaware office. The interviews are projected to last an hour. The interview will be recorded using an audio recorder and transcribed. Participants' identity will be kept confidential; answers to the questionnaire will be recorded by only first name or a selected pseudonym.

In-depth interviews will focus on understanding how Black women perceived the image of the Black woman in media (including TV, popular source magazine and social media), their interpretation of their own body type, the motivation or possibility of physical modification to alter their bodies and their knowledge of Sarah Baartman.

(See the attached research instruments).

### **7. STUDY POPULATION AND RECRUITMENT**

Describe who and how many subjects will be invited to participate. Include age, gender and other pertinent information.

This study will be conducted in the United States (US) and South Africa (SA). To be included in this study, participants had to be of African descent, identifying themselves as a Black woman (biologically) living in South Africa or the United States. Participants could range between 18-25 years old. There will be a total of 20 participants in each country the study, 10 in the United States and 10 in South Africa. To recruit participants in South Africa, the researcher will use the University of Pretoria and University of Cape Town faculty contacts to send email invitations to eligible participants. To recruit participants in the United States, the researcher will use the University of Pennsylvania and University of Delaware's faculty contacts to send invitations to eligible participants.

Data collection will take place at the aforementioned institutions. The universities will only be used as a site to collect data. Permission has been granted to use facilities. No one from the aforementioned universities will participate in data collection or data

analysis, except the principal investigator. Faculty members at the aforementioned institution will act as support in helping to secure rooms to complete the interviews and provide eligible participants information. The invitations will be sent out via email from the principal investigator's University email address. The invitations will include a brief statement describing the study, the participants' role, method of collection of data; estimated time of collection of data and those participants will receive refreshments. The first 10 participants, who accept the invitations and fit the age criteria of the study, will be scheduled for in-depth interviews. This recruitment procedure will be followed for both countries. The participants will be scheduled using the Internet resource Doodle.

Attach all recruitment fliers, letters, or other recruitment materials to be used. If verbal recruitment will be used, please attach a script.

Describe what exclusionary criteria, if any will be applied.

N/A

Describe what (if any) conditions will result in PI termination of subject participation.

N/A

## **8. RISKS AND BENEFITS**

List all potential physical, psychological, social, financial or legal risks to subjects (risks listed here should be included on the consent form).

There is no potential risk of physical or mental injury during participation in this research. However if participants experience discomfort due to the content of the interview, either during or after the study they will be encouraged to visit counseling services on campus.

In your opinion, are risks listed above minimal\* or more than minimal? If more than minimal, please justify why risks are reasonable in relation to anticipated direct or future benefits.

*(\*Minimal risk means the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests)*

What steps will be taken to minimize risks?

N/A

Describe any potential direct benefits to participants.

This research is not expected to yield any immediate benefits to participants.

Describe any potential future benefits to this class of participants, others, or society.

N/A

If there is a Data Monitoring Committee (DMC) in place for this project, please describe when and how often it meets.

N/A

#### **9. COMPENSATION**

Will participants be compensated for participation?

No.

If so, please include details.

N/A

#### **10. DATA**

Will subjects be anonymous to the researcher?

No. However, the data collection will be documented using the participants' first name/pseudonym.

If subjects are identifiable, will their identities be kept confidential? (If yes, please specify how)

The data collection will be documented using the participants' first name/pseudonym. Faculty contacts that provided participant information will not know the confirmed group of participants.

How will data be stored and kept secure (specify data storage plans for both paper and electronic files. For guidance see <http://www.udel.edu/research/preparing/datastorage.html> )

Data will be stored on the principal investigator's personal laptop and external disk.

How long will data be stored?

Data will be stored indefinitely.

Will data be destroyed?  YES  NO (if yes, please specify how the data will be destroyed)

Will the data be shared with anyone outside of the research team?  YES  NO (if yes, please list the person(s), organization(s) and/or institution(s) and specify plans for secure data transfer)

How will data be analyzed and reported?

The researcher will analyze the results data using a categorical coding matrix, which involves identifying responses that is important and then identifying theoretical coding categories. It will be later submitted to a scholarly journal for publication.

## 11. CONFIDENTIALITY

Will participants be audiotaped, photographed or videotaped during this study?

Participants will be audio recorded.

How will subject identity be protected?

Participants will be identified by pseudonym or their first name.

Is there a Certificate of Confidentiality in place for this project? (If so, please provide a copy).

No.

## 12. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

(For information on disclosure reporting see:

<http://www.udel.edu/research/preparing/conflict.html> )

Do you have a current conflict of interest disclosure form on file through UD Web forms?

No.

Does this project involve a potential conflict of interest\*?

No.

\* As defined in the [University of Delaware's Policies and Procedures](#), a potential conflict of interest (COI) occurs when there is a divergence between an individual's private interests and his or her professional obligations, such that an independent observer might reasonably question whether the individual's professional judgment, commitment, actions, or decisions could be influenced by considerations of personal gain, financial or otherwise.

If yes, please describe the nature of the interest:

### 13. **CONSENT and ASSENT**

Consent forms will be used and are attached for review (see Consent Template under Forms and Templates in IRBNet)

Additionally, child assent forms will be used and are attached.

Waiver of Documentation of Consent (attach a consent script/information sheet with the signature block removed).

Waiver of Consent (Justify request for waiver)

### 14. **Other IRB Approval**

Has this protocol been submitted to any other IRBs?

No.

If so, please list along with protocol title, number, and expiration date.

**15. Supporting Documentation**

Please list all additional documents uploaded to IRBNet in support of this application.

- E-invitation for study
- Doodle message
- E-confirmation for study
- In-depth Interview Consent
- In-depth Interview Procedure
- Pre In-Depth Interview Questionnaire

**Appendix B**  
**IRB APPROVAL DOCUMENT**



RESEARCH OFFICE

210 HULLIHEN HALL  
UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE  
NEWARK, DELAWARE 19716-1551  
Ph: 302/831-2136  
Fax: 302/831-2828

DATE: July 22, 2014

TO: Rokeshia Ashley, BS in Public Relations  
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [633772-1] Cross Cultural Comparison of Black U.S. and Black South African Women's Body Image Highlighting the Hottentot Venus and Motivation to Engage in Body Modification

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED  
APPROVAL DATE: July 22, 2014  
EXPIRATION DATE: July 21, 2015  
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # (6,7)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.

## Appendix C

### IRB STAMPED CONSENT

*UD IRB Approval from 07/22/2014 to 07/21/2015.*

1 of 2

Cross Cultural Comparison of Black U.S. and Black South African Women's Body Image  
Highlighting the Hottentot Venus and Motivation to Engage in Body Modification

#### In-depth Interview Informed Consent

**Please note:** This study is intended for participants who identify as a Black woman (biologically) living in South Africa or the United States between 18-25 years old.

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

**Purpose of the research study:** The purpose of this study is to find the ideal image of a Black woman, if Black women are motivated to engage in body modification to attain the ideal image, if the aforementioned is affected by nationality.

**What you will be asked to do in the study:** If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire regarding your demographic background, and an in-depth interview.

**Time required:** 1 hour

**Risks and Benefits:** You are not expected to participate in any treatment that would incur the risk of physical or mental injury during your participation in this research. However if participants experience discomfort due to the content of the interview, either during or after the study they will be encouraged to visit counseling services on campus. This research is not expected to yield any immediate benefit to you.

**Compensation:** No monetary compensation will be given on behalf of the experimenter for participating in this study. Food and beverages will be provided at interviews.

**Confidentiality:** Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your answers to the questionnaire and in-depth interview will be audio recorded by only your first name or a selected pseudonym.

**Voluntary participation:** Participation in this research study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate at all.

**Right to withdraw from the study:** You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty.

**Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:** Principal investigator, Rokeshia Ashley. Her email address is [rashley@udel.edu](mailto:rashley@udel.edu). Contact the Institutional Review

Initials \_\_\_\_\_

Board, University of Delaware, 302-831-2137, for questions or concerns regarding your rights.

**Agreement:** I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure by signing the document below, or clicking the agreement.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Initials \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix D**

### **INTERVIEW PROCEDURE**

#### **Cross Cultural Comparison of Black U.S. and Black South African Women's Body Image Highlighting the Hottentot Venus and Motivation to Engage in Body Modification**

##### **In-depth Interview Procedure**

###### **I. Interview Set-up**

1. The interviewer will meet the participant at a space at the University of Pretoria, University of Cape Town, University of Pennsylvania or University of Delaware.
2. Digital audio recorder will be placed on a surface between the interviewer and participant.
3. Interviewer will offer refreshments to the participant.

###### **II. Welcome, Purpose and Ground Rules**

1. Invite participant to enjoy food and drinks
2. Explain informed consent and collect this form from the participant
3. Interviewer will introduce herself and point out the audio recorder and what it will be used for
4. Interviewer will then ask the participant to choose her name. The participant will be encouraged to use her first name or pseudonym.
5. Interviewer will explain what an in-depth interview is and encourage open, honest answers.
  - a. Assertion of voluntary participation
    - i. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.
    - ii. You can stop participating at any time.
    - iii. Are there any questions? Are you willing to participate in the interview?
6. Interviewer will give the participant the questionnaire.

7. When the participant is done, the interviewer will collect the questionnaire.

### **III. Question and Answer**

1. Interviewer will turn on audio recording equipment
2. Interviewer will begin to ask in-depth interview questions

#### **In-depth interview questions**

##### **Black woman's body image**

1. How do you identify a Black woman's body?
2. What does a Black woman's body look like?
3. How does your body compare to your depiction of a Black woman's body?
4. What has contributed to your interpretation of a Black woman's body?
5. When you see a Black woman's body in the media, how is it presented?

##### **Media**

1. How does your body compare to your interpretation of how a Black woman's body is presented in popular media (including TV, popular source magazine and social media)?
2. How do you feel when seeing the portrayal of a Black woman's body in the media?
3. How do you feel the fashion industry impacts Black women's body image?
4. What is the message you think the media is trying to convey about a Black women's body?

##### **Body Modification**

1. Is it possible to construct a Black woman's body using body modification?  
How?
2. Have you deliberately altered your body (by exercise, body modification devices {i.e. waist shaper}, or cosmetic/plastic surgery) intentionally to achieve the image presented in media of a Black woman? Why?
3. What would motivate you to engage in body modification?

##### **Cross Cultural**

1. What is the United States/ South Africa cultural standard of a Black woman's body?
2. What types of Black women's body do you see in the United States/South Africa?
3. What are your perceptions of a Black woman's body in the United States/South Africa?

4. Do you think Black women in the United States/South Africa modify their bodies?

**Sarah Baartman**

1. Do you know who Sarah Baartman is?
2. If so, do you feel her image is connected to the body image of Black women in South Africa or the United States?
  - a. How has Sarah Baartman's body image impacted your own body image?

**IV. Closing**

1. Interviewer will ask if anyone has any questions or closing comments
2. Interviewer will express thanks to participant and clean up