

Unveiling the Strategy Behind Blackfishing: Kim Kardashian's Instagram and the New Beauty Discourse

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Abstract

As a fashion and beauty icon in America, Kim Kardashian is one of the public figures who supports the new beauty discourse. The emerging concept of new beauty in America challenges conventional limits for delineating beauty. This idea emphasizes that beauty is not limited by skin color, body shape, age, and hairstyle; instead, it underscores the need to embrace the natural body. This study examines how Kim Kardashian's personal Instagram posts from 2014-2023 showcase new notions of beauty via the lens of semiotic theory by Barthes (1964) and the concept of blackfishing. New forms of beauty discourse displayed by Kim Kardashian are accused of being blackfishing by excessively darkened skin, curvy body shapes, full lips, and hair. According to the findings of this study, there is a sense of ambivalence towards black women's bodies. Consequently, white people have internalized certain characteristics of black bodies without appreciating the unique qualities of black women. Kim Kardashian promotes a new beauty discourse that is considered blackfishing through her collaboration with the fashion and beauty industry and building her own cosmetics business. This demonstrates the participation of other influential individuals in the fashion business who endorse Kim's blackfishing appearance so that this appearance continues to appear in public and is normalized.

Keywords: African-American, Beauty, Blackfishing, Culture, Instagram, Semiotics

Introduction

New beauty discourse is an idea that challenges the boundaries of beauty, including age, skin color, hairstyle, and body shape, to create inclusivity for all women (Givhan & Morales, 2020). The fashion and beauty industry's concept of "new beauty" aims to challenge Eurocentric beauty standards and promote the idea that everyone is attractive. This idea is used by the fashion and beauty industry as a marketing strategy to expand market reach. However, this idea is also used as a justification by celebrities and influencers to adopt black body features openly.

The adoption of black body features is acknowledged by celebrities, influencers, and the fashion and beauty industry as a manifestation of freedom of expression and endorsement of novel and boundless beauty concepts. Nevertheless, this new beauty discourse is considered blackfishing by the black community. Blackfishing refers to the act of imitating and adopting the visual and cultural aspects of the black body and culture. This is achieved through a range of activities aimed at altering physical appearance.

These activities include cosmetic treatments like makeup, lip filler injections, implant surgery, and deliberately editing self-portraits to resemble those of black or ebony women (Stevens, 2021);(Cherid, 2021). The primary objective of these practices is to generate financial gain. Blackfishing is an attempt by white people to appear like black people by making changes to their bodies so that they look like black women (Stevens, 2021). The adoption of body features by white people is considered a form of exploitation and misrepresentation that has the potential to erase representation and dilute culture. Therefore, this usage of black body characteristics becomes a manifestation of racism. Only when white women embrace these characteristics and components are black physical traits deemed appealing.

The perception of beauty in America is often shaped by the dominant social group and tends to show a bias towards white physical appearance. The shift in perceptions of black body features and cultural elements occurred because of the dominance of white people in the fashion and beauty industry. Black bodies that were previously considered harmful are now considered beautiful when adopted by white people.

Black people's body features are used as elements of beauty that can be modified and adopted by white people, not as racial elements. White people have the privilege to determine what body features can be adopted and can be used for financial gain. This double standard is a form of racism that still occurs in the fashion and beauty industry. Although the presence of people of color began to increase in visibility in the fashion and beauty industry in the 1990s, their presence has not been able to shift the dominance of white people in the American fashion and beauty industry.

Black fishing, as defined by black journalist and activist quoted, refers to the deliberate efforts of white people or influencers to create the appearance of blackness (Jarrar et al., 2020);(Konstantopoulou et al., 2019);(Vrontis et al., 2021). This includes excessive tanning of the skin, and adopting hairstyles and clothing trends that were pioneered by black women to create ambiguity. The idea of blackfishing challenges the perception of many experts who believe that black women's bodies were previously considered atypical and challenging to accept. Although admiration for black bodies has been there for a considerable period, the prevailing society at that time often held discriminating views towards black skin.

White people's attraction to black bodies is based on the striking physical differences, making them interesting to look at. Black women's bodies were once considered erotic, sexualized, and even fetishized, often depicted as 'hypersexual' and immoral (Tate, 2015). Consequently, the black community has experienced significant suffering as a result of the adoption of black body features that have long been the subject of discrimination by white people. With the advent of globalization and social media development, the concept of new beauty in America has grown to be more accessible for the general public to find.

Kim Kardashian, a white celebrity and influencer, is a fashion and cosmetics trendsetter who both follows and creates trends to control the industry also involved in the growing blackfishing trend. Kim Kardashian is one of the celebrities and influencers

who frequently endorse the blackfishing appearance, which she admits is a form of freedom of expression that represents the new beauty discourse.

The blackfishing appearance has become a fashion and beauty trend in America under the pretext of promoting a new beauty discourse. Kim Kardashian has popularized the fashion and beauty trend of blackfishing through her social media and Instagram accounts, which have grown to become a benchmark of beauty for American women (Kurniawan & Louvan, 2018). Body features that are identical to those of black people are now embedded in Kim Kardashian's identity, resulting in the misrepresentation of black women.

The primary aim of this study is to explain the correlation between the white-dominated fashion and beauty industry and the utilization of black body features by white people in self-promotion and product endorsement. This research is expected to highlight the double standards imposed by white people in America in assessing black body features and the use of black body features by white people. Therefore, this investigation can explain how Kim Kardashian promotes appearances and the forms of new beauty discourse that are deemed blackfishing on her Instagram account.

Based on the explanation above, this study will discuss the new beauty discourse that is considered blackfishing in the fashion and beauty industry displayed through Kim Kardashian's social media from 2014 to 2023. The selection of Kim Kardashian as the subject of this study is because Kim Kardashian is a fashion and beauty figure who has quite a significant influence on society and the fashion and beauty industry. Kim Kardashian's influence can be described through the fashion and beauty trends she has created over the past few years. In her appearance, Kim Kardashian often displays an eccentric style that then becomes a fashion and beauty trend. Kim Kardashian's ability to create trends illustrates her significance in the fashion and beauty industry.

The appearance of black fishing has been considered a fashion and beauty trend in the fashion and beauty industry. However, this study sees that black fishing is considered a new beauty discourse normalized by society through consistent appearances seen on social media and shown by celebrities and influencers. New beauty discourse considered blackfishing is utilized by the fashion and beauty industry, including celebrities and influencers, as a marketing strategy. Kim Kardashian promotes the idea of beauty through social media and Instagram. The high intensity of Kim Kardashian's appearance, which is considered blackfishing, raises questions, namely, what forms of new beauty discourse are displayed by Kim Kardashian, which are considered blackfishing, and how Kim displays them. The answer to this question will be the purpose of this study.

Research Method

This research is conducted based on the discipline of American Studies, with a primary focus on the concept of beauty and cultural studies. The perspective of cultural studies in American Studies is used to determine the features of the black body and

elements of black culture that are adopted by white people and are considered black fishing.

In this study, the author will use the concept of black fishing and the theory of commodification to examine the forms of the new beauty discourse that considered black fishing on Kim Kardashian's social media. Kim Kardashian utilizes her Instagram account as an Influencer to showcase her appearance, manage her business, and sustain her existence. Thus, social media is the appropriate instrument for evaluating Kim Kardashian's physical appearance.

In this study, Kim Kardashian's social media blackfishing will be examined through the lens of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The scope of this investigation extends beyond the definitions of connotation and denotation; rather, it necessitates an examination of the myths that are inherent in the subject matter. To implement Barthes' semiotic theory, researchers must do more comprehensive examinations of the subject of study. Mythology is a philosophical concept that does not imply truth. Myths in images, objects, or phrases are created by the advertising industry, government, and other dominant groups to form beliefs that are unconsciously believed by society (Barthes, 1979). Thus, in this study, the author will analyze the myth of using body features and cultural elements in Kim Kardashian's Instagram uploads.

In this investigation, the development of the perceptions of black women by white people will be described by providing an overview of how black women are considered objects through the story of Sara Baartman. This narrative can then be juxtaposed with the black fishing phenomenon that is happening today, which shows ambivalence towards elements of black culture and body features. This study will describe this ambiguity through Kim Kardashian's blackfishing appearance on her Instagram posts from 2014-2023. The selection of this time frame is determined by the progression of Kim Kardashian's evolving appearance over time.

Results and Discussion

White Perspectives on Black Bodies: A Historical Overview

Black woman has a complex connection to the Hottentot Venus as it portrays the black woman's body as widely subjected to criticism and exploitation. Saartjie Baartman, also known as Sara Baartman, was a black woman from the Khoisan Tribe, South Africa, who was sent to England in 1810 to participate in a freak show (Gordon-Chipembere, 2006). Baartman, was publicly displayed in freak shows in England and France during the early nineteenth century, was referred to as "Hottentot Venus" as derogatory moniker by white people (Dunton, 2015). The term Hottentot Venus is a racist term that highlights Baartman's animalistic attitude and uncontrolled sexuality (Hobson, 2018).

The fascination of white people with black bodies is not rooted in their physical attractiveness, but rather in the substantial disparities between the two. White people have the power to define the significance and value of black bodies, which consequently assess black bodies as being of inferior worth compared to white bodies. Baartman's body does not fit the existing beauty standards because black women have overly sexualized bodies,

behave like animals, and provoke lust. Baartman, as a black woman who is not categorized as a beautiful woman, merits to be oppressed, degraded, exploited, and her body controlled for the benefit of white people.

The most significant writing about Baartman began through pseudo-scientific writing by French anatomist and geologist Georges Cuvier (Schuhmann et al., 2005). Cuvier's scholarly writing focuses on the sexual oppression and exploitation of Black women by White people. Baartman's body shape, buttocks, and genitals were not viewed for scientific research purposes, but rather to satisfy concealed erotic desires. This was the case when white audiences, both male and female, viewed the freak show and exploited black women's bodies to establish racial dominance (Hobson, 2018).

Baartman's life narrative demonstrates the persistent prejudice faced by black women, conveying the message that black women should adopt a sense of fear and insecurity due to their susceptibility to being treated as objects by white audiences. Black women continue to be judged and criticized for both their appearance and behavior. Thus, Baartman's story is a depiction of the pain and suffering experienced by black women, which hurts their psyche, physical, and culture.

As a minority, representation in mainstream media is important for black people, particularly in the fashion and cosmetics industry. This is related to how black people's self-esteem and the racism that white people continue to show through the media. Thus, the representation of black people represented by Kim Kardashian displaying a black fishing appearance is considered a new idea of beauty that can shift the representation of black people.

Ambivalence Towards the Black Body

White women have the privilege to identify and value the cultural elements and features of black women's bodies. White women typically prioritize the cultural elements and characteristics of black women's bodies that can serve to improve their appearance and finances (Stevens, 2021). The adoption of black cultural elements and bodily features by white women is currently becoming a growing trend, especially with the development of globalization and social media.

Blackfishing develops as a result of ambivalence towards black women's appearance, indicating structural racism in society. In conjunction with black women's endeavors to assert their self-esteem in opposition to white notions of femininity and beauty, cultural appropriation and blackfishing have progressed. This ambivalence illustrates that there is injustice in society towards black women's cultural elements and body features. White people find black women's cultural elements and body features, such as dark skin, braids, thick lips, large buttocks, nail arts, and accessories, attractive, however, they still fail to fully value and respect black women.

The celebrity and influencer Kim Kardashian is widely acknowledged for her engagement in acts of cultural appropriation and blackfishing. Kardashian is one of the influencers and celebrities who explores black fashion and culture. In 2018, Kim Kardashian drew attention among American women due to her appearance at the MTV Movie/TV Awards. Kardashian's appearance in 2018 caught the public's attention

because she appeared with bold makeup, hip-hop style, and braided hairstyles. While Kardashian's unique and trendy appearance appealed to some, the black community interpreted her hairstyle as a sign of lack of recognition and appreciation. The black community holds the belief that white women only tolerate black cultural elements and body features without understanding and appreciating the people and the history of cultural elements and body features.

Black cultural elements and body features that were implemented into beauty trends in 1979 were not considered forms of blackfishing. A great example of this was the black community's reaction to Bo Derek's appearance in the film *10*. In the film *10*, Bo Derek appears with a Fulani hairstyle that is identical to ebony hair. Nevertheless, the Fulani hairstyle was not subject to criticism at that time; rather, numerous black women expressed their gratitude to Bo Derek for his capacity to elevate black culture, which allowed them to incorporate Fulani hairstyles into their professional environments.

Concurrently, in the present day, black people regard this appearance as derogatory to black culture and a shift in the representation of black women in the entertainment industry. A further indication of the attempt to forget and erase the black culture and suffering associated with the Fulani hairstyle is the fact that it has now been given a new name: "Bo Derek braids.". The disparity in the public's reaction to the incorporation of black cultural elements and body features in the 1970s and today is a result of the different circumstances and demands regarding racial equality.

In the 1970s, black Americans were content with the use of their cultural elements by white people, because it gave black women the impression that they were noticed and valued, even though they were unable to use it. In contrast, today, black Americans demand respect for the use of their cultural elements and body features by acknowledging that they are theirs and valuing history, refraining from exploiting them for personal benefit.

The process of selecting cultural elements and bodily features of black women that are acceptable to white individuals in the fashion and beauty industry is dependent upon the fashion and beauty industry, the market, and the trends of the era, which were dominated by white people. Fundamentally, the fashion and beauty sector may prevent blackfishing by actively engaging black people as consultants and collaborators. However, the structural racism that occurs in the fashion and beauty industry is unable to provide these opportunities to black people without restriction, so the representation of black people in the fashion and beauty industry is limited.

In addition to the limited representation of black people behind the screen in the fashion and beauty industry, racial discrimination also affects the representation of black women on screen. In that case, it is possible to exploit black women to capture the black market without truly supporting racial equality. Ambivalence towards black women's cultural elements and bodily features creates blackfishing, which is then recognized as a new discourse of beauty.

New Beauty Discourse on Kim Kardashian's Instagram

Kim Kardashian is one of the celebrities and influencers who showcases new beauty discourse on Instagram. Although some of Kim Kardashian's appearances are considered controversial by the American public because they display new beauty discourse that utilizes black cultural elements and body features, Kim Kardashian is still able to maintain her existence in the fashion and beauty industry.

Dark Skin Tone

In the 1920s, societal attitudes toward dark skin transformed. At that time, society no longer associated skin color with low-paying jobs recognized the importance of getting vitamin D from sunlight, and embraced the perspective of fashion designer Coco Chanel on brown skin as a sign of elegant, fashionable, and attractive women (Batra, 2013);(Novianto & Zebua, 2021);(Faschan et al., 2020). Dark skin tone is a racial identity for black people, which is why excessive darkening of skin tone and appearance with Afrocentric hairstyles is considered blackfishing.

The dark complexion, which serves as a representation of the racial segregation and prejudice experienced by black people in the United States, increases the perception of white women who undergo skin darkening. The ability of white women to alter their physical appearance is a privilege that black women are unable to have, whether it is natural or altered, black women are unable to get appreciation.

Blackfishing appearance is desired to attract public attention which is why it became one of the strategies for celebrities and influencers to gain profit. Blackfishing aims to popularize and exploit elements of black women's culture and bodily features on white women's bodies (McKnight, 2019). Changes in perceptions of black women's body features, particularly their dark skin tone, highlight the impact of white people in the fashion and beauty industry. This phenomenon makes it challenging for black women to effectively represent their community, as white women's appearance typically mirrors that of black women.

Kim advertises products on Instagram by displaying her physique, which is reminiscent of the features of black women, particularly her dark skin tone. Black people are closely identified with their dark skin pigmentation. Kim's imitation of black body features is deemed as blackfishing due to her attempt to exploit these features for both financial and non-financial gain. The blackfishing appearance in beauty product advertisements reflects that the product supports the idea of blackfishing. In the advertisement for KKW Beauty (refer to image 14), Kim appears to assert that the public can achieve her level of beauty by purchasing the product.

Kim, a fashion and beauty icon and trendsetter, motivates her Instagram followers and American women to emulate her appearance by engaging in a variety of sports, undergoing cosmetic surgery, and editing photographs before uploading them to Instagram (Setiawan, 2020). Body commodification has been normalized by Kim through Kim's intensity in showing her body and sexuality on Instagram social media (Carr & Hayes, 2015). Kim's followers on Instagram are also encouraged to believe that blackfishing is permissible due to the excessive intensity with which she exhibits her

body, which reflects black culture and features (Fan et al., 2023). This is followed by how American women imitate Kim's appearance, which is considered blackfishing.



Figure 1: Kim Kardashian's appearance with dark skin. (Retrieved from Kim Kardashian's personal Instagram, July 28, 2018).

Denotation	Women with beautiful and desirable bodies.
Connotation	A black body is the desired body.
Myth	The public can look like Kim Kardashian if they buy the KKW Beauty product.

Product advertisements that promote black fishing show how white people have stripped black bodies of their natural features and exploited them for financial gain, all without involving black people themselves. Thus, the marketing strategy that utilizes black body features and culture in product advertisements depicts racist products. The first level of interpretation in Figure 1 is a woman with a beautiful and desirable body. This interpretation is based on Kim's awareness of her body. Based on Kim's Instagram post (figure 1), Kim exposes her body by wearing tight and revealing clothes.

The photo taken from the side shows Kim's curves and skin clearly, while Kim's sitting position with her knees bent gives the effect of her legs looking longer and accentuating her buttocks. The primary objective of this photograph is to showcase Kim's appealing physique, which will effectively draw public notice. Level 2 interpretation is the commodification of the black body. Kim promotes products on Instagram by showing off her body, which adopts the body features of black women in the form of dark skin color.

Dark skin color is an identity closely associated with the black community. This intersects with racial discrimination, which is marked by skin color as one of the most easily identifiable body features. Kim's imitation of black body features is considered blackfishing because there is an attempt to use this body feature for financial and non-financial gain. Kim commodifies black body features through her appearance to sell her products.

An attractive appearance in beauty product advertisements reflects the product being promoted. Thus, the commodification of black bodies in product advertisements illustrates the promotion of blackfishing appearance. The level 3 meaning or myth of image 1 is that the public can look like Kim Kardashian if they buy the product. Kim is a

trendsetter and fashion and beauty icon, so her followers on Instagram and American women try to follow her appearance by doing some exercise, cosmetic surgery, and editing photos before uploading them on Instagram. Body commodification has been normalized by Kim through Kim's intensity in utilizing her body and sexuality on Instagram social media.

The high intensity of Kim's use of her body also gives her followers on Instagram confidence that a blackfishing appearance is acceptable. This is followed by how American women imitate Kim's appearance, which is considered blackfishing. The promotion of black fishing in product advertisements uploads how black body features have been stripped from black bodies and utilized by white people for financial gain without involving black people themselves.

Curvy Body Shape

The difference in physical appearance between black and white people triggers judgments about the body. Black women frequently experience discomfort with their bodies because a voluptuous body shape is believed to be provocative, despite being identical to black women (Gordon-Chipembere, 2006, p. 55). White people interpret the natural body shape of black skin with large breasts and buttocks as commercial sex workers. Sara Baartman's tale as a freak show performer is a depiction of how black women's bodies are considered objects and used to satisfy white people's curiosity. Sara Baartman's tale, which describes the fate of black women, is associated with Kim Kardashian's appearance in the fashion industry.

The desire to change one's appearance through plastic surgery is permissible and not a problem. However, Kim Kardashian shows an indication of a desire to appear like a black person by linking herself to black history. This shows Kim's efforts to shift the representation of black women in the fashion and beauty industry and dominate the black market without involving black people themselves. Unlike black women, Kim, with a body that follows that of black women, has utilized her body to achieve an essential place in the fashion and beauty industry.

The fashion and beauty industry's assessment of black women's bodies and white women's bodies that adopt black women's body features shows a double standard. Black women still have difficulty representing their race because of the emergence of the blackfishing trend, which provides a more acceptable appearance option for white people. The lack of public knowledge about blackfishing and the high intensity of Kim's blackfishing appearance triggers society to follow Kim's appearance and normalize the blackfishing appearance with large breasts and buttocks.



Figure 2: Kim Kardashian's look references the look of the black model, Carolina Beaumont. (Retrieved from Kim Kardashian's personal Instagram).



Figure 3: Carolina Beaumont on Jungle Fever photo collection book. (Retrieved from Made in Wonder Website)

Denotation	Women popping champagne bottle
Connotation	Celebration
Myths	A curvy body should be celebrated

The first level of interpretation in Figure 2 is women popping champagne bottles. The second level of interpretation in this figure is that popping champagne bottles signifies a celebration, therefore the third level or myth of this figure is that the celebration refers to a curvy body shape. This is shown by how Kim's pose balances the champagne bottle on her butt. This figure shows how Kardashian is proud of her controversial curvy body. The celebration of her body is an insult because of how she recreates Beaumont's pose.

The controversial Paper magazine cover where Kardashian is depicted as having a champagne glass balanced on her butt (see figure 2) is a recreation of a 1976 photograph of a nude black model Carolina Beaumont (see figure 3) by French photographer Jean-Paul Goude on Jungle Fever photo collection book. Goude is a photographer who is famous for his controversial racially charged photos. Jungle Fever, his photo collection book is inspired by the term that implies on white man's fetish of colored women. For this reason, Beaumont's picture in the book collection is a representation of how black woman

is still shown as an object and sexualized like Baartman. Goude was also involved in Kim's Paper Magazine.

Therefore, it shows that Kim's appearance in blackfishing sometimes involves many people behind it who decide on how she looks in front of the camera. Kim's picture in Figure 2 is considered as a mocking of black women because of how she, Kim Kardashian is a white Armenian-American woman who's been fetishized for attributes that have been stereotyped as black.

Kim Kardashian is a white woman who is known to have undergone plastic surgery to alter her physical appearance. There is a sketch in Goude's book conveying this called "The Ideal Woman," where he draws what appears to be him admiring a 7-foot-tall black woman with a butt similar to Sara Baartman. According to the black community, Kim Kardashian, a white woman with an unnatural body, is not deserving of comparisons to Sara Baartman.

In Vogue magazine, an article titled "The Era of Big Booty" (now deleted) discussed how white women like Kim Kardashian and Iggy Azalea had popularized big butts. Blackfishing by Kardashian was seen as a trend, however, Baartman was sexualized with her natural body. Cleuci de Oliveira wrote on the feminist blog Jezebel in 2014 that Baartman was the "original butt queen" (Hobson, 2018). Kim Kardashian's voluptuous body and the beauty narrative have effectively marginalized African American women.

Thick Lips

Thick lips stereotype black body features that have recently become a beauty trend which is often used as an object of discrimination by white people. That is why, the imitation of black body features by white people illustrates the limitations of the expressions of black identity. Black bodies are considered desirable bodies; black fishing celebrities and influencers identify which features are most profitable and regulate products that can be promoted through black fishing appearances (e.g., lip plumpers) so that celebrities and influencers see thick lips as commodities, not racial identities (Stevens, 2021).

Discrimination against the size of black people's lips has been observed from the 1800s to the 1900s through theatrical performances with the character Jim Crow. Jim Crow is a black character played by a white man named Thomas Dartmouth Rice, who has intonation, movements, and body features that resemble black people. The acceptance of the Jim Crow character in society at that time triggered the development of several similar characters that imitated the appearance of black people, such as the Mammy caricature.

This character shows the perspective of white people towards black people who are lazy, stupid, inhumane, and unworthy of joining white society to mock wrapped in entertainment. Significant body features seen in the Jim Crow character are very dark skin color and thick lips. Thus, these body features as the identity of black people become negative stereotypes in society. Black body features are associated with negative stereotypes such as violence and criminality (Kleider-Offutt et al., 2017).



Figure 4: Al Jolson in “The Jazz Singer “(Retrieved from Deutsche Welle Website)

However, the current discrimination against black people based on their look appearance differs from the past account. Now, white people use lip filler to create the illusion of black beauty to look beautiful. In the dynamics of fashion and beauty trends, thick lips often appear as one of the beauty trends, but even so, thick lips that appear as a beauty trend do not depict black lips. The thick lips, called the idea of beauty, are Dolly Parton's and Angelina Jolie's. The void of black representation in the fashion and beauty industry shows how black body features are still synonymous with negative stereotypes. The trend of thick lips through lip filler procedures in 2015 shocked black people. This is because thick lips are an object of discrimination that is associated with racial ridicule.

Lip fillers are accepted by society as a beauty trend popularized by celebrities, especially Kylie Jenner and Kim Kardashian, but black women who tend to have naturally thick lips are not widely embraced by the industry. This illustrates how thick lips are only considered attractive on white bodies. This assumption triggers black people to feel marginalized. What has always been an object of discrimination has turned into something desirable. The lip filler beauty trend became an attempt to erase black people from the ideals of beauty that are associated with a long history of racism.

The thick lip beauty trend through lip fillers began with Kylie Jenner's appearance, who underwent a lip filler procedure in 2015 and was followed by Kim Kardashian. Kim Kardashian's thick lip appearance is considered a form of blackfishing because it displays an appearance that imitates black women. Kim Kardashian's thick lip appearance is usually supported by dark skin that reminds us of the appearance of a black face. The difference is that Kim's appearance does not show discrimination or mockery. However, this appearance is considered to have erased the representation of black people and underlined the double standards that exist in American society.



Figure 5: Kim Kardashian promoting her cosmetics brand, KKW Beauty. (Retrieved from Kim Kardashian Instagram, 2021)

Denotation	Women holding flower decorations
Connotation	Symbolize beauty and femininity
Myth	The strategic use of black features in beauty campaigns appeals to a broader audience and suggests that the brand celebrates all forms of beauty

The first level of interpretation in Figure 5 is women sitting among flower decorations. The second level of interpretation in this figure is that women among flower decorations signify beauty and femininity, therefore the third level or myth of this figure is the strategic use of black features in beauty campaigns to appeal to a broader audience, suggesting that the brand celebrates all forms of beauty. In promoting her cosmetic products, Kardashian often appears ambiguous, her appearance depends on what products she wants to promote. In the picture above, Kim promotes her lipstick product, giving the illusion that her lips are thick. Kim's appearance of thick lips and dark skin tone is deemed as blackfishing because it shows the practice of commodifying black body features.

Hairstyles

Afro hair is the natural hair type of black people. This hairstyle is often the object of criticism and discrimination by white people, so the use of Afro-centric hairstyles is a form of blackfishing. Natural Afro-centric hairstyles are now considered a new beauty discourse supporting diverse beauty. The assumption that braids and afro hairstyles are new beauty discourse shows the beauty industry's support for the natural beauty of black women. However, because of the sensitivity, this cultural element cannot be adopted by white people, especially without understanding the value contained in the hairstyle, it is considered black fishing.

Black women are criticized for looking unfeminine with afro hairstyles (Craig, 2002). Braids and afro hairstyles are some of the black body features championed as a beauty idea by black activists in the Black is Beautiful movement in 1962. The term Black is Beautiful is an old term that appeared in The New York Age newspaper in 1914. However, this term was reused in 1962 in support of the "Naturally '62" fashion show as one of the movements that emerged to increase black representation in the fashion and beauty industry. This fashion show showcased black people's natural beauty, such as afro hair and traditional African clothing. This fashion show aimed to instill the idea that blacks are beautiful in everyday life and instill a sense of pride in their natural hair as a black identity.

The rejection of Afro hair in American society forced black people to find ways to be accepted by society. Thus, the black community began to appear with hairstyles considered to "tame" their natural hair, such as braids. Black people have tried to adopt hairstyles that can tidy up their hair into braid hairstyles to avoid discrimination, be accepted by society, and respect their past culture. However, despite these efforts for decades, white people still discriminate against their hairstyles. It affects their life including their work field.

In the 1950 black people could not appear with their natural hair because it was considered unprofessional. That is why, white people who adopt black hairstyle to reap the benefits of it and get praised for doing it is an insult to the struggle of black people who have been discriminated against because of their hair. If Kardashian appeared with the braid hairstyle in the 1970's she most likely would have praised for it because she gave the hairstyle a recognition, but now black people aware that they could represent themselves by using and accepting their cultural elements and body features.



Figure 6: Kim Kardashian and her daughter North West. (Retrieved from Kim's personal Instagram, 2018)

Denotation	Mother and daughter take a photo together with braids hairstyle
Connotation	Cultural assimilation in interracial families
Myth	Modern women in mixed marriages embrace and celebrate mixed culture beauty ideas to celebrate diversity

The first level of interpretation above is when mother and daughter take a photo together with a braid hairstyle. people usually appear freely and comfortably when with their family because family is a source of emotional support and can provide a feeling of being accepted without fear of being judged. Thus, in Figure 6, Kim dares to appear with a braids hairstyle which is considered as something controversial. The second level of interpretation above is cultural assimilation in an interracial family. The adoption of the braid hairstyle by Kim is a manifestation of cultural assimilation resulting from her multiracial marriage.

This appearance is acknowledged by Kim as a deliberate attempt to promote black culture and serve as a role model for her child of mixed-race (Kardashian in Tan 2018). Thus, the third level in the image or the myth behind the image is modern women in mixed marriages embrace and celebrate mixed culture beauty idea to celebrate diversity. Kim Kardashian as a modern woman often appears embracing diverse identities and advocating new beauty ideas. Her marriage with a black man, Kanye West, enriches and offers a blend of cultures.

Thus, a modern woman in a mixed marriage might actively engage in cultural negotiation, balancing her cultural heritage with that of her partner, and often playing a crucial role in educating and integrating both cultures within the family. However, in her book *Hair Story*, white mothers do not need to use black hairstyles to teach black children

to love their hair because this has the potential to negatively affect the black community, white mothers, and black children. Tharps believes that white mothers simply need to teach black children how to maintain and care for their hair and provide support and praise for their appearance.

Conclusion

Physical appearance is the most accessible identity for someone to identify. Black skin tone, afro hairstyles, thick lips, braids, and curvy body shapes are stereotypes of black women's bodies that white people desire. White people choose elements of black women's culture and body features to exploit and make a profit. Ambivalence towards elements of black culture and body features is depicted through how white people judge that elements of black culture and body features are harmful when they are on black bodies but desired and considered beautiful on white bodies.

The appearance of white women who follow the appearance of black women then appears as "something different" and shows ambiguity. The ambiguity of Kim Kardashian's appearance indicates black fishing because of how she mixed black culture and body features on her body. The blackfishing appearance is a new beauty discourse now increasingly normalized by the fashion and beauty industry. This is shown by how Kardashian continuously displays blackfishing appearances when promoting her products.

By incorporating aspects of black culture and body traits, Kim Kardashian presents a new beauty narrative that conveys to society that these elements may be consumed and used without requiring knowledge or comprehension of their historical context. Therefore, the blackfishing appearance of Kim Kardashian is a cause for concern among black people due to her substantial impact on the fashion and beauty industry. The myths behind her black fishing appearance show that she uses black body features and culture for marketing, attention, and celebration.

Kim engages in a collaborative effort with the fashion and beauty industry, namely through magazines and renowned fashion designers, to promote a new beauty discourse that is sometimes regarded as blackfishing. This collaboration demonstrates that Kim's black fishing attire is not always solely determined by her. Nevertheless, Kim's appearance is influenced by a team of fashion designers, magazine editors, stylists, hairdressers, and makeup artists. Therefore, Kim's blackfishing appearance demonstrates the endorsement of the fashion and beauty industry in propagating this ambiguous look.

Aligned with her partnership with the fashion and beauty industry, Kim employs a similar approach by showcasing a black fishing image to promote her beauty products. This ironic approach challenges the vision and mission of Kim's cosmetic brand, which advocates for inclusivity, as the product explicitly portrays black fishing. Consequently, it indirectly influences the representation of black women in the fashion and beauty industry.

The black fishing appearance is now increasingly highlighted by society through social media, posing a threat to the black community. On the other hand, black fishing

has become a promising strategy for the fashion and beauty industry in attracting attention and reaping financial benefits. However, in the end, the appearance of blackfishing is a fashion and beauty trend that will eventually pass. Conversely, black fishing has become a profitable strategy for the fashion and cosmetics industry to attract attention and generate financial profits. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of blackfishing functions as a temporary fashion and beauty trend that will eventually diminish.

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