CHAPTER 3

Black Women’s Digital, Creative, and Cultural Industry Experiences

Abstract This chapter focuses on Black women’s contemporary digital, creative, and cultural industry experiences. It reflects on the overlap between tacit issues concerning racial, gender, and cultural identity in online spaces, and tensions between the emancipatory, enterprising, enjoyable and extractive dimensions of the digital experiences of Black women in Britain—which are inevitably impacted by capitalist infrastructures. This chapter addresses how labour is (un)defined and understood in society, in ways influenced by social hierarchies and structural exploitation linked to anti-Black racism, sexism, classism and different interlocking oppressions. Traumatic aspects of Black women’s digital experiences are discussed, as well as the endeavours of self-serving and institutionally racist arts organisations that attempt to ‘diversify’ their brand image by spectacularising Black people.

Keywords Arts · Black Women · Creative · Cultural industries · Digital · Work

...people are just making their own spaces…it’s very DIY...Making our own iconography and making our own content…it’s really important that we carve out our own narratives and that we don’t shy away from creating spaces for ourselves. (Ruby)

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Creativity encompasses different types of communication, interactions, artistic practice, spontaneity, geographies, self-taught craft, learnt skills, making, showcasing, self-expression, documenting, storytelling, deconstructing, producing, writing, curating, collaborating, and creating. The creative work of Black women in Britain has a rich history and exists both within and outside of formal creative and cultural industry organisations (Benjamin 1995; Jones 2019; Maxwell 2018; Rae 2020; Sulter 1985; Sulter and Pollard 1990; Tajudeen and Silveira 2018; Thompson 2017; Uzor 2019). Furthermore, as is reflected on by the Spare Rib Collective (1988, p. 10), Black women’s creativity can be, at once, supported and constrained by arts institutions, which are often hostile towards Black people:

For those that take on formal art education, the experience of being isolated within the institution is demoralising. There are only a few galleries that are committed to showing Black art. Mainstream galleries have until recently remained closed to work by Black artists. When they do show our work it is often the tokenistic gesture of their equal opportunities policy. Additionally the audiences these venues court and attract is limited to the white middle class. For those Black artists that seek to intervene in that arena and to challenge the system’s view of ‘us’, ‘them’ and history, there is a consistent battle against the marginalisation of our ideas as well as our practice.

As part of such writing in a 1988 issue of Spare Rib, it is asserted that a ‘lack of published material on the history of Black art in this country causes problems which can only be remedied when lengthy research is carried out and published’ (p. 10). More recently, Briana Pegado (2018), Founder and Director of the Edinburgh Student Arts Festival (ESAF), has critiqued inequalities in the creative and cultural industries—asking: ‘if the industry does not reflect the reality of human experience, how can it be relevant?’.

To this day, Black women face institutional barriers that prohibit their access to and career progression within certain arts environments. Digital space and ‘technology’s overall elasticity and unpredictability’ (Everett 2009, p. 12) is not free from gatekeeping and structural oppression, yet, in some cases, can offer more autonomous creative and media production opportunities for Black women than those that are available to them in many mainstream and offline contexts (Barner and Frangine 2020; Gabriel 2016; Gray 2015; Sobande 2017). This chapter emphasises ‘how
digital environments can simultaneously aid and limit potentially oppositional media practices; stressing the restricted nature of online experiences that may be regarded as liberating’ (Sobande et al. 2019, p. 10). In this context, commercial culture is understood as encompassing ‘complex dynamics between capitalism, popular culture, and today’s networked media ecosystem’ (Jenkins et al. 2016, pp. viii–ix).

Although not everything that people do on the internet is a form of labour (Hesmondhalgh 2010), the production and sharing of digital content by people on social media can play a central role in types of digital creative work (Abidin 2018; Glatt and Banet-Weiser, forthcoming 2021; Jarrett 2016; Jarmon 2013). What politics and power relations shape how digital content creators are identified, credited, or dismissed as digital creatives and workers? Whose creative digital work, knowledge-sharing, and cultural production is scarcely regarded as being that? How do the digital experiences of Black women involve forms of creativity and creative work? In what ways are the lives of Black people in Britain spectacularised as a result of how institutions (mis)use depictions of them? The following sections are steered by such questions as part of discussion of ‘tensions between the countercultural, communal and commercial qualities of Black women’s online experiences’ (Sobande et al. 2019, p. 1).

**(Un)defining Work, Labour, and the Marketplace**

What is societally identified as a form of work and labour is influenced by social hierarchies and structural exploitation linked to racism, sexism, classism and different types of interlocking discrimination. So, when considering the work and labour experiences of Black women it is important to understand the intersectional nature of oppression (Crenshaw 1989, 2017)—such as entwined issues concerning ‘inequality, relationality, power, social context, complexity, and social justice’ (Hill Collins and Bilge 2016, p. 25).

To some, ‘work’ and ‘labour’ are words that capture activities and forms of productivity which clearly result in financial profit. Such capitalist-oriented perspectives can involve an emphasis on the perceived economic value of work and labour, often at the expense of any concern about the work and labour conditions that people must deal with. Throughout history and contemporary society there are many examples of Black people not entering marketplace environments out of choice, but instead being violently ‘sold as a type of commodity, a labor tool, or
“beast of burden” (Henderson et al. 2016, p. 4). In the words of writers, educators, activists, and scholars Beverley Bryan et al. (2018, p. 17):

The Black woman’s experience of work in Britain mirrors our experience of work over the past five centuries. This has been one long tradition of back-breaking labour in the service of European capitalism.

The terms ‘work’ and ‘labour’ are used in this chapter to capture various activities, interactions, output, and exchanges that involve Black women producing and providing for others. This explanation of work and labour is undoubtedly ambiguous and imperfect, aligned with my intention to avoid applying narrow and prescriptive definitions that diminish the significance of everyday examples of Black women’s work and labour.

My perspective of work and labour is shaped by the crucial writing of Beverley Bryan et al. (1985, 2018) on Black women’s experiences of work in Britain. I am also inspired by Black feminist activists, authors, and scholars such as bell hooks (2000, p. 48) on ‘women at work’, as well as Angela Y. Davis (1981) whose writing about women’s domestic and care work is vital. My understanding of work and labour is also guided by the writing of Black feminist activist, psychosocial studies scholar, and psychotherapist Gail Lewis (1993) regarding ‘Black Women’s Employment and the British Economy’—which stresses that Black women are among those who typically bear the brunt of the impact of economic crises. As hooks (2000, p. 48) states:

When reformist feminist thinkers from privileged class backgrounds whose primary agenda was achieving social equality with men of their class equated work with liberation they meant high-paying careers. Their vision of work had little relevance for masses of women.

When reflecting on the lives of Black women in Britain in the early 1960s, Bryan et al. (2018) observe that “the State was still busy trying to encourage (white) women to stay home and embrace domestication and consumerism. It wasn’t prepared to offer any childcare support to Black women who had to work” (p. 29). Put briefly, work and labour—particularly when undertaken by Black women—does not always involve a salary, rights, or form of financial compensation or formal recognition. From strike action and the withdrawal of labour, to resistant acts at work, women continue to campaign and participate in collective action intended
to challenge the many structural work and labour inequalities that impede their lives (Olufemi 2019, 2020).

Too often, notions of work and labour have been solely linked to the experiences of people in salaried roles and ‘legally binding’ employment contracts. To exclusively equate work and labour with individuals and institutions that are part of a paid workforce is to overlook a broad spectrum of work and labour, especially in relation to the work and labour of individuals who are among the most societally oppressed and not deemed to be British citizens. Further still, when reflecting on the digital encounters of Black women and forms of work and labour that they can involve, it is important to account for how work and labour experiences have changed in recent decades. In 2000, hooks wrote the following (p. 50):

When women in the home spend all their time attending to the needs of others, home is a workplace for her, not a site of relaxation, comfort, and pleasure. Work outside the home has been most liberating for women who are single (many of whom live alone; they may or may not be heterosexual). Most women have not even been able to find satisfying work, and their participation in the workforce has diminished the quality of their life at home.

When considering the rise of freelance work, the digital gig economy and being remotely employed—especially amid ‘lockdowns’ during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) global pandemic (Sobande 2020a, b)—it is apparent that while Black women’s work at home can involve attending to many other people, sometimes this involves attending to those who are not physically present in their home—such as employers and online audiences. The boundaries between working inside and outside of the home are often muddied and digitally mediated—including for Black women who work remotely and who, on some occasions, may find that working inside the home, but for an external employer, is more beneficial to them than working elsewhere. In addition, as the research of womanist theology, philosophy, and culture scholar Gabriella Beckles-Raymond (2019) indicates, for Black women in Britain, the home can be both ‘a site of freedom and resistance’ (p. 91).

When attempting to rethink ‘the meaning of work’ (hooks 2000, p. 53) it is imperative to understand the digital experiences of Black women. Although such experiences are not inherently a form of work, they often involve elements of it, especially due to consumer culture’s
continually ‘evaporating distinctions between work and leisure, production and consumption’ (Gill and Pratt 2008, p. 17). As understandings of work and labour are inextricably linked to those of the marketplace, when considering the digital work and labour experiences of Black women in Britain it is necessary to grapple with the racist and colonialist history of the development of marketplace and economic activities (Francois 2019; Grier et al. 2019; Johnson et al. 2019). Hence, this chapter is based on an awareness of ‘how race functions in structural and agential ways, integrally reproducing raced markets and social conditions’ (Tilly and Shilliam 2018, p. 534), which are also always connected to gendered and capitalist dynamics.

**Digital Developments, Media, and the Creative and Cultural Industries**

In recent years, many media brands once known for print publications and online writing decided to divest from such output and ‘pivot to video’—allegedly to keep up with the changing nature of content production, saturated markets, and insatiable consumer demand. Digital developments and changes to the creative and cultural industries include those related to ‘visual social media cultures’ (Leaver et al. 2020) and the different ways that media is produced, shared, and monetised with the use of social media and online content-sharing platforms. Digital content-creation processes play a central role in the daily routine of many people in Britain, and blurred boundaries between production and consumption have confronted previously more fixed and dualistic notions of what determines creative work and audience engagement.

Many people’s daily lives involve them concurrently producing and consuming or producing and using media content, resulting in ‘prosumption’ and ‘produsage’ (Jenkins 2006; Lind 2015). Such enmeshed processes are the bedrock of the rise of user-generated content, digital remix culture, social influencers, and micro-celebrities who create profitable digital media and brands based on their own lives and consumption habits (Abidin 2018; Abidin and Brown 2018). The ‘humour infused in much digitally remixed content can initially make it seem harmless, to some’ (Sobande 2019a, p. 153) but the capacity for content including memes, GIFs, and connected commentaries ‘to be perceived as trivial contributes to the potency of forms of digital remix culture, which
may contain hate-filled messages barely masked by allegedly comedic undertones’ (ibid.).

As media and marketplace institutions are bolstered by the intersections of ableism, sexism, racism, capitalism, heteronormativity and other types of interlocking structural oppression, the digital experiences of Black women in Britain are inescapably impacted by unequal power dynamics (Akiwowo 2018; Allman 2019; Okafor 2019). Despite this, whether it is using the internet to learn about Black history that schools do not teach about (Akpan 2018; Folorunso 2018), or using it to create and share other types of knowledge so that it is accessible to many people, Black women in Britain are creatively using digital tools in ways that involve cultural production.

Studies of ‘the politics of cultural and creative work’ (Banks 2007) include research that illustrates the pervasiveness of institutional racism and the inadequacy of superficial so-called diversity initiatives which fail to address systemic oppression (Saha 2018)—from entry-level positions to senior management levels. As cultural theorist Angela McRobbie (2016) outlines in Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries, individuals who pursue work in the creative and cultural industries can find themselves navigating many inequalities that are deeply embedded. Moreover, extensive research on the creative and cultural industries in Britain and the demographic of those who work in industry roles has ‘pointed to the preponderance of youthful, able-bodied people in these fields, marked gender inequalities, high levels of educational achievement, complex entanglements of class, nationality and ethnicity, and to the relative lack of caring responsibilities undertaken by people involved in this kind of creative work’ (Gill and Pratt 2008, p. 14).

‘Who has the resources to live a creative life? Is an economic logic imposed in which creativity must serve a market? Who has access to the material to create?’ (Roberts and Emden 2019, p. 121). Copious evidence indicates that inequalities are rife in the creative industries (Brook et al. 2018) and that ‘[t]he cultural economy systematically excludes people based on race, gender, class and other ascriptive qualities’ (De Beukelaer and Spence 2019, p. 15). Those most impacted by associated structural disparities may attempt to circumvent some of them by primarily seeking out self-employed work in an effort to retain a certain amount of control over the environment that they work in and who they work for.
The cultural entrepreneurship research of scholars Naudin and Patel (2019) highlights how ‘online platforms are an important space for self-employed cultural workers and that within this context ideas of femininity and entrepreneurship are entangled’ (p. 511). Specifically focusing on the digital experiences of Black women, my research includes consideration of the encounters of those who are self-employed cultural workers. There is discussion of how the experiences of Black women online—including their entrepreneurial ones—are impacted by connected issues concerning anti-Blackness, sexism, and misogyny—specifically, misogynoir (Bailey 2010; Bailey and Trudy 2018).

Aspects of the creative and cultural industries have been identified as being ‘agents of economic, social and cultural change’ (Hesmondhalgh 2012, p. 8), and contemporary ‘creative and cultural industries are part of what is commonly referred to as the service and knowledge economy’ (Gill and Pratt 2008, p. 2). In this chapter, I identify the digital creativity and cultural production of Black women in Britain as contributing to such industry activity and innovative forms of knowledge-production and knowledge-sharing—which exceed the boundaries of digital spaces.

**Carving Out (Y)our Own Spaces and Narratives**

Whether it be in the form of making newsletters, producing pamphlets, or establishing independent publishing houses, Black women in Britain have found and created routes that enable them to communicate their perspectives, creativity, politics, and work, in relatively autonomous ways. Regardless of it often being overlooked amid dominant and whitewashing discourse concerning the media in Britain, the Black press has a deep history (t)here—including the development of publications such as the *Voice*, *West Indian World*, *Black Beat International*, *Pride Magazine*, *Caribbean Times* and the *West Indian Gazette* which was ‘launched by political activist Claudia Jones a year after Ghana gained its independence’ (Benjamin 1995, p. 3).

From the trailblazing work of Margaret Busby who co-founded the publishing house Allison & Busby with Clive Allison, to current digital examples of ‘do it yourself (DIY)’ and ‘do it together (DIT)’ publishing, Black women in Britain have generated new ways and spaces through which to share their views, writing, campaigning, and creative work. During the last decade, numerous media-related groups, organisations, and activities founded and predominantly led by Black women in Britain
have developed. These include, but are not limited to, the non-profit Media Diversified, founded in 2013 by Samantha Asumadu—which tackles the under-representation and mis-representation of Black people and people of colour in the media. There has also been the creation of Black Ballad, a UK based lifestyle subscription membership platform that focuses on the experiences of Black British women, launched in 2014 by Tobi Oredein and her co-founder Bola Awoniyi. In addition, in 2015 Liv Little founded gal-dem—an online and print magazine produced by women of colour and non-binary people of colour.

The internet is home to numerous types of aesthetic-political space—created and sustained by Black women in Britain. Analogue and material media production processes such as zine-making also continue to contribute to how Black women in Britain depict themselves, record their own narratives, and participate in consciousness-raising efforts, but, sometimes, digital media still supports such offline activities—including digital marketing and archiving efforts. Digital writing and content-creation processes play a distinct role in the contemporary media experiences of many Black women in Britain, even as media producers who develop their own outlets. On the whole, the creative and cultural work of Black women in Britain is capacious—it can be found in the content of Twitter posts (Dash 2018), blogs (Gabriel 2016), and vlogs (Sobande 2017), as well as being expressed in many different ways, being embodied, and taking the form of what may be referred to as living archives (Larasi 2019).

Navigating Different Digital Experiences and the Prospect of Corporate Co-optation

The remaining sections of this chapter are predominantly based on the words of two women who I interviewed—Bobino and Ruby. There is consideration of connections between their experiences and those of Black women creatives and artists throughout history. The comments of many who I spoke to, including Bobino and Ruby, echo those of social worker, feminist writer, public speaker, and community activist Feminista Jones (2019) who writes about the capacity for online platforms to be used to ‘amplify the narratives that often go ignored by the mainstream media, which usually center Whiteness and White experiences’ (p. 4). An illustration of this perspective can be found in the words of Bobino, who is an artist and researcher in her thirties and lives in England.
When interviewed, Bobino said the following about the video-sharing platform YouTube:

I use it all the time. It’s fantastic…I mean, there’s the personal taken out of it, right? I don’t engage with it, I don’t comment on it or anything like that but I consume, and I’m constantly watching Black women from all different parts of the world. I get strength from this content…strength to expand understandings of how we can communicate…I explore, mostly.

Bobino’s remarks reflect how Black women’s use of social media can aid types of creativity and feelings of collectivity that contribute to the formation and visibility of an ‘online Black public sphere’ (Steele 2016a, p. 2). Such a perspective was expressed by most of the women who I interviewed—with the exception of Amoke who did not use social media very much—but, such discussions also involved an emphasis on the grief, harassment, and abuse that can be a part of the online visibility of Black women—especially dark-skinned Black women, who due to misogynoir (Bailey 2010; Bailey and Trudy 2018) and colourism (Adegoke 2019; Amoah 2019; Gabriel 2007; Tate 2009, 2017a, b) are frequently targeted online.

Although Twitter sometimes plays a central role in the type of collective and communal digital activity that individuals such as Bobino mentioned, it is far from being crucial to the digital experiences of all Black women in Britain. This is indicated by the view of Dr Diddly Doo who is in her thirties and based in England:

I think that social media is a tool…and I don’t know how to use the tools all the time…Twitter is one that I don’t get [laughs]…I think it just doesn’t naturally work with my personality. I feel that Facebook for me…it’s like the original social media platform, I guess…although I would say that was Xanga, for me. Yes! [laughs] Yeah it was Xanga and then Myspace and then all the other ones started to come along. It was like LiveJournal and Tumblr and things that all came along…microblogging…at this point in my life they’re more tools really…than when I was younger, like in my early twenties, it was like life!…it felt like everything was on there and then some quite important life lessons happened and then that changed a lot of the ways that my friends used it and I used it.

Among the Black women in Britain who I interviewed as part of my research were several who had significant experience of working in the
media and creative and cultural industries, including in self-employed creative entrepreneurial roles. One of them was Ruby, who is in her twenties and based in England. Ruby spoke about learning of the flippant ways that some white people in the media industry in Britain simply suggest that writers just ‘YouTube it’ when trying to learn and produce allegedly ‘authentic’ media content about the experiences of people with different racial, ethnic, cultural, and class backgrounds to theirs.

Ruby reflected on the pervasiveness of structurally white and racist workplace cultures in the media industry, where the expertise, creativity, and talent of Black women is often overlooked and actively undermined. She commented on the challenges that Black women in Britain face when pursuing a career in the media and discussed their ‘DIY’ digital media culture and creation of platforms:

There’s a need to have [Black] people on the ground doing things. I’m seeing lots of Black men doing incredible things in film...there are lots of things happening...it feels like a movement...like things are finally moving, but for women it is really slow. For content creators I feel like because things are really slow...I just think it’s very ‘DIY’. Like, I hate the term ‘millennial’ but I think we’re in this time when we don’t want to wait anymore. We don’t want to have to wait for Lenny Henry to be like, ‘we need to hire more Black people’ [laughs] like, people are just making their own spaces...it’s very DIY...with our iPhones. Making our own iconography and making our own content...it’s really important that we carve out our own narratives and that we don’t shy away from creating spaces for ourselves.

Ruby’s comments about the capacity for Black women in Britain to use digital technology in creative and agential ways are consistent with the findings of communication, gender, and women’s studies scholar Kishonna L. Gray (2015), whose innovative research and writing illuminates how ‘Black women have varied responses when employing Internet technologies for empowerment’ (p. 175). Gray’s (2015) detailed analysis of how recent ‘communication technologies have expanded the opportunities and potential for marginalized communities to mobilize in this context counter to the dominant, mainstream media’ (p. 175), is central to my understanding of many of the digital experiences that the women who I interviewed spoke of.

When discussing Black ‘DIY’ digital culture in Britain, Ruby recognised that due to anti-Blackness, Black men can struggle in the media
industry, but that it is the interlocking impact of anti-Black racism, sexism, and misogyny (Crenshaw 1989, 2017)—more specifically, misogynoir (Bailey 2010; Bailey and Trudy 2018)—that results in the exactitudes of oppression faced by Black women. As the experiences of others who I spoke to indicate, online abuse that Black women deal with includes misogynistic harassment, colourism, and targeted trolling, including by Black men. Thus, contrary to how scholarship about, and, by Black women, is often positioned and siloed by academic institutions and disciplines—the media experiences and lives of Black women can never truly be grasped by merely focusing on factors solely to do with race or gender. The comments of many who I interviewed are evidence of how ‘race matters no less in cyberspace than it does “IRL” (in real life)’ (Kolko et al. 2000, p. 4), and how its enmeshment with issues of gender and sexuality influence the digital experiences of Black women in Britain; some of which involve so much unbridled harm being inflicted upon them—especially those who are dark-skinned—that some such individuals have withdrawn from social media and digital spaces.

Media generates ‘meaning through the viewer’s interpretation, which is always contingent on history, context’ (Crockett 2008, p. 249). Who is classed as a media producer or content creator has evolved in tandem with technological advancements and the ascent of digital platforms, coupled with the increasingly affordable and accessible nature of some mobile devices with camera and video functions. ‘However, access itself neither ensures power nor guarantees a shift in the dominant ideology’ (Gray 2015, p. 175). Although it is often glibly claimed that nowadays anybody can be a media producer or content creator, factors such as ableism, fatphobia, racism, sexism, classism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia, and other interlocking forms of oppression can impact whose production of media and creation of content is regarded as creative, skillful, and a form of work—and whose tends to be societally trivialised, devalued, and dismissed.

Ruby spoke about the work of Black content creators often involving ‘really funny Vines’ or ‘meme-worthy things’, or ‘Black Twitter or hair tutorials or makeup tutorials for darker skin-tones’. The influential digital content of Black women in Britain also includes vlogs on YouTube regarding university experiences and which may help other Black women to learn about aspects of university life when making related decisions (Croxford 2018). Ruby commented on the gradually rising profile and
visibility of Black YouTubers and content creators, while critiquing the hyper-visibility of white middle-class YouTubers in Britain:

...when I think of YouTube and YouTubers in England, I think of white middle-class boys who all have the same accent [laughs]...like that regional area just outside of London, and the same editing style and the same [exaggerates voice and does a comical impression] ‘hi guys!’.

Several women who I interviewed had no previous experience of vlogging and expressed an interest in pursuing work as a vlogger but were fearful of facing abuse, as they were acutely aware of how common it is for Black women who are visible online to be the target of relentless harassment and threats (Akiwowo 2018; Allman 2019; Okafor 2019). In the months following my interview with one woman she eventually established a presence as a vlogger with over 10,000 subscribers on YouTube. The content that she posts includes vlogs which feature business advice aimed at Black people and vlogs which specifically focus on what life is like for Black women in different parts of Britain and West Africa. Although YouTube may be used by Black women in ways that enrich them, including by enabling them to post and share entrepreneurial and educational video content of their own, it is also the site of a ‘phenomenon, in which YouTubers attempt to reach young audiences by broadcasting far-right ideas in the form of news and entertainment’ (Lewis 2018, p. 3). Thus, YouTube contributes to harm and hate speech directed at Black women and is a video-sharing platform that should not uncritically be celebrated.

As is illustrated by blogger, documentary producer, author, and scholar Renina Jarmon’s (2013) insightful collection of essays—Black Girls Are From the Future: Essays On: Race, Digital Creativity and Pop Culture—Black women’s digital creativity includes creative approaches to how they think through, write about, express, challenge and navigate socio-political issues online. Although Ruby indicated a hopefulness to do with the growth in Black women’s digital content creation and their founding of creative and media-based spaces, she and others who I spoke to shared concerns pertaining to how ‘the online contributions of Black women who represent themselves in ways that mainstream media rarely do, can lead to their digital re-embodied and resistant presence being mined for marketing inspiration, and their work being monetised without them being compensated’ (Sobande et al. 2019, p. 10). Some of these issues are explored in more detail in the following section.
Spectacularisation and Superficiality

Despite the experiences of individuals referred to as being from ‘Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)’ backgrounds having been discussed in various creative and cultural industries studies, the experiences of Black women of African descent are still rarely the main focus of creative and cultural industries research and efforts to address structural barriers that constrain and obstruct people’s creative practice and work. Ruby reflected on how high-profile media and arts institutions are starting to pay more attention to the independent media and content creation of Black women in Britain, but in ways that may be disingenuous and involve such institutions trying to ‘tap into’ different demographics:

…so when we get approached by all these huge like, arts organisations, to do stuff… sometimes I feel like…are they actually doing it ‘cause they really want to help us and want our voices to be heard, or are they tapping into a market or a group that they can’t connect with?

The words of Ruby convey her understanding of how in the creative and cultural industries ‘the emphasis on a more diverse media workforce is increasingly rationalized in neoliberal terms that stress the benefits of diversity for competition and economic growth, rather than for political, let alone ethical or moral reasons’ (Saha 2018, p. 88).

As digital ‘commerce platforms may be forging hidden ecologies and economies of inequality’ (Gregory 2017, p. 5), I am aware that many forms of exploitation and oppression lurk beneath the surface of digital spaces, even those that promise to prioritise liberatory goals over profit. Ruby’s comments and those of others who were interviewed about their media and digital experiences as Black women in Britain suggest that online environments ‘can be a source of Black women’s resistance, as well as leaving their digital commentary exposed to corporate co-optation’ (Sobande et al. 2019, p. 2) and types of commodification which contrast with the intentions of the original content creator(s).

Black people around the world use digital technology and social media in ways that involve connecting and communicating with each other and communities that they are a part of (Brock 2020; Clark 2014; Everett 2009; McIlwain 2020; Mohammed 2019; Nyabola 2018; Steele 2016a, b, 2017). Resulting digital discourse is sometimes susceptible to being (re)packaged in ways that serve others’ commercial interests and may even
endanger the lives of those behind the original content that becomes (re)presented by others. While the commerce-driven nature of a lot of contemporary digital experiences is linked to oppressive relations and power dynamics, it is still imperative to note that ‘all was not ideal in the pre-commercialization explosion of the Web’ (Roberts 2019, p. 10).

It is also important to acknowledge ‘different understandings of the intentions of digital content creators, some of whom produce work that is collectively owned or created to be shared in ways that move beyond notions of ownership and property which are steeped in capitalist and colonialisit legacies’ (Sobande 2020b). A concern expressed by some who I interviewed was that public discussions that they have on social media may be used and mined by non-Black individuals and institutions in search of material for article pitches and content that connects to Black cultural references, but without involving or crediting Black people—especially Black women (Imhotep 2019). Put another way, non-Black individuals and institutions that (mis)use signifiers of Blackness and the digital commentaries of Black people—including when attempting to pass them off as their own—may seek to use ‘blackness only as a suggestion’ (Jackson 2019, p. 6); alluding to a ‘distance from whiteness’ (Jackson 2019, p. 33) in potentially profitable ways that are aided by the fact that they themselves are not Black.

Keisha Williams (2018), who has studied diversity and inclusion strategies in museums, affirms that many arts and cultural industry organisations in Britain face the challenge of becoming ‘recognised as an “inclusive organisation” for certain portions of the population’ (p. 93) who have tended to perceive such spaces ‘as not for or representing them’ (ibid.). As a result, some arts and cultural organisations attempt to communicate a public image of inclusivity in ways that simply involve them drawing on superficial efforts to visually depict specific social groups as part of their self-serving marketing and communications strategies.

As curator, artist, and organiser Layla-Roxanne Hill and I (2018, p. 109) assert when reflecting on the creative and cultural industries in Scotland:

Not only are arts events and exhibitions located (situated somewhere, rooted in a specific and tangible space), they can also involve people – like artefacts – becoming (dis)located (moving in and out of the space in ways influenced by their access to it).
Even when Black people in Britain are excluded from creative and cultural institutions, such institutions may still attempt to imply the contrary—brazenly using images of Black people as part of their public relations approach, even without their consent and in ways that can put such people at risk of targeted abuse. When interviewed, Bobino who is in her thirties and is based in England, discussed the associated difficulties and dangers that can be involved in Black women’s digital (self)representation, and how institutions (mis)use their image(s).

Bobino’s words highlight how the restricted nature of the digital and creative experiences of Black women includes the risks that they are exposed to online, such as those concerning the pervasiveness of data collection in present-day society (Nzeyimana 2018), undetected surveillance, and the persistence of white supremacy which is entangled with how some individuals ‘function as political influencers who adopt the techniques of brand influencers to build audiences and “sell” them on far-right ideology’ (Lewis 2018, p. 1). In the words of Bobino:

Yeah, there’s the instrumentalisation that can happen…there’s the cultural appropriation…there’s data collection…there’s…a latent or blatant narcissism. There’s a spectacularisation…and superficiality…and bullying…this [social media] is not a decolonised space…it’s a…it’s not a safe space. I think the thing that comes into my head is that…I’m no longer on Facebook but from what I understood, these platforms can censor people speaking their truths about racism…that often…if you talk about whiteness…there seems to be algorithms that seem to shut that conversation down…I find that talking about decolonial processes, talking about racism in a language that they do not deem as acceptable, means that you are shutdown from having the conversation whilst racist parties and…big-oted organisations that are directly inciting violence, are allowed to…host themselves on all the social media platforms.

As is elucidated in the significant scholarship of sociologist Jessie Daniels (2009, 2012, 2017), white supremacy looms large within and over many digital spaces, and societies in general. Also, as the landmark work of information and communication studies scholar Safiya Umoja Noble (2018) emphasises, the internet and the creation of various algorithms is part of intersecting forms of structural oppression that negatively impact Black women in very pronounced ways. The related words of Bobino about the instrumentalisation and spectacularisation of Black people online are a reminder of how although opportunities to connect
and communicate with each other can be provided by social media, these
spaces are monitored, managed, and bordered in ways that can limit Black
women’s freedom and compromise their safety.

Many contemporary digital spaces can be understood as being
impacted by ‘the transition from an early nineties understanding of the
Internet as a utopian space for identity play, community building, and gift
economies to a more privatized, profit-driven model’ (Nakamura 2008,
p. 3) which favours corporate interests. While digital spaces can still be
a vital source of collective-building, the potential for social media to
contribute to a sense of solidarity and community is sometimes fetishised
in ways that evade recognition of difficulties that can be involved in
collective-building, and the importance of many physical spaces in the
collective organising and lives of Black women. The creative, collective
and community-oriented activities of Black women in Britain undoubt-
edly can, and, do, find a range of digital homes, but there is a need to also
acknowledge the cost at which this sometimes comes—as well as a need
to recognise that Black women’s creativity, collective work, and creation
of community offline is no less present or meaningful due to its lack of
digital depiction or visibility.

Individuals such as Bobino spoke at length about how Black women in
Britain are often structurally oppressed as part of their engagement with
arts and cultural industry institutions—as both creative practitioners and
audience members. In Bobino’s experience, being a Black artist in Britain
commonly involves navigating predominantly white spaces marked by the
invisibility and hyper-visibility of Black people (Alabanza 2017). Bobino
also discussed the creative work of Black women in Britain that she is
thankful for and which digital and social media has played a part in:

…so I’m thankful that there are amazing voices on social media…from
all the very many organisations like Shades of Noir and Black Blossoms
and we can go on and on and on…but I just don’t believe that we yet
dominate the conversation and for there to be any growth, that’s what
needs to happen. White people need to concede the positions of power
and actually hand them over. How many institutions can you name in this
country that have a Black or Brown director? I’ve had one white woman
say to me the reason that there are no Black people working at the top of
these institutions is because there aren’t enough Black people.
Arts organisations’ claiming that ‘there aren’t enough Black people’, in an attempt to justify the lack of Black people who work there across a range of roles, or whose creative practice is exhibited, is something that has occurred for a long time in many predominantly white places. In the introduction to *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women 1965–85: New Perspectives*—a text which accompanied a US exhibition of more than 40 artists—it is asserted that the two volumes produced in conjunction with the exhibition provide ‘a direct retort to the excuse that has been offered all too frequently for these omissions in the art world: Well, we didn’t know any black women artists’ (Morris and Hockley 2018, p. 19). Similarities between the sentiment of these words in *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women 1965–85: New Perspectives*, and the experience Bobino shared, demonstrate the widespread and institutional nature of Black women’s active exclusion from many facets of the arts, creative, and cultural industries.

As was outlined in chapter two, the idea that ‘representation matters’ tends to spark a range of conflicting responses and debates to do with the (in)ability of people and institutions to challenge systemic inequalities by simply pursuing increased visibility and inclusion of different social groups in public-facing contexts. Furthermore, in the words of communications and media studies scholar Akane Kanai—‘conflicted feelings can be telling of where we stand and our relation to others’ (2019, p. 188). The comments of Black women such as Bobino signal that certain media and cultural organisations in Britain engage in representation politics in ways that reinforce the neoliberal white supremacist foundations that they are built upon, rather than sincerely and substantially addressing structural discrimination faced by Black women and other people who are systemically oppressed.

There is an abundance of superficial forms of representation and media depiction which can obscure and distract from the hierarchical politics of the production processes and institutions behind such representations, as well as the material conditions they contribute to and emerge from. To return to the views of the Spare Rib Collective (1988, p. 9):

> Many Black artists in Britain site themselves within a Black art movement, attempting to challenge art world eurocentrism. The significant increase in the number of exhibitions by Black artists indicates that this movement has had an impact. It is encouraging to see a number of Black women artists exhibiting, organising, speaking and writing about art. However,
the dynamics of the movement and its relationship to the establishment is problematic on a number of fronts. Progress has been difficult to quantify.

These words featured in Spare Rib (1988) remain highly applicable to the creative experiences of many Black women in Britain, some of whom are making use of digital and social media as a core component of their creative practice or the ways that they share and exhibit it.

**Social Media Terms of Service, Shadowbanning, and Surveillance**

Digital platforms and online social networking services such as Twitter are continually used as part of the development and sharing of the creative content and critical cultural writing of Black women around the world. Twitter’s 140 characters or less approach to posts that people could tweet shifted with its introduction of a maximum of 280 characters in 2017. Despite the micro-blogging site’s focus on concise content, it has been used by Black women in ways that involve sharing detailed and impactful writing and analysis of issues—including their thoughts on and experiences of politics and pop culture (Clark 2014; Jones 2019).

Twitter’s Terms of Service (TOS) which grant Twitter a license (and the right to sublicense) which is worldwide, non-exclusive, and royalty free, are symptomatic of the relative lack of control that people have over the content that they create and share there. Such TOS are but one of many examples of the considerably restricted nature of the rights of digital content creators. Further still, Instagram’s shadowbanning approach which has involved them strategically hiding content that is subjectively deemed to be ‘sexually suggestive’ has impacted the digital content and work of Black women (Joseph 2019).

Shadowbanning disproportionately negatively affects people whose existence, due to racism, sexism, homophobia, fatphobia, transphobia, and other types of intersecting oppressions, is often demonised and a source of moral panic in society. Shadowbanning has resulted in censoring of the digital presence and content of pole athletes and dancers (Carolina 2019), LGBTQIA+ Black women, sex workers, and plus-size models; even when there is an absence of nudity in images (Salty 2019). Due to anti-Blackness, cis-normativity, and transphobia, trans* and non-binary Black people face relentless forms of oppression, brutality, and surveillance (Alabanza 2018). The extensiveness of cis-normativity and transphobia is
such that Black trans* and non-binary people face harassment, abuse, and violence from cisgender Black people as well as non-Black people who target them online and offline.

Whose physical appearance and embodiment is identified as being ‘sexually suggestive’ by Instagram as part of their shadowbanning approach is shaped by the different ways that certain people—including Black women, trans* and non-binary people—are more systemically policed and societally framed as hypersexualised than others. For some, the impact that shadowbanning has on the visibility of their digital content can result in a loss of income and can exacerbate precarious living conditions. How shadowbanning unfolds reveals a lot about whose lives, work, and self-representation efforts are treated as acceptable and something to celebrate, and whose are not and are subject to institutional attempts to hide, condone, and erase them.

In 2019 TikTok admitted to having suppressed the reach of videos by creators that they assume are vulnerable to cyberbullying, including disabled creators (Kim 2019). Such an approach is another example of whose presence on the internet is most likely to be constrained due to a matrix of domination (Hill Collins 2000). The examples of TikTok’s suppression of content, and shadowbanning on Instagram, are just two which illustrate that although social media may be used by Black women as part of their creative and cultural work—and, even, their liberationist efforts—such experiences can involve them enduring forms of censoring that reflect their longstanding systemic oppression and surveillance.

Regardless of how some digital spaces may seem free(er) of capitalist and commercial binds than other contexts, as the internet often operates and is used ‘as a trading platform’ (Dy et al. 2017, p. 300), much digital activity is spawned by inherently capitalistic structures. Consequently, while Black women in Britain may find that digital spaces can facilitate their creative work, in some ways, they may also find—intentionally and otherwise—that their digital creativity contributes to types of marketing, branding, and commercial activity. Given that there is ‘a whole brand of (mostly digital) journalism that culls social media content for stories’ (McMillan Cottom 2017, p. 221), Black women’s attempts to maintain control of digital creativity, content, and commentaries that they generate involve navigating commercial institutions’ ever-present extractive gaze and hunger for profit.

Although social media is often regarded as more democratised than other older media production avenues—such as print newspapers and
broadcast television—social media certainly does not exist outside of hierarchical relations. For every Black woman in Britain who may have found that social media has helped them to establish their creative and cultural practice, there may be another who feels as though they have fallen foul—including because of cliquish qualities of aspects of digital culture and the dangers that their digital visibility can involve. After all, an individual’s ability to access a space does not always mean being able to participate in it in ways that are beneficial to them (Gray 2015).

**Harassment, Bullying, and Abuse**

As has been established, the digital experiences of Black women can bolster their creativity and resistant work (Jarmon 2013) but can also be impacted by the common ways that Black women have been ‘subjected to a scrutinizing surveillance’ (Browne 2015, p. 156) for centuries. As is explained by communication, gender, and women’s studies scholar Kishonna L. Gray and critical culture, gender, and race studies scholar David J. Leonard (2018), in their work on *Woke Gaming: Digital Challenges to Oppression and Social Injustice* (p. 5):

> From the Internet to the constructive worlds of virtual gameplay, the digital world offers spaces of play and freedom in a post-ism promised land of equality and justice, but our experiences reveal the fissures found within those spaces.

Among the many ways that the digital encounters of Black women in Britain involve experiencing harm and harassment, is how they are objectified and spectacularised by white editors in search of content to generate sales and clicks—including in the form of Black women’s potentially marketable writing about traumatic and painful experiences. Independent writer Kesiena Boom’s (2019) discussion of challenges involved in producing Black women’s personal feminist essays in digital spheres exposes such issues, and poignantly poses the question: ‘can the price ever be right?’ (p. 252). Overall, different digital spaces may enable Black women’s public documentation of encountering oppression, profiling, and abuse, but can also be a source of such experiences.

As Bobino spoke about at length, when Black women in Britain are visible in media and public life, they are prime targets of hate speech and potential violence. For example, Labour Member of Parliament
Diane Abbott was subject to nearly 50% of online harassment directed at women MPs in the lead up to the British election in 2017 (Dhrodia 2018), and continues to face excessive amounts of public scrutiny rooted in misogynoir (Palmer 2019). Research also indicates that Black women are 84% more likely than white women to be mentioned in abusive Twitter comments (Amnesty International 2018). As such, there is a need for non-partisan and not-for-profit organisations including Glitch—founded by Seyi Akiwowo in 2017—which works towards ending abuse online and has supported and driven research about the specific experiences of Black women in Britain.

A Black cyberfeminist framework which ‘argues that structural oppression is translated through technologies and reproduces different individual and categorical experiences’ (McMillan Cottom 2017, p. 217) can aid understanding of the many dangers and forms of oppression that Black women encounter on the internet. And so, it is from a Black cyberfeminist perspective (Gray 2015) that I continue to consider the thoughts and experiences of individuals such as Bobino, who described some of the ways that social media can be a ‘toxic place’ which instead of bringing joy to the lives of Black women, can, at times, curtail their wellbeing:

I think it might’ve been around 10 years ago [that I joined social media]. I didn’t want to be on it. My friends said you’ve got to be on it, everyone’s on it. It’s how you keep in touch with people, but to be honest I think it’s a trap. It’s great for information…but I can look down my Twitter timeline for instance and see the actual…see those images of atrocity…Black people spectacularised…their death…I can’t watch these videos of inhuman practices that we are continuing to carry out as a country…I can’t look through my timeline and not feel complicit…so I don’t really engage with Twitter anymore.

‘As anti-Black racism and other forms of outright bigotry experience a click-inducing upswing in popularity’ (Spelic 2019, p. 42), the digital lives of Black women in Britain, and, around the world, continue to be marred by the prospect and reality of encountering disturbing content that depicts and communicates violence. The leading information studies work of Sarah T. Roberts (2019) on the experiences of commercial content moderators emphasises how continual exposure to extremely disturbing content can have a very detrimental impact on people’s lives and health. Relatedly, Bobino’s words stress that the trauma which can
be involved in Black women’s online experiences can be connected to horrifically violent, anti-Black, and white supremacist content that they are exposed to, sometimes, daily.

Even when speaking of the negative aspects of social media, Bobino consistently acknowledged some of its benefits for Black women in Britain, including how particular platforms may lend themselves to Black women’s creativity:

I see amazing people online. I see my peers online doing amazing things...resisting...but to tell you the truth, I’m really struggling. I’m not feeling like...I don’t feel that social media is necessarily boosting my self-esteem or my confidence, but then again I do see amazing people, so I shouldn’t say that...maybe it’s because I’m not fully present with myself or I’m giving myself a hard time, so I’m not able to celebrate with other wonderful...I think that what it is that digital spaces can do is persuade you to go and spend time with people face to face. I’m mostly using Instagram. It allows me to be creative when...it allows me to create visual work in a way, or think through things visually. I also realise that [with social media] you’re able to...celebrate yourself and celebrate others...celebrate difference and experiment with new ways of representing yourself and speaking language...I mean...that is a triumph that we can do that and disseminate it and we can get feedback. We can validate ourselves but I also really, really am troubled by systems of measurement. I’m worried that person ‘A’ will want to replicate person ‘B’, and I see this again especially in terms of our media and our social media and an emphasis on brand and consumption...homogenisation.

In a similar way to Ruby, Bobino recalled her awareness of how certain media and arts organisations attempt to use images of Black women and their content and creative work in profit-oriented and shallow ways which simply serve the organisation. She also spoke of how such organisations attempt to virtue-signal by indicating their awareness of some of the abuse that Black people face, but without critically addressing this or acknowledging such experiences within their own institutions:

They [arts organisations] are interested in spectacularising stories of abuse. They do not have the tools with which to have conversations about race, so when I brought to their [an organisation’s] attention, their complicity...when we penetrate into those spheres, at the moment it’s superficial, because they are not allies. They have no interest and no will to have a
conversation about their complicit racism, so what I mean about camaraderie [that organisations claim to offer] is the superficiality that runs rampant with neoliberal white supremacist patriarchal misogyny, and in fact, many of these women are misogynistic in as much as they are not willing to make the connection between race, sexism, and class. When I spoke to them about how the organisation is not representing me and my brothers and sisters, Black and brown in the UK…they said ‘we’ve got [name of one Black woman employee]’ …I say all this in relation to how they use media, as I noticed on their Instagram they’ll often have an image of a Black person sat outside looking like they were minding their own business…they’ve instrumentalised this young Black person. I think there needs to be a whole rewriting of it…people of colour…Black women need to be making these programmes and these platforms. I think we take what we can from those [digital] platforms and what we’ve learnt from them and arrange it into something that is ‘decolonised’.

Bobino’s words emphasise that the mere inclusion of people from various backgrounds and with different identities in the creative and cultural industries does not equate to them being treated equally. The example that she discussed which involved an arts institution attempting to ‘diversify’ their brand image, rather than address structural racism and anti-Blackness within the institution, is demonstrative of how ‘whether TV or tech, cosmetic diversity too easily stands in for substantive change, with a focus on feel good differences like food, language, and dress, not on systemic disadvantages associated with employment, education, and policing’ (Benjamin 2019, pp. 19–20).

Bobino’s comments also highlight how some arts organisations tokenistically engage with Black women, including by framing their hiring of just one Black woman—who is often from a middle-class background—as a revolutionary declaration of their support of Black people and Black art. Such industry dynamics are consistent with the words of the Spare Rib Collective (1988, p. 10): ‘The establishment, as it does with Black communities and other interest groups, attempts to identify particular individuals as the authenticating voices…marginalised individuals alone do not represent a forceful challenge to the mainstream’. The examples that Bobino mentioned are consistent with ‘an economy of visibility’ (Banet-Weiser 2018, p. 2), within which (re)presentations of Black people are used by brands and institutions that attempt to position themselves as ‘diverse’ and ‘inclusive’—words often emptied of meaning—and, even, ‘radical’—despite their contrary actions.
As has been argued, ‘the analysis of textual representations of race in advertising imagery is only a part of the broader project of documenting the historical relationship between race and consumption’ (Lury 2001, p. 157). Bobino’s comments evidence the importance of looking beyond the digitally marketed image of an arts organisation and learning about Black people’s experiences of them—expressed in their own words—to understand how they are treated by such institutions.

Many brands, I argue, including in the creative and cultural industries, ‘(mis)use issues concerning commercialised notions of feminism, equality and Black social justice activism as part of marketing that flattens and reframes liberationist politics while upholding the neoliberal idea that achievement and social change requires individual ambition and consumption rather than structural shifts and resistance’ (Sobande 2019b, p. 1). Thus, even when the activities of creative and cultural industry institutions in Britain are marketed as foregrounding matters regarding anti-Black racism, Black lives, and intersecting oppressions, it is rare that such activities meaningfully involve, engage, support, and are led by Black women—especially those from working-class backgrounds.

The experiences of Black women in Britain, particularly at regional levels, are often invisible amid data and discourse concerning issues connected to gender, race, accessibility, inclusion, and the creative and cultural industries (hill and Sobande 2018). In fact, their so-called ‘statistical insignificance’ is often the shoddy basis upon which some creative and cultural industry organisations claim they are not able to recruit and employ Black women, or provide specific and transparent information about the extent to which they work with Black creatives. Regardless of little to no indication of a substantial effort and commitment to address structural inequalities and support the creativity, craft, and work of Black women, many arts organisations continue to construct an image of them that suggests the opposite. However, often with the use of digital technology and social media, Black women in Britain are raising awareness of and publicly challenging such approaches.

Concluding Thoughts

As is explored in essential work which develops a Black cyberfeminism framework (Gray 2015), Black women are using digital spaces and technology as part of Black feminist knowledge-production, community building, and creative work. Creativity can be found in Black women’s
The words of both Ruby and Bobino are a reminder of how despite the opportunities to connect and communicate with each other that social media may provide for Black people around the world, such spaces are monitored, managed—and, arguably—bordered in ways that can considerably limit Black women’s creative control, free speech, and can even compromise their safety. Whether they are participating as workers, spectators, creators or all three interconnected roles, the marketplace can be a site of Black women’s sustained oppression, as well as a site of their efforts to exert agency and push against forms of structural marginalisation and brutality. For that reason, I remain wary of suggesting that liberation can be secured within marketplace settings, but also conscious of how Black women participate in such contexts in resistant ways and as part of liberationist struggles that far surpass the parameters of consumer culture (Sobande and Osei 2020).

While my work ‘relates to issues of representation, it is also focused on power and politics, because without transformational and structural changes, increased surface-level representation is meaningless’ (hill and Sobande 2018, p. 109), and can be institutionally weaponised to distract from prevailing societal inequalities and necessary critique of them. For decades, ‘Black women’s struggles for political change have led to an increased involvement in a number of fields, amongst them education, media, local government, health and the arts’ (Spare Rib 1988, p. 9). Even though Black women in Britain are significantly shaping creative and cultural production (t)here, including via the creation of digital content, their work seldom receives adequate support and is often trivialised to the point that it is completely dismissed. However, it is equally important to note continually increasing commercial and corporate interest in the digital activities of Black people, as is evidenced by YouTube hosting the YouTube Black summit event in Los Angeles in 2016, and Twitter hosting a Black Twitter UK event at their London headquarters in 2019.

As is reflected on in this chapter, the digital experiences of Black women in Britain include the production and sharing of content as part of creative, and, sometimes, resistant, efforts—including activist work
which involves documenting collective organising and offline action. Still, ‘potentially resistant and liberating qualities of such experiences can be denuded through forms of corporate co-optation; Black women’s online content being (mis)used and (mis)appropriated by commercial entities that fail to credit or consult the creator(s) of the original source’ (Sobande et al. 2019, p. 11). As the digital activity of Black women is an increasing source of interest among mainstream media and marketplace institutions, digital content and narratives created by Black women will continue to be (re)mediated by commercial entities, including creative and cultural industry organisations in Britain. Therefore, some of the ways that the digital dialogue of Black women may seem to transcend certain borders—including the borders of different social media platforms and institutions—can sometimes be to their detriment and to the benefit of corporations that quickly attempt to commodify Blackness, especially the creativity, candour, and ingenuity of Black women.

Notes
1. Launched in 2013, Vine was a video hosting service where people could upload, share and respond to short-form video content that was approximately six seconds long. Although Vine is defunct (since 2016), it continues to be recognised as a key site of viral content created and shared by Black people, as is discussed in online articles such as ‘Black Vine: The Oral History of a Six-Second Movement’ (Félix 2016). In January 2020 Byte was released which is a short-form video hosting service that has been framed as Vine’s successor.
2. The term ‘BAME’ which stands for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic is one which rightly continues to be critiqued, including due to its use often involving a lack of specificity concerning racial and ethnic identities and experiences; especially at the expense of understandings of the lives of Black people of African descent and the particularities of anti-Blackness that they encounter. For this reason, the term ‘BAME’ only features in this book as part of discussion of prior writing and research that makes use of it in connection to the lives of Black women.

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