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Exposing Racism in Fashion: How Black Women Navigate Societal Beauty Standards

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Honor Scholar Program, C/0 2021

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Abstract

Throughout American history, Black women have been treated as the most inferior group. Social status is dependent on race, gender, and economic status. These factors contribute to overall social hierarchies. Whiter skin tones are more desired than darker tones. The fashion industry perpetuates white desirability while also displaying Black women as undesirable and inferior. The fashion industry is dominated by white males, and white women are the representations within fashion. Fashion, therefore, is a reflection of the white male's ideal world: desirable white women, submissive Black women, and very few Black men. Black women however are changing the narrative within the fashion industry and are creating new paths toward fashion. Fashion is a racist industry and uses visual media outlets to promote racist thought processes. Black women are exposing these ideas and shifting the definition of fashion.

Historical Context and the Foundations of the Fashion Industry

Black people in America have been oppressed for hundreds of years, and throughout history, society has found new ways to maintain the idea that Black people are inferior to white people. Jim Crow Law was a core period in American history in which the separation of Black and White people was heavily enforced. This included many public spaces such as parks, restaurants, buses, and even schools.

In the 1940s, psychologists Kenneth Carter and Mamie Clark designed and conducted a study known as “the doll tests” to examine the psychological effects of segregation on African-American children. Researchers recruited three- seven-year-old African American girls. The children were asked to identify the dolls’ race and decide which they preferred. The children were also asked to identify which doll was “good” or “bad”, and which looked more like them. These questions were designed to identify racial preference, racial identity, and recognition, as well as self-identity and recognition. The results of this study found that even though Black children were able to identify that the Brown doll looked more similar to them, they had more preference to play with the white doll. The children were also reported to have more positive associations with the white doll whereas they used more negative associations with the Brown doll. The study displays the relationship between Black children and their self-esteem. Racism's psychological effects created self-esteem traumas, and Black children had a negative self-perception of themselves. Due to the immense racism at the time the brown doll was associated with inferiority. Many of the African American children in the study also preferred the white doll. Their negative connections with the brown doll further emphasized how racism impacted African American children’s self-esteem. Children are influenced by the things that

surround them because they are in their learning stages. African American children learned from experience that they were inferior to white people, i.e segregation laws.

The fashion industry is used as a way to market beauty to women. Fashion magazines and media are used to build expectations of women and make comparisons between different types of women. Expectancy theory is based upon the power that negative expectations may have in influencing social reality (Taylor, Lee, & Stern, 1995). In fashion, expectancy theory can be seen through the types of models used to present fashion trends. White women are oftentimes the ones chosen to model, thus the overrepresentation of white women has those social influences. This can qualify as a negative expectation because the fashion magazines are showing mostly white women which limits the visual representations of Black women or other women of color. By doing this, the fashion magazines are implicitly stating that white women are more beautiful than other women because they are featured in the magazines more.

To continue, social comparison theory says that people have an inherent need to evaluate their actions and opinions and oftentimes, comparisons will take place with others who are socially similar. Fashion magazines have an over-representation of white women in their magazines which leaves social comparison an option for only white women. On the other hand, Black women are forced to compare themselves to the white women being idolized. From that, it is evident that Black women are unable to participate in social comparison theory because they do not have the social means to include themselves in the comparison. Because Black women are not represented as often, they are essentially excluded from being catered to in the fashion industry.

Because Black women are unable to engage fully in social comparison and are automatically opposite of white fashion models, the expectancy theory is then put into place. Black women are expected to compare themselves to the white women in media, yet, the aesthetic of a Black woman is vastly different from that of a white woman. The fashion industry creates positive images that are mostly represented by white women while Black women and other women of color do not benefit from the images of the fashion industry. Within the fashion industry, the stereotypes and inferior portrayals of Black people are perpetuated. As it relates to Black women, Black women have a unique perspective because the intersections of gender and race interact within the Black female experience. Being Black and being a woman are seen as inferior positions within society, leaving Black women vulnerable to both. The media then takes this idea and uses poor representations of Black women to perpetuate the negative image of Black women. In a discussion by West, C (1995), West identifies the early representations of Black women including the “mammy” and the “jezebel”, then later adding in the “sapphire” stereotypes have been defiant of Black women for years and discusses the psychological impacts of these stereotypes on Black women. A “mammy” is a term once used in the south to describe Black women who were nurses and caretakers of white families and their children. She is described as maternal, family-oriented, and self-sacrificing. The “Jezebel” is seductive and sexually irresponsible, and a “sapphire” is a woman who is threatening and argumentative. West (1995) presents notions of these three stereotypes of Black women, then explains the negative impacts it has. Stereotypes influence power dynamics and cultural dissonance. Black women face psychological trauma due to these interpretations. The “mammy”, “sapphire”, and “Jezebel” are all negative implications towards the womanhood of Black women as well as associate these terms with Blackness. White mothers or mother figures are not showcased as “mammies”,

because it is meant to degrade and inferior. As a result, Black women are forced into an inferior positionality in comparison to other women and Black men.

Because Black women are depicted as inferior, the world uses these images of Black women and connects those ideas to describe all Black women. Doing this allows people who are socially accepted to dismiss Black women in social spaces. These perceptions not only affect Black women in fashion but throughout all aspects of society. Even in social psychological studies, Black women are underrepresented and undesired. To add, racial stereotypes are often used in a professional's perceptions of their clients (e.g., Jackson, 1983; Lopez & Hernandez, 1987). For example, both researchers and clinicians have sometimes considered Blacks to be poor candidates for psychotherapy due to their perceived paranoia, poor impulse control, lack of insight and verbal expression, and lower intellectual level (Lopez & Hernandez, 1987; West, 1995). Because of these implications, Black people and Black women are never fully removed from the stereotypes. The perpetuation of these stereotypes limits the access that Black women have and the racial traumas that are present continue to flourish. Therapists specifically have a duty to engage their clients to assist in mental health, however, stereotypes against Black women limit the valuable assistance of therapists because therapists associate stereotypes with Black women and use those stereotypes as justification for behavior. The reality is that the problem is the perpetuation and association of stereotypes toward Black women causing Black women to be seen as inferior and irrelevant to society.

This paper notices the historical context in which the fashion industry has negatively impacted the Black female experience within the social atmosphere of western culture. Furthermore, this paper will continue to explore how racism and oppression within fashion not only contribute to the social discrimination of Black women but also how the social dissonance

impacts the mindset of Black women. The fashion industry has developed the social hierarchy of beauty in westernized culture, yet, Black women have socially transformed their identity through fashion. These concepts will be explored from a social psychology perspective.

The Fashion Industry

The fashion industry is a predominantly white institution that influences the beauty standards of women based on the male perception. Although less than 20 percent of the entire world is Caucasian, white people have managed to not only dominate an entire industry but also have coerced the rest of the world into engaging in self-oppression through the fashion industry. The fashion industry is devised by fashion designers and photographers who work together to create a unique vision using clothes and photography that is eventually interpreted as the standard of beauty to the viewers. Designers and photographers select models to make their vision come to life. Along with that, fashion magazines are publishers of content that prioritizes white beauty. Who are these designers and photographers, and what is their goal? Which high fashion magazines have the most influence?

When Black women are presented in fashion, it is to make distinctions. Black models challenge aesthetics, versatility, and beauty. Black models are also highlighted to show the impacts of their race within their modeling careers. Black women are underrepresented within high fashion, and the Black models that are chosen are tokenized. Tokenized models serve the purpose of exoticizing and emphasizing fashion ads. This article relates to the impacts of western fashion on a social level. Black women in society are used to show diversity within a space meant for whiteness. Black women are exoticized in fashion. The white male gaze is a target audience for fashion, which means Black women are the rare factor white men are looking for.

The point of being exotic in a foreign space also means many are not around, so Black women in fashion contribute to that idea. A token model also contributes to a “type”. By having a “type” in fashion, the female audience aspires to be the “type”. Fashion influences women’s beauty perceptions and aspirations. The racist implications of exoticizing Black women and tokenizing Black models contribute to the way society perceives Black women and Black women’s beauty. Along with that, racism has many levels of interaction, thus dismantling racism will require multiple levels. Bias exists within everyone, it’s just a matter of who can use their bias to advance some while discriminating against others. Many jobs are specific in their hiring process. Black people and other people of color are used to meeting quotas or markets to specific communities of color. Industries are dominated by white people, so Black people are used as tokens for the companies to show they aren’t racist. Even though Black people have representation in spaces, they aren’t given equal opportunity as their counterparts. Within fashion Black women are used as tokens, but are not given as many opportunities to elevate. Bias within fashion and beauty is in favor of white, thin women. To perpetuate white beauty standards, Black women within the industry are used to make white women look better. Black models are posed behind white models, or lower to display the submission of Black women, while white women stand out. Bias controls the way Black and white models are presented and bias controls the perpetuation of stereotypes and socially constructed hierarchies.

The fashion industry excludes the Black female body by associating beauty, desirability, and attractiveness with thin and light skin bodies. White models within the early fashion industry were petite and pale. Models such as Twiggy, Suzy Parker, and Dovima serve as the standard ideal model between the 1950s-60s. Researchers Dates and Barlow explored the different media portrayals of Black women between the 1960s- 90s. Date et al. (1990) concluded that the media

image of African Americans could easily be applied more broadly to media depictions of all racial minorities and women: “Black media stereotypes are not the natural, much less harmless, products of an idealized popular culture; rather, they are more commonly socially constructed images that are selective, partial, one-dimensional and distorted in their portrayal of African Americans” (p. 5) (Peak 2003). The image of the Black women is a false representation of the Black female experience. Media producers stick to a one-sided representation of Black women by only casting Black women in specific roles.

Even in fashion, Black models are used as props to elevate the beauty and quality of white models. Black models are often posed in submissive or low positions in relation to their white counterparts. Even when magazines use Black models throughout the pages, the cover photo is often a white woman. High fashion magazines do not prioritize Black women on the cover because the cover is reserved for the face that will gain the most traction. High fashion magazines such as *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Elle* have a lot of power in representation, yet they deliberately showcase white models on their cover. Fashion magazines are becoming more diverse, but moving rather slowly. In a content analysis of fashion magazines, Humphrey and Schuman found that the proportion of ads featuring Black people increased throughout the years, from 1% in 1950 to up to 10% in 1982. Black people consisted of 12% of the U.S. population, yet fewer than 12% of the ads in *Time* and *Ladies' Home Journal* featured Black people. In the current article, *The Great Awakening* by Healy and Mercante (2018), they look at the number of Black people that appear on high fashion magazine covers. These researchers zoomed in on the reality of fashion magazines. Looking at *Vanity Fair* magazine, Beyonce appeared on the cover in 2005. The next Black person to appear on the cover of *Vanity Fair* was Kerry Washington in the year 2013. This means in eight years, only two Black people have been on the cover of the

magazine (Healy and Mercante, 2018). Fashion magazines have already been diversifying their cover models, however, diversity does not include only Black people, but any person that is not white. . To avoid using Black people as often in fashion magazines, they diversify even more by showcasing models and celebrities who are white-passing but not necessarily caucasian.

Celebrities like Selna Gomez, Jennifer Lopez, and Prianka Chopra are often seen on covers to show that diversity. These women are women of color, however, features such as their skin tone and hair give them elevation, yet other features such as their lips, bodies, hair color, or eyes are fetishized and seen as “new” or exotic”. Content analyses of fashion media consistently show that darker-skinned women have and continue to be posed and styled in exotic juxtaposition to the normatively white female body if they are included in fashion at all (Mears, 2010). Black women that do make the cover seemingly have to be big-name celebrities or models. Beyonce Knowles, Kerry Washington, Tyra Banks, and Naomi Campbell are very popular celebrities who are chosen for covers. Tyra Banks and Naomi Campbell are also two Black models that are in high fashion, but not many other Black models have the same attention given. The fashion industry is very particular about the images they want to display and the message that is being received by their work. Racism within the fashion industry is perpetuated by leaving Black women out of the conversation of diversity and inclusion further oppresses Black women.

In a discussion by Ashley Mears (2010), her work looks at how cultural producers, agents, and clients ultimately reproduce culture by fashioning femininity along race and class lines. Features such as small waist size, hair length, and youthfulness are evolutionary ways in which feminity is described. Low waist to hip ratios is more desired, while fuller-figured women are often looked down upon in the fashion industry and do not get as many opportunities to model. Furthermore, white women who are full-figured are less likely to be recognized than a

petite Black woman. Although race is a factor within the fashion industry, production teams begin their search for models based on their body types first (Mears, 2010). Thinness is desired in western fashion because it pleases the white male gaze. White men desire people who are not intimidating and use those people to appear more dominant. Furthermore, body type also plays a role in social hierarchies. Body types within American culture have been used to signify wealth as well and social status. Throughout the 20th century, overweight bodies have signaled lower class standing, while a slender physique indicates economic power, self-restraint, and upper-class status (Bordo, 1993). With this, the industry is looking to showcase beauty and wealth in one picture. Petite white women are the ideal brand for fashion because white thin women are not intimidating. They are known to be more submissive to men, and thus appear more desirable and loveable. This trend continues and serves as the foundation for the models in the fashion industry. Although there have been shifts within trends, the normality of fashion relies on thin white women. As the fashion industry associates beauty with this thin, white ideal model, the media further normalizes the trend, and individuals, in turn, make these associations as well.

When discussing the fashion industry, it is important to remember that although fashion is targeted towards women, the visual aspects are catering to the male gaze. The male gaze is a term used to describe the perception of the masculine viewpoint. Men idealize women as well as other men, and then use those ideas within the media to portray a fantasy image of that woman or man to the rest of the world. Thinking about the male gaze and the control men have over the fashion industry as it relates to women, the idea of femininity is being broadcast. Femininity (and masculinity) is a social construct used to define the demeanor of people which would typically assist in identifying one's gender identification. Feminine traits are those defining behaviors of women, while masculine traits define men. The fashion industry uses femininity to

emphasize the behaviors in which society wants women to act. This includes hairstyles, posture, and gait while using props such as make-up, high heels, and other tools to provide viewers with a way to create this look for themselves. The industry uses images to control women's behaviors. Women in the fashion industry serve as props to carry out the criteria in which men create.

The fashion industry has also assisted in enforcing social hierarchies and perpetuating stereotypes against Black women for years. Fashion is meant to be relatable, fun, and invoke confidence. Fashion models are symbols and representations of societal beauty standards and desirability. Staying with the trend is what's important to people within society. With that, fashion is catered to white women, by white men. The idea behind fashion is appealing to the white male gaze. Ideas and standards that are attractive to white men are the images that the fashion industry reveals. In an archival research study, Millard and Grant (2006) found that Black models are posed submissively, whereas white women are posed more sexually. In addition to the racial differences in poses, there were also many gender differences found. Specifically, when women and men are posing together, they are posed in a way that symbolizes traditional relationships. Women are posed low, submissive, and dependent, whereas men were posed higher with authority and competence.

After examining the content it is clear that fashion magazine photographers intentionally pose models based on their race and gender when in paired and group photos. Also in their study, Humphrey and Schuman found that in 1950, Black people were never portrayed in dominant roles and were portrayed in subordinate positions in 62% of the ads. Furthermore, they found that all of the ads featuring Black people portrayed them in low-skilled labor positions (e.g., laborers, cooks, servants). By 1982, only 14% of the ads featuring Black people portrayed them in low-skilled labor positions. In contrast, White people were portrayed as high status. Race and

gender decide how a model is posed. Because of normalized views of social hierarchies, it is evident that fashion magazines continue to perpetuate these stereotypes. Black women are posed submissively because historically Black women have been caretakers of everyone (Black men and white families). Thus, they are posed in a submissive manner to show that Black women are at the bottom of the social ladder. White women are posed sexually. Sexual poses can also be interpreted as submissive, however, the white woman is more desirable. Sex sells and white women are shown to be the ones that are deserving of pleasure. When men are put in the picture, they are the most authoritative body in the photo since white men are at the top of the social ladder.

Furthermore, the social hierarchy created by the fashion industry displays ideas of beauty and self-perceived attractiveness by individuals. Belmi and Neale (2014) discuss self-perceived attractiveness and how that perceived attraction gives people leverage to support or deny inequalities. Belmi et al. used five different studies to display correlations between self-perceived attraction and responses to social inequalities. Study 1 was an online survey taken by 180 people of different genders and nationalities. Participants were asked to complete the survey based on the nationality they identify, however they could only choose one. Belmi and Neale measured self-perceived attractiveness and support for group-based dominance, legitimizing ideologies, subjective social class, and demographic controls on a 7-point scale (1= Strongly disagree, 7= Strongly agree). In the first study, Belmi and Neale found that self-perceived attractiveness significantly positively predicted social class and support for group-based dominance. Belmi and Neale also found that self-perceived attraction was positively associated with belief in legitimizing ideologies. Finally, Belmi and Neale used socioeconomic status as a mediating variable between self-perceived attractiveness and legitimizing ideologies and found that when

subjective social class was included as a factor, the importance of self-perceived attractiveness decreased.

In the second study, Belmi and Neale (2014) used self-perceived attractiveness to predict power. All participants then rated their attractiveness on a 7-point scale. Following the priming, participants answered questions about perceived power, social class, and economic status. Belmi and Neale measured perceived power and status, self-esteem, and support for group-based dominance. The results showed that the priming manipulation did have a significant effect on participants' perceived attractiveness, power status, and self-esteem. When compared to the control group, participants primed to feel physically attractive rated themselves significantly higher on attractiveness, power, and self-esteem than the control group, whereas participants primed to feel unattractive rated themselves significantly lower on all three measures. Belmi and Neale's (2014) study shows that social hierarchies are perpetuated from the fashion industry. Both studies presented make implications about the relationships between perceived attractiveness and social statuses. The fashion industry provides a guideline of attractiveness, and makes positive associations of attractiveness toward white, wealthy individuals, while Black women are associated with more inferior positions within society.

The racial and social disconnection within the fashion industry begins in the classroom. There are degrees available for many areas within fashion including designs, textile merchandising, marketing, and more. The textbooks used in fashion classes lack diversity and have little representation of women of different racial identities or diverse body types. Reddy et al. (2018) dissect the various textbooks used in fashion classes. Researchers gather multiple books to analyze the amount of variation in the model images used. Reddy et al found that 85% of the models within fashion textbooks are white, European women. Women of color make up

the final 15%. Of that 15% of women of color, they were majority light-skinned women. The over-representation of white and idolization light skin Black women is due to colorism.

Colorism refers to the “process of discrimination that privileges light-skinned people of color over their dark skin counterparts” (Hunter, 2007, p. 237). Within the media, light-skin Black women are highlighted whereas darker-skinned women are not represented. Furthermore, when the media presents a dark-skin Black woman, she is portrayed as the “sapphire” (West et al. 1995). Light-skin Black women are labeled as more the “more desirable” Black woman.

Therefore, when the fashion textbooks only display light-skinned Black women, it creates not only a racial division, but it creates colorism within the Black community.

Fashion magazines are not the only literature that creates division. Within fashion textbooks, it is understood that they portray racial inequalities within beauty standards and desirability between women. Both textbooks and magazines contribute to the division of women are through body discrimination. Within fashion textbooks and magazines, models are very thin. The average size of a woman is a size 8-10. However, fashion magazines predominantly display models size 2 or smaller. The fashion industry uses thinner models within illustrations, and this display tricks the larger population into believing this image is the standard. A study by Sypeck, Gray, and Ahrens (2004) used a 9 point scale to analyze the body images of models within mainstream fashion media(1= very thin, 9= obese). The study found that in the 1980s and '90s, models were considered thin. Over time, white, and Asian models were considered thin, while Black models showed an increase in models with larger body types. Black models were often rated higher on the scale when featured in Black magazines such as Ebony (Reddy et al, 2018). To continue, in a content analysis of Black versus white-centered magazines, Baker found that White women were much more likely to be objectified (i.e., with their faces hidden and emphasis

being placed on their physical attributes) than Black women in magazines geared toward White men, White women, and especially Black men. When Black women were presented with men in Black-oriented magazines, these women were portrayed in higher positions than the men with whom they are featured. In terms of physical characteristics, Baker found that overall the Black women featured in the ads had medium complexions, straight hair, and curvy figures. More specifically, when featured in White-oriented magazines, Black female models with lighter skin tones, straighter hair, and thinner figures tended to be presented (Baker, 2005).

The social division between ethnic groups in America has catered to the desires of white Americans. However, Black women have created a sub-culture of fashion and trends that cater to their identity and culture. In a qualitative think-aloud study that explored how Black women process information from Black and white magazines by Ogden et al (2012), he found that Black women respond more positively to Black magazines, whereas they show disinterest and rejection to White magazines. Black women are a group that has been at the bottom of America's social ladder for centuries. Black women have historically been exploited and robbed of the freedom to express themselves freely without being tokenized or objectified. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that Black women reject white magazines because it does not accurately project Black women, nor the values of the identity. On the other hand, Black magazines present Black women in a way in which the Black female audience can accept and indulge because it is relatable. The content within these magazines focuses on fashion and beauty. It is evident that Black women have developed their brands and fashion trends that they find are more related to their identity, which makes Black magazines more engaging.

Some magazines cater to Black women such as *Ebony*, *Jet*, and *Essence* and unlike other white-centered magazines, these magazines not only showcase Black women in various positions, poses, and aesthetics, Black directed magazines also look to showcase the natural features of Black women. Leslie (1995) conducted a content analysis of the portrayal of Black people in *Ebony* from 1957 to 1989. He found that the percentage of ads featuring natural Black hairstyles increased, while ads featuring straightened hair decreased and ads featuring a variety of Black hairstyles also increased. Also, ads featuring Black people adhering to White standards of beauty decreased, as did ads featuring Black people adhering to Black standards. The purpose of these magazines is not to perpetuate negative stereotypes of Black people, or even to diminish the beauty of white women. These magazines are made to represent Black women in a dignified way, while also showing the beauty, humanity, and respect that Black women have and are deserving of.

Based on the research, it is plausible to say that the fashion industry is racist and perpetuates oppressive ideals and images that contribute to the oppression toward Black women. Visual media has created ways to dismiss Black women and consider them inferior compared to just about every other community of people. On the other hand, Black women do not fully identify with the images being displayed and have created their own visual media representations that encourage the embracing of Black women and Black beauty. With the rise of Black centered fashion magazines, Black women are becoming increasingly more respected and socially accepted. *Ebony*, *Jet*, and *Essence* are not only centered on Black women but inspire and encourage Black women to see themselves as beautiful. The increase in representation of Black women with these fashion roles will motivate viewers of all races and genders to view Black women more positively. As positive images of Black women begin to cycle, it is more likely that

visual media industries will consider these new and more positive representations of Black women and use these representations to bring upon social equity within visual media.

The Magazine

The purpose of creating a magazine for this project is to re-invent fashion in a way that prioritizes Black women and showcases Black dark skin women in a desirable, and fashionable way. The magazine will also display various skin tones and body types to acknowledge the diversity of Black women and the Black female body. There is a difference in how women are represented in fashion magazines versus the way white women, white men, and even Black men are represented. This magazine will seek to purposefully spotlight Black women and center Black women amid others.

The magazine will touch on Black beauty, casual Blackness, and the freedom of being Black. Black women are denied the opportunity to showcase genuine humanity when being shown in magazines. Black women in fashion magazines often have the purpose of being a support to the white centers. This magazine will show how Black women are naturally beautiful no matter skin tone or size. It will also dismiss the notion of the “angry Black women”, the “ratchet and ghetto Black women”, and even the submissive “housemaid Black women”, and present a casual and “normal” perception of Black women. Visual media portrays Black women in ways that make Black women appear ignorant and inferior. The magazine will show Black women being casual and living everyday life. White women have many characters and personas that are represented in various ways throughout the media. This magazine will look to broaden the way Black women are seen in a casual setting. Finally, the magazine will display and emphasize the freedom Black women are entitled to. Oftentimes, Black women are overlooked

and underserved. Black women have been denied the freedom to have multiple perceptions, and have been limited and stained with the negative stereotypes mentioned throughout the paper. Black women are free to live and be whoever they choose, and should not be dictated by false visual media perceptions.

To complete the magazine, I recruited eight models: 5 Black women, 1 white woman, 1 Black male, and 1 Latino/Hispanic male. I used more Black women models obviously to showcase the variety of tones and shapes that Black women can have. Within the group of Black women, 2 dark skin women are thin, one plus-size woman with light brown skin, 1 light brown skin thin model, and one medium skin woman with thicker hips and a smaller waist, considerably a medium size. When recruiting, I only specified that there be only one white woman, one white male, and one Black male, while every other model needed to be a Black woman. I did request darker skin women as well, but I wanted to make sure there was a balance in the number of Black women overall. I used the non-Black women to dismantle the social constructs that are formed within fashion. These three individuals who were non-Black women were used to support Black women in photos and switch the positions of the models. The photos show the Black women in dominant, powerful, and superior forms while the other models are supporting the idea. The goal was not to minimize the existence of non-Black women but to show that Black women exist. By centering on Black women, and spotlighting specific elements of the Black women, the magazine not only redefines the role of Black women in visual media but also presents a way to showcase Black women more prominently.

A magazine is the best way to present my solution because magazines are a part of the foundation of visual communication media. Magazines set the tone of fashion because a

magazine is where women get all the information they need on beauty and fashion. The magazine is more direct and catches many people's attention. Not only that, being featured in a magazine, no matter how many times, is a signifier that the person being featured is someone to admire. Showing images of Black women in magazine form is a great way to show the fashion aspect of media representation as well as showing that Black women are admirable and worthy of being featured in a magazine setting. Magazines extend rank and display social hierarchy. Creating a magazine thus gives Black women elevation and the message can be received visually, quickly, and widely. It is important that the creative piece is able to be used by others even after my time at DePauw. This conversation needs to be continuous. A magazine is long-lasting and gives people the opportunity to engage with the content.

The magazine intersects many fields including political science, fashion, and a hint of psychology. These are all important factors that contribute to the conversation at hand. Exposing racism within fashion looks at race, politics, and representation. With that, the magazine looks at the effects visual media has had on Black women and compares the impacts white visual media has on Black women versus the impacts of Black visual media. I look to expose racism in fashion while discussing the social implication that racism has on Black women. While exposing the fashion industry, I will simultaneously be redefining and reestablishing positivity and beauty as it relates to Black women.

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