

Colorism in *Vogue*

A critical visual analysis of skin color discrimination, diversity and beauty in American *Vogue*
magazine

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ABSTRACT

Colorism is a form of racism that discriminates against individuals with darker skin and uplifts those with lighter skin. While this issue is often regarded as a detriment within Black communities of America, it stems from historical White prejudices and should also be analyzed and discussed through the lens of traditionally White-owned media such as *Vogue* magazine. *Vogue* has a great deal of influence on the women's perceptions of beauty due to its prestigious stature in the fashion industry. As the world of beauty of fashion is an ever-evolving industry, it is possible that the way *Vogue* chooses to depict beauty could be evolving over time, making it an appropriate medium to analyze how the presence of colorism plays a role in the magazine as well as its potential effects on how Black women's beauty is presented within the fashion industry. It was of particular interest to analyze any changes in diverse representation and beauty standards over a period time in order to determine if any significant changes have been taking place. A Visual Critical Discourse Analysis was implemented for this study in order to determine implicit meanings and themes within *Vogue* covers. The sample for the visual analysis consisted of 100 *Vogue* covers chosen over a span of 20 years, beginning from 2001 and extending to 2020. The process of analysis began with an initial codebook of elements to search for in the magazine covers that could provide insight into how Black women of varying skin tones were being represented. Next, open coding was used to establish and identify the overarching themes seen most frequently throughout the analysis. These main themes consisted of inclusivity of Black women, or tokenism, presentation and sexualization of Black women's bodies, evolution of beauty standards and changes in beauty branding. The findings show colorism's significant presence in *Vogue* throughout the years. Although there was a greater quantity of dark-skinned models featured in the latter half of the sample, the depiction of the women, use of reoccurring models, consistent presence of an ethnically ambiguous aesthetic and tokenism made the brand's

sense of diversity appear performative and potentially even disingenuous. There was also a disparity in how Black women were styled and presented dependent on their skin tone, with the lighter-skinned models often being presented in a more flattering and glamorous way than the darker-skinned models. The finding from this study will be able to contribute to previous colorism studies while broadening the conversation of skin color discrimination within racial groups to a larger phenomenon present in traditionally White-owned and globally influential media.

KEYWORDS: *Colorism, diversity, beauty standards, ethnic ambiguity, tokenism*

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1. Introduction

Actress Viola Davis claims that in order to find success in Hollywood you must either be “a black female version of a white ideal, or you have to be white” (Trent, 2022). This same sentiment that plagues the lives of Hollywood actresses extends to models such as Naomi Campbell who was outcasted from certain fashion shows due to the color of her skin (Oppenheim, 2016). The underlying issue being described by these women is colorism, a subset of the larger issue regarding a lack of diversity and inclusivity in certain industries. This issue has been frequently discussed across many forms of media as society’s outlook towards what counts as adequate representation progresses over time.

The purpose of this research project is to determine if and how the American beauty and fashion industry is making progress towards inclusivity and diversity by analyzing *Vogue* magazine covers over a 20-year time span and dissecting the prevalence of colorism. Part of the inspiration for this research stems from the influx of recent beauty and fashion brands such as Fenty Beauty and Fashion Nova which have been praised for being more inclusive when it comes to displaying different skin tones and body types in advertisements that deviate from the expected norm. With more modern fashion brands gaining popularity and recognition for marketing themselves as diverse, the shift in cultural convention is ongoing and it is important to determine how much progression is actually being made. Analyzing the characteristics of the women portrayed on *Vogue* covers from 2001-2020 will reveal the notion of any major cultural shifts happening within the industry.

It is apparent that there has been a lack of diversity and representation when it comes to models in the beauty industry, with Black women and other women of color being the least represented. While racism acts as an overarching issue in the world of beauty and fashion, there is also a more specific issue of colorism, a term coined by novelist Alice Walker as “prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their colour” (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.1). This phenomenon, while not new, has been a major topic of discussion in America within the last couple decades (Harris, 2018, p.2073). People’s self-perceptions and perceptions of others are often determined by colorism (Harris, 2018, p.2073). It is important to understand how this is reflected in this industry due to the massive impact it has on the self-esteem and well-being of young women and girls, with a large majority of adolescent girls finding that “magazine images determined their ideas of the beauty ideal” (Ogden & Russell, 2012, p.1588). Being

Black should be seen as beautiful and American media and society should be able to reflect this notion so that people of all skin tones can feel “beautiful, valued, significant, and loved” (Frisby, 2019, p.36).

It is important to specifically analyze colorism and inclusivity in a mainstream magazine such as *Vogue* because magazines act as a reflection of the most popular beauty ideals in the fashion industry (Ogden & Russell, 2012, p.1589). Founded in 1892 as a high-society journal and later bought in 1909 and transformed into a women’s fashion magazine, *Vogue* would become a publication with a distinct focus on “beauty, composure, and etiquette” (Brittanaca, 2021, para. 1). *Vogue*’s elite status in international fashion along with media makes it an institution that “potentially reaches transnational audiences” (Kuipers et al., 2014, p.2159). With the structural shift made to *Vogue* in 1988 with the transition of Anna Wintour as editor, the magazine began to emphasize women’s bodies rather than just their faces (Brittanaca, 2021, para. 3). With this transformation came a more frequent focus on mainstream celebrities who possess a wide outreach as cover models (Brittanaca, 2021, para. 3).

Vogue is a women’s fashion magazine with a primarily female audience, making it a useful medium to analyze how beauty ideals are typically marketed towards women in America (Britannica, 2021, para. 1). Recently, *Vogue* has attempted to market itself as diverse in comparison to the rest of the fashion world, emphasizing strides towards cosmopolitanism (Kuipers et al., 2014). This analysis will allow us to see how Black women are actually being portrayed in these magazine covers and if they accurately reflect the diversity the brand declares.

The importance of colorism studies stems from how deeply ingrained this issue is within American ideology. It can have major effects on every aspect of one’s life, from social to economic. While this matter can be observed as a superficial issue plaguing the beauty industry, it also has significant real-world effects and consequences for African American women (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.7). According to intersectionality theorists, it is not possible to understand concepts such as representation and diversity amongst women without looking at the broad perspective of race, sexuality and class all together (Mears, 2010, p.24). These three characteristics intertwine to construct a broader idea of femininity. Intersectionality allows for a deeper understanding of people’s unique experiences and adversities by considering all of the characteristics that can marginalize a person. By conducting a visual Critical Discourse Analysis

(CDA), a broader idea can be formed of how beauty and femininity are portrayed for women of varying social and cultural backgrounds.

A large part of social science research specifically deals with race studies (Dhillon-Jamerson, 2018, p.2087). Certain aspects of racism, such as colorism, have been overlooked or misconstrued by people. Much of the focus on colorism pertains to it being an intraracial issue, or one that occurs within a racial group (Dhillon-Jamerson, 2018, p.2088). It is often depicted as a functioning caste system in which minority groups hierarchize their own, but the root of this colorism and source of its existence is often ignored in scholarly discussions around race (Dhillon-Jamerson, 2018, p.2088). Interracial dynamics, or White colorism, is hardly touched upon. This is why it is important to analyze how colorism manifests in traditional White-owned media such as major fashion magazines, instead of adding to the many studies that have been conducted on colorism within Black communities.

When delving into discussions surrounding race, a CDA is useful because it is important to analyze language and imagery and the connotations they have because much of the language associated with this topic has been described by scholars as “complicated, powerful and revealing” (Waring, 2013, p.303). White Americans have over time have become accustomed to shifting conversations surrounding race to colorblind rhetoric, implying that everyone should be seen as equal and not judged by the color of their skin (Waring, 2013, p.303). While this colorblind rhetoric and overall idea of ignoring people’s race initially seems progressive, it actually diminishes the severity of the adversities certain people of color must go through, as well as creating a false and paradoxical sense of reality (Waring, 2013, p.303). Colorblind ideology also naturally establishes codes through language and imagery that become infused with harmful racial stereotypes (Waring, 2013, p.303). So, even if it is not always directly stated, the media’s portrayal of different women based on their skin tone can reveal the general societal view towards a variety of racial groups While it may be comforting to conceptualize a world in which skin color is irrelevant to one’s quality of life, the intense American history of race and its lasting consequences have made it inconceivable to do so.

The overall significance of colorism is often diminished by sociological discourse that conceptualizes it as a “subset of racism,” making it appear to be less of a threat than blatant racism (Dhillon-Jamerson, 2018, p.2088). Intraracial racism is more difficult to identify than interracial racism, with the latter typically manifesting in more obvious scenarios. The presence

of overt racism is decreasing, but covert racism, or colorism, is continuously increasing (Dhillon-Jamerson, 2018, p.2088). The idea of colorism being a covert or less easily identifiable form of racism stems from the idea of it being a “hierarchy within a hierarchy” (Dhillon-Jamerson, 2018, p.2088). Ultimately discussions of racism and inequality from scholars should include colorism because they are linked (Dhillon-Jamerson, 2018, p.2088).

This research is meant to add to previous studies on colorism and the shifting culture of the beauty industry towards diversity and inclusivity to see if we can notice any significant changes, patterns and trends over a 20-year period. A Critical Discourse Analysis of visual data will be implemented to provide evidence for an answer to the following questions:

RQ1: How does colorism play a role in Vogue Magazine covers?

RQ2: How has the presentation of beauty for Black women within the beauty and fashion industry changed over time?

RQ3: How has the presence of ethnic ambiguity and exoticism changed marketing within the beauty and fashion industry over time?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 American History of Colorism

In order to understand the concept of colorism (the preference for lighter skin and Eurocentric features) and its ongoing impact on the lives of Black women it is crucial to acknowledge the American history of slavery and colonialism (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.1). Colonialism is a large part of why American society has an ingrained preference for people with lighter skin (Egbeyemi, 2019). Although slavery existed before the enslavement of African people in the “New World,” it became “deeply associated with dark skin” (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.2). Skin color became an indicator of behavior, with slave buyers creating an association between a person’s skin color and the type and quality of a service they could provide (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.3). The discrepancy over black people’s skin color in America became prevalent when enslaved African women would produce children with white male captors, resulting in lighter-skinned mixed children who were preferred by white society over darker-skinned black people (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.3). A major contributor to the concept of colorism was the idea of splitting the house, in which the darker-skinned slaves would have to work outside in the fields and the lighter-skinned slaves would work inside of the house as servants (Frisby, 2019, p.39). The work of the lighter-skinned slaves was less physically demanding. White slave owners would naturally feel more comfortable around the slaves with lighter skin, sometimes even treating them as family members since they already worked inside the house (Frisby, 2019, p.39).

The way colorism is so deeply integrated into American history has allowed it to influence societal beauty ideals for women. During the seventeenth century, Eurocentric standards were becoming more widely accepted as the norm, influencing how Black women looked at their own bodies and faces (Laham, 2020, p.70). Around the era of the Jim Crow laws, hair straightening gained popularity amongst African American women, with this being another method of emulating Eurocentric beauty standards (Willett, 2010, p.10). Historically, African hair was often deemed unattractive and inferior to that of Europeans, being given the derogatory term “wool” to describe its texture (Thompson, 2009, p.833).

Around the 1940’s many of the advertising for makeup geared towards Black women was focused on skin lightening and utilized light-skin models in the advertisements (Frisby, 2019, p.39). Black-owned cosmetic companies also sold skin-lightening products, although they would rarely advertise them (Willett, 2010, p.10). Contrarily, White-owned cosmetic companies would

openly advertise these skin-bleaching products, depicting disturbing images on women's faces split in half, with one side black and one side white, to show the before-and-after effect (Willett, 2010, p.10). The harsh reality of how beauty advertising throughout history has placed such an importance on having lighter skin is a crucial element to why modern studies surrounding colorism within the beauty industry are necessary.

2.1.1 Roots of Colorism & Discourse Over Terminology.

Colorism as a term is commonly referred to within Black communities, describing a form of "black-on-black" discrimination (Hannon, 2015, p.13). Even with colorism being a phenomenon most commonly discussed in Black communities and within other racial minority groups, it is also important to distinguish "white colorism" and "white racism" as the catalysts from which these interracial discriminatory behaviors stem from (Hannon, 2015). Brown racism or colorism is the perpetuation of this same phenomenon within minority groups (Hall, 2018, p.2136). This is typically inflicted by minorities with lighter skin onto those with darker skin due to the hierarchy placed on skin tone from past historical confrontation with the White race (Hall, 2018, p.2136). The way minority groups are continuing to perpetuate colorism is a reflection and response to what has already been perpetuated in white spaces. Colorism within minority groups continues to hurt and disadvantage many people of color, but the colorism that stems from White people is what creates major imbalances in the economic, cultural and social lives of minority groups (Hannon, 2015, p.18). The reasoning for conducting a CDA within *Vogue* magazine specifically is to determine how colorism is present in mainstream media which often aims to appease a White audience. Part of the coding process will include categorizing the skin color of the models on *Vogue* covers, providing some insight into the potential evidence of skin color stratification not only within Black communities, but on a broader scale.

Social science research determines that skin color discrimination in Black communities is a response to exclusion based on skin color from White people (Hannon, 2015, p.14). Part of why the specific indication of "White colorism" has been ignored in many conversations regarding discriminatory practices is due to the assumption that White gatekeepers and racists are more likely to be guided by their racial prejudices in a way that generalizes Black people as one large group instead of recognizing and differentiating skin tones (Hannon, 2015, p.14). However, this assumption does not justify the erasure of White colorism and presentation of

colorism as an issue only within Black communities. Presenting White people's prejudices towards Black people as purely racist without the added acknowledgement of colorism underestimates the power of white privilege and the idea that the closer a person is to "whiteness," the more advantages they have in many aspects of society (Hannon, 2015, p.15). Within the United States specifically, colorism and racism are "intrinsically linked," as they share the same roots of White hegemony (Hannon, 2015, p.15). This is part of why it is important for studies such as this one to analyze and discuss the presence of colorism in traditional White-owned media such as an influential magazine like *Vogue*.

Research also indicates that the constant perpetuation of skin color stratification is partly due to the "similar-to-me effect" (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.6). A lighter complexion automatically translates as being "racially similar to whites," making people with this complexion more accepted amongst white audiences (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.6). Negative connotations towards darker skin triggers discriminatory attitudes like feelings of unease that cause a hindrance to the lives of many Black people. Black women see these negative effects not only in personal and romantic life, but also in the corporate world and hiring process due to the "what is beautiful is good" effect (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.6). This effect explains the link many people have between attractiveness and other positive characteristics, perceiving that people with lighter skin will also share attributes like high intelligence and professionalism (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.6). The negative connotations placed onto darker skin tones is an important factor to regard when analyzing representation and inclusivity seen in the fashion industry.

2.2 Influence of The Beauty Industry

The American beauty industry is particularly influential due to globalization. The modern phenomenon of globalization can be defined by the export of "cultural, social and economic criteria" (Hall, 2018, p.2135). Pop culture is one of America's biggest exports, so the production and distribution of films, television, music, advertisements and other mass media such as magazines has the power to spread "Western ideals of beauty" to the rest of the world as well as throughout the country (Laham, 2020, p.67). The increasing significance of relationships between nations and their culture is due to more international trade and interactions along with technological advances (Hall, 2018, p.2135). Women around the world compare themselves to the beauty standards established in the major fashion capitals; particularly the United States due

to the country's large influence through media (Thompson, 2009, p.846). The influence of America's beauty ideals on the rest of the world is part of why it is important to analyze the American edition of *Vogue* and how it presents beauty to its audience.

New York, Paris, Rome and London have been regarded as the fashion capitals of the world, especially around the time of the early 2000s (Steele, 2019, p.73). The branding of these particular cities as fashion capitals has created a shared assumption of a "hierarchy of cities" which hold the most fashion influence on the rest of the world (Steele, 2019, p.73). Therefore, the beauty standards most prevalent in these major fashion capitals affect how beauty is perceived throughout the rest of the world, as they all contribute to shaping a global hegemonic standard of beauty (Yan & Bissell, 2014, p.206). The presentation of models in magazines from these major fashion capitals largely highlights "femininity, glamorization, and sexuality" while also emphasizing westernization and Eurocentric beauty standards (Yan & Bissell, 2014, p.207). There is also a general consensus between these fashion capitals that young and thin bodies are an aspect of this beauty ideal (Yan & Bissell, 2014, p.208).

2.2.1 Importance of Representation: Self-esteem and Perceived Self-worth.

The importance of highlighting colorism in the beauty industry stems from the massive impact the beauty industry has on the self-esteem and self-worth of young women and girls. The cultural influence of the cosmetic industry greatly affects people's perception of beauty and their own attractiveness. Many men and women are constantly striving to become more attractive, but the attributes that make someone attractive are constantly shifting with the times (Hunt et al., 2011, p.9). The things that are considered to be beautiful are constantly evolving because "when society changes, so does the perception of beauty" (Hunt et al., 2011, p.9). The media is incredibly powerful in that it both "threatens and supports positive body image in girls" (Lamb et al., 2016, p.17). According to research, the media has a serious impact on how both adolescent girls of color and White adolescent girls view their bodies, self-concept and self-perception (Lamb et al., 2016, p.18). Black women are faced with a White aesthetic presented as the norm since they are children, "from Miss America to the Barbie doll" (Thompson, 2009, p.840). There are even many nursery rhymes based around the notion of colorism that young Black girls are faced with hearing and internalizing throughout their adolescence.

*“If you’re black, stay back;
If you’re brown, stick around;
If you’re yellow, you’re mellow;
If you’re white, you’re all right”*

(Frisby, 2019, p.36).

The importance of representation for Black women extends further past the color of people’s skin. Subcategories of colorism like featurism and texturism explain why Black women have such an emotive connection to their hair which is often “linked to one’s lived experience” (Thompson, 2009, p.831). Long, straight hair is an example of a Eurocentric beauty standard that is idealized and seen as most attractive. Texturism, or the idea that straighter hair or more loosely defined curls are superior to kinkier curly hair, affects many Black women’s notions of attractiveness (Thompson, 2009, p.832). This causes them to assimilate through hair straightening and other hair altering practices. Hair texture and length are not just markers of beauty, but also femininity, creating a link between African features and masculinity that further hurts the self-esteem and perceived desirability of Black women (Thompson, 2009, p.832). Straightened hair is also often linked to “socio-economic mobility,” due to the notion that it is more professional looking and thus garners more economic opportunities (Thompson, 2009, p.843). With physical features playing an integral role in colorism and how Black women are perceived, these factors will be included as codes to observe throughout the initial coding process of the analysis.

Whiteness as the beauty standard affects the self-esteem of Black women to the extent that it influences their regular grooming habits. Ascribing to a particular aesthetic influences what beauty and fashion products people purchase. Social comparison theory allows for an understanding of why people compare themselves to the societal beauty standards set in place (Thompson, 2009, p.838). With this theory in mind, the normative hair standards influence one’s perceived level of attractiveness and personal hair style choices (Thompson, 2009, p.838). This makes it extremely tempting for Black women to align their hair style choices with the beauty ideal that is promoted by mainstream media such as magazines, commercials and print advertisements (Thompson, 2009, p.839). Perms, wigs and weaves have all become a “normative part of Black beauty” (Thompson, 2009, p.847). Mainstream Black celebrities have contributed

to this normalization of having long and straight hair due to how they are presented in film, advertisements and on red carpets.

The presence of colorism in modern society directly affects not only the perceived self-worth, but also the livelihood of Black women. With darker-skinned women in America often being perceived as less attractive, they are disadvantaged in the dating market and less likely to have dating success (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.5). Since a more Eurocentric aesthetic is seen as normative, anything that deviates from this norm is “othered” and therefore seen as less desirable (Dowrich, 2020, p.10). Criticism of Black women’s appearance comes from both “in-group” and “out-group” members, with Black men also showing a preference for more Eurocentric features when they date Black women (Lamb et al., 2016, p.20). Skin-color stratification is also heavily linked to body image. African American women’s satisfaction with their skin color is connected to satisfaction with overall appearance and even specific body parts (Lamb et al., 2016, p.20). For many Black women, the difficulty to manipulate skin color causes it to become heavily linked to perceptions of all other physical characteristics as well (Lamb et al., 2016, p.20). The negative stereotypes associated with darker skin leads to social disadvantages from being treated like second-class citizens (Frisby, 2019, p.36). Studies show that lighter-skinned women with traditionally European features have experience more social acceptance resulting in higher self-esteem and more social benefits than darker-skinned women (Robinson-Moore, 2008). Those with lighter skin tones tend to be offered “greater opportunities, resources, and privileges” (Frisby, 2019, p.39). Society’s affinity towards lighter skin can impact people with darker skin tones in a number of ways such as fewer job opportunities, longer prison sentences and lower income (Frisby, 2019, p.39).

While we can acknowledge the progressive strides being made towards greater diversity today, the pain and insecurity stemming from skin color prejudice is so deeply ingrained within American society, stemming from the days of slavery and colonialism (Dowrich, 2020). It may take time to recondition and reshape people’s perception of beauty to reach a point where people of all races and body types can feel like they are beautiful, desired and worthy of love. Identifying any misrepresentations or potentially poor representation of Black women within the beauty and fashion industry through such studies on colorism could lead to change in how brands such as *Vogue* represent people. With such change could emerge accountability from other major

fashion brands from the fashion capitals of the world that may be upholding and promoting similarly constrictive paradigms of beauty.

2.3 Beauty Standards

Whiteness being marketed as the ideal aesthetic and beauty standard has remained a norm in American advertising for centuries (Shankar, 2019, p.112). White supremacy was the basis for most advertising during the pre-civil-rights era, featuring white bodies as “paragons of purity” (Shankar, 2019, p.112). During the post-civil-rights era there was a notable shift towards multicultural advertising that aimed products towards a broader range of people (Shankar, 2019, p.113). Nonetheless, there is a very specific and narrowly constructed concept of “femininity in white terms” (Mears, 2010, p.22). Within the fashion industry clients tend to choose models based on the consumers they have in mind and how they assume they would respond to them (Mears, 2010, p.22). A study from Style.com regarding a 2007 collection during Fashion Week shows that out of 677 models featured from fashion houses there were only 27 non-white models, yielding “less than 4% minority representation on the catwalk” (Mears, 2010, p.23). Fashion models act as a representation of the often-oppressive beauty standards upheld and promoted in the industry along with the blatant objectification of women’s bodies for “patriarchal and capitalistic gain” (Mears, 2010, p.23).

Societal beauty standards largely emphasize Eurocentrism, not only in skin color, hair and features, but in other physical characteristics such as body type. The gap between the idealized fashion model’s body and the body of an average woman is becoming more significant as time passes (Mears, 2010, p.23). While skin color is usually a more identifiable attribute of one’s race, bodies are also racially coded, with the “size zero” look being most associated with whiteness (Mears, 2010, p.22). The body positivity movement and other self-love movements of the 21st century have worked to encourage many women to find themselves beautiful and embrace their natural bodies, but the fashion industry still promotes a specific appearance as the most beautiful. While much of the body positivity movement has utilized social media platforms to promote the acceptance of diverse body types, there are still other body type movements such as the “thinspiration” and “fitspiration” movements that typically encourage “disordered eating and unrealistic thinness” (Lazuka et al., 2020, p.85). Along with having narrow views on body image, the fashion industry particularly finds younger women to be desirable and often shuns the

appearance of older women. This concept of ageism feeds into the idea that the natural ageing process is undesirable (Lewis et al., 2011, p.101). These factors are important to observe throughout the initial coding process of the CDA in order to analyze how all aspects of beauty standards for Black women within the fashion industry have changed over time.

In the late 2010s and early 2020s models and actors have been more publicly vocal about social issues such as harmful beauty standards. In 2022 supermodel Bella Hadid spoke out about having reconstructive surgery on her nose at 14-years-old due to insecurities towards her Palestinian features. This went on to spark conversation from the public about the immense pressure to fit into the Eurocentric beauty standards, the need for White features to prevail in the modeling industry and the power that fashion media has on young girls (Mohammed, 2022). If women in the modeling industry with lighter skin feel such a pressure from society to look a certain way, the pressure towards those that differ from these standards in more ways, such as skin color and body type, are likely to feel that same pressure on a much more intense scale.

2.3.1 Depiction of Black Women.

There are distinct differences in how dark-skinned and light-skinned women's bodies are portrayed in the media. There is an imperial gaze placed on women of color's bodies while White women are commonly associated with purity as "something to be protected" (Mears, 2010, p.24). When darker-skinned women appear in fashion media they are often stylized and posed in a sexual manner to emphasize their exoticism and juxtapose the White female body (Mears, 2010, p.24). Women's sexualization is also linked to how bodies are categorized due to social class. Throughout the 20th century overweight bodies became associated with a lower class while thinner bodies indicated a higher-class status (Mears, 2010, p.24). Since a higher economic status is intrinsically linked to whiteness, these is a popular depiction of "sexually restrained bourgeois white women" and the contrasting "working-class women of color" (Mears, 2010, p.24). These constructions of femininity lead to the inherent association between the female body, whiteness and thinness. This association is why this study aims to analyze the intersectionality of race, skin color and other identifiers such as body type. Searching for indicators of objectification throughout the analysis will provide insight into how certain physical features intersect and result in themes of particular narrative portrayals of Black women.

As this study pertains to a potential shift in culture seen over time, it is important to observe how Black women have been previously portrayed in the media. Analyses of magazine advertisements from the 1990s shows that the Black women being featured would most often have Caucasian features and lighter skin than their male counterparts in the image (Keenan, 1996, p.905). Advertisements from the late 1960s to 1990s for black-owned magazines like *Ebony* or *Jet* were more likely to associate words such as “pretty, lovely, and beautiful” with the lighter-skinned black women in the photos (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.5). Women who upheld Eurocentric beauty standards were more likely to be featured in the forefront of advertisements, furthering the notion that the value of beauty lies not only in the color of your skin, but the specific shade (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.5). Based on studies conducted in the late 1900s, Black women with lighter skin and Caucasoid features were preferred over other Black women when appearing in movies, music videos and advertisements (Neal & Wilson, 1989, p.328). The effects of such beauty standards on Black American women are psychologically significant and impact feelings of “perceived self-worth, intelligence, success, and attractiveness” (Neal & Wilson, 1989, p.324). These effects are important to identify and analyze because of the significant role physical features have on the lives of Black Americans (Neal & Wilson, 1989, p.323). Articles from 2005 mention the increase in quantitative representation in American advertising, with each year being better than the last (Mayo et al., 2005). However, the question of whether this representation is meaningful or a “true picture of African Americans” has remained over time (Mayo et al., 2005, p.49). This type of research aims to contemplate this question and dissect the meaningfulness of this noted rise in quantitative representation. While in recent years beauty and fashion brands such as *Vogue* have been praised for pushing boundaries and being inclusive due to their incorporation of models of color, the specific features of the models they choose may still be perpetuating colorism and the Eurocentric beauty standards that they claim to be dismantling. A visual analysis of *Vogue*’s magazine covers will address how the fashion industry chooses to promote diversity and inclusivity by interpreting meaning within the covers.

Even with increased media representation, when Black women are highlighted the models and actresses depicted are typically still representative of some sort of Eurocentric beauty ideals, including “body type, skin color, and hair texture” (Sekayi, 2003, p.469). They usually have lighter skin, thin body types and straightened hair. Exceptions are sometimes made to the preference of this particular aesthetic, with darker-skinned women and traditionally African

features sometimes being praised for appearing “exotic” (Sekayi, 2003, p.469). However, even the darker-skinned Black women featured are often demonstrating other forms of Eurocentric standards, often still being “as thin as any White model” (Sekayi, 2003, p.469). Also, praise for appearing exotic can be linked to fetishization which is often an issue that women of color face. Those who are identified as the “other” in society are often recognized as erotic objects for those in more powerful positions to fetishize (Lalvani, 2009, p.264). This process takes place because “power functions not just as a prohibition, but as an incitement as well” (Lalvani, 2009, p.264). The sexualization of darker skin and Black bodies comes from a need for differentiation and hierarchization which is established through sexual modes (Lalvani, 2009, p.264). Being fetishized and sexualized also contributes to objectification. Black women are looked at as sexual objects, with their bodies being put on display and ogled at for people’s amusement and fascination (Lamb et al., 2016, p.21). Their bodies have been stereotyped as “hypersexual, animalistic, manipulative, and promiscuous” due to their historical image as the “Jezebel,” a portrayal of Black women as morally unrestrained temptresses that was used as a justification for the exploitation and rape inflicted by White men (Lamb et al., 2016, p.21). These negative and harmful stereotypes are the factors to consider and search for when analyzing magazine covers and determining their meaning.

While societal beauty standards have great influence over Black women, Black women themselves also hold a great deal of influence, becoming an integral aspect of the consumer base for the beauty industry. Women of color spend much of their disposable income on makeup (Frisby, 2019, p.39). Research shows that many Black women specifically end up spending twice as much money on skincare and beauty products because they are forced to go through a trial and error process when finding their proper shade of foundation or concealer, causing them to purchase more makeup than they need (Frisby, 2019, p.38). Black women have immense buying power that generates billions of dollars for an industry that often does not bother to cater to them (Frisby, 2019, p.38). Black consumers are extremely influential in so many aspects of mainstream culture, often influencing the buying habits of non-Black consumers by establishing trends (Frisby, 2019, p.38). From a marketing viewpoint it would make sense for many brands to move towards adhering to people of color in a way they had not been previously. According to the US Census, due to the increased presence of interracial relationships most Americans will

belong to an ethnic minority group by 2044 (Frisby, 2019, p.38). Brands will likely continue to adapt and diversify their products and advertising to reflect the times.

2.4 Ethnic Ambiguity, Exoticism and The Future of Beauty Marketing

With the shift being noticed over time towards greater diversity and representation in the media, it is important to observe how certain groups are represented. Lighter skinned Black women will often be featured more in the media and are even made to represent the whole of their racial group which consists of a wide variety of shades. Many Black people with lighter skin are biracial or multiracial, being mixed with another ethnicity. Biracial people who can “pass for White” benefit from certain societal privileges when they are able to emulate a fully White European phenotype (Harris, 2018, p.2074). Historically, many biracial Black people with very light skin that could “pass” for White would fully identify as White in order to escape the adversities that would come with being in a racial minority group (Harris, 2018, p.2074). There are many biracial Americans who still prefer to be more closely associated with their whiteness as a means to stray away from all of the negative connotations associated with darker skin (Harris, 2018, p.2074). Those negative connotations such as “poverty, ignorance, violent behavior, and unattractiveness” are still present, even if not always explicitly stated (Harris, 2018, p.2074). While the negative effects of colorism tend to be more detrimental to the lives of darker skinned black women, light-skinned black women also face negative repercussions to such beauty standards. They can be ostracized from Black communities due to appearing lighter, creating a sense of alienation from their own culture leading to self-identity struggles (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.7). Like darker skinned women, they also tend to be fetishized in media with how they are represented. American history has associated the term “exotic” with “racialized, gendered and sexualized implications” (Waring, 2013, p.300). While the notion of being exotic can be seen as complimentary when directed towards lighter-skinned Black people in the context of beauty and dating, the aforementioned negative stereotypes linked towards exoticism are difficult to disguise.

Ethnic ambiguity, or “the absence of any one prominent ethnic or racial feature that is easily discernible to one specific group,” has become a central aspect of many marketing campaigns for cosmetics (Johnson-Hunt, 2020, para. 4). Popular modern beauty brands like Fenty Beauty and Kylie Jenner Cosmetics “employ ethnic ambiguity to sell dreams of

homogenized beauty” and consequently “expand their consumer influence” (Johnson-Hunt, 2020, para. 4). This rise in the use of ethnically ambiguous models has been prominent since the early 2000s (Johnson-Hunt, 2020). While some see this as “an effort to answer the global desire for diversity and inclusion,” others view it as “another form of appropriating and fetishizing ethnicity” (Johnson-Hunt, 2020, para. 5). The idea that adapting an ethnically ambiguous look is a form of appropriation or fetishization is present because many White women are able to benefit from the aesthetic aspects of other cultures while simultaneously reaping the privilege of their Whiteness. Conversations surrounding cultural appropriation in America constantly circulate due to Black Americans’ ability to “create, dictate, and drive the American fashion and design industry” (Brown & Kopano, 2014, p.62). While Black Americans are often not fully accepted into “White high society,” they still contribute to determining what becomes trendy and popular within the fashion industry (Brown & Kopano, 2014, p.62).

To some extent White women have been influenced to change the color of their skin to adhere to beauty standards through tanning culture. The appeal of tanning is a more recent development, for throughout history pale skin has been the “archetype of aesthetic beauty” (Heckman & Manne, 2011, p.7). While a pale complexion has historically had a connotation of high social status, tanned and dark skin has been stigmatized. Throughout the 20th century these connotations surrounding tanned skin morphed, with there being a greater emphasis on the health benefits of sunbathing (Heckman & Manne, 2011, p.14). This created a large market for tanning in the fashion industry, with the French designer Coco Chanel furthering the popularization of tanning by appearing with darkened skin in 1929’s *Vogue* magazine. (Heckman & Manne, 2011, p.16). A sort of dichotomy has been established between pale and tanned skin being the rivalling standards of beauty for White women. This more recently desired aesthetic that moves slightly away from traditional Eurocentrism is also in a way forcing White women to adhere to an unattainable beauty standard (Thompson, 2009, p.841). All women are now being expected to meet somewhere in the middle of White and Black aesthetics in order to achieve the most sought-after traits of each race. In this way, the seemingly biracial or ethnically ambiguous woman is becoming a new subset of the beauty standard. This is still a beauty standard that favors White woman, being that they are able to assimilate more seemingly to ethnic ambiguity by donning a more “urban” style of clothing and makeup, tanning their skin and even undergoing cosmetic surgeries to resemble women like the Kardashians who have played a

major role in setting this aesthetic as the new standard. Ultimately, out of skin tone, body type and hair texture, skin is the most difficult feature to alter (Sekayi, 2003, p.469). While skin lightening practices have been prevailing for plenty of time, it is not as common or popular to alter one's body in this way in comparison to hair altering or body altering techniques. White women are then able to benefit from this racially ambiguous aesthetic and also the traditional White aesthetic at the same time, as they can alter other attributes to fit a particular aesthetic while either remaining in their White skin or tanning. For this reason, the "biracial" aesthetic continues to be detrimental to darker-skinned Black women and their perceptions of beauty, continuously perpetuating colorism while allowing brands who display this aesthetic to appear diverse.

2.4.1 Shift in Culture.

The presence of colorism within mainstream media has shifted over time, with there being a larger presence of darker-skinned models and actresses within cosmetic and beauty advertising (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.7). This shift could be due to the changing social landscape over the years, with the target audience for younger up-and-coming beauty brands setting particular expectations for the well-known and established major beauty brands. When brands limit their selection of shade ranges for the makeup they sell, the public responds with outrage and demands change. This control that the public holds in having beauty brands reflect the changing times and social or political climate is largely due to the rise of social media. With the immense power that the Internet and social media has had within the 21st century brands are able to receive direct feedback from the public on their advertisement campaigns and business ventures, making outrage and backlash over a glaringly obvious lack of representation immediate and impactful on the brand in question. Social media has allowed for people to speak out about societal issues and demand change. With the rapid pace of technological advancements and the continued rise in social media, public discourse is constantly evolving (Carney, 2016, p.183). Those who consume media have become "interactive social agents" rather than "passive audience members" (Carney, 2016, p.183). Culture and society have a great deal of influence over consumer behavior especially in the world of beauty and cosmetics (Hunt et al., 2011). As societal standards change along with perceptions of beauty, these industries are expected to respond and adapt to keep up with modern expectations. It is possible with this shift that people's perception of beauty has

been changing to include darker-skinned Black women and other minorities that do not fit into the traditional Eurocentric beauty mold that had been set as the standard within this industry. However, it is also possible that beauty and fashion brands catering to darker skin tones is a current and “fading social movement” that will have little to no actual impact on the socio-economic gaps still present between lighter and darker skinned people in the real world (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.7).

Even with such a notable shift, colorism has continued to have a great deal of influence largely due to the presence of technology and the power mass media has on today’s society (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.4). The difference in treatment of Black actresses and models always seems to depend on their skin tone. It can still be clearly seen in advertising and film how “the preference for light-skinned women of color is evident, as it is rare to find a dark-skinned woman in a positive leading role or as a love interest” (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.4). Lighter-skinned black women have become the default choice in the film industry when a black woman is to be cast. This is also the case for other forms of media such as music videos for rap and R&B artists (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.5). This preference within various forms of media comes down to who is seen as the most attractive, and therefore the most profitable. A visual analysis of *Vogue*’s covers will be able to decipher what type of look was seen as most attractive over time, as well as most profitable.

A factor to consider in how beauty has been represented for Black women over time is through changes in beauty branding. The cosmetic industry has always marketed makeup towards women to allow them to cover up blemishes and appear more attractive. For a large part of American cosmetic history, the makeup offered in retail stores has been extremely limited and ineffective for Black women (Frisby, 2019, p.36). Most of the time the makeup offered would not cater to darker skin tones and complexions. The cosmetic industry took a major shift toward the end of the 2010s, with the singer Rihanna’s *Fenty* brand launching in 2017 and offering a wide shade range of makeup with 40 tones (Frisby, 2019, p.36). The launch of her brand was met with positive reactions from the general public who applauded her for making strides towards inclusivity in the beauty world through her makeup and use of diverse models depicted in advertisements (Fetto, 2020). Following her lead, other major cosmetic brands began to widen their offered shade ranges to be more inclusive and possibly reap the same positive feedback as *Fenty*, creating an entire marketing trend in the cosmetic industry (Frisby, 2019, p.36). Along

with makeup options, the models used to advertise these products have been more diverse than ever. A major question to address when it comes to this shift towards diversity seen recently is the type and quality of representation for darker skinned Black women. Not all representation is necessarily positive. There is also a difference in how skin tones are represented depending on the type of media. Traditional White-owned magazines seem to be allowing for greater representation of darker-skinned models, while black-owned magazines such as *Ebony* or *Jet* have seemed to have a harder time letting go of the Caucasian phenotype, continuously prioritizing a racially ambiguous and lighter-skinned aesthetic (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.7). This could partially be due to a deeply ingrained sense of internalized racism that is present within the Black community and many other minority groups from having to conform to Eurocentric beauty standards for so long (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.7). This internalized racism contributes to the perpetual notion that colorism is an issue specific to Black communities, even though the historic roots show that this issue derives from White colorism.

An integral reasoning for implementing a CDA for this study is to reveal any hidden insights, allowing for a reflection of whether the representation and diversity in *Vogue* is tasteful or a form of tokenism. 2010 marked an important turning point in American advertising, with the results of that year's census causing many companies to focus more attention towards minorities (Shankar, 2019, p.114). Many corporations' tactic for displaying diversity includes centering whiteness as the focal point then juxtaposing this with a person of color (Shankar, 2019, p.114). Inserting a person of color into a piece of media for the sole purpose of diversification while still centering whiteness as the focal point of the story being told is a form of tokenism. Tokenism will often utilize people who epitomize ethnic ambiguity (Shankar, 2019, p.114). This will typically include a lighter-skinned Black woman featured that is "devoid of any racial, cultural, or linguistic specificity" (Shankar, 2019, p.114). The disingenuous nature of this marketing strategy can be seen as counteractive because its purpose is to attract more minority audiences, but it still adheres to a primarily White audience and how they would like to see diversity represented. Minority women have been either "portrayed according to racially specific gender stereotypes" or entirely "excluded from mainstream media" (Baker, 2005, p.15). While "the number of ethnic minorities in the media has increased in recent decades," this sense of diversity can be a shallow example of tokenism, or a disingenuous effort to include a minority group to appear more inclusive and progressive (Baker, 2005, p.15). Black women experience "greater

quantitative representation” in American magazine advertising as time progresses, but the portrayals of the models still shows a preference for a certain aesthetic (Donna et al., 2005, p.50). Part of the reason for the presence of disingenuous representation is due to the notion of color-blind racism. This concept alongside neoliberal ideology in America continues to disadvantage people of color, but does so in a covert way that appears egalitarian (Carney, 2016, p.186). This modern-day form of “new racism” is implemented when brands use people of color as tokens of diversity in order to appear inclusive and progressive to the public. The color-blind rhetoric also creates a false sense of comfort for those who are not discriminated against, allowing them to believe issues like racism and colorism are no longer prevalent (Carney, 2016, p.186).

Mainstream Black female celebrities such as Lupita Nyong’o, Rihanna and Serena Williams must be able to navigate colorism within their respective industries based on their hues and their propensity to “lay outside what whiteness dictates as acceptable” (Young, 2021, p.91). Colorism plays a large role in which Black women within the entertainment industry are “seen as the most authentic, the most commercial, and the most valuable” (Young, 2021, p.83). While often times men are able to be judged based on capital such as their education level and wealth status, women are typically judged foremost for their physical attractiveness (Medvedeva et al., 2017, p.187). Just as these other forms of capital are important for many men to be deemed as successful, racial capital for women in the entertainment industry consists of the cultural commodification of the roles they play. This makes it so that women of color must commodify their looks in order to gain recognition as a racial minority that is globally and socially relevant (Medvedeva et al., 2017, p.187). With the idea that the media assigns value to certain racial identities, it can be hypothesized that minorities with lighter skin will gain more opportunities and have a higher chance for success in their field because they “possess more cultural capital” (Medvedeva et al., 2017, p.188). Not only does Hollywood choose to highlight lighter skinned Black women and Black women with more Eurocentric features, but it also chooses to award and honor Black actors when they play roles that perpetuate specific racial stereotypes (Medvedeva et al., 2017, p.189). This is why the notion of diversity often appears so shallow and disingenuous. Black actors have been awarded and applauded for roles such as neglectful mothers, abusers, and in the case of Lupita Nyong’o with her breakout role in *12 Years a Slave*, slaves and servants. A visual analysis will allow for determination of how Black women of varying shade ranges are portrayed and commodified.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Methodology

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is used to analyze how meaning is communicated through textual and visual language (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p.1). Through an analysis of visuals, CDA aims to “reveal buried ideology” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p.1). Such an analysis allows for meaning to be determined beyond what is being presented at surface-level, a process that would be useful for determining a shift in culture. In this particular case, the shift being studied is regarding colorism, beauty ideals and inclusivity within the beauty industry. Determining the communicative aims of fashion magazine covers can be done by analyzing the semiotic choices made through the specific use of “language and visual communication” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p.30). CDA studies implicit meanings, or meanings that are not explicitly expressed, but more so alluded to (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p.30). When it comes to analyzing advertisements in a visual analysis, the images are meant to convey a certain message or feeling, but they do not have any fixed meaning. This leaves them “more suggestive” and open to interpretation and analysis (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p.31). Providing context for the imagery could also lead to wider variety of interpretation. Examining aspects of the image such as setting, colors, props, lighting and text will allow for an understanding of what is meant to be communicated.

CDA allows for deep reflection of broader themes within media. Through an analysis of *Vogue*'s covers I was able to begin conceptualizing the overarching messages being communicated about beauty, race and any other social or political issues faced throughout each year of the chosen sample. This analysis allows for a determination of how colorism is being represented in beauty and fashion with *Vogue* symbolizing this industry. This method allows for recognition of any reoccurring patterns or the emergence of new themes pertaining to diversity and the specific inclusion of Black women over time.

3.2 Data Collection & Sampling

The general analytical framework for a CDA breaks down the stages of analysis as selecting discourse, locating data sources, exploring background text, coding data and finding overarching themes, analyzing social relations, analyzing internal relations and interpreting the data (Mullet, 2018, p.122). To begin this process, I selected the discourse I want to analyze

regarding colorism and diversity in fashion and beauty due to the topic's societal relevance and my personal interest in this particular industry. Next, I identified *Vogue* magazine covers as my data source due to the impact that the magazine has on the fashion industry both in America and internationally. The magazine covers were gathered from the *Vogue* Archive website which archives all of the American *Vogue* covers from the 1890s to current day (see Appendix E). This archive database updates every month with the latest issue and digitalized cover (Gunatilleke, 2013).

A reason for using American *Vogue* magazines to identify societal changes stems from an anthropology perspective of studying culture and fashion over time to identify a society's value systems (Kopnina, 2007, p.364). Subjects traditionally studied through the lens of anthropology including "ritual and ceremony, dress, body, gender, sexuality, identity, meaning and globalization" all closely relate to fashion studies, as fashion and its importance to society has always played a major role in various cultural studies (Kopnina, 2007, p.364). *Vogue* acts as the perfect establishment to not only study an evolution of trends in fashion, but other visual identifiers that can contribute to popular discourses within cultural studies (Kopnina, 2007, p.366). Such an influential magazine can help identify and reveal insights into how beauty is packaged and sold to consumers and ultimately perceived and adopted into daily living. *Vogue* magazine comes in 19 different editions including American, British and Asian editions. It has high status as an influential fashion magazine and is regarded as a global institution (Kuipers et al., 2014, p.2159). The magazine's influence and high status in fashion and media allows for the trends featured in the magazine to influence "media around the world" (Kuipers et al., 2014, p.2159). *Vogue*'s brand identity has been carefully crafted and controlled over time, with each edition establishing its own style while still being marketable to a global audience so that readers may feel a connection to "global high fashion" (Kuipers et al., 2014, p.2161). Over time, *Vogue* has made more initiatives to address global issues from a social and political landscape, with the magazine's artistic and visual nature allowing it to transcend cultural boundaries and reach a large audience (Kuipers et al., 2014, p.2159). A form of media such as a fashion magazine may not seem like a source for political engagement and specific issues, but *Vogue* has managed to address its audience as "cosmopolitan consumers of global brands," opening itself up to conversations surrounding more than just beauty and fashion (Kuipers et al., 2014, p.2160). This method of facilitating engagement with its audience has also welcomed criticism of the brand's

social awareness and issues surrounding racial diversity and health (Kuipers et al., 2014, p.2160). The beauty and fashion industry as a whole face much criticism over its portrayal of specific body standards, racial stereotypes, oversexualization and exploitation (Kuipers et al., 2014, p.2161).

I found it of particular importance to analyze magazine covers due to the scarcity of linguistic research surrounding this form of media (Held, 2005, p.173). Magazine covers play a crucial role in the market value of print media, with their attractiveness contributing to “kiosk culture,” or the attraction to journals, postcards and magazines that decorate the check-out queues (Held, 2005, p.173). Covers act as a prime example of multimodal text types, deploying pictures, typography and language at once to create a unique meaning (Held, 2005, p.175). Along with this convention of meaning, a cover is meant to uphold a brand’s image and convey the aesthetic and values it aims to uphold. A magazine cover is meant to immediately capture attention and stand out against competitors in order to gain new readers (Held, 2005, p.175).

The data set for the visual analysis consists of 100 *Vogue* Magazine covers over a span of 20 years from 2001-2020. The chosen covers were analyzed within this time span. Each year has a unique cover for all 12 months. Five different covers were chosen for each year based on the Fitzpatrick Scale of Skin Tone (Sachdeva, 2009). With this scale I was able to determine which models featured during each year had the darkest skin types. Then, based on the classification of these models, I chose the five covers featuring models categorized by the darkest skin type for that year, looking at each classification in order of month, starting with January. The intention behind pinpointing the darkest skin tones featured from each year is to highlight the presence of colorism in the magazine during each point in time. The magazine covers acts as a reflection of what was seen and marketed as beautiful during each respective year. During some years within the chosen sample, the darkest skinned models would still only consist of tanned white women. Nonetheless, this sample allows for observation of any change, if present, in the representation of Black women, other women of color and particularly darker-skinned women over time as well as the overarching themes and beauty ideals encouraged in fashion magazines.

3.3 Operationalization & Analysis

In order to analyze the data, a combination of inductive and deductive coding was implemented. This process of abductive coding allowed me to elaborate beyond pre-existing

theory and data by “modifying, elaborating upon, or rejecting theory if needed” (Kennedy, 2018, p.5). This method allows for back and forth movement between known data and theories, allowing for the best possible explanation of the patterns found (Kennedy, 2018, p.5). The overall complexity and “messiness of social life” makes this type of qualitative research important because it allows for the reconstructing and reimagining of theories as they pertain to different contexts (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014, p.2). The process of an abductive analysis allows for a balance of theory and observation to determine new findings or add nuance to existing concepts. The flexibility of abductive coding allows for research to be conducted beyond the “predefined conceptual boxes” (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014, p.4).

I began the deductive coding process with a predefined scale for analyzing skin color. Skin color was referred to and investigated using the Fitzpatrick Scale of Skin Tone (Sachdeva, 2009). This scale is typically implemented in dermatology, but it is also useful for cultural studies. The scale denotes six types of skin color, with skin type I representing the fairest and skin type VI representing the darkest (Sachdeva, 2009). This scale was first used to identify the five covers featuring the darkest-skinned models of each year (see Appendix D). Throughout this initial process of categorization, I realized that this scale does not capture a very wide range of skin tones, with there only being three categories that could be used to adequately describe the Black models’ skin tones. However, I was still able to implement the scale and determined that its limited nature is an indicator that it is outdated and likely not the most suitable for future social science research. Once I was able to classify the skin types of the models displayed on the covers, I was able to further analyze the number of times each skin type is shown within the sample, leading to a further analysis of the societal context with which these skin types appear the most. Based on existing theory of brands becoming more inclusive over time, I predicted to see more of a presence of the darker skin tones in the latter half of the data set. Specifically analyzing the context of each cover that includes darker skin models in relation to the other covers from that year that feature White or pale-skinned models provided more context as to how diversity is being represented in the magazine.

Throughout the visual analysis I began with an initial codebook and also intended to search for additional visual cues and themes that explain what each image is communicating regarding beauty and race. The initial codebook was structured with a listing of general information about the model on the cover, including the month and year of the cover, the name

of the model, the number of the people included on the cover, the age of the model(s), occupation of the model(s) and the ethnicity of the model(s) (see Appendix A). Following this general information were the main themes including physical characteristics, styling, expressions and positioning, setting and text. The codes included in the physical characteristics theme were shade range of model, hair color, hair length, eye color, body type and body height. Styling included hair style, clothing, presence of cultural appropriation, makeup and accessories. Expressions and positioning included codes for emotions portrayed, interaction with objects and setting, posture of model, presence of objectification and eye contact. Setting included lighting tones, lighting positioning, props, background, foreground and color scheme of photography. Text included positioning of *Vogue* header and presence of model's name. Text from the cover was also coded to highlight any key words and phrases and highlight any relevant social and political trends present.

I also implemented inductive coding, or open coding, to creating themes and/or codes based on the information gathered throughout my analysis. I utilized the Atlas.ti program for qualitative data analysis to carry out my coding process. I was able to add codes to the existing codebook as I recognized the most important themes present in the data. This process of coding the data was initially tedious and daunting due to the repetitiveness found in the first half of the sample. However as certain patterns became more apparent throughout the coding process, it became easier to conceptualize certain narratives present about the beauty and fashion industry. I also found it challenging to categorize the Black models based on the scale I implemented in my codebook, with certain categories still displaying a great deal of variation in skin tone and failing to capture the true variance between some of the darker-skinned models. While initially finding this to be a hindrance, I chose to acknowledge this as another aspect of the lack of diversity in many industries.

Through this process I was able to create generalized conclusions based on my observations and interpret meaning from the data (Mullet, 2018, p.122). I contemplated the deeper implicit meaning behind why certain aesthetic choices were made for the particular model on each cover. The coding frame was then developed to showcase the final and most relevant themes that provided the most insight, value and nuance to the questions at hand regarding colorism, beauty expectations and ethnic ambiguity. The themes of the final coding frame

consisted of inclusivity of Black women, presentation of Black women, objectification and subjectification and evolution of beauty standards.

4. Results/Discussion

4.1 High Prevalence of Colorism in Vogue

Colorism, or skin color prejudice, is highly prevalent in *Vogue's* magazine covers. The results show a preference for lighter skin tones, as they are featured much more throughout the sample (see Appendix B). When Black women are featured throughout the sample, they are most often coded as V. (Brown, Dark Brown), then less often coded as the darkest skin tone VI. (Dark Brown, Black). Within the category V. (Brown, Dark Brown) there is still some variation in skin tones due to the sample not adequately capturing a wide enough range of tones. This chapter will explain how the context in which lighter-skinned and darker-skinned Black women appear on the covers provides broader intel into how the magazine presents diversity.

4.1.1 Tokenism.

The majority of models from the sample where White and the next most prevalent ethnicity coded was Black or African American (see Appendix B). Of the 37 Black models coded, 10 were of mixed ethnicity. Based on the Fitzpatrick Scale the shade that was featured the most in the sample was II. (White, Fair). Next was III. (Medium, White to Olive), then V. (Brown, Dark Brown), then VI. (Brown, Very Dark, Brown to Black) and finally I. (Light, Pale White). As theory states, colorism refers to the preference for those with lighter skin and Eurocentric features (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.1). A preference for lighter skin can be observed through these results, with the majority of models being White and having white/fair skin. The sample was chosen based on the darkest-skinned models of each year, yet those with lighter skin prevailed significantly. Whiteness as the ideal aesthetic being marketed has been a consistent norm in American advertising for centuries (Shankar, 2019, p.112). While there was eventually a shift towards multicultural advertising in the later 1900s, it is apparent that Whiteness as a paradigm still triumphs as the most marketable aesthetic, specifically in the fashion and beauty industry (Shankar, 2019, p.113).



Image 1. January, February, March and April 2011 Covers

Note. Retrieved from *Vogue* Archive Database (<https://archive.vogue.com/>)

While the presence of White models prevailed throughout the sample overall, it was also apparent that there were strides made towards diversifying the magazine’s cover models over time, with Black models being seen more frequently throughout the 2010s than the 2000s. However, a noticeable pattern observed throughout several of the sample years is that there is very often only one Black model featured for the entire year (see Image 1). This is when the sense of diversity turns into a depiction of tokenism. Tokenism becomes evident when a person of color is inserted into a piece of media for the sole purpose of diversification while Whiteness is still centered (Shankar, 2019, p.114). It becomes evident that *Vogue* treats its inclusion of Black women as a necessary act in order to reach a socially acceptable diversity quota. The trend of featuring one Black model for the year is seen throughout the late 2000s and early 2010s with many of the same reoccurring faces, including Rihanna, Beyoncé, Michelle Obama, Serena Williams, Lupita Nyong’o and Zendaya. As the diversity of the covers increases in the later years of the sample and Black women are seen more frequently within the same year, it is still these same women depicted. The year 2018 appears particularly diverse at first glance with its inclusion of multiple Black women and specifically dark-skinned women. However, when further contemplating the specific women chosen (Beyoncé, Rihanna, Serena Williams and Lupita Nyong’o) who have all appeared on past covers multiple times, it becomes evident that *Vogue* only feels comfortable displaying Black women when it comes to these particular faces. This begs the question of why the magazine denotes these particular women as its consistent signifiers of diversity. It also presents an idea relating to tokenism that a small bit of diversity is enough for brands to appear socially conscious and that certain faces can act as representatives of their entire community.

60% of the models were actresses, about 20% were fashion models and 20% were musicians (see Appendix B). The rest were athletes, politicians or coded in the “other” category as socialites or influencers. There are some implications stemming from the number of Black athletes, actors, musicians and politicians that appear in the sample in contrast with the very few Black fashion models. They must be commodified in some way or be able to entertain in order for their beauty to be praised. Of the 37 Black women coded, there were only six Black fashion models present (see Appendix B). It seems as though Black women are really only being represented as beautiful when they have something else to offer additionally. The Black women who appear, and particularly those with darker skin, must also be presented as strong, athletic or intelligent. In contrary, the White fashion models who appear in the sample can be presented in a much shallower way, simply for being traditionally beautiful. This could be seen as a negative, as their personalities are not being showcased and their names often do not even appear anywhere on the cover. However, it is also very telling that they are able to appear on the covers without having any additional attributes to offer because their beauty is enough to sell the magazine. Whereas the Black models who appear in *Vogue* almost always have to be an extremely well-known celebrity, such as Beyoncé and Michelle Obama who appear multiple times throughout the sample. When a Black fashion model is showcased on a *Vogue* cover, she is being portrayed as beautiful simply for her looks and not for being well-known in any other regard. The reason for this happening so rarely could be because *Vogue* does not choose to highlight the beauty of Black women as a selling point for their magazine. It would likely still be easier to sell their magazine with a White fashion model on the cover, because even if her name is not extremely well-known to the mainstream public, she conveys a traditional Eurocentric archetype of beauty that is easier to market than Black beauty and more traditionally African features.

This plays into the idea that Black women must have something greater to offer in order to be accepted by society or seen as beautiful. The lack of Black fashion models and reoccurring appearance of musicians and actors shows that Black women must provide some sort of entertainment in order for them to be valued and respected. Black bodies within the entertainment industry are commodified so that those with higher cultural capital are able to be more successful (Medvedeva et al., 2017, p.188). Therefore, the more Black women are able to offer in terms of both talent and looks, the more successful they can become. Those who are

deemed more attractive automatically gain more cultural capital, and since society most often deems those with lighter skin as more attractive, they “possess more cultural capital” (Medvedeva et al., 2017, p.188). Black women with darker skin must be able to accumulate cultural capital through their talents since they are not always provided the same opportunities and relevance as those with lighter skin based purely on their physical attributes.

The pattern of actresses and musicians being featured on *Vogue* covers more than fashion models could also be attributed to an American societal fascination with celebrities. Mainstream celebrities have become an integral aspect of marketing within the beauty and fashion industry. This is likely because they are able to reach the broadest audience, drawing in more readers to the magazine who might not typically be interested in fashion. In this way celebrity culture seems to have a major influence on the fashion industry.

4.1.2 Objectification and Subjectification of Models.

A sultry expression was coded most often out of all emotions, followed by happiness then tranquility (see Appendix B). Many of the models wore a very blank, almost lifeless expression which was either deciphered as tranquility or apathy/lack of emotion. Excitement was once coded for two instances, and anger appeared once. Standing was the most common body positioning for the models, followed by sitting then lying down. There was one instance where a model was jumping. The models almost always made direct eye contact with the camera, with the exception of four instances where there was no eye contact.

The majority of the covers featured little to no presence of sexualization or demeaning portrayal of the models (see Appendix B). The remaining 20% of covers featured some presence or a high presence of sexualization or demeaning portrayal. Overall, the models were not as sexualized as theory suggests they could be. This could be due to *Vogue*'s high stature and reputation as an influential magazine geared towards women specifically. *Vogue* is a high-end editorial fashion magazine with a prestigious reputation within the fashion industry to uphold. If there is to be any form of dissimilar portrayal of models based on their skin tone, it would likely be done through micro-aggressions and subtle styling choices that do not initially appear alarming, but upon a thorough analysis are revealed through reoccurring patterns. Presence of sexualization and the levels to which Black women are objectified depending on their skin tone could likely be more apparent for analysis done on a Men's magazine or a magazine intended for

both men and women. The knowledge that most readers of American Vogue are women may decrease the likelihood of the women on the covers being portrayed in a hypersexualized or demeaning manner.

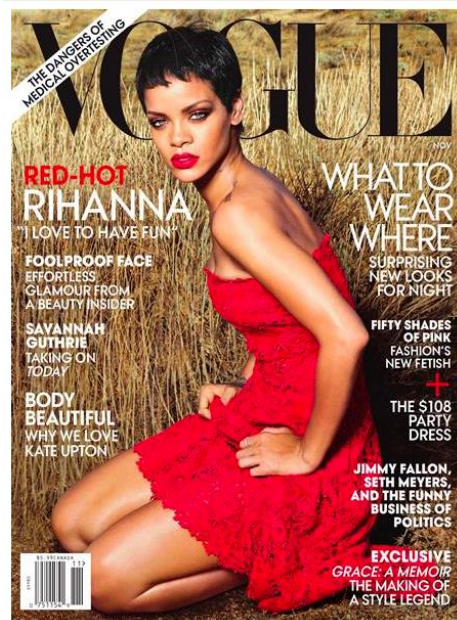


Image 2. November 2012 Cover



Image 3. April 2016 Cover

Note. Retrieved from *Vogue* Archive Database (<https://archive.vogue.com/>)

However, while the majority of women from the sample were not being overtly sexualized and objectified, the women that were portrayed in a more risqué manner were most often women of color or celebrities with a reputation of being hypersexual in the media. Actresses such as Penelope Cruz and Angelina Jolie, who each appeared multiple times throughout the sample, would be portrayed in a more sexual manner, wearing tight or revealing clothing and suggestive expressions. This is likely to match with the persona they often portray in their movie roles. The Black women that were portrayed in a more suggestive manner included musicians such as Beyoncé and Rihanna who are also known for being bolder and sexier with their aesthetics. Interestingly, Beyoncé appeared multiple times throughout the analysis and was sometimes portrayed in a sexual manner, but other times portrayed as soft and demure. This is likely due to changes in the creative team styling her and influencing the photography for each year. Rihanna was also styled in a more sexualized manner on certain

covers she is featured in depending on the year. Also, throughout the coding process, Rihanna was documented as multiple different skin tones (see Image 2 & Image 3). This could be attributed to different lighting, makeup and styling choices made depending on the year the cover photo was taken. The styling choices seem to vary on the covers, possibly dependent on how her skin tone is depicted. The singer's April 2016 cover in which her skin tone is coded as V. (Brown, Dark Brown) shows her in a sparkly and sheer long dress. She is coming out of the water and her body and hair are wet. Contrarily, her cover from November 2012 where her skin tone is coded as IV. (Olive, Moderate Brown) shows her in a short red sundress with floral lace as she sits in a wheat field. This look is more subdued and girly rather being overtly sexy and edgy. Theory suggests that there is a distinct difference between how dark-skinned bodies and light-skinned bodies are depicted due to the imperial gaze placed on many women of color's bodies (Mears, 2010, p.24). Darker skin is often exoticized, whereas White women's bodies are more commonly associated with ideas of purity (Mears, 2010, p.24).



Image 4. *April 2019 Cover*

Note. Retrieved from *Vogue* Archive Database (<https://archive.vogue.com/>)

The majority of covers showed the model covering the Vogue header. The remaining 22 covers featured the cover model behind the Vogue title, being covered by the letters (see

Appendix B). 80% of the covers featured the cover model's name explicitly stated in the text. The rest of the covers either did not state the model's name or only alluded to it through the use of a pun or word-play. Referring to the models' name in a pun instead of explicitly stating it could indicate that Vogue assumes its readers will know who the model is and have enough familiarity with them to understand the reference being made. The model's name not being explicitly stated anywhere in the text could also represent a form of sexualization and objectification of the model because they are being presented purely for their appearance and not the value of their name and persona. The covers which consisted of multiple people never included the models' names, but often would have one or two more famous celebrities in the photo who would likely be easily recognized without their name associated with them. Then, as seen in the April 2019 issue, surrounding them would be some lesser-known models of color (see Image 4). With the placement of their bodies and the more famous White actress being centered on the cover which aims to celebrate "global talent," the depiction of diversity does appear performative and as if ethnic models are being used to juxtapose the White female body (Mears, 2010, p.24).

4.2 Presentation of Black Women's Beauty

With there being a greater frequency of Black women featured in the second half of the sample years, it may appear on a surface level that Black women's beauty has been celebrated within the fashion industry more over time. This chapter proves insight on the type of representation presented for Black women and how they are not always portrayed in the most flattering light. This observation is especially seen when comparing the presentation of those with darker skin and those with lighter skin.

4.2.1 Styling & Setting.

The majority of models were coded with their hair styled casually, meaning it was worn down and intended to look natural and not too styled (see Appendix B). The next most popular hair style was an updo, some of which were messy and some of which were meticulously crafted. About 15% of models had their hair straightened and 10% curled. The rest were worn wet and slicked back or coded as "other." Many of the White women were styled in a more relaxed way, with the undone and messy look being a part of their appeal. They were most often styled with

hair appearing to be in its natural state, looking effortless or tousled. The darker skinned models are styled more meticulously in terms of hair and makeup. Less often are they seen with their hair and makeup emulating its natural state. This could be because of the notion that Black women appearing messy or undone is not seen as desirable in the same way that it can be for White women. Black women's hair is often not celebrated in its natural state by mainstream media, with Black women in the public eye often wearing wigs or straightening their hair. Since the Jim Crow era, hair straightening has been a practice for Black women to emulate Eurocentric beauty standards and escape the ridicule and negative association attached to their natural hair (Willett, 2010, p.10). The only Black woman to wear her hair naturally throughout the sample is Lupita Nyong'o who has very short hair. With her hair being so short, there is less of it to maintain and style. This could very well be the reasoning for allowing her to wear her hair with its natural texture. The pattern of hiring dark-skinned models with very short or even shaved heads has been very popular in the fashion industry since many hairstylists do not know how to style Black women's hair.

The specific control of Black women's appearance and why they cannot be portrayed in such a casual and relaxed way could also play into the idea that Black women's bodies need to be controlled more than White women's bodies because they are seen as inherently wilder due to exoticism (Mears, 2010, p.24). Casual styling may not be equated to sexiness when attributed to Black women in the same way it can be perceived for White women. The portrayal of women in more casual styling is also primarily present with thin women who make up the majority of the sample. A more casual look could be interpreted with a negative connotation as messy or disheveled when placed on a larger body, especially a larger ethnic body.



Image 5. April 2015 Cover



Image 6. September 2015 Cover

Note. Retrieved from *Vogue* Archive Database (<https://archive.vogue.com/>)

The large majority of models wore long dresses. The rest were styled in a shirt and top or short dress. 6 model were coded as wearing a bathing suit or leotard. “No accessories” was coded most often, then minimal accessories and only about 10 instances of multiple accessories on a model (see Appendix B). The lack of accessories could be attributed to a more simplistic and eloquent look the magazine wishes to portray when it comes to styling. There were some noticeable patterns in which the race of the model would play a role in how they were styled on the cover. Serena Williams is a professional tennis player who appeared multiple times throughout the analysis. She was one of the few dark-skinned women who appeared, and she was not styled nearly as glamorously as the lighter-skinned actresses and musicians. This could be due in part to her stature as a professional athlete, but the choice to make her portrayal less than flattering comes off as intentional when being compared to the styling of all the other models in the sample. This pattern of portraying darker skinned athletes in a drab manner comes up again with Olympic athlete Simone Biles in her August 2020 cover. She is simply dressed in a leotard that resembles something she would compete in, with little to no accessories and a

vague/nondescript background. The choice to portray these athletes in such a manner that purely focuses on highlighting their beauty from the perspective of their athleticism seems contradictory to the text on the covers that suggest a relationship these athletes have with fashion. Serena Williams' April 2015 cover includes the text "fashion's love affair with sports," but behind this text Williams is wearing a very plain dark blue dress that is not particularly flattering or memorable (see Image 5). The only accessory she has on is a simple bracelet and the background is just a plain blue wall. She is referred to as "Queen Serena," but it is not portrayed in a way that feels regal or like any genuine effort was put into highlighting and showcasing her beauty. In comparison to the September cover from the same year, Beyoncé is styled in a skin-tight long dress with floral motifs and lace (see Image 6). Her hair is wet to match the sexual nature of her styling and suggestive gaze. The choice to style Beyoncé in a more glamorous manner could be attributed to her lighter skin tone, whereas Williams who has darker skin is made to look understated. The difference in their styling could be attributed to the desirability of lighter-skinned Black women over darker-skinned Black women, with Black women who uphold more Eurocentric features historically being regarded as prettier and more desired (Egbeyemi, 2019, p.5).

While the argument could be made that since Williams' profession is not closely linked to fashion, it should not be expected for her to be styled glamorously. However, many of the other women who are also not closely linked to the fashion industry are still styled in a way that showcases Vogue's idea of beauty, even if it does not always match their public persona. The dark-skinned Black women on these covers are either hypersexualized with an emphasis being placed on their bodies, or completely covered up and/or styled in a way that is not particularly flattering or memorable. There seems to be more creativity put forth with the lighter-skinned Black women and how they are styled.

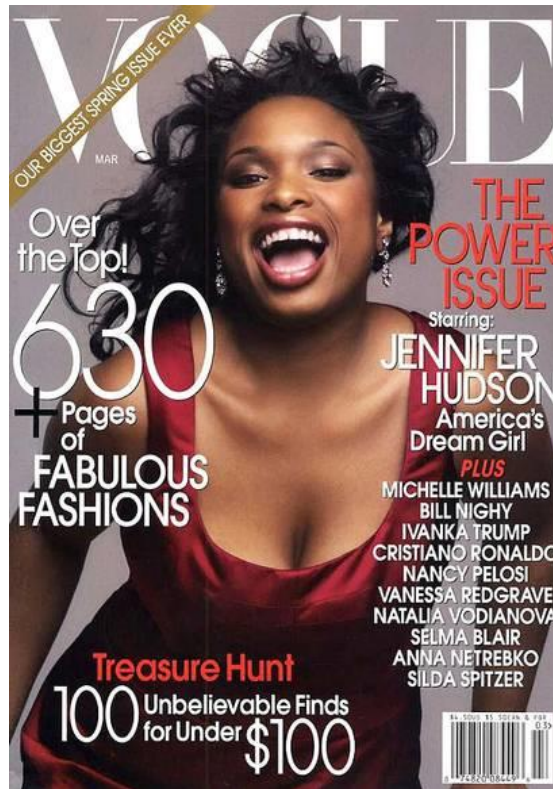


Image 7. March 2007 Cover

Note. Retrieved from *Vogue* Archive Database (<https://archive.vogue.com/>)

Another example of poor styling for the darker-skinned women in the sample is the March 2007 cover featuring Jennifer Hudson (see Image 7). There is nothing particularly significant about the way she is styled or the background of the image, as she wears a simple red dress and stand in front of a plain grey background. The nature of her expression and positioning stands out in comparison to all of the other models photographed for that year. She is smiling with her mouth wide open as she leans over towards the camera. This is likely to show her excitement, but it comes off as unflattering and sexualized. It feels as though she is being depicted from an exoticized lens, made to look wild as if she is yelling towards the camera. This contributes to the stereotype of Black women's bodies being animalistic and promiscuous (Lamb et al., 2016, p.21). This depiction particularly stands out in comparison to the other cover models of that year who are almost entirely White women. They all wear expressions the are calm, tranquil or sultry; none of which exhibit the same sense of enthusiasm. This is another example of the magazine implementing tokenism and using Black women's bodies to juxtapose that of White women's (Mears, 2010, p.24).

Half of the covers were set in outdoor locations and the other half were either indoor or in a vague/nondescript location (see Appendix B). The two most popular color schemes were bright/vibrant and colorful and dark earthy tones. The next most popular was light earthy tones then pastel and black, white and red. There were three instances of a red, white and blue color scheme. The model on the cover was always prominently featured in the foreground of the image rather than being in the background with another object or person drawing more attention. This shows that the focus of *Vogue's* covers is always meant to feature the model as the focal point and subject of the image. There were only eight instances where objects or props were prominently featured in the cover, so the models very rarely interacted with their surroundings in a way that gave the covers any significant narrative story-telling. In terms of interaction, “no interaction” was coded 75% of the time and the rest featured “some interaction.”

70% of the covers featured warm lighting and the rest were cool-toned. The lighting was almost always bright and highlighting the model directly. There were 22 instances where the lighting was dim or heavily shadowy. An issue observed when it came to the lighting choices made for the dark-skinned models is the fact that it was not always very flattering for their skin tone. Simone Biles' August 2020 cover received plenty of criticism online when it was first released for this exact reason. The lighting does not highlight her skin's beauty, even appearing dull due to the harsh shadows casted on her. Her head is also turned away from the camera, making her one of the few models coded as not making eye contact with the camera. While her gaze off into the distance may have been intended to look stoic or regal, with the words “people empowered” appearing beside her, it actually makes her appear to lack power and narrative control in the image.

The lack of flattering lighting for darker skinned models emphasizes the importance of the photographer chosen along with the rest of the behind the scenes involvement of the photo shoot. These factors have a significant impact on the final product of how the cover model is portrayed. The lack of attentiveness given to the lighting and sometimes styling choice for the darker skinned models could be attributed to a lack of diversity seen in *Vogue's* staff. The first Black photographer to work for *Vogue* did not appear until 2018 when Tyler Mitchell photographed the September issue featuring Beyoncé (Nnadi, 2018). Mitchell himself emphasizes his efforts to celebrate and elevate the black body through his work, combating the way black people have previously been objectified and sexualized (Nnadi, 2018).

4.2.2 Evolution of Beauty Standards & Trends.

There was not much of a significant evolution in how Black women were styled throughout the 20-year span of the sample. Nearly all of the Black women featured wore their hair straightened or altered in some way that deviates from its natural state, with the hair straightening practice being a popular form of assimilation since the Jim Crow era (Willett, 2010, p.10). Most models wore minimal or natural-looking makeup and about 35% were styled with heavy makeup (see Appendix B). This change in makeup technique happened gradually over time, with the makeup of the early 2000s being much lighter and subtler then gradually getting heavier and more dramatic over time. There was no significance or distinction in the makeup chosen for darker-skinned Black models in comparison to those with lighter skin.

Nearly half of models were between 31-40 years of age. The rest of the models were primarily 20-30 years of age, with a handful of outliers in the 41-50 range, one model in 51-60 and another in 61 or older (see Appendix B). These results are consistent with the perceived notion of ageism in the fashion industry, with beauty being most emphasized in younger bodies (Lewis et al., 2011, p.101). She was one of the Black women who appeared multiple times throughout the sample. Older women's beauty was very rarely represented throughout the sample, but Black older women specifically were even less represented than White women. When they were represented it was most frequently with the use of Michelle Obama, an internationally recognizable First Lady who appeared in the 41-50 range, then later appeared again in the sample in the 51-60 category. This follows the theme seen of the Black women featured the most appearing multiple times throughout the sample and often having an occupation unrelated to fashion, commodifying their beauty when they have something greater to offer outside of their looks (Young, 2021, p.83).

The body type that appeared the most was thin, with about 75% of the models having this build (see Appendix B). The rest of the models were curvy and one was stout. The prevalence of thin bodies within the sample is an accurate representation of the fashion industry and the idealized body type it most often promotes (Mears, 2010, p.23). 60% of the models were tall, and the rest were mostly of medium height. The tall models most often also had thin bodies, reflecting the popular build seen in the fashion industry. Since thinness is often a characteristic associated with White bodies, the curvier bodies that are more often attributed to the models of

color in the sample are featured less (Mears, 2010, p.22). Regarding other physical characteristics, half of the models had brown eyes. The next most popular eye color was blue, then green and very few hazel. The most prevalent hair length was medium, then short, then long. Nearly half of the models had brown hair, a large amount had blonde hair and rest had black hair. Two models had red hair, one being artificially dyed and one being natural. Brown and black hair was seen frequently for both Black and White models throughout the sample, not showing any significance dependent on skin tone.

4.3 Changes in Beauty and Fashion Marketing

This chapter delves into the notable shift in the desired aesthetic for women over time. While pale skin is still extremely prominent in the latter half of the sample, there is also much more of a presence of tanned skin for White women and naturally darker skin for women of color. It is seen more often that when a cover features multiple women with emphasis on their diverse backgrounds, most of the women of color featured have lighter brown skin. This could be due to the societal affinity towards lighter skin amongst Black people who can “pass for White” (Harris, 2018, p.2074). When various forms of media want to depict an image of diversity they seem to often exclude darker-skinned bodies and have lighter-skinned bodies act as representatives of the racial group. It is also evident throughout the analysis that some of the White women in the sample would be presented with tanned skin to reach a desired ethnically ambiguous look (Thompson, 2009, p.841). This ethnically ambiguous aesthetic is also seen with the Black women featured throughout the sample. They most often have lighter brown skin, Eurocentric facial features and straightened hair. From a marketing standpoint for the magazine, this is a way to feature more ethnic faces so that the brand can maintain an image of being diverse, while still heavily enforcing the same archetype of beauty in terms of the women’s features and body types.



Image 8. *November 2001 Cover*



Image 9. *December 2001 Cover*

Note. Retrieved from *Vogue* Archive Database (<https://archive.vogue.com/>)

4.3.1 Reflection of The Times.

There is a pattern present in the earlier years of the sample that emphasizes American patriotism and the all-American girl look through the use of colors, clothing and text (see Image 8 & Image 9). The aesthetic most related to the covers with this patriotic symbolism was often that of purity, youth and simplicity, worn by the White models. This creates the notion that this particular image is what people would conceptualize when thinking of beauty in America and how the country celebrates and presents beauty. There are instances where Black models are also represented with American patriotism, but it happens very rarely and is always associated with their athletic accomplishment. The white women who are presented with a similar patriotic rhetoric are typically fashion models. These women can be seen as symbols of American beauty without having a greater accomplishment to contribute because they already fit into the traditional archetype of what America believes to be most beautiful. However, the Black women who are presented with this patriotic motif are athletes who have made a significant

achievement, making it appear that their beauty can only be seen as American if they have made a grand contribution using their talents.



Image 10. November 2020 Cover



Image 11. October 2020 Cover

Note. Retrieved from *Vogue* Archive Database (<https://archive.vogue.com/>)

Even though the later years in the sample feature more Black models and particularly darker-skinned models, this notion of diversity still appears performative and disingenuous when looked at in context to the year’s events. The very last sample year, 2020, features the most Black models out of all of the sample years. While not included in the sample, Harry Styles became the first man to grace the cover on his own, even sparking controversy for challenging traditional gender norms by wearing a dress. Lizzo is the first and only woman of a larger build to appear in the sample (see Image 11). However, the appearance of diversity from this year in particular is directly linked to the social and political issues present in America during the time. Some of the most prevalent issues from that year were voting rights, healthcare, gun violence, a refugee crisis and predominantly, racial injustice. Therefore, it does not feel like a coincidence that this particular year would feature drastically more dark-skinned Black women than previous years. Some text that appears on the covers featuring Black woman from this year includes “Standing up, speaking out,” “take your protest to the ballot box,” and “now we have permission

to speak? Well I have always spoken.” (see Image 10). There is not much of a focus on the fashion and beauty choices being made this year. Instead, the covers from this year are meant to make a statement and take a stance in the midst of the social and political climate. The September issue from this year even features a painting of a dark-skinned Black woman instead of an actual model. This shows that the inclusion and showcasing of dark-skinned models is very intentional and meant to be visually impactful. It does not necessarily have anything to do with the actual models chosen; the magazine more so seems to want to project an image of inclusivity and market itself as a valuable and insightful piece of media that takes a stance on current issues. It does not actually reflect that the magazine wishes to showcase dark skin as beautiful on its own or even as a part of the fashion industry. Theory suggests that Black women’s bodies are commodified and even awarded when they play into specific racial stereotypes that appease the viewership of a White audience, but the results also show that their bodies can be commodified in a way that allows for brands to depict an image of diversity (Medvedeva et al., 2017, p.189).



Image 12. *May 2007 Cover*

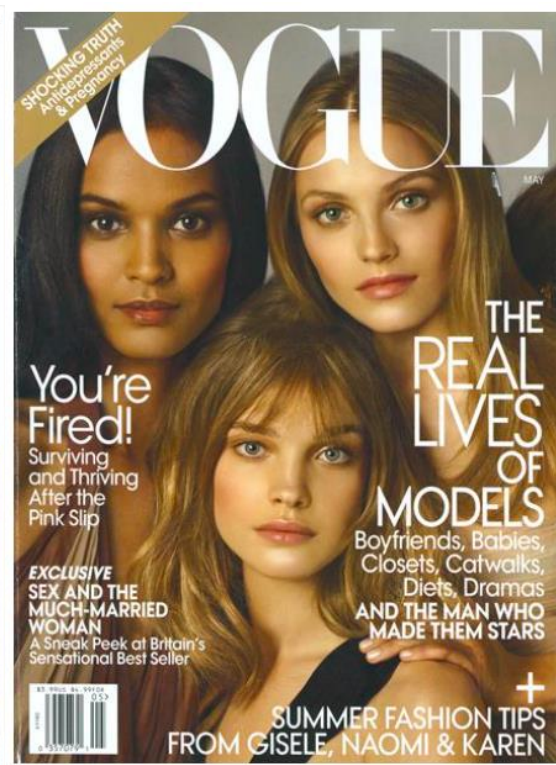


Image 13. *May 2009 Cover*

Note. Retrieved from *Vogue* Archive Database (<https://archive.vogue.com/>)

4.3.2 Lack of Diversity in Group Covers.

On the few instances where there were group covers, or covers featuring more than one model, there was a noticeable lack of skin tone diversity, especially in the earlier years of the sample. The first time a cover with multiple women appears in the sample is the May 2007 cover which features five White models and no women of color (see Image 12). The significance of there only being White models present in this particular cover is due to the purpose of that month's issue. The text of the cover reads "The World's Next Top Models." None of the model's names are explicitly stated, a pattern seen throughout the analysis pertaining specifically to fashion models, but since the text insinuates that these models featured are the biggest models in the world at the time, the publication likely did not find it necessary to include their names, presuming the audience would soon come to recognize their faces. The lack of any women of color in an issue dedicated to the future of modeling and what *Vogue* believes it will look like bodes powerful insight into the fact that women of color and anyone who deviates from the traditional paradigms of beauty were not heavily presented as beautiful in the fashion industry around the time of the late 2000s. Group cover from the year 2009 show improvement towards diversity, but in an insubstantial manner (see Image 13). The May 2009 cover features a close-up image of three models, two of which are White (Anna Jagodzinska and Natalia Vodianova) and Liya Kebede who is Black. Kebede was coded as V. (Brown, Dark Brown), but would certainly fall on the lighter end of the spectrum of skin tones seen within this specific category. She also has traditionally Eurocentric features and her hair is straightened, resembling the styling of the two women next to her. This contributes to the notion of tokenism and brands attempt at displaying diversity by centering whiteness and juxtaposing it with a single Black body (Shankar, 2019, p.114). Kebede was also featured in a previous year's cover, contributing to the pattern of reoccurring Black models seen throughout the sample. The September 2014 cover depicts the same type of image, with one Black model and two White models, all of which are styled similarly. The Black model, Joan Smalls has her hair straightened but also pulled up into a bun like the two models next to her.



Image 14. March 2017 Cover

Note. Retrieved from *Vogue* Archive Database (<https://archive.vogue.com/>)

The March 2017 issue depicts a problem that the magazine has in its attempts at showing a diverse array of women on its group covers (see Image 14). Firstly, the text on the cover reads “Women Rule!” and “Fashion’s fearless females.” *Vogue* often has a message of female empowerment and strength associated with the group covers, but the image associated with the text tends to not feel very warranted. The cover was meant to display a diverse group of women as the current faces of fashion, starkly contrasting the May 2007 cover from 10 years prior which featured only White models as the current faces of fashion. However, what the magazine attempts to do here somewhat misses the mark and becomes less impactful than what it could have been upon better execution. Of the seven models on the cover, only three are women of color, none of which have dark skin. There was an attempt made at showing body diversity, something *Vogue* very rarely depicts, with plus-sized model Ashley Graham. However, while Graham is categorized in the fashion industry as plus-sized, when positioned next to the other thin models who are all draped over each other, it is difficult to notice a difference in her body.

This feels like a poor attempt at featuring a larger sized model on the cover, as much of her body is covered by the other models' arms and her body is turned to the side, facing away from the camera. The cover is somewhat of a triumph in that it features the first Asian woman in the sample. However, the overall attempt at a diverse and female-empowering cover is spoiled by the lack of skin tone diversity and the decision to homogenize the models. While the latter may just be seen as an aesthetic choice to show the models all styled similarly and as a united front, it is comprehended as a way to stifle their individuality and any true notion of diversity. As *Vogue* implements in its group covers, performative and shallow displays of diversity such as this allows for brands to appear more progressive to the public without implementing any actual boundary-pushing effort to include bodies that have historically been shunned (Baker, 2005, p.15).

Another cover from the late 2000s which featured multiple people on the cover was the April 2008 issue with the fashion model Gisele Bündchen and professional basketball player LeBron James. This cover sparked much criticism and outrage due to the cultural insensitivity displayed by the narrative of the cover. James and Bündchen are positioned to resemble a classic image of King Kong holding onto a woman, comparing James' likeness to that of a gorilla and reiterating a dangerous and harmful racial stereotype. While the cover does not depict a Black woman being dehumanized, the brutalization of James' image also contributes to the overarching theme towards the dehumanization and mistreatment of the portrayal of dark-skinned people by *Vogue*.



Image 15. June 2016 Cover

Note. Retrieved from Vogue Archive Database (<https://archive.vogue.com/>)

4.3.3 Tanning & Cultural Appropriation.

A noticeable trend throughout the coding process was the excessive tanning of many of the White models' skin. Many of the White women appeared darker than what their normal skin tone is. Several models and actresses such as Christy Turlington and Margo Robbie appeared more tanned than what they normally look like in real life or in their movie and television roles (see Image 15). It is also apparent that when the White women are made to look tanner, they are also styled more sexually, often wearing less clothes or being put in a more sexualized positioning than the White women on covers from the same year who were presented with their natural pale skin. This correlates to the theory of darker skin being exoticized and having a sexual connotation attached to it (Lamb et al., 2016, p.21). Darker skin is often exoticized and sexualized while paler skin is linked to ideas of purity and grace. The presence of tanning also contributes to the overarching change in beauty standards for both Black and White women over time which has moved towards ethnic ambiguity in order for brands to promote an idea of a "homogenized beauty" (Johnson-Hunt, 2020, para. 4). While this phenomenon is seen

throughout the sample both in the 2000s and 2010s, it is still more popular and frequent to see pale skin, as it remains the primary “archetype of aesthetic beauty” (Heckman & Manne, 2011, p.7).

There was no clear presence of cultural appropriation throughout the sample except for two instances in which White models were styled with Chinese-inspired silhouettes (see Appendix B). While the concept of cultural appropriation can correlate to the idea of an ethnically ambiguous aesthetic, it is not a necessary factor. It is also relevant to note that clothing inspired by traditionally Chinese garments were incredibly popular in the early 2000s, so seeing such a trend in those particular years may just be fitting for the time. There was no impressionable presence of White models culturally appropriating Black culture, contrary to the fact that Black American style contributes a great deal to the fashion industry (Brown & Kopano, 2014, p.62). It is logical that any presence of cultural appropriation within the magazine would dissipate over time as celebrities and brands worked towards being more socially conscious and progressive throughout the 2010s. *Vogue* and any other prestigious fashion magazines would receive incredulous backlash for promoting cultural insensitivity if they were to style a model in such a way during the 2020s.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary

I conducted a Critical Discourse Analysis of visual data consisting of American *Vogue* covers from 2001-2020 in order to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How does colorism play a role in Vogue Magazine covers?

RQ2: How has the presentation of beauty for Black women within the beauty and fashion industry changed over time?

RQ3: How has the presence of ethnic ambiguity and exoticism changed marketing within the beauty and fashion industry over time?

My intention with this research study was to add to previous studies surrounding colorism and the shifting culture within the beauty industry towards greater diversity and inclusivity. By analyzing magazine covers I intended to dissect the substance of the diversity present, seeing if it is positive representation and not just performative representation that brands feel the need to partake in as a marketing ploy.

For my methodology I used a CDA to study the implicit meaning of the magazine covers. To choose my sample I selected five covers from each year that featured the darkest skinned models seen that year. I based this selection of covers on the Fitzpatrick Scale of Skin Tones. I found that this sampling would provide the most honest representation of how darker skin tones are represented in the magazine over time. Then for the coding process, I started with a codebook of certain themes and codes I wanted to identify throughout the analysis. Then, I also implemented open coding to identify the prevalent overarching themes seen throughout the process.

Overall, the findings show that colorism has a strong hold and influence on the beauty and fashion industry indicated by the specific models featured on *Vogue* magazine covers and the brand's depiction of beauty through strategic styling choices. Even with the sample being chosen from the five darkest-skinned models of each year, White models were the most present in the sample. Of the Black models present throughout the sample, many were of mixed ethnicity or had a lighter skin tone. The models with darker skin began appearing more frequently towards the latter half of the sample years, showing that the brand has tried to diversify over the years.

However, through an analysis of the content of the covers and how the Black women are featured, it is apparent that this sense of diversity is more so an example of tokenism used to make the brand appear more progressive. Very few of the Black models featured were actually fashion models, with many musicians, actors, politicians and athletes reoccurring throughout the sample. There were many examples of the same Black women reoccurring several times throughout the sample, implying that a select few ethnic faces are more than enough representation and furthering the notion of a very shallow attempt at diversifying *Vogue's* brand.

Throughout the 20-year span of the sample covers chosen, while there are more dark-skinned Black women featured in the latter half, there is no significant difference over time in how their beauty has been presented. The majority of Black women throughout the entire sample wear their hair straightened or with a wig, thin bodies are still the most prevalent and lighter-skinned Black women with more Eurocentric features are featured heavily. The presence of ethnic ambiguity was heavily present in groups covers where models of different ethnicities would all be featured. The token Black women of the group would often have lighter skin and Eurocentric features, including facial features and body type. This concept was also represented with several White women who appeared much tanner than how their skin normally presents. The group covers often portrayed *Vogue's* approach towards diversifying their brand as performative, with there actually being very little variation in skin tones or body types.

Based on the findings it appears that *Vogue* magazine depicts colorism by primarily featuring Black women with lighter skin and often styling them in a more flattering manner than those with darker skin. When Black women were featured throughout the sample they often represented the idea of tokenism, showing that the effort seemingly made by *Vogue* over the years by *Vogue* is largely performative. With modern brands marketing themselves as diverse it is important to note the quality of representation being presented in the media. With the quality of darker-skinned Black models' representation being subpar, it shows that the beauty and fashion industry's perceptions and stereotypes associated with them have not dissipated over time. Even with a greater sense of diversity in the later years, the subject matter associated with the covers and the model's purpose for the cover is often performative with an underlying message. An important insight to emerge from these findings is that the disparities in factors such as styling and lighting based on the color of the model's skin become more evident when making comparisons to other models within the same year. When simply analyzing a single

image on its own, it can be difficult to determine how the model is being portrayed and whether or not it is a flattering and positive portrayal. However, when making comparisons to other models, elements such as tokenism become much more apparent.

With American *Vogue* having such a great deal of influence on the rest of the world's perception of beauty, such findings determine that Black women's beauty is still marginally represented. When it is represented, the ever-present issue of colorism makes it so that those that fit into the Eurocentric beauty mold are still most likely to be seen as the most beautiful, gaining the most respect and cultural capital. This could go on to affect the self-esteem and livelihood of young Black women who are susceptible to the ideas promoted in the media. Also, with many studies surrounding race studies, there has been a lack of focus on colorism as it pertains to mainstream media. There has been more of a focus on the issue of colorism as an intraracial issue within Black communities, but the results of this study show how it is also heavily present in predominantly White-owned fashion media and should therefore be further investigated as an issue that plagues society on a grander scale.

5.2 Limitations

I found the Fitzpatrick Scale to be a bit limiting in that it does not necessarily capture a wide enough range of categorizations of darker skin tones. There were many categories that would pertain to those of other races, but it was just primarily the final two categories that could capture the Black women's skin tones. The middle category also included some biracial Black women with more pale skin. The realization of this scale's limitation came from analyzing the results and seeing how Michelle Obama and Lupita Nyong'o were coded in the same category, although they are not necessarily the same skin tone. Lupita has darker skin, and an additional category would have captured this differentiation a bit more to show how rare the darkest skin tone was showing up in the sample. A way to improve this could be by adding a few more categories to the scale, or instead conducting research with another scale which follows the same concept but is more detailed. The Eumelanin Human Skin Color Scale is a more updated scale which encompasses a wider range of skin colors and would therefore be more suitable for modern studies surrounding social and cultural studies (Dadzie et al., 2022). According to Dadzie et al. (2022), the Fitzpatrick Scale was specifically designed to describe skin phenotypes

based on sun reactivity, but its widespread and at times incorrect usage has led to a “systematic lack of recognition of the diversity of darker skin colours” (p. 1).

5.3 Further Research

For future research in order to further explore how American beauty ideals are represented through influential magazines such as Vogue, it could be beneficial to see if there is any correlation between brands and the models on the covers. This would be a way to check if there is any established sense of brand identity and loyalty associated with certain models and if that influences how they are being styled.

Another variable to investigate could be looking deeper into each year’s art directory and editing staff to determine if this also influences the styling choices made for the covers. It could provide deeper insight to determine if the presence or lack thereof of staff diversity affects the content of the covers and the diversity of the models. Investigating the number of Black photographers who have worked with Vogue could be insightful for determining how this correlates to the way Black women are portrayed in either a flattering or unflattering manner. Implications of how staff diversity could affect the final product of the cover are already seen throughout this analysis. The singer Rihanna appears several times throughout the sample and she appears to have a slightly different skin tone in each cover, with her skin appearing darker in some photos and lighter in others. This could likely be due to different photographers implementing different art styles and lighting. The makeup and styling departments could also play a large role in making her look so different in each cover.

Anna Wintour, the editor-in-Chief of Vogue has a great deal of influence on the magazine and what it showcases, so it could also be insightful to research and investigate her history with the magazine along with her past journalistic work to gather a scope of her views towards diversity and inclusivity in the beauty and fashion industry.

It would also be interesting to implement a multimodal form of research with the addition of interviews for future research. Interviews could be done with Black American women to get their viewpoints of how these models in Vogue are portrayed along with their more general thoughts on colorism and skin color diversity in the fashion industry. It would be insightful to hear their perspectives and also investigate if they currently feel represented by the portrayal of Black women in fashion and the media. It would be interesting to gather women’s perspectives

on diversity and colorism regarding high fashion magazines, as well as major beauty brands such as Fenty beauty which has specifically marketed itself and garnered praise for its strides towards diversity. Gathering a large sample of women of different ages and socioeconomic backgrounds to see how they feel about the brand's social awareness and marketing of their products would be profound for determining whether these brands are actually accomplishing what their marketing sets out to exhibit.

Another possibility for future research would be to do a comparison of other countries' Vogue magazine covers over the years and see if there are any major differences in how Black women are portrayed depending on their skin tone. It would be interesting to further explore if colorism is regarded as more of an American issue or if similar patterns observed in this research would also be prevalent in other countries. It could be interesting to conduct a similar study with another country that does not have a fashion culture that is so heavily influenced by celebrities. Many European versions of *Vogue* feature more high fashion models and focus more on creativity and artistry on their covers. American Vogue places a very heavy focus on celebrities who are the most marketable for their brand, often taking away from any real focus on the fashion being displayed or the artistic direction and creativity of the covers.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Codebook

General Information:

Month, Year of cover- January, 2007

Number of people in cover-

Name of model(s)-

Ethnicity of model(s)-

- White
- Black or African American
- Asian
- Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Mixed Ethnicity
- Hispanic

Age of model(s) during time of cover-

- 20-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61 or older

Codes	Sub-codes	Denotation	Connotation
Shade Range of Model	Fitzpatrick Scale:		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. I. (Light, pale white) b. II. (White, Fair) c. III. (Medium, White to Olive) d. IV. (Olive, Moderate Brown) e. V. (Brown, Dark Brown) f. VI. (Brown, Very Dark, Brown to Black) 		
Occupation of Model	Occupation(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Fashion Model b. Actor/Actress c. Musician d. Politician e. Athlete f. Other 		
Physical Characteristics	Hair Color: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Black b. Brown c. Blonde d. Red e. Other 		
	Hair Length: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Long b. Medium length 		

	c. Short		
	Eye Color: a. Brown b. Blue c. Hazel d. Green		
	Body Type: a. Thin b. Curvy c. Stout d. Overweight		
	Body Height: a. Short: 4ft 8in(142cm)-5ft 2in(159cm) b. Medium height: 5ft 3in(160cm)-5ft 6in(169cm) c. Tall: 5ft 7in(170cm)-6ft 3in(190cm)		
Styling	Hair styling: a. Casual (worn down, natural looking) b. Straightened c. Curled d. Updo e. Wet/slicked back		

	f. Other		
	Clothing: a. Shirt and bottom b. Short dress c. Long dress d. Suit e. Bathing suit f. Other		
	Cultural Appropriation: a. Presence of cultural appropriation b. No clear presence of cultural appropriation		
	Makeup: a. Minimal makeup b. Heavy makeup		
	Accessories: a. No accessories b. Minimal accessories c. Multiple accessories		

<p>Facial Expression</p>	<p>Emotion(s) portrayed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Happiness b. Sadness c. Anger d. Fear e. Surprise f. Excitement g. Tranquility h. Sultry i. Apathy/lack of emotion 		
<p>Body Positioning</p>	<p>Position/Posture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Sitting b. Standing c. Lying down d. Jumping e. Other 		
	<p>Interaction (With people, objects, and setting):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. No interaction b. Some interaction 		
	<p>Presence of objectification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. High presence of sexualization and/or demeaning portrayal 		

	<p>b. Little/no presence of sexualization and/or demeaning portrayal</p>		
	<p>Eye Contact:</p> <p>a. Eye contact with camera</p> <p>b. No eye contact with camera</p>		
Setting	<p>Lighting Tones:</p> <p>a. Warm tones</p> <p>b. Cool tones</p>		
	<p>Lighting Positioning:</p> <p>a. Bright, well-lit, directly hitting the model</p> <p>b. Dim, shadowy</p>		
	<p>Props/Objects:</p> <p>a. No objects present</p> <p>b. Objects present (describe)</p>		
	<p>Background:</p> <p>a. Outdoor location</p>		

	<p>b. Indoor location</p> <p>c. Vague location/Difficult to decipher</p>		
	<p>Foreground:</p> <p>a. Model is most present in the foreground</p> <p>b. Another object/setting or text is most prominent in the foreground</p>		
	<p>Color scheme of photography:</p> <p>a. Red, white and blue</p> <p>b. Black and white</p> <p>c. Earthy tones (light)</p> <p>d. Earthy tones (dark)</p> <p>e. Bright/vibrant and colorful</p> <p>f. Pastel tones</p> <p>g. Black, white and red</p> <p>h. Other</p>		

Text	Header: a. Model in front of the Vogue title b. Model behind the Vogue title		
	Model's Name: a. Explicitly stated b. Not stated c. Alluded to or used as a pun/play on words		
	Message of Text: *Identify the most prominent words used (Mention of any major events/societal context?)		

Appendix B. Atlas.ti Results

7.2.1 Shade Range

● ◆ I. (Light, pale white)	4
● ◆ II. (White, Fair)	41
● ◆ III. (Medium, White to Olive)	21
● ◆ IV. (Olive, Moderate Brown)	10
● ◆ V. (Brown, Dark Brown)	21
● ◆ VI. (Brown, Very Dark, Brown to Black)	16

7.2.2 Ethnicity

● ◆ American Indian/Alaska Native	0
● ◆ Asian	3
● ◆ Black/African American	37
● ◆ Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0
● ◆ Hispanic	8
● ◆ Mixed Ethnicity	14
● ◆ White	60

7.2.3 Occupation

● ◆ Actor/Actress	60
● ◆ Athlete	6
● ◆ Fashion Model	18
● ◆ Musician	17
● ◆ Other	2
● ◆ Politician	3

7.2.4 Age

● ◆ 20-30	43
● ◆ 31-40	49
● ◆ 41-50	7
● ◆ 51-60	1
● ◆ 61 or older	1

7.2.5 Height

● ◆ Medium height: 5ft 3in(160cm)-5ft 6in(169cm)	37
● ◆ Short: 4ft 8in(142cm)-5ft 2in(159cm)	2
● ◆ Tall: 5ft 7in(170cm)-6ft 3in(190cm)	60

7.2.6 Body Type

● ◇ Curvy	24
● ◇ Overweight	0
● ◇ Stout	1
● ◇ Thin	76

7.2.7 Hair Styling

● ◇ Casual (worn down, natural looking)	34
● ◇ Curled	11
● ◇ Other...	7
● ◇ Straightened	16
● ◇ Updo	22
● ◇ Wet/slicked back	13

7.2.8 Hair Length

● ◇ Long	14
● ◇ Medium Length	56
● ◇ Short	33

7.2.9 Hair Color

● ◇ Black	26
● ◇ Blonde	30
● ◇ Brown	48
● ◇ Other.	1
● ◇ Red	2

7.2.10 Eye Color

● ◇ Blue	33
● ◇ Brown.	51
● ◇ Green	18
● ◇ Hazel	3

7.2.11 Makeup

● ◇ Heavy Makeup	36
● ◇ Minimal Makeup	64

7.2.13 Accessories

● ◇ Minimal Accessories	35
● ◇ Multiple Accessories	10
● ◇ No accessories	52

7.2.14 Clothing

● ◇ Bathing suit	6
● ◇ Long Dress	66
● ◇ Other....	2
● ◇ Shirt and bottom	18
● ◇ Short dress	10
● ◇ Suit	0

7.2.15 Cultural Appropriation

● ◇ No clear presence of cultural appropriation	88
● ◇ Presence of cultural appropriation	2

7.2.16 Emotion

● ◇ Anger	1
● ◇ Apathy/Lack of Emotion	14
● ◇ Excitement	2
● ◇ Fear	0
● ◇ Happiness	32
● ◇ Sadness	0
● ◇ Sultry	43
● ◇ Surprise	0
● ◇ Tranquility	26

7.2.17 Sexualization

● ◇ High presence of sexualization and//or demeaning portrayal	19
● ◇ Little/no presence of sexualization and/or demeaning portrayal	80

7.2.18 Eye Contact

● ◇ Eye contact with camera	96
● ◇ No eye contact with camera	4

7.2.19 Color Scheme

● ◇ Black and white	0
● ◇ Black, white and red	8
● ◇ Bright/vibrant and colorful	28
● ◇ Earthy tones (dark)	27
● ◇ Earthy tones (light)	18
● ◇ Other.....	7
● ◇ Pastel tones	7
● ◇ Red, white and blue	3

7.2.20 Props/Objects

● ◇ No Objects present	91
● ◇ Objects Present	8

7.2.21 Interaction

● ◇ No Interaction	75
● ◇ Some Interaction	24

7.2.22 Foreground

● ◇ Another object/setting or text is most prominent in the foreground	0
● ◇ Model is most present in the foreground	99

7.2.23 Background

● ◇ Indoor location	16
● ◇ Outdoor location	50
● ◇ Vague location/Difficult to decipher	33

7.2.24 Lighting Tones

● ◇ Cool Tones	27
● ◇ Warm Tones	71

7.2.25 Lighting Positioning

● ◇ Bright, well-lit, directly hitting the model	77
● ◇ Dim, shadowy	22

7.2.26 Body Positioning

● ◇ Jumping	1
● ◇ Lying Down	6
● ◇ Other.....	2
● ◇ Sitting	20
● ◇ Standing	70

7.2.27 Model's Name

● ◇ Alluded to or used as a pun/play on words	5
● ◇ Explicitly stated	81
● ◇ Not stated	13

7.2.28 Vogue Header


● ◇ Model behind the Vogue title	22
● ◇ Model in front of the Vogue title	77

Appendix C. Coding Tree

Themes	Groupings	Initial Codes
Inclusivity of Black women (Tokenism)	Reoccurring models	Occupations
	Commodification of Black bodies	Shade Range
	Group covers	Ethnicity
Presentation of Black women	Controlling of Black bodies	Hair styling

		Clothing
		Makeup
	Patriotism	Setting
	Natural Beauty	Lighting
Objectification and Subjectification	Demeaning portrayal	Expression
		Positioning
		Eye Contact
		Text
Evolution of Beauty Standards & Beauty Branding	Beauty trends	Cultural appropriation
		Makeup
		Body Type
	Ethnic Ambiguity	Hair Color
	Exoticism	Age

Appendix D. Fitzpatrick Scale of Skin Tones

Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5	Type 6
					
Light, Pale White	White, Fair	Medium, White to Olive	Olive, Moderate Brown	Brown, Dark Brown	Dark Brown to Black

Appendix E. Vogue Archive Database

Explore the Complete Vogue Archive. (2022). Vogue | The Complete Archive.

<https://archive.vogue.com/>