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**How Black women make sense of 'White' and Black' fashion magazines: a qualitative
think aloud study**

Jane Ogden and Sheriden Russell

Department of Psychology, University of Surrey, UK

Address for correspondence:

Jane Ogden,

Professor in Health Psychology,

Department of Psychology,

University of Surrey,

Guildford,

GU2 7XH, UK.

Tel: 01483 686929

Fax: 01483 689553

Email: J.Ogden@surrey.ac.uk

Abstract

This qualitative Think Aloud study explored how Black women (n=32) processed information from a White or Black fashion magazine. Comments to the 'White' magazine were characterised by rejection, being critical of the media and ambivalence, whereas they responded to the 'Black' magazine with celebration, identification and a search for depth. Transcending these themes was their self identity of being a Black woman which was brought to the fore either by a sense of exclusion (White magazine) or engagement (Black magazine). Such an identity provides resilience against media thin ideals by minimising the processes of social comparison and internalisation.

Key words: Body dissatisfaction; media; Ethnicity; Social comparison

Introduction

Body dissatisfaction and weight concern are common amongst young girls and women in the Western world and although many possible causes have been identified including peer pressure, family dynamics and individual cognitive schema much research has highlighted a central role for the media (Glauert, Rhodes, Byrne, Fink & Grammer 2009; Nasser 2009; Dittmar 2005; Brook and Mussap, 2012; Ahern et al, 2011; Santoncini et al, 2012). In line with this, an American survey found that 70% of over five hundred adolescent girls stated that magazine images determined their ideas of the beauty ideal and 47% wanted to lose weight as a result (Field, Cheung, Herzog, Gortmaker and Colditz, 1999). Body dissatisfaction has also been found to increase through adolescence concurrently with an awareness of the socio-cultural attitudes and social comparison with media models (Clay et al., 2005; Martin and Kennedy, 1993).

Research has therefore explored the association between media presentations of women and experiences of body dissatisfaction. For example, using correlational designs studies show an association between the frequency of viewing popular magazines, the importance placed on the images used in such magazines and factors such as body dissatisfaction, drive for thinness and pathological eating (Harrison and Cantor, 1997; Stice et al., 1994; Tiggemann, 2003). Other studies have used an experimental design to explore the impact of showing women magazine images of the 'ideal body shape'. Such research suggests that acute exposure to media images of thin women for only a few minutes increases body size distortion in those with Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa and pregnant women compared to neutral images (Waller et al., 1992; Sumner et al., 1993; Hamilton and Waller, 1993). This short term exposure can also result in a significant increase in women's body dissatisfaction (Ogden and Munday, 1996; Halliwell and Dittmar, 2004; Halliwell et al., 2005; see Groesz et al., 2002 for a review). Bell, Lawton & Dittmar (2007) also concluded

that watching music videos resulted in greater levels of body dissatisfaction in teenage girls compared to either listening to the song on its own, or learning a list of neutral words. Similarly, Becker et al (2002) explored the impact of the introduction of television and associated Western images in Fiji and reported a corresponding increase in disordered eating patterns, eating related attitudes and body dissatisfaction. Furthermore, research indicates that interventions can ameliorate the impact of the media via information regarding strategies such as airbrushing, the use of makeup and lighting and making the implicit biases of the media explicit (Stormer and Thompson, 1995; Ogden and Sherwood, 2008; Ogden et al, 2011).

As a means to identify the mechanisms behind the links between media images and body dissatisfaction research has drawn upon two key theoretical frameworks. Firstly, social comparison theory has been used which argues that upward social comparisons occur when an individual compares themselves to someone perceived to be socially better than them (Festinger, 1954). If a discrepancy is perceived between the individual and the comparison figure the individual will be motivated to make personal alterations in order to progress towards the comparison standard (Martin and Kennedy, 1993; Higgins, 1987). Accordingly, models in the media signify the societal ideal, so are subsequently used as comparison figures. Upward social comparisons reveal a discrepancy between their selves and the media causing a self-discrepancy, which in turn may increase body dissatisfaction (Harrison and Cantor 1997; Posavac and Posavac, 2002). Second, researchers have identified the role of internalisation (Thompson & Stice 2001). In line with this, Graff-Low et al (2003) investigated attitudes towards appearance and strive for thinness, and found that internalisation of thin ideals was associated with concerns about weight. Accordingly, body dissatisfaction may only be exacerbated by the media if a woman internalises these ideals and

makes favourable upward comparisons to the images they view (Stice et al, 1994; Stormer and Thompson, 1996; Mask and Blanchard, 2011).

Not all research, however, indicates such a clear role for the media. For example, Ferguson, Winegard and Winegard (2011) argued for an evolutionary psychology approach to body dissatisfaction focusing on mate selection and peer comparison rather than media effects which was supported by a meta analysis in 2004 which concluded that the role of the media has been overstated (Holmstrom, 2004). Similarly, a number of studies have found only partial or no impact of the media on the ways in which women feel about their body image (Ferguson et al, 2011; Muoz and Ferguson, 2012; Hayes and Tantleff-Dunn, 2010; Cusumano and Thompson, 1997; Tiggemann, 2006). In addition, research indicates much variability in women's responses to the media which is particularly apparent for ethnic minority women living in the Western world who remain under represented amongst those with eating disorders and body shape concerns. For example, when looking at the prevalence of eating disorders amongst ethnic minorities studies report rates such as 11.5% and 12.2% which are lower than the prevalence of ethnic minorities in the local populations (Arcelus and Button 2007; Waller et al, 2007). Further, Jackson, Keel and Lee (2006) reported lower levels of disordered eating patterns and preoccupation with thinness in Korean women living in the US compared to those living in Korea and Warren et al (2005) reported lower endorsement of thin ideals and body dissatisfaction in ethnic minority women living in the US compared to European Americans.

Much research has also focused specifically on Black women and highlights how this population appear to be particularly resistant to media images of thinness. For example, DeBraganza & Hausenblas (2008) concluded from their experimental study that Black women showed significantly less change in their body dissatisfaction after viewing media images of the 'thin ideal' compared to Caucasian women. Similarly, from their qualitative

analysis Parker et al (1995) argued that Black girls were more likely to appreciate their physical appearance and have a broader definition of beauty compared to Caucasian girls who felt disappointed with the way they looked and narrowly defined beauty in terms of a few specific characteristics. Likewise, Gordon et al (2010) reported that Black women selected more voluptuous bodies as being attractive compared to their Caucasian and Hispanic counterparts.

Research therefore indicates that body dissatisfaction remains a common problem for many women and that exposure to media images of the thin ideal has a role to play in both its development and maintenance. Possible mechanisms for this process involve social comparisons and internalisation with women aspiring to attain a thinner body and making changes in their behaviour accordingly. Not all studies, however, support this position suggesting that the impact of the media may not be as consistent as sometimes suggested. Furthermore, not all women are equally influenced by such images, and those from ethnic minorities, particularly Black women seem to be especially resilient. To date, however, although research has identified the existence and extent of this resilience, little is known about the ways in which Black women react to and process the information presented to them by the media. Furthermore, if social comparison and internalisation are the key mechanisms that translate exposure into subsequent body dissatisfaction, it remains unclear how and why Black women resist these processes. Some researchers have addressed these issues and provided possible hypotheses. For example, Warren et al (2005) argued that the ethnic gap between the media images (ie White) and the Black reader prevents the process of internalisation. Further, it has been suggested that media pressure to adopt and incorporate 'Western' ideals paradoxically enhances the need for Black women to maintain their own culturally specific ideals (Sharma and Sharma 2010). These ideas, however, remain to be tested. The present study therefore aimed to explore how Black women respond to and make

sense of the media images presented in a standard 'White dominated' fashion magazine compared to those given a comparable 'Black dominated' fashion magazine as a means to explore the role of social comparisons and internalisation and the mechanisms behind any resilience they show.

Method

Design

The study used a think aloud qualitative design with a between groups design. Following a neutral training period, participants were randomly allocated to either a UK ethnic majority orientated magazine (ie predominantly White models; n=17) or a Black orientated magazine (ie predominantly Black models; n=15). For simplicity these will be referred to as 'White' and 'Black' conditions. The study received favourable ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee.

Materials

For the neutral training period the January 2012 issue of 'Kitchen and Garden' was used which contains advertising and features relating to aspects of domestic life. For the 'White' magazine the January 2012 issue of 'Red' was used and for the 'Black' magazine the December 2011 issue of 'Essence' was used both of which were considered to be of the same genre with a comparable focus on fashion and beauty and an equivalent use of female models for both advertising and features. All materials were the latest issue of each magazine, reducing the likelihood that they would be familiar to the participants.

Participants

Participants were Black women (n=32) aged between 18 and 50 years who had lived in the UK for at least five years and were currently located in the South East of England. The

mean age of participants reading the ‘White’ magazine was 37.1 years and 35.4 years for the ‘Black’ magazine. Participants were given a pseudonym and their details are shown in Table 1.

-insert table 1 about here -

Procedure

After consenting, participants were randomly allocated to their condition by taking a numbered (1 vs 2) piece of paper from a bag. They were then told that recording would begin, presented with the first neutral training magazine and asked to speak aloud any thoughts that were provoked by the stimuli. If participants remained quiet for a substantial amount of time they were prompted to speak with the phrase “what are you thinking?” After passing through approximately thirty pages or when participants were no longer giving fruitful responses to the stimuli, they were presented with the experimental magazine (ie. either White or Black). Recordings were not stopped in this time and participants were asked to repeat the same procedure. Once they had passed through approximately thirty pages of the magazine or their responses seemed to naturally come to an end, the recording of session was stopped and participants were handed a debriefing sheet to read.

Data analysis

Although several studies exploring body dissatisfaction have used interviews to access the ways in which people feel about their body shape (eg. Ahern et al, 2011; Gonzalez et al, 2012), the present study used a ‘Think Aloud’ methodology as a means to obtain less socially desirable and self conscious material and to enable insights into the more spontaneous thoughts that people have. This approach has been deemed to produce rich qualitative data and to enable in depth interpretation of thought and reasoning processes when

engaged in activity (Cotton and Gresty 2006; French, Schroder and van Oort 2011). The think aloud sessions were transcribed verbatim and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis which involved reading and re reading the transcripts, identifying poignant aspects of the text and grouping these into themes and sub-themes (IPA; Smith and Osborn 2003). This method of analysis was selected as it supports the aims of the think aloud methodology and enables an understanding of participants' thoughts and feelings in a realistic scenario.

Results

From analysis of the think aloud sessions it was clear that the women engaged with the two magazines in different ways with different themes emerging from the two sessions. In particular, when responding to the 'White' magazine the women's responses could be conceptualised into three themes relating to rejection, being critical of the genre, and ambivalence. In contrast, their responses to the Black magazine were classified into themes relating to celebration, identification, and seeking depth. These themes will now be described with the use of exemplar quotes. Transcending these themes was the notion of self identity which can be seen to permeate many of the quotes. This is elaborated upon in the discussion.

1. Thinking about the 'White' magazine

With regard to the 'White' magazine, three themes were found. These were rejection, being critical of the genre, and ambivalence.

i) Rejection

When initially presented with the 'White' magazine, participants were generally dismissive of what they could see, or thought the magazine was representing. Many participants mentioned the low likelihood of them purchasing such a magazine:

"I find um, sort of like magazine's like this one I won't buy...I wouldn't waste my money sort of buying it" (Sofia)

Some stated that it wasn't worth reading in any depth:

"I would probably flick through this magazine if I was probably waiting somewhere" (Sarah)

"this I would flick if I was in a salon or something..." (Joan)

This sense of rejection was supported by feelings that the content was uninteresting and predictable and not worth investing time in:

"umm, same old same old, I'm, I'm not sure what's different about this magazine from other magazines" (Avery)

"I'm not interested to be honest, I'm thinking you know, lots of fashion tips and things" (Olivia)

In general, women's responses to the white magazine indicated that they felt it contained nothing of any interest to them and was very much the same as all other UK fashion magazines. These negative responses generally occurred towards the start of the think aloud session and reflected automatic and spontaneous reactions to being presented with the stimuli.

ii) Being critical of the genre

Following this initial rejection, participants became overtly critical of the magazine in terms of both what it contained and what it omitted.

Many were critical of the emphasis on consumerism and the frequency of glossy images designed to encourage readers to spend their money:

“this would make me feel like it’s an expensive magazine to buy and that it’s full of adverts” (Sarah)

Some believed that the magazine was too focussed on particular products:

“a few pages in and already I’ve had two pages of perfume, maybe too much”
(Victoria)

Many were also critical of the kind of products being advertised:

“and I think the products that it does advertise, they’re...they’re not your everyday, what you might see on the high-street, they tend to be , from, maybe boutiques, and sort of thing, I mean some of them, well, umm, Maybelline that’s a common make-up but a lot of the umm, yea” (Sofia)

Participants were also critical of the images of women in the magazine and felt that they were being manipulated to desire a specific thinner body size:

“umm, it’s just subliminal messages about the perfect woman and if you don’t look like this you don’t look like anything” (Sarah)

The magazine was also criticised for what was absent: and for most this related to the focus on white women and the sale of products for white bodies:

“it wouldn’t do it for me, yea that’s probably, oh that’s skin care but it’s going to be focussed on white people, white people’s hair, European hair” (Avery)

In addition, whilst noticing and commenting positively on the one Black woman featured in the magazine, the women were critical of the frequency with which Black women appeared:

“so I’ve seen her again now, the Black model, but I’ve had to go quite a way in to find her, which is disappointing” (Sarah)

Furthermore, when Ashley noticed the Black model:

“mmm, there’s a Black girl in a purple, oo, that’s actually quite nice’ (Ashley)

She then became critical of the makeup the white models were wearing:

“...dream matte mouse, makes them look good, if I did it I’d look patchy” (Ashley)

The women therefore seemed explicitly critical of the magazine and felt manipulated by its attempts at advertising. Further, far from being enticed into wanting to buy the products on offer, the women were critical of both the frequency and content of these adverts. They were also aware that as a Black woman they were excluded from the magazine as the products were felt not to be not for them and they were constantly aware of the absence of Black women in the magazine.

iii) Ambivalence

Despite rejecting the magazine initially and being critical of its contents some women showed an attempt to engage with the content of the magazine. This was, however, characterised by feelings of ambivalence and a tension between engaging and distancing with the stimuli.

For example, some expressed positive comments about the images they were seeing:

“I think this magazine’s quite seductive ...cos there’s plenty of perfume and it looks quite provocative” (Victoria)

Some were neutral:

“to be honest I’m not swayed either way, this magazine with skinny people and make-up and, they’re doing it as a job, you’d have to be that type of person” (Natalie)

But most expressed positive comments tempered by negative ones illustrating a tension between engagement and distancing and a sense of ambivalence.

“this girl’s got a top on that looks like a, oh no, with those skinny legs?, dear me”
(Ashley)

In particular, one woman started to describe how the images made her want to lose weight as she made comparisons between herself and the models being presented. This process of engagement and internalisation was then abruptly halted as she came across the image of the Black model at which point she instantly distanced herself from the magazine:

“looking at the fashion here, thinking, wishing that you know I had umm, I didn’t have all this Christmas weight on me, and getting rid of it and, wanting to sort myself out and, sort my life out and sort my weight out, which comes hand in hand in my opinion! Fantastic! Beautiful Black role models feature very very very small feature but a nice beautiful picture of Naomi there, yea there’s its, uh it’s the glits and the glam, which I feel so far disconnected from” (Toni)

Similarly, a few women started to describe the models in a positive way but then diverted the conversation as they saw the Black woman:

“sort of, perfect looking, actress on the magazine cover... I read the caption and thought it be something more interesting on Naomi Campbell...” (Joan)

“oh Black model, who’s this? Mm see even what, she’s wearing, look at that, £189 for a dress...£395 for, who could possibly, well, not on my salary” (Morgan)

Overall, the women initially rejected the magazine on the basis that it was uninteresting and predictable and then criticised both its content and what was absent. At times, however, some made more positive responses and appeared to engage more directly with the images they were seeing but these comments were characterised by ambivalence with their attention being quickly being diverted away, particularly when presented with an image of a Black woman. These processes seemed to create and justify a sense of distance from the magazine and reduced any sense of affiliation or engagement with the material in front of them.

2. Thinking about the ‘Black’ magazine.

Women’s responses to the Black magazine were strikingly different and were conceptualised into three themes: celebration, identification, and seeking depth.

i) Celebration

In some cases, participants initially expressed surprise at the presentation of a predominantly Black magazine:

“ok...mmm, Black lady on the front (giggles)” (Andrea)

Then, on recognising that the magazine was for and about Black women, they expressed celebration and a sense of pride in Black people having a dominant position in a fashion magazine:

“seems very umm, kinda Afro-American, umm, very, umm, kind of enlightening and inspiring” (Alyssa)

By raising the salience of Black women this then made them critical of other ‘White’ media:

“nice seeing the big brands, with Black people in the advert, from the you know, we should see more, more of that in the white magazines ” (Anna)

And, likewise they felt indignant about the presence of a white man and white woman in the stimuli magazine:

“why is there, why is there a white couple at the beginning of a Black magazine?”

(Brooke)

The appearance of Black people in a fashion magazine is therefore still novel for many participants. This creates an initial sense of surprise, then pride and celebration. It also generates resentment that Black women are underrepresented elsewhere and that White people are present where Black people should be. The women therefore become territorial about the magazine as they start to celebrate its ‘Black content’.

ii) Identification

This process of celebration and pride, also initiated a sense of affiliation and identification with the contents of the magazine.

For many, this related to the products being sold which were deemed relevant to them:

“the right foundation, mmm, sometimes you don’t see my complexion, sometimes in magazine, but when you do you kind of know!” (Brooke)

“nice cus it’s like tailored to, to Black people and our skin, where as if I looked at another magazine I wouldn’t necessarily take notice” (Nevaeh)

It was also apparent in the ways they identified with the features:

“a story piece that you could probably say ‘yes’ to rather than seeing us in the negative” (Gianna)

One woman even commented when seeing a photograph of a famous actress in a way that epitomised a feeling of familiarity and identification:

“my cousin, Halle (Berry) (laughs)” (Andrea)

Furthermore, the women seemed to be actively trying to identify with aspects of the magazine even when objectively the differences were more obvious. For example, when reading a feature about a life coach Brianna said:

“live in grace, spiritual life coach, kind of want to check if she’s a Christian or just spiritual” (Brianna)

As a Christian, this participant was trying to find common ground, rather than difference with the subject matter. Similarly, a married participant found relevance in an article targeting single women:

“single ladies find something new for the holidays, something new, what does she mean?...anyhow, I’m not supposed to be reading these things am I” (Anna)

Further, where the magazine featured non Black ethnic minority females, this was also focused on as a point of similarity and identification:

“people of, rooted people, if that makes sense, umm, people with Black African dress, but there’s a lady there, with almost well, Muslim type head wear” (Isabella)

Accordingly, once engaged with the magazine the women actively identified with its images and contents and focused on aspects of similarity rather than difference.

iii) Seeking depth

Having identified with the magazine and actively sought out ways in which its contents were relevant and familiar to them the women then engaged at a deeper level. In particular, most moved beyond just looking at the images and started to read the text. For some this was for the more superficial material:

“where can I get to the good stuff ...aww this is quite good, and there’s a little quiz about , if you have any biases about when it comes to skin colour, see I would read the quiz” (Mia)

But others found themselves drawn into the more detailed stories and then once remembering the task in hand described their thoughts:

“winning the fight against HIV...just thinking its nice they’ve found something, well they think they have, for HIV” (Andrea)

Very simply, many wanted to read the magazine properly:

“I just want to read it” (Mia)

And even when they were critical of the magazine, this was tempered by a sense that although superficial at times, the magazine had some depth about it:

“lots of adverts before we get to the nitty gritty” (Alexa)

Overall therefore, when considering the Black magazine, women identified with its contents and celebrated the dominant presence of Black women. This appeared to temper any criticisms and encouraged and steered them towards engaging with the contents of the magazine at a deeper level. At its simplest form, this involved reading the text rather than just ‘flicking’ but it also involved searching out relevant content and actively finding points of connection and affiliation. Furthermore, such quotes illustrate an interest in aspects of the magazine other than thinness and fashion such as religion, fiction, health and science and relationships.

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the ways in which Black women make sense and process the images presented in both a White dominated and Black dominated fashion

magazine in the context of understanding any resilience they may show to media ideals of thinness.

The results showed that the Black women responded in strikingly different ways to the two sets of stimuli. In terms of the White magazine, the women's responses were characterised by rejection, being critical of the genre and ambivalence. In particular, when first exposed to the material they commented on how superficial, uninteresting and trivial the contents were and then criticised it in terms of both what was included and omitted. Furthermore, even when making attempts to engage with the magazine this was tempered by ambivalence and distancing particularly after noticing an image of a Black woman. Previous research indicates media images may cause body dissatisfaction through the processes of internalisation and upward comparisons as the women presented are considered to be the ideal (Harrison and Cantor, 1997; Posovac and Posovac, 2002; Thompson and Stice, 2001). The Black women in the present study showed no evidence for either of these mechanisms and consistently distanced themselves from the stimuli, thus relegating its status and undermining its potential impact on their sense of self. Research in aligned areas indicates that when people are presented with messages designed to change their behaviour such as smoking cessation or dietary change health education information, they develop a state of resistance to undermine the impact of these behaviour change interventions. In particular, studies indicate that number of strategies are utilised such as avoidance, ignoring and finding fault in the arguments used or criticizing the mode of presentation (Jacks and Cameron, 2003; Harris and Epton, 2009). Such strategies are regarded as a form of blocking and conceptualised as a hindrance in this context. They are also considered a means to protect an individual's sense of integrity in the face of a challenge to self (Harris and Epton, 2009). The women in the current study showed a similar array of strategies by focusing on ways to reject and negate the magazine's content which limited their internalisation of the potentially

damaging images in front of them. For them, however, such blocking can be seen as protective and functional.

In sharp contrast, when looking at the Black magazine the women responded in terms of celebration, identification and seeking depth. In particular, they clearly enjoyed seeing Black women so prominently featured in a fashion magazine and found ways to focus on similarity rather than difference in its content. Further, this process of identification with the magazine and its content motivated them to engage with the information at a deeper level and rather than ‘flicking’ through, they read and digested anything it had to offer. In addition, although the magazine contained images of Black women, who were equally as thin as those in the White magazine, these generated no comments as the participants appeared interested in other aspects of the magazine. Previous research suggests that Black women may be protected from the influence of media images of thin models due to the ethnic gap as most models are White (Warren et al, 2005). The present study found no support for this suggestion as even when this gap was closed the women again showed no evidence for either internalisation or upward social comparisons. Accordingly, although presented with Black models, the Black participants showed elements of resilience.

The Black women in the present study therefore showed no impact of the media images on their body image supporting evidence that the influence of media images may not be as substantial as often thought (Holmstrom, 2004; Ferguson et al, 2001; Munoz and Ferguson, 2012). Further, nor did they illustrate the mechanisms of either internalisation nor upward comparisons in response to either magazine which may help explain the resilience they demonstrate in the face of Westernised images of the ideal body (Parker et al, 1995; Gordon et al, 2010). In addition, whilst rejecting and being critical of the White magazine, they elicited comments of identification and a desire for depth to the Black magazine. These results can be understood in terms of the central role of self identity and

what it means to be a Black woman which permeate all aspects of the think aloud sessions. For example, when considering the White magazine, the 'White' dominated content was deemed irrelevant to them as Black women, thus initiating a sense of their Blackness. Then, once exposed to the only Black woman featured in the magazine, this notion of themselves as a Black woman who is similarly marginalised and ignored became more salient facilitating a process of criticism and negativity. Therefore, their sense of being a Black woman on the margins of society evolved from a more dormant awareness to a dominant core self identity and such a 'Black woman' was one who was neither impressed nor contaminated by a white dominated sense of what is desirable. In line with Gold et al (1991), therefore, the identity of being a Black woman was transformed from being an offline into an online cognition by exposure to a White dominated medium.

In contrast, this self identity as a Black woman was more promptly made online upon first presentation of the Black magazine. Accordingly, as soon as it was recognised that this was a 'Black woman's' magazine, the participant's core notion of likewise being a Black woman was activated which enabled them to identify, celebrate and engage with the magazine and its contents. It could be predicted, however, that this in turn would facilitate the processes of social comparison and internalisation with the thin images of women being presented which were, in this case, now familiar and in the same social group as the participants. This was not the case, however, as the women disregarded the thin images and focused on the content at a deeper level; the online self identity of being Black was associated, not with a focus on thinness or fashion but on other aspects of the self generating an interest in topics such as fiction, health, science and relationships. In parallel to their reactions to the White magazine, reading the Black magazine similarly raised the salience of their Black identity which again was protective.

Such as analysis is in line with social identity theory which argues that an individual's social identity is dependent on the social groups they consider themselves to be a part of (social categorisation) which in turn fuels social comparisons and social action (Tajfel, 1978). From this perspective, when confronted with the 'White' magazine the social categories of 'us' and 'them' and a sense of exclusion were activated bringing an ethnic specific concept of self to the fore thereby fuelling social action not to buy or even read its contents. In contrast, the 'Black' magazine generated a self identity of inclusion and a category of 'us' only, which in turn triggered all that this Black identity encompassed. And in both cases this self identity of being 'Black' remained unrelated to thinness and an aspiration to look like the models in the magazines. And in both cases it generated resilience and offered protection against the images they were seeing.

To conclude, the present study aimed to explore how Black women make sense of images in White and Black dominated fashion magazines as a means to understand the resilience they show to media images of the ideal female body. The results indicate that the participants showed neither internalisation nor social comparisons to either magazine and in both cases engaged with the information in ways which protected them against the images they were confronted with. Central to this process of resilience was the impact of a self identity as a Black woman which was made more salient by both magazines and whilst this generated rejection and criticism to the white magazine, it evoked a desire to utilise parts of this identity which were unrelated to fashion, thinness and beauty when examining the Black magazine. Accordingly, Black women may show resilience to the images in magazines, not just because these images are predominantly of white women but also because central to the identity of being a Black woman is a sense that being a Black woman has more to it than being thin, with this more complex self identity being activated when confronted with women in magazines who are either White or Black.

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Table 1: Participant demographics

Name	Age	Time in UK	Magazine
Isabella	49	Life	Black
Morgan	50	Life	White
Emma	19	Life	Black
Olivia	20	Life	White
Gabby	50	Life	Black
Alexa	22	Life	Black
Abi	21	Life	Black
Makayla	25	Life	White
Kim	21	Life	White
Mia	26	Life	Black
Addi	34	Life	Black
Eliza	32	7yrs	White
Ella	31	16yrs	Black
Natalie	31	Life	White
Sam	23	14yrs	White
Alexis	25	Life	White
Lily	32	Life	White
Andrea	25	Life	Black
Toni	49	Life	White
Alyssa	24	Life	Black
Valerie	43	Life	Black
Joan	37	Life	White
Avery	47	Life	White
Leah	50	Life	White
Nevaeh	22	Life	Black
Sofia	48	Life	White
Ashley	50	Life	White
Anna	39	Life	Black
Brianna	30	Life	Black
Sarah	42	Life	White
Brooke	46	Life	Black
Victoria	49	Life	White