RACE AND DRESS: HOW RACIAL IDENITY AND STRATIFICATION IMPACT BODY
MODIFICATION AND SUPPLEMENTATION AMONG COLLEGIATE WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

RACE AND DRESS: HOW RACIAL IDENITY AND STRATIFICATION IMPACT BODY
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The relative insignificance of fashion to the discipline of sociology, as well as academia writ large, has led to a substantial paucity of theory and scholarship about people dressing their bodies. Despite Aspers and Godart's 2013 plea in the *Annual Review of Sociology* to change the tide and seriously examine of the sociology of fashion, the area remains largely devoid of sociological analysis. This is particularly true of the intersection of race and dress. The few sociological studies that do address race and dress focus on body modifications and body work used either to achieve or resist hegemonic notions of beauty (Gimlin 2007; Anderson et al. 2010). This model, while illustrative and representative of women with defined political or cultural objectives, says very little about the complexities of women's quotidian dress considerations and behaviors.

Employing a "talking while walking" methodology, I interviewed and examined the wardrobes, makeup, and styling tools of 35 African American, White, Latina and Middle Eastern women at a large midwestern university in 2015. The participants expressed awareness of the racialized nature of their clothing and actively grappled with racially specific expectations and preferences for their bodies and styling. Consequently, their bodily supplementations and modifications contained numerous, overlapping, and, at times, conflicting notions of race. By focusing on dress, this groundbreaking study adds a new dimension to the ways in which race impacts our daily activities.

To my parents, who never stopped believing in me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my committee, family, and friends.

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INTRODUCTION

Personal background

This study is about how racial identity and stratification impact the dress of young women at a large midwestern university in 2015. It has previously been thought that the intersection of race and dress was limited to targeted expressions of either political rebellion or assimilation. This study shows that race is a central organizing principle for quotidian dress across racial groups, one that spans beyond intentionally political or cultural hairstyles or clothing. The women at Midwest University expressed awareness of the racialized nature of their clothing and actively grappled with racially specific expectations for their bodies and styling.

This study emerged from my own interactions with diverse communities and their varying, and sometimes conflicting, definitions of beauty and style. As a biracial woman socialized in a majority White community in Wisconsin, my identity as a Black woman was solidified by my minority status and by exclusion from my White classmates. The only counterpoint was my paternal Afro-Trinidadian family, whom I mostly understood as foreign, albeit familiar. Stylistically, I identified with my White peers, but due to my hair texture and facial features, I could not physically express our shared aesthetic. When I moved to a more racially diverse city, my racial identity was re-defined and took on new meaning. To this new community, particularly to the African Americans in the community, my style was distinctly White. As a young tween, this perception was perplexing; I had not changed my hair or clothing, but in this new community, a new context, my clothing said something different, something that I had never had access to before—whiteness. As I grew older and moved in and out of various communities, my clothing was always racialized, but the meaning was constantly shifting. As a researcher, I wondered how other women grappled with the racialized meanings of dress as they

traversed through various communities and interacted with diverse racial groups. I wondered

how their dress practices were shaped by their experiences with race. This study is borne out of

my own experiences and questions about dress, racial identity and racial stratification**.**

Key Concepts

     Dress refers to the wide array of possible body supplementations and modifications

(Roach & Eicher 1992). These possibilities can include anything from tattoos to dieting to

trousers to haircuts. Dress communicates social status, attitudes, desires, beliefs, ideals, and

identity nonverbally, through a system of symbols and codes (Cerny 1993; Turner 2012). Shared

social conventions provide individuals with a collection of pre-determined sets of dress symbols

to use in their own body modifications and supplementations (Roach-Higgin & Eicher 1993).

These shared codes allow people to communicate effectively and nonverbally through dress

(Ainsworth 2013). Yet unlike linguistic codes, dress codes are not exact or fixed; instead, they

are wrought with ambiguity and complexity (Davis 1992; Feinberg et al. 1992). Theoretically,

any alteration or addition to the body falls under the umbrella of dress, which indicates a wide

array of academic research that has touched on the various issues relating to dress.

     Racial Identity is a socially constructed sense of individual and collective belonging

with people who share a common heritage, social history, and position (Helms 1993). It is

formed in relation to others and is subject to change (Nagel 1996; Ellemers et al. 2002). Often

skin color and other phenotypes operate as the representation for the complex amalgamation of

experiences that construct racial identity (Chavez & guido-DiBrito 1999).

     Racial Stratification is the social system that classifies people into hierarchical racial

groups (Verdugo 2008). As a result, scarce resources, such as status, wealth, and power, are, in

part, allotted according to position in the racial strata. Furthermore, this system has produced a

high degree of racial homophily among the full spectrum of relationships, including intimate, schoolmate, acquaintance, and merely "knowing about" someone (McPherson et al. 2001; Lawrence 2000).

Literature Review

The relative insignificance of dress to the discipline of sociology, as well as academia writ large, has led to a substantial paucity of theory and scholarship about how people dress their bodies. Despite an early interest in dress in the late 1800s by prominent sociologists, such as Thorstein Veblen and Georg Simmel, the area has largely fallen out of favor in the discipline. The lack of interest in fashion and dress is characteristic not only of sociology, but also of the wider terrain of academic disciplines. Though inquiries into dress are relatively pervasive, that pervasiveness belies an overall lack of recognition within academia. Consequently, fashion and dress have a haphazard, but constant, history in academia. Those who have broached the subject descend from a wide array of disciplinary and conceptual backgrounds, which has done little to develop a clear theoretical framework to study fashion and dress. The present study draws from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds to define the central concepts that relate to the sociology of fashion and dress.

In the following section, I parse through the intersections of class, gender, race, and ethnicity to hone in on the current state of the sociology of dress and race. The central areas of dress research reveal its historical beginnings as a subset of gender and class studies. Despite the widespread recognition of class and gender as they relate to dress, the roles of race, racial identity, and stratification have been only marginally explored. The focus of this study is to begin uncovering the role of race in contemporary dress behavior.

The early studies of dress incorporated observation and theories of gendered differences in fashion. In fact, Veblen's (1899) canonical study of *conspicuous consumption* was based on observations of the men's and women's body supplements and modifications. His conclusions correlated the binary gender system of the industrial era to distinct dress practices of the leisure class. Similarly, Simmel (1904) theorized that women's relatively low social status caused them to adorn their bodies for security and acceptance. These early studies provided the foundation for the trajectory of gender, class, and dress studies.

Since that time, numerous studies and museum exhibitions have emerged to explore various intersections of gender, class, and dress. As a result, dress has been recognized as a primary mode of gender socialization and identity development. Research has shown that gender-specific bodily adornments provide powerful signals and cues for appropriate social interactions. For example, in 1962, Gregory Stone observed that whether newborn babies wore pink or blue determined qualities associated with the baby, as well as interactions. Similarly, children are classified into gender categories in early childhood based on their nonverbal cues, such as clothing and hairstyles (Weinraub et al. 1984). Furthermore, Judith Butler (1990) posits that not only do body supplements and modifications shape how people are treated in society; they also impact how people understand themselves.

Gender *performances*, actions, and behaviors, including dress, solidify and reify gender identity and categories (Butler 1990). In fact, historically, evidence of non-conforming dress has been used as diagnostic tool for Gender Identity Disorder (Zucker 2006; Langer & Martin 2004). More recently, Hamil et al. (2011) found that, for girls, conforming to gender ideal types in early childhood through dress is linked to a stable gender identity and to positive evaluations of their gender identity. Yet in middle childhood, dramatic shifts in their gender identification can occur

often, wherein they choose *tomboy* dress behavior (Hamil et al. 2011). This process is not true

for boys, who are more likely to conform to a hegemonic masculine identity and dress style

throughout childhood (Ruble et al. 2006). In either case, dress is used as a proxy for gender

identity development.

Dress can also be a proxy for sexuality and sexual identity (Moore 2006; Levitt et al.

2003). Moore (2006) found that among Black lesbians in New York, body modifications and

adornments signaled roles in same-sex relationships. The same distinctions, often named *femme*

and *butch*, are represented through hairstyles, clothing, and makeup practices within White

lesbian communities (Levitt et al. 2003). Here we see the norms of dress serving to demarcate

group boundaries and establish a lesbian or bi-sexual identity. Interestingly, neither Moore nor

Levitt's examination explained how racial identity and racial narratives of performance or

stratification intersected with sexuality and gender to construct or impact in-group dress

practices.

The implications of non-conforming dress for dominant constructions of gender or

sexuality can be far-reaching and wide-ranging for men as well as women. Gender non-

conformity can lead to violence and alienation from society. Studies have shown that members

of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities have been traumatized and

victimized for apparent gender non-conforming dress behavior (Gordon & Meyer 2008; Toomey

et al. 2010).

In addition, members of the *cisgender* community, individuals who identify with their

assigned sex, who do not conform to gender ideals of dress can also face negative repercussions.

For example, Johnson et al. (2003) found subtle repercussions for women who do not embody

ideal femininity, such as wearing the appropriate amount of make-up or having a particular

hairstyle. These women are less likely to be seen as friendly, healthy, virtuous, or trustworthy. Women who do meet the ideal standard of beauty are more highly valued marital partners and friends and are typically granted social favors (Berry 2008, p. 29-30).

Due to the correlation between dress and favorable personality traits, appearances can be leveraged to acquire resources, such as job access to solidify or improve class status (Lurie 1981; Anderson et al. 2010; Thompson 2009; Patton 2006). Numerous scholars have examined how social actors utilize dress to achieve social goals. For example *body work,* modification of the body, and adornment can be deployed to acquire aesthetic capital and gain social status, rewards, and resources to transcend one's class status. Aware of the association between the dominant construction of beauty and social cachet, women style their hair in accordance with the ideal, hoping to attain social power. Rose Weitz (2001) labels this practice *accommodation*. Gimlin (2007) found that people participate in fitness regimes, including dieting, exercise, and the use of performance-enhancing drugs to alter their bodies, to communicate health and youth. Hudders et al. (2014) observed that men and women use bodily adornment to communicate attractiveness and social status. For example, men use luxury cars to signal their economic stability and virility (Dunn & Searle, 2010; Shuler & McCord, 2010), and women use luxury clothing to signal attractiveness, youth, ambition, maturity, and intelligence (Hudders et al. 2014).

Historically, gender, class, and dress studies only minimally included racial analyses. When race has been incorporated, it is often limited to a discussion of responses to racist paradigms of beauty. As a result, the intersection of race and dress has been framed through a dialectic scale, with accommodation on one end of the spectrum and resistance on the other. In the following section, I explore how race as been addressed in the area of dress studies.

Even though dress has the ability to facilitate access to social resources, some body modifications and supplementations have been proven ineffective for racially marginalized people. For example, although blond hair is often viewed as ideal, African American women who have blond hair face negative perceptions about their personality, such as unprofessionalism and unintelligence (Greene 2011). Nevertheless, despite the limitations of some of these modifications, dress can mitigate blackness at times. For example, conservative, middle-class clothing has been used to challenge oppression and access civil rights (Ford 2015). Furthermore, historical evidence suggests that hairstyles and clothing have been mobilized to challenge dominant constructions of gender, class, and race (Weitz 2001; Leeds-Craig 2002; Ford 2015). The focus on the use of body supplementation and adornment to achieve political gain has limited our understanding of the potential ways race can influence dress, particularly clothing.

In a similar fashion, questions about ethnicity and dress have addressed the cultural legacy that persists in contemporary minority dress practices (Candelario 2000; Bettie 2000, 2014). Cultural attire and body modifications operate as a foil for the marginalization of blackness by the beauty and fashion industries (Rosado 2003). For example, Gwendolyn O'Neal (1994; 1998) determined that elements of West African culture persist within contemporary African American dress (O'Neal 1994, 1998). Her discussion focused on men and women who integrated "cultural attire" or "traditionally styled garments imported from various African countries, made of fabrics constructed and finished in those countries, or replicas of such garments" into their dress practices (O'Neal 1994: 169). These garments symbolized resistance to racial oppression by asserting ancestral and cultural pride. Similarly, Ginetta Candelario (2000) found Dominican American hairstyling practices were used to reinforce their connection to their Dominican Republic heritage. Yet these studies only represent one impetus for dress among

specific racial minority populations. Often questions about racial minorities who have not chosen to dress in cultural attire or undergo culturally symbolic body modifications are left unanswered.

Research questions

Despite the obvious and powerful role of dress in society, we know very little about what contemporary women think about as they dress their bodies. The most glaring omission is with regard to how women navigate the wide variety of racial symbols and racial identities on their own bodies. For the present study, I wanted to know if racial identity and stratification, in addition to intentionally cultural and political dress, impact body modifications and supplements. Second, I wanted to know who influenced the style, dress, and beauty of women with diverse racial identities. Third, I wanted to know the pressures of performance that influenced how women dress their bodies. I postulated that the imagined gaze, the interpretation of dress codes, and the ideologies of bodily performance shifted across racial groups. I found that racial identity and stratification impact how women understand their bodies, trends, style, fashion, and dress codes and, as a result, how they chose to adorn and modify their bodies.

CHAPTER 1: METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the dress preferences and practices of female collegiate students at Midwest University. In this chapter, I delineate the particularities and rationale for my research design. To organize the chapter, I used five phases of qualitative research, outlined by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (2006). *Phase I* consists of positioning the researcher as a multicultural subject. In *Phase II,* the researcher delineates the interpretive framework and philosophical assumptions. *Phase III* explicates the research strategies, and in *Phase IV,* the methods of data collection and analysis are reviewed. Finally, *Phase V* explores the art, practice, and politics of interpretation and evaluation (Denzin and Lincoln; Creswell 2013).

Phase I: The Researcher as a Multicultural Subject

The nature of research is interactional, wherein the researcher and participant both impact the process and outcome of research. Brian Bourke (2014) posits that even the experiences and socio-historical location of the investigator have an impact. "The concept of self as research instrument reflects the likelihood that the researcher's own subjectivity will come to bear on the research project and any subsequent reporting of findings. Interpretation consists of two related concepts: the ways in which the researcher accounts for the experiences of the subjects and of her or himself, and the ways in which study participants make meaning of their experiences" (Bourke 2014: 2). This means my own preconceptions and preconceived notions shape the present inquiry into the dress and fashion of collegiate women. Denzin and Lincoln (2006) implore researchers to acknowledge their subjectivity as potential researcher biases.

To begin, I am a biracial African American woman, of middle-class status. This project began because of the role fashion and dress have played in my own life. Growing up in an upper-

middle-class and predominantly White community in Wisconsin, my phenotypes (nose shape, hair texture, lip size) stuck out as different. Furthermore, I could not manipulate or style my hair in ways that were trendy in that community. The texture of my hair and my racial background prevented me from being viewed as fashionable. When I moved to a racially diverse neighborhood in Michigan during my early teenage years, I was suddenly considered very attractive because of my light skin, hazel eyes, and curly hair texture. In the new community, my phenotypes were preferential and valued, and I had access to fashionable status. That access did not guarantee I would be trendy; it just meant that if I decided to undertake the requisite beauty work, I could achieve that status. To complicate matters, this racially diverse community had competing paradigms of attractiveness, stylishness, and fashionability, which were based on racial stratification. Thus began the process of constant negotiation between different paradigms of beauty and fashion through my own dress practices.

These experiences inspired me to undertake the current research project. As a sociologist, I wanted to better understand how race and racial identity impact dress. During the initial phases of research, I was struck by the lack of information on the racialized nature of fashion and dress. Neither sociologists nor fashion and dress scholars have engaged this question that has played such a predominant role in my life.

Phase II: Interpretive Framework and Philosophical Assumptions

As a secondary method of determining positionality, Creswell (2013) challenges researchers to uncover and disclose the "assumptions deeply rooted in our training and reinforced by the scholarly community in which we work," (19). Following this charge, I begin by disclosing the intrepretivist "interpretive framework" (Creswell 2009, 2013) or "paradigms" of the study (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba 2011). Then, I describe the four philosophical

presuppositions that provide the basis for the interpretive paradigm: collectivist ontology (the nature of reality), abductive epistemology (what counts as knowledge and how knowledge claims are justified), exposed axiology (the role of research values), and qualitative methodology (the process of research) (Ormston et al. 2014; Creswell 2013). Taken altogether these ideas provided a guideline for collecting and interpreting the data.

Interpretivist Interpretive framework

"An interpretive framework comprises not only the particular disciplinary theories that inform the conceptualization of research phenomena—the conceptual framework—but also the more wide-ranging philosophical assumptions and commitments that inform methodological choices and guide research practices in the course of the entire research process—what sort of data are collected, what sort of methods and techniques of analysis are used, and how 'interpretation' and 'analysis' are understood in general," (Moisander and Valtonen 2006, p. 103). For this investigation, I utilized an interpretative or constructionist approach to examine the layers of meaning collegiate women assign dress activities and preferences (Avenier and Thomas 2015). In the field of dress and fashion studies, this is called a "practice approach," wherein the research focuses on both the structuring influences of the outside world and the practical actions on people's bodies (Skov and Riegels Melchior 2008). In accordance, I executed a series of open-ended interviews, observations, and documentation to understand how women in college understand their dress and what choices they make to clothe their bodies.

Collective Ontology

To explore the various meanings of dress, I assumed a *collective idealist ontological framework* that focused on the collective nature of knowledge, wherein "the social world is made up of representations constructed and shared by people in particular contexts" (Ormstron et al.

2014, p. 5). I began by asking women to discuss about their own sartorial behavior and aesthetics. Second, because this research perspective is "particularly concerned with the relationship between accounts and the situations in which they were produced," the participants were directed to speak about how they arrived at their style preferences, as well as about how their communities responded to their dress (Madill et al. 2000). Finally, they were asked about their knowledge of broad fashion trends and social pressures for beauty. The responses were analyzed as both a representation of their personal experience and as a dimension of the "collective mind" shared by people of the same social positioning (McLaughlin 2009).

Abductive Epistemology

Ormston et al. (2014) defines epistemology as the "ways of knowing and learning about the world" (p. 6). My epistemological assumptions begin with the *subjective epistemological framework* that reality is co-constructed between the researcher and participants (Creswell 2014). This co-construction is defined by an abductive approach, wherein "everyday activities, ideas, or beliefs are described using participants' language and meanings (first-order concepts). A technical account is then 'abducted' from the lay accounts using the researcher's categories (second-order concepts)" (Ormstron et al. 2014: 6).

As the women relayed information about their dress, I classified their responses into preexisting paradigms about dress. In many instances, their experiences did not fit into prevailing paradigms; in these cases, I created new frameworks. In so doing, I hoped to incorporate the historically-structured understandings, prejudices, and institutional practices that are handed down, but are often invisible to participants (Schofield 1993; Scotland 2012).

This method is particularly relevant to studies of dress because "the decision-making process involved in the visual representation of the self is taken for granted or is assumed to

occur almost automatically and naturally, if not thoughtlessly," (Strashnaya 2012). As a result, the self-reflexivity required to answer questions about stylistic preferences was difficult for participants, who often began their explanations of dress with *I never thought about that* or *I don't know, I never thought about it.* To encourage and entice self-examination of their own dress behaviors and preferences, I provided anecdotes from my own life. This reciprocity of experiences between researcher and participant constituted the subjective epistemological basis for the study.

Exposed Axiology

Axiology refers to the impact values and ethics have on research (O'Reilly and Kiyimba 2015). Baptiste (2001) outlines three issues that comprise axiology: "a) the place and role of the researcher's values in research; b) the role of research subjects; and c) the appropriate way(s) to use research products." I use this guideline to structure my axiological approach.

Historically, scientific research endeavored to be value-free and unbiased, but over time, it has become clear that all research is value-laden (Klenke 2008): "The researcher's own moral framework and understanding of what they feel is morally appropriate will arguably ultimately influence the way the research is approached" (O'Reilly and Kiyimba 2015). As a researcher, I view dress as a relatively innocuous and benign subject, but I recognized that, for some of the participants, clothing has political and religious significance. As a result, it was important to recognize the ways in which some of my inquiries piqued the participants' moral compass. Though it is impossible to eliminate entirely the impact of my values, I acknowledged and bracketed them for the duration of the study.

Instead of viewing the participants as "objects to be studied," I respected and encouraged their subjectivity. As a result, the participants chose the general meeting location, what questions

to answer, and what aspects of their dress would be photographed (Baptiste 2001). However, I ultimately determined the structure of our interactions. For example, I dictated the general direction of our conversation by asking a series of semi-structured and open-ended questions. Additionally, I pulled clothing of particular interest to be photographed and examined. In essence, our interaction was collaborative and reciprocal.

Finally, I valued my interactions with the participants as the necessary first step in building knowledge with regard to the intersection of race and fashion. Since this undertaking is one of the first to examine how race and racial identity impact dress preferences and behavior, this study is not generalizable, nor is it representative. Rather, over the course of this project, I have begun to identify important factors and codify concepts to test on a larger scale with a random sample.

Qualitative Methodology

Methodology is the general orientation toward how the research is accomplished (Marvasti 2004). I utilized a qualitative methodology to examine college women's dress preferences and behaviors for several reasons. The first is that the general aims of qualitative research—to understand meanings, to observe and describe experiences, ideas, beliefs and values—befit the two objectives of this study: (1) to describe the dress preferences of racially diverse college women; (2) to determine the meanings the women attach to dress (Creswell 1994; Joubish et al. 2011). Furthermore, qualitative research is typically carried out in natural settings and undertaken when the variables in questions are complex or have not yet been explained by theories (Creswell 1994; Joubish et al. 2011). The intersection of race and dress has largely been neglected and thus required an approach that allowed participants' experiences to initiate the process of codifying important variables and theorizing. Finally, the interviews,

observations, and documentation took place in natural settings, such as at participants' residences and in familiar public spaces.

Phase III: Research Strategies

Strategy of Inquiry

A strategy of inquiry is a "bundle of skills, assumptions, and practices that researchers employ as they move from their paradigm to the empirical world" (Denzin and Lincoln 2006). For this study, I used a grounded theory strategy, wherein I collected various types of data to begin developing a theory or schema from the participants' perspectives and experience about dress. Specifically, the *constructionist grounded theory* approach provided flexible methods of data collection so as to hone in on the "values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies of individuals" (Creswell 2007; Charmaz 2006). Therefore, I incorporated multiple sources for data collection: including observations and interviews (Creswell 2007). In dress and fashion research, this approach is called "wardrobe studies"(Klepp & Bjerck 2014). Because of the exploratory nature of this project, the conclusions from the study are suggestive rather than definitive (Creswell 2007; Charmaz 2006).

Phase IV: Methods of Collection and Analysis

In this section, I describe the procedures used to collect data and the rationales for each choice. I explain site selection, participant selection, and recruitment strategies. I conclude with a summary of the types of data I collected and analysis techniques. The study began with the approval of the Michigan State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Devers and Frankel 2000). In accordance with the IRB, all of the participants were assured that their answers would be anonymous and that they were under no obligation to answer questions. Additionally, they were assured that there were no negative repercussions to not completing the interview.

The study included very little screening criteria: anyone who was a student at Midwest University, identified as female, was between the ages of 18 and 25, and attended high school in the US was eligible to participate (Ritchie et al. 2003). These requirements enabled me to ensure the participants had been socialized in the US and had a relatively similar knowledge of popular culture. In so doing, I could hone in on the specific area of interest: how women of different racial groups of comparable class backgrounds in society, with access to the same popular media over a similar period of time, might have been influenced by different television, movies, celebrities and music within the same society, as well as, racially distinctive social networks. Implicitly, my study was also directed toward women who were not members of any racial-political organizations on campus, although none of the women identified as being in any political organizations or social movements.

Site Selection

I chose Midwest University to complete the study for several reasons. First, the university has a large population of approximately 49,000 students, over 19,000 of which identify as female. In addition to the vast number of students to sample from, the diversity of the racial population at Midwest University (77% White, 8% Black or African American, 1% American Indian, 5% Asian, 3% Hispanic) facilitates and illuminates the wide variety of ways that racial identity impacts dress. These numbers are typical of the national averages for African American, Asian, and Hispanic students as of 2008 (Kim 2011). In addition, only 1% of the undergraduate population commutes to the university, promoting a shared sense of community on campus (Wiseman et al. 2004). In many ways, this university typifies the collegiate experience across the US; as a result, it provided an important locale for beginning the process of building theories of dress with regard to collegiate women.

Participant Selection and Recruitment strategies

The study utilized non-probability theoretical sampling typical of grounded theory research. Theoretical sampling "is a particular kind of purposive sampling in which the research samples incidents, people or units on the basis of their potential contribution to the development of theoretical constructs" (Ritchie et al. 2003: 80). This sampling measure was selected because the aim of the study was to delineate all possible linkages between dress and racial identity for current collegiate women in the US (Ritchie et al. 2003).

An open and flexible approach was used to locate, select, and recruit a diversity of racially-identified women participants (Arcury & Quandt 1999). Three types of recruitment strategies were combined to generate the "sampling frame" for this study: *engaging gatekeepers, organizations, snowball sampling,* and *flow populations* (Ritchie et al. 2003: 89). The *organizations* strategy focuses on gaining institutional support and assistance to identify and recruit participants. *Snowball sampling* refers to when the researcher accesses participants through contact information that is provided by other participants (Noy 2008). *Engaging gatekeepers* refers to identifying people in leadership positions to aid in recruitment (Renert et al. 2013). Finally, the *flow populations* or *face-to-face* model solicits participation by approaching people in selected locations (Ritchie et al. 2003). A multi-strategy approach to recruitment and a considerable amount of time were necessary to access the targeted, racially diverse population of women (Renert et al. 2013). A total of 36 participants were recruited using the following strategies.

The first wave of recruitment began with the use of the flow population model, wherein participation was solicited in the public spaces of Midwest University, such as the student union, library, and international center (Ritchie et al. 2003: 94). This method was appropriate for

recruiting because restricted access to dormitory rooms made a *household screen* impossible (Ritchie et al. 2003). I approached potential participants with visual feminine physical cues and inquired about their willingness to participate in the study (West & Zimmerman 1987; West & Fensteraker 1995). During our brief conversation, I screened their eligibility, which consisted of inquiring whether they identify as female and whether they were between the ages of 18 and 25 (Ritchie et al. 2003).

Though three women approached through this method agreed to be interviewed, this technique only yielded one White participant willing to allow access to her private dwelling. I hypothesize that, because I did not cultivate the requisite credibility and trust from participants, I was not granted access to participants' home (Devers and Frankel 2000). As is typical of *theoretical sampling,* I had to assess the data I acquired from this method and adjust the recruitment approach to ensure access to participant residences (Robinson 2014). As a result of this assessment, trust-building measures were employed to cultivate participant comfortability (Devers and Frankel 2000; Ritchie et al. 2003; Robinson 2014).

The second recruitment strategy consisted of a combination of flow population and use of gatekeepers. In addition to enabling increased access to the target population, the gatekeepers-based recruitment strategy was specifically deployed to build trust and confidence with potential participants (Devers and Frankel 2000; Sixsmith et al. 2003; Blodgett et al. 2005; Robinson 2014). The housing department, functioning as a gatekeeper, had the ability to block or grant access to the dormitories and the population of interest (Sixsmith et al. 2003; Blodgett et al. 2005). I collaborated with the Midwest housing department and determined that recruitment would be more effective in the campus dormitories. I acquired explicit written permission and recommendations on where to recruit from the Midwest University housing department. First,

the location was changed from the library and the union to the entrance of dormitory dining halls on campus, as suggested by the Midwest housing department staff. In addition, the housing department provided a table with the Midwest university logo, which further bolstered my credibility (Blodgett et al. 2005). At the table, I displayed flyers, business cards, a sign-up sheet, and my IRB approval. Taken together, these items signified to students walking by that I was operating in an official capacity, thereby solidifying my trustworthiness (Devers and Frankel 2000; Blodgett et al. 2005).

Gatekeepers can help the researcher to establish credibility in the eyes of the population (Devers & Frankel 2000; Renert et al. 2013). One potential risk of gatekeepers is that they may limit or bias the sample (Blodgett et al. 2005). In order to avoid these pitfalls, I requested that the housing department allow me entry to every dormitory with a dining hall, instead of following their advice to recruit only in select dormitories. Though I was not granted access to the dining hall itself, I was allowed to position a table near the entry and exit so as to recruit students face-to-face as they passed by (Robinson 2014). This popular location attracted numerous students throughout the day. Another potential pitfall of gatekeepers is their potential to hinder a study based on their own perception of the relevance and significance of the study (Renert et al. 2013). The gatekeepers in the housing department did not articulate any negative ideas toward my study of fashion and dress and were quite helpful with scheduling time and space for me to recruit participants. Most likely, this attitude results from the fact that they are accustomed to receiving requests for a table for advertising from various student organizations.

As I stood near the entrance of the dining hall at a table, I approached passersby that had visual cues of femininity and were "doing gender" (West & Zimmerman 1987). Judith Butler (1988) says, "gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be

understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (519). Gender consists of a series of acts and performances. I used hegemonic notions of gender performance associated with women to filter through potential participants and subsequently approached anyone whose gender presentation was female (Butler 1990). Specifically, I looked for physical cues, such as hairstyle, breasts, facial hair, voice-pitch, gait, and gestures. Anyone who did not fit neatly into the definition of female was approached and asked if they wanted to participate in a study of women's clothing and dress. Anyone who identified as a woman was included in the study.

Using this method, I was able to recruit four White participants, and I continued to utilize this method until the end of the 2014 fall semester, when I modified the recruitment strategy to encourage a more heterogeneous sample (Robinson 2014). Initially the only participants I was able to recruit through the flow population and organizations model identified as White; I was unable to recruit racial minorities using this method. Racial minorities' disinclination to participate in research studies is well documented, particularly in health research (Renert et al. 2013). The basis for this disinclination toward participation is largely due to past institutional violations and abusive practices and perceived racist attitudes (Williams et al. 2013). Though the present study is not health-based, I suspect that because I requested admittance into intimate spaces, such as their apartment, dormitory and closet, racial minorities were similarly reticent to participate in the study.

Research suggests that face-to-face recruitment and culturally sensitive recruitment materials are strategies for combatting the reluctance to participate and will yield the highest degree of willing participants, including underrepresented and minority populations (Gilliss et al. 2001; Yancy et al. 2006). Yet this method alone did not garner any racial minority participants;

the African American and Latina students I encountered were not interested in being interviewed.

In order to encourage more diverse participation, I offered incentives to passersby in the form of a $10 gift card to a popular restaurant (Head 2009). The debate over paying participants is heated, and the practice is highly contested. Sullivan and Cain (2004) argue that payment is the ethical compensation participants have earned by taking part in the study. Goodman et al. (2004) argue that compensation is unethical because low-income participants would feel coerced into taking part in the study. To avoid coercion, the American Sociological Association (ASA) directs researchers to offer a fair exchange for the assistance of participants (Heard 2009). Since the interviews usually took between 1 to 1.5 hours, I compensated the participants at a rate similar to the average minimum wage, which is $7.25 per hour (United States Department of Labor). Furthermore, to avoid a potentially biased outcome, Head (2009) notes that it is best to give payment at the beginning of the interview so that it is clear that participants are being paid to show up and not for their answers. When the interview began, I gave the participants the $10 gift card as a gesture of good faith and to ensure that their responses were genuine. Through this method, a number of women agreed to be a part of the study. Though the racial diversity increased overall, I was unable to recruit Latinas or Asian Americans using this method. In total, I recruited 14 participants using this method; nine were African American, four were White, and one was biracial (both African American and White).

The fourth strategy I used for recruiting was to attend various sociology course lectures throughout the university and pitch my study. This method yielded one White participant. This method of recruiting was more effective when one professor offered extra credit to those willing to participate in the study. Because I wanted to avoid coercion, these students did not receive the

$10 gift card for their participation. Once extra credit was offered, seven students agreed to participate. All of the participants were White, except for one, who was Middle Eastern.

The fifth strategy was to advertise for participants on social media (Devers & Frankel 2000; Robinson 2014). Though this method tends to yield participants with a higher socioeconomic status, that demographic was consistent with the target population of women who can afford to attend university (Robinson 2014). I posted an advertisement to the *Yik Yak* application, which allows users in geographical proximity to Midwest University to post anonymously, if they choose. In the advertisement, I included my contact information and a brief summary of the study. This method yielded only a few responses, two of which were from people who agreed to be interviewed for the study; both were White.

The sixth strategy utilized an *organizations* model wherein two of Midwest University's offices for underrepresented students assisted with recruitment (Ritchie et al. 2003). The first office, which is geared toward first-generation college students, as well as toward racial and gender minorities, agreed to post my flyer in their office. Because of the limited advertisement, this method did not yield any participants. The second office, which focuses on children of migrant workers, agreed to post my flyer in their office and on their Facebook page. As a result of the Facebook post, two Latinas agreed to be involved in the study.

The seventh strategy involved *snowball sampling* wherein participants identified other potential interviewees (Ritchie 2003). This method is particularly effective when the research topic is sensitive (Robinson 2014). These participants also acted as gatekeepers because of their leadership roles as multicultural aids within the larger student population, thus lending my study a heightened level of credibility (Robinson 2014). Both of these gatekeepers sent emails to their student advisees on my behalf. The problem with this method is that it can be biased toward

participants with larger social networks and may potentially overlook participants with few social relationships. By using a multi-strategy approach, which included snowball sampling, I attempted to reach potential participants who had both large and small social networks. In addition, snowball sampling can undermine the heterogeneity of the sample because people tend to refer those whom they know well. The participants who referred potential interviewees used their position as at Midwest University multicultural aids to advertise the study. As a result, their referrals were not friends but people who had been assigned to work with them at the university. Though this method, I included 4 African American participants in the study.

The effectiveness of each recruitment technique was underscored by the degree to which it afforded me legitimation in the eyes of potential participants. There was very little I could do to achieve that status on my own. I noticed that if I wore a suit or business casual dress, I garnered a higher degree of interest in the study, though these changes in dress had only a marginal impact on recruitment. The greatest impact on recruitment for the study came via organizational and individual legitimization through various Midwest University offices and departments. Finally, by offering gift cards and extra credit, I was able to entice participation from a more racially diverse sample of women. The study may have been affected by self-selection bias, wherein willingness to participate in the study reflects a particular trait that undermines the representativeness of the study; however, this potential bias was deemed insignificant, since the generalizability of the findings was not the purpose of the study. Instead, the study was meant determine if there is a relationship between dress and racial identity and how college women understand that relationship.

Data Collection Procedures: Interviews

I used a "wardrobe studies" framework to collect data. This hybrid method, designed specifically for dress studies, incorporates a mix of qualitative techniques wherein "the interviews are used as both a supplement and as an integrated part of the method" (Klepp & Bjerck 2014). In this case, the interviews were supplemented by documentation of dress and a reflective research journal.

I interviewed 36 college students at Midwest University using a semi-structured format that included sifting through articles of their dress. This method of interviewing, called the "co-fabrication of data," allows for a flexible interaction with both the participants and their garments (Klepp & Bjerck 2014: 377). The interviews happened in two stages. The first stage included a traditional format, wherein I asked questions about their dress experiences, perceptions, and aesthetics, and participants answered. For the second stage, the interviews were more interactive and tactile. Together the participant and I actively inspected, examined, and talked about the articles of dress in the participant's wardrobe.

Stage 1

Few studies have investigated what women think about as they participate in various dress activities (Woodward 2007). First, in order to understand how the women saw themselves and self-identified, I posed questions aimed at getting the women to describe themselves and their bodies). Next, I asked the participants a series of questions focused on their thought processes regarding their dress practices.

What is your race? This question is particularly important because the dominant ideal of beauty is wrought with racist undertones: light skin, blond hair, blue eyes, and double eyelids (Banet-Weiser 1999; Banks 2000; Bordo 2004; Candelario 2000; Chapkis 1986; Craig, 2002; DuCille 1996; Espiritu 1997; Gilman 1985; Hobson 2003; Kaw 1993; Lakoff and Scherr 1984;

Peiss 1998; Weitz 2004). Too often, we assume that this racialized beauty ideal unilaterally impacts how women view their own bodies and shapes their dress practices (Hall 1995; Kaw 1993). The few studies that have examined the relationship between race and dress have shown racial identity to be an important predictor of bodily modifications and body supplements. In the case of the former, for example, racial identity is a predictor of eating disorders, such as bulimia and anorexia (Chin Evans & McConnell 2003; Duke 2002; Miller & Pumariega 2001; Markus & Wurf 1987). In the case of the latter, racial identity is a predictor for supplements such as makeup colors and clothes (Bettie 2002). In addition, a few studies have identified racialized motivations for altering bodies through dress, such as plastic surgery (Kaw 1993), and hair styling (Rosado 2003; Candelario 2000; Walker 2000). The construction of race involves a wide range of physical dimensions, including, but not limited to, skin color, hair texture, body shape, and eye shape. As women strive to project beauty, they must contend and grapple with all of the features that constitute their racial identity. I proposed that those physical qualities of race, embedded in the participants' racial identity, shape a wide range of their dress choices, such as makeup, clothing, shoes, nails, hairstyling, and brand choice.

How tall are you? This question is important because contemporary fashion models, deemed the epitome of beauty in US society, are typically between 5 feet 8 inches and 6 feet 1 inch tall, much taller than the average US woman (Mears 2011). Furthermore, height is correlated with employability, wherein taller individuals tend to have jobs of higher status and income (Case & Paxson 2006). These factors implicate height as being a significant measure by which women are evaluated and assessed. I hypothesized that women, feeling pressure to achieve the dominant beauty ideals, will dress to accentuate their height. This means that height is a significant predictor of dress, particularly with regard to shoes.

What is your clothing size? This question is important because numerous studies have shown that society idealizes and privileges thin bodies. It has also been shown that this well-documented fact leads women to undergo various types of body-work, such as eating disorders and exercise, to self-monitor their weight (Kwan & Trautner 2009; Chernin 1994). Because of the enormous pressure to achieve a thin body, it is my contention that women use whatever tools are at their disposal to achieve the ideal body, including dress. Body size and weight are important predictors of how women perceive and dress their bodies.

What is important to you about your body? Explain your likes or dislikes. This open-ended question allowed women to explicitly state what they value about their bodies and to explain their bodies in their own terms, in ways that the literature has not yet indicated. Overstreet et al. (2010) found that racial identity was an important determining factor when women assess their bodies, particularly with regard to body shape. Chattaraman & Rudd (2006) and Yoo (2003) found that body assessment impacts dress practices, since clothing can be used to modify bodies. This question is an outgrowth of two bodies of literature: (1) the ways women dress to accentuate or mitigate important, flattering, or unflattering bodily attributes and (2) the role of race in body shape, size, and figure assessment. I hypothesized that racial identity impacts body assessment and subsequent body modification and adornment practices.

Is there anything you want to hide when you dress? What do you want to show off when you dress? This question directly addresses the notion that body modification and adornment is used conceal and reveal bodies (Harvey 2004). Tiggerman & Lacey (2009) found that dress is used to camouflage perceived imperfections. Though this topic has not previously been investigated, I hypothesized that race will influence what women desire to hide or show off.

Do you care about your dress? Is your dress important to you? This question gauges "clothing interest" (Gurel & Gurel 1979), fashion attachment, or "fashion clothing involvement" (O'Cass 2000). Each of these concepts refers to the extent to which a person is concerned with their dress. O'Cass (2000) demonstrated that age and gender are both significant mediators of clothing involvement. I hypothesized that corporal privilege is also an important mediator for clothing involvement. As a result, women with high levels of physical privilege, either because of their race, height, or weight, would be less concerned about their dress because their bodies meet social standards of presentation.

Who or what influences your dress? Most literature is driven by the assumption that media portrayals of women in magazines and on television significantly shape body image and subsequent body modifications (Mischner et al. 2013). This perspective tends to neglect the role of social groups, which Ferguson et al. (2014) found to be the most important factor in predicting body dissatisfaction and modification among young women. Furthermore, Woodward (2007) found that even the perceived *social gaze* influenced how women view and adorn their bodies. The open-ended nature of this question allowed space for the participants to talk about all the potential influences of both body modification and adornment, including, but not limited to, media, social networks, and social gaze.

Who are the people/person you look up to when you get dressed? Who do you want to look like most? These questions emerge out of a number of theoretical frameworks: *Trickle Down Theory, Mass Market Theory*, and *Subculture Leadership Theory, Trickle Down Theory* (Simmel 1904) states women look to the fashion stylings of society's upper crust for dress inspiration; historically these members of society were upper class and royalty, but contemporarily, they are considered to be celebrities and models. *Mass-market Theory* (King,

1963) posits that fashion innovators emerge from a multitude of social backgrounds and have a profound impact on dress practices. Finally, *Subculture Leadership Theory* (Sproles 1979) argues that dress preferences are the result of social and cultural group practices. Each of these theories points to a different model for dress behavior. Asking open-ended questions about ideal-types allowed the participants to indicate the particular references that shape their preferences and practices for dress.

Who do you get dressed for? This question is derived from Woodward's (2007) study wherein women dress for the expected social setting and "being seen." Woodward analyzed the type of event, either work or social, and the visceral experiences of being observed and witnessed by both friends and potential mates. She found that found that experiencing the gaze "is therefore a marriage of the intimate and the generic as women consider their own dressed bodies in light of wider social ideals and expectations. The generic gaze is specific to individual women as it is racialized." As a result, women's perception of "being seen" is unique to their own social reality. This open-ended question allows space for women to express the particular gaze that is most important as they dress their own bodies.

What do you think about when you get ready? Woodward (2007) demonstrated that there are a number of overlapping considerations that take place during the act of getting dressed. By asking open-ended questions, the women I interviewed had space to reveal ideas previously assumed to be beyond the scope of dress. I hypothesized that women think about issues of race, class, and gender while getting dressed.

What are you hoping to achieve while dressing your body? Dress can indicate numerous values, as exemplified by the popular adage "dress for success. " This question revealed which values or images women are hoping their dress will convey. The literature on this

theme has covered a range of topics, typically focusing on one social situation or type of dress behavior. For example, professional women are found to use clothes and hairstyles to convey competence and authority in the workplace (Peluchette et al. 2006). When asked about their hair, Dominican American women said that they used hairstyling techniques to display their Hispanic ethnicity, and African American women said that they style their hair to resist dominant norms of beauty (Candelario 2007). This open-ended question allowed space for participants to explain any of the various intentions of their body adornment and modification.

What is your favorite outfit? Why? What are the most important things in your wardrobe? Bettie (2007) and Candelario (2000) observed that women and girls make choices for dress based on their race, class, and ethnic background. By identifying the participant's favorite outfit, we begin to create a picture of what Woodward (2007) calls the *ideal self*, which is the preferred physical version of one's self. Since dress is an embodied experience, the identification of favorite and important outfits served to uncover what women like most about their bodies, highlighting the aspects of dress they most enjoy and value. It is my contention that racial identity will structure the aspects of dress the participants use to construct their ideal selves.

How do you racially identify yourself? How does your identity come through in your clothing? The literature on this topic suggests that mass production, endemic to the contemporary fashion system, has served to homogenize dress across space and time (Negrin 2008). In contrast, I contend that there are racial identification markers embedded in dress that personalize dress and fashion trends. Often these markers are references to cultural groups, wherein only members of the community in question understand where to look for the symbols

and what their significance is (Eicher 1992; Winge 2012). This question helped to uncover the markers of identity that are often overlooked in the apparent homogeneity of style.

Stage 2

During the second phase, we engaged in "talking-whilst-walking interviews," where the participants and I explored their closets, cabinets, drawers, and dressers to examine the various elements of dress. This method helped to stimulate communication and descriptions of particular meanings attached to dress (Hitchings & Jones 2004; Klepp & Bjerck 2014). I took pictures of their outfits, hairstyles, and makeup preferences to document dress choices.

Drawing on "object-based research" and material culture, I cataloged significant and meaningful dress as identified by each participant (Klepp & Bjerck 2014). This involved taking 7 to 10 photographs of a wide variety of garments, body supplements, and modifications, since each participant viewed their dress slightly differently. I performed a "substantial analysis," wherein I recorded the physical elements of the garment. I noted the brand, quality, and condition of each garment (Prown 2001). Next, I focused on the various individual and social ideologies attached to the dress. Specifically, I asked a number of questions to uncover what the young women thought their dress practices signaled.

What does this outfit signify in your community when you wear it? This question is derived from the theory of *Conspicuous Consumption* (Veblen 1899), wherein people buy goods for the explicit purpose of communicating wealth and status, particularly through the consumption of garments. Charles et al. (2007) found that Blacks and Hispanics were more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption than Whites. Other research has shown that clothing contains other symbols not related to wealth, but rather to in-group values and ideals

(Winge 2012). This open-ended question allows space for responses related to conspicuous consumption, as well as other ideologies.

What does this article of clothing say about you when you wear it? What does your hairstyle communicate about you? Dress is widely recognized as a form of communication, either as a text, as a language, or through symbols and representations. The literature on this topic suggests that women are aware that their dress communicates a wide body of information about them (Damhorst 1999). For example, Dominican American women recognize that their hairstyles signify different information about their identity as they cross cultural and racial communities (Candelario 2000). The questions here built on the existent literature by delving into different dimensions of how women engage in communication through dress.

What do you hope people notice when you wear this outfit? This question is important because it underscores the interactional nature of dress, wherein women are concerned with how the messages embedded in their dress are received (Damhorst 1999). Preiholt (2012) explains that garments carry different meanings depending on the social situation. This question uncovers what the participant hopes their dress communicates.

What do you hope happens when you wear or style yourself in this way? The literature suggests that women dress to achieve particular goals, such as employment or respect (Peluchette et al. 2006). In my estimation, this finding only narrowly reflects the intentions that shape women's dress. By asking an open-ended question, women have room to communicate a wide variety of dress objectives.

Who likes this outfit when you wear it? Who does not like this outfit when you wear it? Woodward (2007) states that women grapple with numerous, overlapping perceptions of their bodies as they decide how to dress their bodies at the *moment of assemblage*. She highlighted the

different, and often contradictory, meanings of dress, as well as the complex negotiations women engage in daily as they navigate though different social situations, such as class, work, and lunch. These questions delved into the various social groups women encounter and the different responses to their dress (Woodward 2007).

Journal

Throughout the duration of the data collection, I kept field notes and a journal to facilitate reflexivity and to "provide a research 'trail' of gradually altering methodologies and reshaping analysis" (Ortlipp 2008: 696). In accordance with this methodology, I noted the tone and tenor of the meeting and the participants' general reaction to my inquiry. As a result of my notes and analysis, I made revisions and removed interview questions that did not yield robust responses. Additionally, this process helped to codify the emerging variables whilst challenging my own assumptions about dress.

Data Management Methods

The interviews were recorded, transcribed and de-identified. The documents and recordings were stored in a locked cabinet. Similar procedures were used for storage of the photographs and field notes. All of the pictures had been de-identified at the time of recording and therefore did not include pictures of participant faces.

Phase V: Evaluation

Sandberg (2005) provides three measures to determine validity in intrepretist research: communicative, pragmatic, and transgressive validity. Communicative validity is determined by the degree to which the researcher and participant create a "community of interpretation," wherein they have a mutual understanding of what they are doing (Sandberg 2005, p. 54). Communicative validity enables the researcher to determine the coherence of interpretation.

Genuine dialogue has a high degree of communicative validity since it cultivates understanding by emphasizing the particular meanings embedded in the question. To ensure communicative validity, I provided personal examples to clarify the precise meaning of the question and give context for the question. Further augmenting the communicative validity, I asked follow-up and clarification questions to establish the precise meaning of participants' responses.

Pragmatic validity establishes coherence of interpretation wherein the researcher accurately understands and represents the participant ideas and behaviors. To establish pragmatic validity, I reworded participant responses and gauged their reaction to my summations. In addition, I asked participants to describe situations and show me their dress. The participants were accommodating and allowed me to rifle through their garments, make-up, and other accessories, such as jewelry and scarves. Since the formal interview had been completed by the time I actually looked at their garments, a modicum of comfortability had already been established. In addition, when approaching their garments, I referred back to specific items discussed during the formal interview. This practice ensured that my interpretation of their ideas and perceptions surrounding dress accurately fit their lived experiences.

Finally, transgressive validity ensures that the researcher entertained alternate explanations of the phenomena of interest by challenging their assumptions, preconceptions, and biases. To establish transgressive validity, I intentionally posed my conclusions as suggestive. I also entertained numerous possible interpretations of participant responses.

Since the study was not meant to be representative of the entire population of collegiate women, but rather suggestive of important factors of dress, fashion, and race, this study had very little body diversity, class diversity, and age diversity. For future research, I plan to use the

findings of the present study to create a survey tool that allows for more representative

conclusions with regard to female college students.

CHAPTER 2: RACE AND DRESS

Introduction

Very little is known about how race impacts body adornment and modification. What we do know does little to explain individuals' contemporary dress practices. Historical evidence demonstrates that women have altered their bodies either to resist or to conform to racially defined constructions of beauty. Contemporarily, that model still dominates our understanding of race and dress, despite recent evidence suggesting that women's relationships to prevailing notions of beauty are far more complex. Evidence has show that rather than fitting neatly into a model of conformity or rebellion, women's dress represents a mixed bag of ideologies, meanings, and narratives. In this hodgepodge of ideas, does race remain a factor in how women decide to dress their bodies? If women are not using their dress to resist racist notions of beauty or alter their bodies for acceptance, does race matter in their dress? If it does matter, what racial ideas and constructs do women draw from to construct their appearance? Additionally, how does the media factor in?

Negotiating Beauty: racial imperatives

It is widely accepted that the hegemonic notion of feminine beauty has historically and contemporarily been racially exclusive, primarily by privileging Whiteness or the performance of being White (Berry 2008; Jeffreys 2005; Adkins & Skeggs 2004; Kinloch 2004; Bordo 1993). As a result, women have been forced to contend with that particular construction of feminine beauty. There are two predominant models of beauty that explain the social pressure presented by hegemonic notions of beauty. The first is the Foucouldian model, which suggests that women adhere to the prevailing notion of beauty in order to achieve social acceptance, capital, and resources (Gimlin 2000). This assertion means that women self-monitor, adorn, and modify their

bodies in an effort to achieve acceptance and employment (Gimlin 2007; Turner-Bowker 2001; Entwistle 2000; Turner-Bowker 2001; Foucault 1979; Featherstone 1991). Often, marginalized women (due to race, class, ability, etc.) undertake additional techniques to mediate more effectively the physical qualities associated with their marginality (Kwan & Tautner 2009; Reischer & Koo 2004; Kaw 1994; Gimlin 2007, 2002; Weitz 2001).

For African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, adhering to the prevailing notion of beauty has meant minding the *politics of respectability* when in adorning and modifying their bodies (Ford 2013). For example, during the Civil Rights Movement, African American women wore chemically processed hairstyles and skirts for the explicit purpose of cultivating the respect they were denied because of their race (Ford 2013). Similarly, skin bleaching, hair straightening, and the whitening of features through plastic surgery have all been defined as body modification measures undertaken to achieve acceptance (Kaw 1993; Hunter 2011).

The second model demonstrates challenges to dominant constructions of beauty through dress. Here, women choose an alternate aesthetic and style to adorn and modify their bodies. Often viewed as a political statement or as the result of one's ethnic heritage, these women resist the social pressures to conform. For example, women and men in the Black Power movement and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) wore Afro hairstyles, denim pants, and little makeup in order to challenge White norms of beauty, assert racial pride, and desexualize their bodies (Ford 2013; 2015; Black 2004). Similarly, in the 1970s, African American men and women integrated *cultural attire* or "traditionally styled garments imported from various African countries, made of fabrics constructed and finished in those countries, or replicas of such garments" into their American and western dress in an effort to reclaim their

Whitewashed history of racial subjugation and subvert symbols of there oppression (Jackson & O'Neal 1994: 169).

These dichotomous models, wherein women either strive to meet or rebel against the dominant construction of beauty, undermines the situated essence of beauty standards and oversimplifies the complex relationship between race, dress, and fashion (see Woodward 2007; see Craig 2002; see Weitz 2001; Rosado 2003; Smolka et al. 2009). The expectations for beauty are constantly shifting, as are the meanings they connote. Thus, as women navigate through different social spaces, the meaning and significance of their bodies and dress fluctuate in ways that cannot be boiled into a simple framework of rebellion or acquiescence to an overarching construction of beauty. In reality, women face a highly complex system of privilege and aesthetics, wherein they must negotiate, grapple with, and choose how to present their bodies, particularly with regard to race, in an increasingly diverse world.

Tate (2007) has used the term the *third space* to describe the nexus of varying and conflicting constructions and meanings of beauty, fashion, and body. Here, women are constantly and continuously negotiating their own ideas of beauty by cherry-picking parts of the dominant constructions of gender, beauty, and race, as well as alternative constructions of beauty, to arrive at their self-presentation. Similarly, Hammidi and Kraiser (1999) theorized that women *do beauty* by visually articulating and negotiating cultural contradictions and personal ambivalence to various definitions of beauty to construct their own bodily performance (59). The resultant body modifications and adornments are an exhibition of their own unique definitions of beauty (Woodward 2009; Kang 2010). The current chapter explores the body modifications and adornments a diverse group of women have chosen for themselves.

The present study provides an investigation into the *third space*, wherein women have cherry-picked various elements of dominant and subversive racial narratives to dress their own bodies. The contemporary nature of the study provides the ideal backdrop for understanding the process of dress because the changes in the nature of racial politics. Since the Civil Rights Movement, when clothing was arranged and deployed to communicate specific political goals, there has been a shift in how people engage the subversive and insidious nature of contemporary racial politics (Winant 1994, 2004). The participants in the present study, like many of their collegiate peers, were aware of the politicized nature of clothing, but were not singularly focused on how to mobilize their bodily modifications and adornments as a part of a social movement, social statement, or collective social action. Their apathy, in combination with the insidious nature of contemporary racial politics, makes now an ideal time to study how people navigate the third space of varying and conflicting racial territory.

Media and Beauty: socialization messages

A crucial factor, incorporated into the process of negotiating beauty, is the high degree of visibility of women's bodies in social and traditional media. It is widely accepted that aesthetic arrangements of bodies, fueled by the dominant construction of beauty, convey information about appropriate gender performances (Dworkin & Wachs 2009; Lindner 2004; Goffman 1979). Judith Lorber (1994) argues "cultural representations of gender and embodiment of gender in symbolic language and artistic productions that reproduce and legitimate gender statuses," (30). For example images in the media, such as magazine articles, television programs, and advertisements, are important cultural purveyors of beauty information (Henley 1977; Goffman 1979; Finkelstein 1991; Dworkin and Wachs 2009; Durham 1999). Consequently, observation of these frames constitutes a central mode of socialization into the dominant construction of beauty.

Media images tend to reflect the racial hierarchy that privileges Whiteness (Signorielli & Bacue 1999; Fouts & Burggraf 2000; Glascock 2001; Collins 2002; Dworkin & Wachs 2009). Although Whites and persons of color are seen cavorting as friends in advertisements, their interactions subtly maintain racial hierarchal relations by placing darker women in the background and in supporting roles (Dworkin & Wachs 2009; hooks 1992). Despite the increasing numbers of representations of Asian and Hispanic women, cover models tend to be White (Collins 2002; Dworkin & Wachs 2009; Espiritu 1997). On the rare occasion when models of color are included, they typically have lighter skin, straight hair, and narrow features, all of which are approximations of Whiteness (Dworkin & Wachs 2009). Altogether, these images tend to reinforce the unequal and marginal status of people of color, while reaffirming the notion of a colorblind society (hooks 1992; Dworkin & Wachs 2009). Through the placement of models and their physical features, the images send the message that particular women's bodies are more valued than others. As a consequence, women feel pressure to modify their bodies through clothing, makeup, and hairstyling in order to be considered attractive and valued.

Furthermore, these media images function as agents of socialization for the dominant constructions of beauty (Myers & Biocca 2006; Lindner 2004; Kang 1997; McKay & Covell 1997; Lanis & Covell 1995). Milkie (1999) argues that popularized images may impact how we believe others see such images and thus use them to judge ourselves. Even if women do not internalize the popularized messages, they perceive these standards as the measures by which others judge them (Milkie 1999).

As women look at their reflection in a mirror, they imagine the various ways people may view their bodies and clothes, a process called the *imagined gaze* (Woodward 2007: 99-100). In combination with this imagined gaze, women consider formal and informal dress codes and

dominant ideologies of being and performance to decide what to wear. Because clothing can have a multitude of meanings dependent on the context, women have to explore the various systems of meaning (Woodward 2007: 80-82). Woodward highlighted sexuality and gender among the central considerations. By drawing upon this knowledge base at the *moment of assemblage*, women select modifications and adornments to construct their self-presentation (Woodward 2007: 80-82).

Research Questions and Findings

For the present study, I wanted to know if race factored into the considerations made during the moment of assemblage. Specifically, I wanted to know if racial identity impacted women's preferred styles and fashions, as well as dress behavior. It is widely recognized that racial identity impacts how women view magazines, models, and celebrities and whether the ideal-types portrayed are used to gauge and assess their own body size and weight (David et al. 2002). Yet it is unclear which images and aesthetics from the media shape women's body modification and dress at the moment of assemblage. Therefore, in addition to questions about the ways in which race impacts participants' own dress practices, I asked participants to reflect and comment on the media images that embody their aesthetic preferences and impact their own dress behavior. These questions inform which aspects of socially available information women use to make decisions about dress and to assess their own bodies and the bodies of others.

This chapter establishes new pathways for sociological inquiry into fashion, dress, and race though an exploration of college students' racial identity and clothing across racial groups. The chapter is broken up into six parts, each of which represents a theme I observed. The first chapter is about how participants ascribed their racial identity to their clothing; the second is about the influence of racially homogenous friends on style; the third is about racially similar

celebrities that influence style; the fourth is about racial differences in dress observed by

participants across campus; the fifth is about racially specific pressures for dress; and the final,

sixth chapter is about racial differences in concealing bodies through dress.

Part 1

The most interesting and compelling finding of my research is that 15 participants

thought that their racial identity influenced their clothing. Eight African American participants,

six White participants, and one Middle Eastern participant saw their clothing as racialized. The

following are 11 particularly poignant excerpts from various interviews regarding racial identity

and dress.

Sasha (African American) saw her style as particular to the African American community:
> Interviewer: How do identify yourself, racially?
> Sasha: I'm African American.
> I: Do you feel like your identity comes through in your clothes at all?
> S: I would say so. Like the Uggs and the trends that I wear, that's high among African American groups. That's a signifier.
> I: So…okay. So besides the Uggs, what else? Is there anything else?
> S: I wear a lot of Victoria's Secret. I know a lot of African American girls wear Victoria's Secret jogging pants and hoodies and I don't really shop on a brand, I shop on what I like.

Victoria (White) saw her racial identity in her clothing, particularly when comparing herself to her peers on campus
> Interviewer: So is there something that you…I think you talked about this; that you want people... How do you identify racially?
> Victoria: White.
> I: Do you feel like your identity comes through in your clothes at all? Your White identity.
> V: Yea. I mean, I don't…maybe like to other people it does, but to me that's actually never really like crossed my mind, I guess. I mean you definitely can see, like, the difference, the different, like, ways that, like, different races, like, dress on campus, I guess, but I don't know, I've never really thought of that before, I guess.

Charlotte (White) noted that her clothing fit the image of a stereotypical White girl.
> Interviewer: Okay yea, so that answers the next question. How do you identify yourself racially?
> Charlotte: Like Caucasian, White.
> I: Yea, and do you feel like this comes through in your clothing at all?

C: Sometimes, like I know like…I don't know where it, like, came up but there was like…I think it was my…yea, my race and ethnicity class year and there was like a stereotype for a typical White girl and I didn't realize, like, I fit so much of that but like, not all of them, but what I wear primarily so…

Lucy (White) also saw her clothes as typical of a White girl.

Interviewer: Yea, yea, yea. Oh, interesting. So how do you identify yourself racially?

Lucy: White.

I: Okay. Do you feel like your racial identity comes through in your clothes at all?

L: Probably, I mean there's like the typical…like the typical White girl thing. The basic you know…

Sophia (White) was reluctant to admit her race was evident in her clothing but acknowledged that it was present and that she fit a White girl stereotype, even though that was not her aim.

Interviewer: Okay. Oh, how do you identify racially?

Sophia: White or Caucasian.

I: Okay. Do you feel like that comes through in your clothes in any way?

S: Some but some no, I don't. Not…not a lot I don't feel like.

I: Okay. If it did, you said some…to some degree, what would it…how so?

S: I always hear about this, nowadays it's like this basic girl idea.

I: Oh yes, yes.

S: And like the boots with leggings and stuff like that and I tend to wear like…to wear that. But I don't feel like I'm….I don't do it because I'm like, I'm trying to fit in, I do it because it's comfortable. So I think that in some ways that could come across as being like the basic White girl.

Janet (White) argued that her clothes fit the stereotypical image of a White girl.

Interviewer: Yea. Well it's more noticeable but it's really not that much in the whole MSU population so it makes sense. How do you identify racially?

Janet: Caucasian.

I: Yea.

J: I guess.

I: You never know. Do you feel like, that like your Caucasian identity comes through in, like, your clothes at all? Like for example, if people couldn't see you and they could only see your clothes in your wardrobe, would they know that you were White?

J: That's a really hard question. Like if you're looking like very, very stereotypically like yes, but I feel like unless they came in with that mindset just by looking at my clothes, they would have no idea what race I was.

Olivia (Black), one of the only participants not born in the US, saw her Ethiopian identity and her African American identity as intertwined, both of which were present in her clothing.

Interviewer: Okay, so how do you identify yourself racially?

Olivia: Racially, that's complicated. I'm Ethiopian, I was born and raised there.

I: Oh really.

O: Yea, but I'm also part Italian and part Yemen, which is an Arab country but I go by Ethiopian. If a person asks me specifically, "what's your ethnicity?" I'll tell them I'm

East African, I'm Ethiopian and I have some other background as well but as an American I do represent myself as African American.

I: When did you come here?

O: When I was like 6, 5, almost 6.

I: Okay. Well that is complicated. Do you feel like any of these identities come through in your clothing?

O: Yea, like the Ethiopian flag, it's green, yellow, red and like, those are like three colors, I will say, I personally would not wear as an outfit but if it's like a certain occasion like, for instance like this weekend is the gala, which an African exhibit that has like fashion shows and clothing, so I probably will end up wearing like a black tee-shirt, a black jeans, and I might like throw on my Ethiopian bracelet or I have this one Ethiopian colored scarf, but like I can like wrap my hair with it or something, just like to incorporate with it but since how I say black goes with everything, that would be the only way I would be willing to wear those colors.

Kylie (Middle Eastern), the only participant of Middle Eastern descent, articulated the many ways her racial identity was evident in her clothing.

Interviewer: Okay. So actually, there's a question I had later. Okay so you said you're Persian.

Kylie: Yea, I'm Persian.

I: So do you feel like that comes through in your clothes at all?

K: I think so. I mean, like I said, the thing about being…like the black, like wearing black like that's a very like…like I don't know…I don't know why this is the way it is, but like with Persian girls it's like, our purses are black, our clothes are black, our car is black, black, black. Like everything is just black, like I don't know maybe it's because like people say black is like flattering to your figure, our hair is dark, our eyes are dark, like that's like a big part of, like, my image, like the reason I keep my hair curly is this is part of my culture like my hair…a lot of Persian girls, we have naturally very curly hair and I…when I was younger I would try to straighten it and hide it but like now I embrace it. This is what it is and I keep that. When you see my room, you'll see my culture in it but like with my clothes like I mean, I don't know, like in Iran the style of people is very different from the style here, like of what people wear and how they dress. Especially because it's a very underground community, like the fashion community, because in Iran you have to wear the hijab and like the loose fitting clothing and stuff and a lot of people don't care and still will like pull their hijab all the way back and wear something tight. The majority of the fashion is kind of like underground; it's not really legal but the perception of Persian fashion here, there's like a term, I don't know if you've ever heard it, they'll say, "oh that such a…like that person's such a FOB." Have you ever heard of that?

I: Um hm. Like "fresh off the boat."

K: Fresh off the boat, yea. So like when you think of Persian FOB style, you think of like girls that, like, really tease their hair up, like they put on like a ton of makeup, like guys who have like hairy chests and like low cut Armani Exchange V-neck shirts. Like that's what you think of when you think like a FOB Persian style. So like in that sense, that's like a negative connotation, so nobody wants to dress like that, nobody wants to be

considered a FOB. So like, I wouldn't say that, that influences my style because I don't…I don't wear that. [See Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 5 and Figure 6]

Dawn (African American) did not see her race in her clothing, but rather in her hair, particularly the texture.

Interviewer: Okay interesting. How do you identify yourself racially?

Dawn: Just African-American.

I: Okay do you feel like that comes across in your clothes at all? Like if someone like saw you today but, like, couldn't see her skin color, do you think that they would know like that you were Black or Black girl?

D: They probably wouldn't know because like if you're on this campus most of the girls dressed the same, we all wear Uggs and leggings and shirts and like if you couldn't see the skin tone I feel like you wouldn't know.

I: Interesting. Do you think your racial identity comes through in any other way?

D: Probably my hair, but that's it because you can definitely look at my hair and tell that I am not like White or anything but...

I: And is it... Do you feel like that it has to do with the way you style it, like the styles that you go for? Or anything else?

K: No just like, I guess I want to say like the texture of it or something.

Autumn (African American), the only biracial participant in the study, expressed that her biracial identity was evident in her clothes, even though she said, "I guess I kind of identify with the Black community."

Interviewer: Okay. How do you identify yourself racially?

Autumn: I say I'm biracial.

I: Okay and do you feel like that has influenced you clothes at all?

A: Yeah I do, actually. That's a really good question. I think because, like, I was like… I was raised in like a very prominently White community. In high school we lived in a suburb of like Detroit, of like Metro Detroit area, high school was what, like 85% White, so like I mean, just like being around a more White population, of course like I don't know there's no thing… there's no such thing to me, as like dressing White, but like you go to the stores that are in your neighborhood, you know what I'm saying, and mostly like White population would shop at those to, you know what I'm saying, so like I think that has definitely influenced me a lot. So yeah.

Sky (African American) thought her identity as a Black women influenced her clothing, particularly with regard to the trends she paid attention to.

Sky: I hang around mostly Black people, I have my core group of friends are all Black. I probably have two really good White friends.

Interviewer: Okay. So in the go-out space is it also mostly Black or is it a mixed crowd?

S: Mostly Black.

I: Okay. Do you identify as Black too?

S: Yes.

I: Do you feel like that influences your clothing at all?

S: Um hm. Because I like to…I don't really like…I really like to keep hip with how Black trends are going.

Each participant had a unique perspective with regard to how her clothing was shaped by race. They saw race as evident in their clothing in a multitude of ways, including racial stereotypes, fashion trends, narratives, communities, physical qualities, and history.

Part 2

Nineteen of the participants' friends were of the same racial group. Of particular interest are the seven women (six White, one African American) who did not think race influenced their own clothing, but said their friends, the majority of whom were of the same race, influenced their clothing. The following are four excerpts particularly salient and demonstrative examples of how racially-exclusive social networks influenced clothing.

Harper (White) said that her Whiteness did not influence her clothing, but that she was influenced by her social networks. Therefore, although not obvious to Harper, her Whiteness infiltrated her clothing through her friends.

> Interview: How do you identify yourself racially?
> Harper: Cauc…like Caucasian, like White, yea.
> I: Okay, yea. Do you feel like your identity, like your White identity comes through in your clothes at all?
> H: No, not at all.
> I: Okay. Can you describe the basic racial makeup of your friend group?
> H: It's pretty diverse.
> I: Ok.
> H: But like up here, it's pretty Caucasian.
> I: Oh, so from your high school it was more diverse?
> H: I went to…actually I went to private, I went to a Jewish private school of 200 kids.
> ….

Later in the interview, she said that she was influenced by her mostly White social network's fashion choices.

> I: So is there somebody that you want to look like, that you feel like you try to emulate, like, "I always like their style," nobody?
> H: I mean like I get ideas, like if I'm on Facebook, "oh like that's a cool outfit," like maybe I'll do that, but there's not like one person where I go like, "oh I need that."
> I: So when you get ideas on Facebook, are they usually like friends of yours?
> H: Yea, yea.

A similar phenomenon emerged over the course of my conversation with Karen (White), who thought that race did not impact her dress, but was highly influenced by friends' style, who were White.

Interviewer: So you said your mom is someone that definitely influences your dress, is there anybody else?

Karen: I guess like what my friends wear. There's not like a particular friend I would say, but like definitely if I see them wearing stuff, and I like it or something like that, yea.

I: Can you describe your friend group to me? Like…I don't know just anything about that.

K: I have a lot of different friend groups, so it's kind of hard. Like, one of my…like my…one of my really, like my best friends is like really, really into like fashion, like she worked at a ton of clothes stores, so like she always has, like really not…sometimes different but also really fashionable stuff, so I guess that kind of helps me, like, definitely see like what's in style and stuff like that and if I like it or not. And then I have other friends who don't care as much, so I probably, if I'm going to go more of a like a fashion route like this, I would more look towards my friend that does. Whereas like she even says she's like…I'm like…if I'm wearing something and we're going…like we were doing something so casually the other day and she looks so cute and I'm just like not. And I was like, "why are you dressed up?" and she was like, "when am I not dressed up? When am I not done up?" So it's like that. So it's like that type of thing.

I: Okay. So can you also describe like the racial dimension of your friend groups? Like what about your fashionista friend, the one that's real jazzy?

K: She's…she's White.

I: Okay.

K: She…let me see. Most of my friends are like White race.

Similarly, Patti (White) had a majority of White friends and was influenced them, particularly her roommate.

Interviewer: Okay. So what would you say is the general racial make-up of each of the three groups that you interact with?

Patti: The general racial makeup?

I: Yea.

P: Let's see. Well the kinesiology one, it's… I don't know, it's kind of a good, like, balance of everybody really. I'm just thinking of one of my classes, and a…it's a pretty good balance, yea. My friends here also, because Holden's like an international dorm. So yea, there's like…there's a few people that are…my suitemate's from China so that's cool. I like hanging out with her. Yea, a lot of diversity. And my Christian group is mostly White people but there are different ethnicities in that as well.

….

Interviewer: Okay. Are there people that you look up to when you get dressed, like that you admire their style, that you maybe want to emulate or somebody that you just feel like is always…I don't know, it could be a celebrity, a friend?

Patti: I think my big sister's definitely a big one just because, I mean, we've like shared clothes our whole life. I'll be like, "oh that looks good on you," and now it's mine, that sort of stuff. Also my roommate, she has a lot of just like cool things, but at the same time they're just like…they can be worn with a lot. So it's not like something so unique that you can only wear it with a certain like outfit set, but she has a lot of versatile stuff.

Sandy (White) did not think her racial identity influenced her clothing, but all of her friends were White, and they shaped her dress choices.

> Interviewer: Okay. What you say is like the racial makeup of your friends? Like the friends you just described are they…
>
> Sandy: They are high school friends, I'm not as close with them anymore, but like that's, you know, what I can think of right now. One of the girls is blond-haired, like White like me, but she's also like really, really tan, like more of the rocker girl. The girl that was Aztec look, she was actually like pale-skin redhead, really pretty. Oh gosh, my friend who did the sporty look, long like brownish hair that was curly and she was also White and then my friend who… I have another friend who kind of dressed more like me, more of like a classy smart look and she's Asian and…but would… she had like short hair. I'm trying to think, she's also in Business [school] with me, too, though, so it's like, you know, some people are in the same major and some people aren't. It's where you grew up, as well, so yea…It's kind of…I'm trying to think.
>
> I: So the people that you feel like influenced your clothes, in your friend group, most of them are White and then there's an Asian girl?
>
> S: Yeah.
>
> I: Okay. Okay. How do you identify racially?
>
> S: I'm German American, I'm White, Caucasian with blond hair.

Though not conclusive, these interviews point to another layer of the racialization of clothing. Racial stratification and social networks work in tandem to influence the clothing of collegiate women, even in ways they may not realize.

Part 3

I found that, often, when women mentioned the celebrities that influenced their style, they chose celebrities with the same racial background. Thirteen of the girls (eight African American and five White) identified celebrities as their style stars who are the same race as they are. Four African American women who said their racial identity did not influence their dress admired celebrities of the same racial background. Twelve particularly interesting examples of participants discussing celebrity style are provided below.

Sasha (African American) was influenced by African American celebrities.

> Sasha: Thank you, I like Olivia Pope. She inspired me for a lot of the things that I buy… and "Beyoncé. I love Beyoncé. I really just look at icons, what they wear to differing Grammy ceremonies and everyday paparazzi pictures. I follow things like that, what they wear.

Steph (African American) also identified Beyoncé, who is an African American, as a celebrity whose style she admired.

> Interviewer: Okay is there something that influences your dress, like "okay I like that person's style" or…?
> Steph: I'll just throw out Beyoncé because I like her style. She's not like, she's never inappropriate with anything she wears so…

Brooklyn (African American) identified with Black celebrities, Rihanna and Beyoncé, as women whose style she admired.

> Interviewer: Are there any people or persons, either celebrities or friends or whatever, that you look up to in terms of their style? That you really admire or you like or you want to emulate?
> Brooklyn: I think I like Beyoncé and Rihanna's style, but I don't think I'd want to emulate it because I just don't think I would be comfortable wearing those kind of clothes all the time. But I like their style on them.

Sky (African American) also identified Rihanna as someone whose style she liked.

> Interviewer: Is there anybody you look up to when you get dressed? Like who do you want to look like most? Is it… Do you have friends or celebrities, anybody who you feel like, "oh, I always like their style?"
> Sky: I like Rihanna's style. I don't…Not as naked as she is but I like, like…I like how causal but like still, like, cute she is. Like the things she wears to like basketball games.

Dawn (African American) identified Rihanna and Beyoncé as the women who influenced her style.

> Interviewer: Okay, so do you feel like there are anybody, any people, friends, like style, like fashionistas, whatever, Instagram people that you look up to in terms of style, like "oh! I really love them like I want to look like them or I like how they put it together," whatever.
> Dawn: I love Rihanna, and I love how she dresses but I don't think I would ever be able to pull some of the stuff off she wears because some of the stuff is like really crazy.
> I: It is, like the green fur thing that she wore. I can't ever imagine wearing that. She made it look amazing but it's like, "where would I ever wear green fur, like neon green fur?"
> D: But I like the way she dresses. I like the way Beyoncé dresses sometimes. It's a lot of people I like how they dress, but it's just when it comes to more style, it's Rihanna's style and how she dresses, and then probably because sometimes she wears a lot of dark colors and I like dark colors.

Christine (African American) admired an African American celebrity.

> Interviewer: Who would, like, be an example of a celebrity?
> Christine: I would probably say LaLa Anthony. She's gorgeous, she has her own like boutique online, her own makeup line. I like what she wears. Her boutique is a little expensive, but it's nice stuff. She wears a lot of high skirts and pointed heels and stuff like that.

Charlotte (White) also identified a celebrity of the same race who shaped her self-stylization.

Interviewer: Ok. Who's someone or what people do you feel like you look up to with your style? Do you have any style stars? It could be friends, too, it doesn't have to be celebrities but just somebody that you look up to.

Charlotte: I'm trying to think. Well, I like Lauren Conrad. She has like a line at Kohl's and I like everything, like pretty much yea, like everything in her line, and I think her style, it's very like low-key, like mellow, and that's how I kind of am, so I like her sense of style.

Sandy (White) identified two White celebrities whose style she liked.

Interviewer: So are there any people that you particularly look up to for your clothes and your style?

Sandy: That's a really interesting… So I typically look up to different, say celebrity-wise, I actually look up to people with similar body-types sometimes. So like Kate Hudson, she doesn't have very much boobs, but she's got like a larger butt, or like that's what she's known about and being blond hair and everything. I really like her style and like what she stands for, she has her own business now for like Fabletics, if you've heard of that?

.…

Interviewer: I get what you're saying. Anybody else besides…

Sandy: Kate Hudson. Gosh, I'm trying to think off the top of my head. I feel like there's just like so many, like, classy ladies I can think of that are like stars that I can't, like, put my finger on right now. Oh, Blake Lively, Audrey Hepburn.

Olivia (African American) identified Rihanna and social media bloggers as her style inspirations. Rihanna, a recording artist, is Afro-Barbadian; the style bloggers are also African American.

Olivia: Rihanna has like similarities to what I wear and then there are…I know these girls who are on Instagram, which we follow each other. We have, like, similar styles.

Lydia (African American) admired the style of an African American actress.

Interviewer: Okay I get it. Okay. So besides your looking up to your godsister and being influenced by the French, are there any things that you feel like influence dressed, like friends or I don't know social media or whatever?

Lydia: I would say. Well, I watch a lot of CNN. Well, not anymore, but I used to, not anymore, really, I don't have as much time, but like CNN and then like when I watch *Scandal*. Definitely *Scandal* and *How to Get Away with Murder* I would say I definitely pay a lot of attention to their outfits because I just think that Kerry Washington just dresses amazingly, I love her style. So I don't know, it's just that business, confident look is, I don't know, is just something that I really admire, I think that's the most sexy, to look sophisticated.

Autumn (African American), who was biracial but identified as Black and with the Black community, admired the style and bodies of African American celebrities.

Interviewer: Yeah, get, yeah, but I'm glad you're very explicit. So are there any people you look up to when you get dressed? Like style stars? Like either… It could be friends, family or even, I don't know, some celebrity or something? Like who do you like look up to for your style?

Autumn: Do I look up to from her style? I don't know if I look up to anybody for my style, but I do think, of course, like Rihanna dresses really cute, love her. Who else? There is this… I feel so silly saying this, but there's this like woman I follow on Instagram, I don't know how I started following, her but like her name is like Lira Galore, or something like that.

I: Yeah, I know who she is.

A: You know who she is? I think she just is like so beautiful and like her clothes are so beautiful, like I feel like they, like, just complement her so well, so I like love stalking her page, like "Oh my gosh, that would be so cute" if I have the body for it but yet… So I mean her, Rihanna, who else… I mean there are so many, like Beyoncé…

Jamila (African American) admired the style of an African American celebrity.

Jamila: Black women who, you know, are doing things positive, positively and not only just makeup and hair and stuff like that, just like all around like Janelle Monáe, like she's great.

Interviewer: Ah interesting, okay.

J: Like I love her so much because she's…

I: What do you love about her?

J: She's, she's natural, of course, and her style is different, she…her music is like…. She's always like…she's just different all around and you don't see that a lot in the…some Black women.

There is an abundance of literature about racial representation in the media and its impact on body image, particularly for racial minorities who are not often visible. The present study suggests that racial representation also impacts the fashion and style that women admire. The racialized lens impacts not only how women see their bodies, as previously suggested, but also how women see fashion and dress.

Part 4

Four participants (three African American and one White) noticed racial differences in dress across campus.

Victoria (White) observed racial differences in dress across campus.

Interviewer: Do you feel like your identity comes through in your clothes at all? Your White identity.

V: Yea, I mean, I don't…maybe like to other people it does, but to me that's actually never really like crossed my mind, I guess. I mean you definitely can see, like, the difference, the different, like, ways that, like, different races, like, dress on campus, I guess, but I don't know, I've never really thought of that before, I guess.

Sky (African American) noted that the expectations for dress at social gatherings were different if the attendees were primarily White than if they were Black.

> Interviewer: Why do you feel like you don't pay attention to like White fashion, so to speak, or like other types? Why this particular…?
> Sky: I don't know, it just not really my style personally, I don't really go to as many events…Like the events I dress up for, you wouldn't wear an outfit that you would wear to, like, maybe more so like a Black party, you wouldn't wear that same outfit to a White party. It's just like a little bit different, but that's probably why. Because I don't really associate myself that much with…

Christine (African American) noted that certain styles were racially exclusive.

> Christine: I would probably say like, yea like a gold chain like that. I don't see a lot of White people wearing those, and then like my boyfriend, he's actually Haitian, so like they're like always decked out like when they go somewhere. One of his friends he always like wears kind of like a gold bracelet and chain. I like…that's like him, you will never see like a White or Latino or any type of guy wearing that. And I think the chain is kind of like a big thing now too.

> In addition to the celebrities the participants saw as stylish in the media, a racialized lens

was also applied to the dress trends participants witnessed across campus.

Part 5

Five African American participants noted pressures and practices related to fashion and

dress that were specific to their racial group. They discussed colorism, hairstyles, body type, and

other styling practices.

Olivia (African American) noted ideals for beauty performance that are exclusive to African American women, particularly the trend toward unprocessed, natural hairstyles.

> Interviewer: What would you say they are? Can you describe them to me?
> Olivia: Like the features that you need to have to be considered beautiful?
> I: Yea.
> O: Okay, lets see. Nice eyebrows, a nice smile, thicker hair. As an African American, I can honestly say natural hair is becoming much more preferred and if you don't have it, they would prefer you to have a really nice weave. Makeup is a must, I feel like eyeliner and your eyebrows and like lips have, like been the most trend thing for girls to have lately.

Jamila (African American) also noted the trend toward natural hairstyles in the African American community.

> Interviewer: Okay, interesting. Any other trends? So you said you have natural hair, would you say that's a trend among your communities? I know there's kind of, like there's a movement happening, but…

Jamila: It's a movement happening, but I started way before the movement started because I was just tired of getting perms and I was like…I washed my hair one day and then I'm like, "if my new growth is this curly, you know like what…how curly can it be without the relaxer?" So [indistinguishable--I 've been] transitioning back to natural because I didn't always have perms, I mean relaxers in my hair. But yea, I would say the natural thing is a trend now, too, because a lot of natural…a lot of girls got perms at a young age and so they don't even know their curl pattern, they don't know like what their hair looks like, and so they're like, "oh, well if her hair, then my hair could probably…" You know what I mean? So everyone's finding out that they do have beautiful, you know, coils or kinks or curls do. I think it is a trend.

Brooklyn (African American) noted the trend for natural hairstyles among African American women on campus but added a caveat that the preference was for a particular texture of natural hair. Her observation reflects the tendency to privilege features that approximate closer to Whiteness.

Interviewer: Any other styles you've noticed, like either with hair or shoes?
Brooklyn: Natural hair is more...it's bigger now than when I first started.
….
Interviewer: What would you say they are? Like what do women feel pressured to be? Like is there a certain body type or hairstyle or fashion style that women feel like they have to fit in to?
Brooklyn: I feel like body type, kind of skinny but thicker on the bottom in like, you know, in certain areas. And then hairstyle? I think people are getting more accepting of different hairstyles, but I think it's still that looser…if you have curls, looser curls, or straightened, I think.

Sky (African American) also noted a trend toward colorism and natural hairstyles in Black communities.

Interviewer: Okay, do you feel like there are social pressures to be attractive or beautiful?
Sky: Very much.
I: What are they?
S: Probably to be like skinny but have a butt, like a big butt. Big boobs but still to have a skinny waist. Not to be too short or not to be too tall, like probably like 5'5" to 5'6" is the ideal height. Probably to be lighter toned, at least in the African American community, really doesn't really acknowledge a lot of dark-skinned beauty. Yea, that's what I've noticed.
….
I: Anything else? Any like, I don't know makeup styles or hair styles that you feel like are really popular right now or trendy, not necessarily popular but like what's…?
S: I would say going natural is getting really trendy, trendy, excuse me. I think the braids are getting really trendy too as well as the faux locs, I think those are really cute. And I didn't really see anybody wearing them last year, I just started seeing people wear them this year.

Similarly, Bella (African American) discussed the prevalence of colorism. She also remarked that she intentionally dressed fashionably to mitigate the negative effect it had on her status as a potential mate.

> Interviewer: Would you guys say there are social pressures to be attractive and beautiful? And if so, what are they?
>
> Bella: Yes, like yes. I think it's more so of…I think it's just your view on the world, I think it's more so you want to fit in, like you want to fit in and you want to be accepted by a member of the opposite sex, like and especially for African American women. Nowadays, it's harder for, and I don't want to say harder, I just think it's more pressure put on you if you're dark skin, if you have the darker skin because my best friend is your complexion. My best friend is really light. When it comes to us being approached by guys, you know it's a preference. Guys have a preference and nowadays, you can see it all on social media, society favors the lighter skin. So for dark skin girls, and my little sisters are dark, who have this pressure to know your own self worth and know that you're beautiful and you know, be able to tell that to yourself because it's not common that a guy will choose you over a light skin girl. It's very rare for a guy in our generation, in our day and age to choose the dark skin girl over the…they won't choose the Kelly Rowlands over the Beyoncé nowadays, you know, and if they do it's because you have bigger breasts, butt, your butt is bigger so you compensate. You compensate by doing or by following trends. You compensate by, you know, doing certain things to your hair, getting extensions, wearing eyelashes, making sure your fashion is up-to-date. Making sure a lot…and it's crazy to think that way, but it's so true and we're not promoting, I think society doesn't promote individuality anymore. It promotes conformity and being accepted. In order to be accepted, some things just don't fit, like a lot of people, a lot of my friends or my former friends from high school who are all like art majors and stuff, she…one of my friends she dress so funny and it matches her personality to a tee but the majority doesn't, the majority, that's not accepted. It's like "this girl dress crazy," like "she crazy," you know? You wear your natural hair and, you know, for people with "good hair," that's fine but with people that have the more coarse hair, "she needs to put that up," like she needs to do something with her hair. It's just, it's a struggle trying to feel beautiful in a society where, you know, all beauty isn't accepted. All forms of beauty isn't accepted. Yea, it's a big deal to some people, if you aren't mature enough to be able to know your own self worth.

Not only does race impact the social networks and dress practices of the participants, but it also shaped whose style they admire.

Part 6

Finally, I found racial differences with regard to participants' reasons for using clothes to reveal or conceal their bodies. Both White (five) and African American (three) women were concerned that tight clothing would reveal the wrong type of bodily attributes, such as thighs

deemed too thick or a rounded stomach. Only the African American participants expressed

trepidation over the possibility that tight clothing would reveal too much of their body and might

attract the wrong type of sexual attention or might distract from other attributes about their

personality, such as capability or respectability. Finally, White women expressed dislike for the

embodied experience of clothing (Entwistle 2000), such as when it pulled, gathered, or stretched

in physically discomforting ways. Below are nine telling examples of how women use clothing

to impact the perception of their bodies.

Karissa (White) was concerned about how comfortable she was in her clothing. In addition she
expressed concern over particular pant styles.

> Karissa: Mostly it's just about fitting my body, like not uncomfortable, like not tight in
> areas, not looser, then, where it falls off.
>
> <div align="center">….</div>
>
> Karissa: The bottom of pants sometimes when they get too clutchy on the claves. I just
> know I have big claves from soccer and volleyball. She didn't want tight pants to reveal
> her calves or to make her uncomfortable physically.

Janet (White) expressed concern over wearing clothes that did not flatter the appropriate physical
features.

> Janet: I guess, just because most of my friends wear leggings as pants and I cannot pull
> them off so I wear jeans.
> Interviewer: Why do you feel like you can't pull it off?
> J: Well, one, I don't have anything long, and I don't like when its really tight on my butt
> and then there's nothing to cover it.
> J: I guess style-wise. I don't know, I wouldn't walk around in just a tee shirt in the winter.
> I: Right, right. But you said that you don't like leggings, you don't like to wear them
> because you don't like your booty showing.
> J: Correct.
> I: In the summer does that also mean that you don't like a short short or, you know, like,
> something like…does it translate also into like your swimwear? Is it like an across the
> board thing?
> J: Yea. I would say so. Like I prefer like one-pieces for swimsuits and like shorts…I
> really do not like those short shorts where there's like half an inch between the crotch and
> the end of like the shorts.
> I: Ah yes, okay. Is that because maybe you feel like, maybe you don't want to show off
> your body or you don't like that… just that general style, you don't want people to be
> looking…why do you think that is?
> J: I think it's a combination of both, like I'm not the most confident so I like to be
> covered, but also sometimes I think, I don't, sometimes it doesn't look super classy. So I
> feel like longer things look little bit classier.

Similarly, Harper (White) was concerned about wearing clothing that would flatter her body and not emphasize the wrong features.

> I: Okay. Friends for ideas. Okay, so when you get ideas what are some things that you think about?
> H: This flatter my body?
> I: Okay.
> H: Like does this like flattering, I wouldn't wear something that, like, makes me look not so good in the right places.
> I: What are the right places to look good? I'm curious.
> H: Like…like, I don't, I don't…I don't know. Like, "does this make this look to big," or like, "does this make that look…does this make my butt look too big, like does this make my thighs look too big?"
> I: Okay, so you're worried on some level about any particular body part looking too big.
> H: Yea. Or not…yea, I guess.
> I: Not too big.
> H: I'm not like a huge, like, fan of just like showing everything.

Lucy (White) expressed her reluctance to wear particular tops that clung to parts of her body that she didn't like.

> Interviewer: Mine is pretty bad, too. What do you hope to achieve while dressing your body? Is there something you want to hide or accentuate or have people notice, or don't notice?
> Lucy: Yea. Let's see. I have like a super square upper body, and I'm not really the most like…there's…there's definitely stuff I'd like to fix, there's like belly fat I'd want to get rid of since I'm 13, so…so there's some of that, so I definitely don't wear tight-fitting tee-shirts to hide that because I typically wear like tighter fitting jeans and nobody's got time for a muffin top, so…

Due to her dislike of her stomach, Christine (African American) expressed desire to hide her midsection with her clothing

> Interviewer: Is there anything you want to hide when you get dressed?
> Christine: My stomach.

Similarly, Dawn (African American) discussed her desire to hid her midsection with body adornments.

> Interviewer: Is there anything that you want to hide in your clothes and conversely is there anything that you want to show off? Like about your body...
> Dawn: I don't think I ever tried to hide anything or if I try to hide it would be my stomach if it's like something tight I wouldn't want to have my stomach just bulging out.

In contrast, Steph (African American) wanted to cover up because she didn't want to draw negative attention to sexualized parts of her body, particularly her breasts and legs.

> Interviewer: So can you describe to me your favorite outfit and why?
> Steph: A tee shirt probably because its not like too tight-fitting.

….

I: What would you say is the most important thing in your wardrobe or your favorite thing?

S: Staying warm, staying comfortable, and being appropriate in wherever you're going, like if it's a meeting, if it's, you know, a date with somebody, if you're going out with friends, wherever you're going, just be appropriate.

I: So what are the important factors of being appropriate?

S: Not showing too much.

I: Not showing too much. So what would be too much? Like she overdid it or he overdid it?

S: Like in the summertime if your shorts are super little or if you have a shirt on that's revealing too much cleavage. That's not appropriate unless you're at like the beach or something.

I: Is it like a certain length on the leg or…?

S: I would say like about…it depends on how your legs are, like if you have skinny legs, it won't, you know, its better that it doesn't go that far, but if you have like thicker legs then make sure you get like a certain amount of coverage, like a good amount of coverage.

I: Oh, okay, to make sure your like booty is like in your pants.

S: Yes.

Similarly, Brooklyn (African American) was concerned with not showing too much of her body, particularly at the wrong occasion. Even when she wanted to reveal parts of her body, she did so in moderation so as not to draw negative attention.

Brooklyn: Like no cleavage. Like if you're going in for a job interview or to church, you don't want like, you know a lot of cleavage hanging out or you don't want your pants to be too tight so I feel like my body…like I'm a little thick, but I'm not so thick that I can't find things that won't hide that thickness in certain situations.

Interviewer: So would you say that needing to conceal certain dimensions of you body is important to you, at times?

B: Yea, only because I don't like when attention is put on it.

I: Okay. And that's attention from…?

B: Anybody, you know, relatives, guys, so...

….

I: Okay, so interesting. All right, so that's interesting because my next question is what do you feel most attractive or sexy in? Is that even something that you would say is important to you?

B: I would say sometimes. Because sometimes, you know, you just want to look nice but at the same time I don't…I don't know I just sometimes feel uncomfortable when, like, I'm given that attention. Yea, so it's kind of contradicting…

I: Yea, well everybody's complicated. Okay so what are the situations where you might want some of that attention, even if it is rare?

B: When I go out like to parties or a club.

I: So on a daily basis you more want to conceal, and then when you go out to a party you might want to flaunt a little more?

B: Just a little more.

I: Okay just a little. And what does that outfit look like where you're maybe showing off a little more to feel sexy or attractive? [Maybe you] want that attention?

B: It's like a crop top, but it's not like super short. It's like well below…it's like just above my belly button maybe. And then some like high-waisted pants that still like…no, the crop top is…I said is just above my belly button, right?

I: Yea.

B: And then the high-waisted pants are like above my…just below my belly button. So it's like a little…

I: Yea, yea, yea. Okay, got it. I like that outfit, too.

<div align="center">….</div>

I: Is there anything you particularly want to show off?

B: Sometimes my butt.

I: Okay. So is that something…because you didn't say that was one of your likes. Would you say that, that's a like?

B: Sometimes, but I don't…but again I don't like the…I don't like when like attention…I don't know.

I: Interesting, of course we have to talk about that, so…

B: Yea.

I: You do like it, but you don't like attention?

B: Yea. Because sometimes I like the way it makes me look, but I don't like when people like talk about it.

I: So what does it…so when you look in the mirror, you like what you see?

B: Yea.

I: And in certain clothes you, you like how it looks in certain clothes, but you don't want other people to comment on how it looks?

B: Yea.

I: Okay. So would it be okay if somebody like appreciated your booty from afar and didn't comment or you don't want anybody to really notice?

B: Yea, I think if they appreciated it from afar…yea. I just don't like it when it's said to me.

Kylie, the only Middle Eastern participant, was also particularly concerned with not revealing too much of her body and thereby giving what she thought would be the wrong impression.

Interviewer: What are your intentions behind getting dressed? Like, "okay, I want to make sure I'm appropriate for this event." Is there anything else that you're like, "okay, I want…I hope that people notice X about me," or "I hope they don't notice Y."

Kylie: My boobs, I don't want people to like look at my boobs.

I: Oh, right okay. Anything else? Like a particular message they receive when they look at you?

K: Well I want to be taken seriously.

I: Okay.

K: I think as a woman, like unfortunately this is the way it is, I'm not saying it's good or it's bad, but if you wear a certain thing, people are going to think a certain thing about you. So like, like if I said, if you're going…if I'm going into…to tutor and I am dressed a certain type of way, I'm going to look like a jersey-chaser. I'm not trying to have that reputation, you know what I mean? And like that's not the type of person I am, so I want

to convey that or like if I'm going to… like I'm not going to show up to class like…in like stilettos or like heels or something just because that shows a certain message about you, like I don't want people to look at me and be like, "oh she's fast. Oh, she's this. Oh, she's that." Like if it's cold, I'm not going to go out in a short skirt because they're going to…people are going to think of me the way that they think of those people that wear short skirts, and like I don't want to be viewed in that light. So like I think a lot of it has to do with being a woman. Like if I was a man, it would be completely different, you know? Because like when you look at dudes…like if I look at a dude, and he could be wearing sweatpants and a sweatshirt or he could be dressed nicely, like I'm going to think like, if he's attractive guy, I'm like, "oh, like, he's an attractive guy." That's all that's going to go through my head, I'm not going to think about the type of person that he is but I think with females, like people are so critical of females and what we wear and like…and it's just like unfortunate, you know? But what's even more unfortunate is that we abide by these rules because, like, by me not dressing in a particular way to be viewed a certain way, I'm abiding by those guidelines set by society, but then if I don't abide by those guidelines, then I'm going to get, god knows what kind of reputation, which I don't want to deal with.

Black and White women both expressed a desire to conceal parts of their body that they viewed as undesirable. Black women expressed additional desire to conceal the parts of their body that were sexualized. Their comments hint at a complex relationship to presenting their bodies and the situated nature of their experiences. They were very aware of the changing meanings of various body dimensions and used clothing to impact public perception.

Conclusion

Surprisingly, race has been a widely overlooked dimension of contemporary individual dress practices. In my estimation, the fact that race has been so overlooked is due to the changing political landscape, where racial inequality is more laissez-faire than explicit. Therefore, the racialization of clothing, though omnipresent, is not easily delineated by clear symbols of racial power or respectability. When the racialization of clothing has been boiled down to those dichotomous frames, we oversimplify the majority of contemporary quotidian dress that is not constructed as a part of either a social movement or political agenda. From ideology to practice to observation, race has infiltrated numerous experiences related to dress. Rather than neatly

fitting their experiences into a narrow and dichotomous framework of acceptance or resistance to racial dress narratives, the women I spoke with cherry-picked the elements of a racialized fashion system for themselves. In addition, I found that popular media, which was also viewed through racialized frames, influenced this process. This research suggests the myriad of intertwined ways that race impacts the process of getting dressed

Figure 1: Race, Dress and Fashion Chart

	Black	White	Inspired by racially similar celebrities or social media celebrities	Says Race comes through in their dress	Most of friends are of the same race	Friends shape style	Says friends are diverse but they are mostly of one group	Identified beauty ideals or pressures that are specific to one race	Claim there are racial diff in dress	Reveal/conceal
Sasha	X		X	X	X	X				
Victoria		X		X	X	X			X	
Harper		X			X	X	X			X
Charlotte		X	X	X	X		X			
Olivia	X	X	X	X				X		
Ava		X								
Lucy		X		X	X					X
Sophia		X		X		X				
Karissa		X			X		X			X
Kylie	Middle Eastern			X		X				
Karen		X			X	X				
Kendall		X	X			X				
Dawn	X		X	X	X	X				
Jamila	X		X		X	X		X		X
Patti		X			X	X	X			
Janet		X		X	X	X	X			X
Autumn	X	X̶	X	X	X	X				
Brooklyn	X		X		X	X		X		
Sky	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	
Sandy		X	X		X	X				X
Lydia	X		X			X	X			
Steph	X		X		X	X				X
Tanya	Latina					X				
Christine	X		X						X	X
Asia		X				X				
Tiffany		X					X			
Barbie		X			X	X				
Adrianne		X		X		X	X			
Jordan	Latina									
Leena	X			X		X				X
Cat	X									
Bella	X			X		X		X	X	
Brenda	X			X						

CHAPTER 3: BODY IMAGE AND DRESS

Introduction

The sheer number of women represented in contemporary media has inspired an equally large body of research about the messages conveyed by media images and how they impact consumers' body image and self-esteem. The present study takes a different approach from traditional studies of the social pressures placed on women's bodies by exploring the specific ideas and images in the media that impact their body image, modification, and adornment.

Media representations of bodies nonverbally communicate how women should perform, position, and style their bodies (Dworkin & Wachs 2009; Lindner 2004; Thompson et al. 1999). Judith Lorber (1994) writes, "Cultural representations of gender and embodiment of gender in symbolic language and artistic productions… reproduce and legitimate gender statuses" (30). Magazine articles and advertisements are important cultural purveyors of beauty information (Goffman 1979; Duncan 1990; Henley 1977; Dworkin & Wachs 2009; Finkelstein 1998; Durham 1999). Erving Goffman (1979) found that numerous gendered messages were uncovered by examining the gaze, body positioning, and facial expressions. Dworkin and Wachs (2009) note, "Body language as expressed through body-positioning, eye contact, head tilts, and facial expression (smiling, etc.) also provides culturally recognizable cues that the media have used to produce and reflect gendered bodies" (42). The media models of beauty play a dominant role in social conceptions of sexuality, body size, demeanor, facial structure, hair length and texture, and scent, as well as numerous other sensory dimensions of women's bodies. These images function as agents of socialization for the dominant constructions of beauty (Lindner 2004; Kang 1997; McKay & Covell 1997; Lanis & Covell 1995).

Furthermore, images represented in media tend to reflect the racial hierarchy that privileges whiteness (Collins 2002; Dworkin & Wachs 2009; Fouts & Burggraf 2000; Glascock 2001; Signorielli & Bacue 1999). Despite the increasing numbers of representations of Asian and Hispanic Women, cover models tend to be White (Collins 2002; Dworkin & Wachs 2009; Espiritu 1997). Models of color typically have lighter skin, straight hair, and narrow features, all of which are approximations for whiteness (Dworkin & Wachs 2009). The combination of messages women receive with regard to preferential features and self-presentation has the ability to influence how women define beauty.

Not only can media imagery contour individual conceptions of beauty, but, as Milkie (1999) argues, popularized images may also impact how we believe *others* see such images and thus use them to judge ourselves. Even if women do not internalize the popularized messages, they may perceive those standards as the measures by which others judge them (Milkie 1999). As a result, there are numerous ways in which women are impacted by the media. Many argue that the overabundance of slender women in media leads to eating disorders, such as bulimia and anorexia nervosa, as well as to negative body images, particularly among White women (Garner et al. 1980; Thompson & Heinberg 1999). Often women seek out *thinsporation* or *thinspo*, pictures that represent their ideal body type, to encourage the modification of their own bodies. These images of very thin women are then utilized to inspire modification of their own bodies (Klesse 2012 et al.; Collins 1996; Joshi et al. 2004; Mills et al. 2002). Yet viewing ideal images of beauty can also make women feel better about their bodies (Myers & Biocca 2006; Mills et al. 2002; Henderson-King et al. 2001) For example, when women identify with celebrity images through *parasocial,* or one-sided, relationships, they feel better about their bodies after viewing the pictures of those celebrities than women who do not identify with those celebrities (Young et

al. 2012). Furthermore, when idealized images are explicit and blatant women respond with positive self-evaluations (Wan et al. 2013). When the ideal of beauty is subtly portrayed or unassuming, women report having negative self-assessments of their bodies (Wan et al. 2013). There are also important differences in how different racial groups are affected by media portrayals of women. For example, Black girls and women often do not identify with portrayals of White women and are therefore not susceptible to the messages that underscore their representations (Duke 2002; Milke 1999). African American women and girls are vulnerable to these popular portrayals of Black women (Gordon 2008).

Research Questions and Findings

Thus, as we filter through the messages about gender and beauty, it is important to remember the process of negotiation that women undertake as active social agents. Despite the recent discoveries in how women and girls engage various media representations, it remains largely unclear as to how this engagement with media affects their quotidian dress behavior, particularly their clothing selection. Therefore, instead of focusing on the messages contained in advertisements and how women feel about their bodies after viewing the images, I asked a racially diverse sample of women to describe what pressures, if any, they experienced when deciding how to dress their bodies. Woodward (2007) calls this the *moment of assemblage*, wherein women modify and adorn their bodies before attending an event, whether routine or special, public or private. I asked participants about relevant and experienced social pressures for their own bodies. This chapter focuses on the social expectations that the women at Midwest University experienced for their bodies.

The chapter is broken up into four parts, each of which represents a social expectation for bodily performance. Part 1 explores the oft-obscured processes of modification and adornment

women feel compelled to undertake in order to achieve social standards of beauty. Part 2 explores the thin ideal and how this ideal has shaped specific body evaluations and modifications. In Part 3, I discuss an hourglass figure ideal. In Part 4, I discuss the African American preference for a modified version of the hourglass figure that accentuates buttocks and breasts.

Part 1

11 participants (six African American, five White and one Middle Eastern) expressed pressure to be coiffed, styled, or "done up" with hair, makeup, and clothing. These participants expressed pressure to exhibit evidence of styled hair, make-up, and clothing in general, rather than using hair, makeup, and clothing to highlight a particular style or corporal elements. Their astute observation highlights the social demand for women to modify and alter their bodies for social acceptability. In so doing, the participants' observations demonstrate that embedded in contemporary beauty ideals are the very bodily modifications and adornments of dress that make the ideal possible. Gimlin (2007) conceptualized these dress practices as requisite labor or *body work* to achieve a desired aesthetic. This body work includes, but is not limited to, plastic surgery (Kaw 1993), hair styling (Weitz 2011; Thompson 2009; Bellinger 2007; Patton 2006), skin-color alteration (Patton 2006), makeup application (Bettie 2014), nail care (Kang 2003), and fitness regimes (Gimlin 2007; Patton 2006; Evans and McConnell 2003). The nine examples below demonstrate the preferences for the transparent body work that is necessary to achieve a particular style.

Ava (White) articulated the pressure to be coiffed and wear makeup.
> Ava: I think there's…yea, there's a crap ton of pressure and then you see a lot of people wearing makeup.

Olivia (African American) highlighted the importance of wearing makeup.

Olivia: Makeup is a must. I feel like eyeliner and your eyebrows and like lips have, like, been the most trend thing for girls to have lately.

Patti (White) explained that the social ideal is not any one particular style, but rather tangible evidence of effort undertaken to achieve the look.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you feel like in society there are social pressures to be beautiful or attractive?

Patti: Yes, I think so.

I: What would you say they are?

P: I think just like a lot of, you know, like commercials that we see all these things, like Victoria's Secret fashion show. All of their girls watch that, and they're like I hate this girl, but…and just yea, this, I guess, images of like guys having to be really strong and like, you know, dress nicely and all that stuff and yea, just girls having to, like, put on a lot of effort in.

Karissa (White) spoke of how being styled correctly has social capital.

Interviewer: Can you describe some of the pressures that you've noticed?

Karissa: Being, especially on a college campus, being attractive is kind of like, a goal. People are going to like you more if you're like this attractive, bubbly, stylish person, or people will be more drawn to you.

Kylie (Middle Eastern) explained the pressures to sexualize your body through styling and clothing.

Interviewer: What would you say those pressures are?

Kylie: I mean obviously like you want to flaunt…people like want to flaunt what they have, right. So like, when you go out to parties, like you'll see girls going out to parties, like it will be like below like 10°F, and you will still see girls in like high heels and little skirts, like that is still going to happen, like it's cold, like we all know it's cold, but then you still see people like wearing these things to show off their bodies and to get people's attention. It's all about attention, like people want attention, whether it's positive attention or negative attention. People want to get attention for what they're wearing or how they look. So like, I mean for me like, I like I'm a full chested, I'm a full chested girl. I don't ever show my boobs off because I like, I don't know, I just don't want to, but then for some people, like they really want to show off their boobs or show off their butt because they…it gets attention. So I mean yea, I think…I think there are a lot of pressures for girls to dress a particular way to show off their butt or show off their boobs or whatever they have to get attention from the opposite sex and even attention from the same sex, like you want people, people want people to envy them or to be like "oh, like look at her, like I wish I looked like that," and that may not be your intention, like going in, like you're going in your classroom like, "all right what can I wear to like make people jealous of me?" but like in the back of your mind, like, you want to pick out like the baddest outfit you have to be like the center of attention when you walk in so…

Jamilia (African American) felt pressure to wear makeup.

Interviewer: Yea, yea, yea. So would you say there are social pressures to be attractive or beautiful?

Jamilia: I would say so. Like another trend right now is getting into the makeup thing, like I was just practicing. Like all my makeup stuff's on the floor, but I was practicing yesterday, and I'm terrible at it but…

Janet (White) explained that there is pressure to style both hair and makeup, even in the collegiate environment.

Janet: Not too much makeup, but not no makeup; your hair has to be styled, granted in college not so much because on weekdays people are just going to classes and like don't really care what they look like, but I would say in general society puts pressures on how you look.

Lydia (African American) desired recognition of her body work.

Interviewer: Okay, is there something they are hoping to achieve his own would notice about your dress? When you do put an effort, what is it that you want people to notice?
Lydia: When I do put in the effort, I just want them to be like… I just want a compliment out of somebody, to be honest.

The participants felt pressure to undertake modifications and adorn their bodies to communicate that they cared about their appearance. For them, the final outfit or hairstyle itself was less important than its ability to demonstrate and communicate the effort it took to achieve it. The body work undertaken to create the look was intentionally visible to communicate various positive social attributes and acquire social capital. Similar to the role of makeup in the workplace, which connotes health and credibility, these colligate women recognized the positive connotations of making their body work visible (Dellinger & Williams 1997).

Part 2

The dominant construction of beauty idealizes exceptionally skinny bodies (Wiseman et al. 1992). This particular ideal is evident in the abundance of exceedingly slim women in magazines, television, and other popular media outlets (Sypeck et al. 2004). Often these women are thinner than average US women (Klesse et al. 2012; Smolak & Levine 1996). Rarely does popular culture accurately depict the diversity of body types in the US because being thin is considered ideal (Sypeck et al. 2004). Contemporarily, the majority of social and psychological research on ideal types has focused on the "thin ideal" and its negative impact on body

satisfaction and modification (see Grabe, Ward, & Hyde 2008; Groesz et al. 2002; Want 2009).

Many argue that the overabundance of slender women in the media leads to eating disorders, such as bulimia and anorexia nervosa, as well as to negative body images, particularly among White, Asian and Latina women (Garner et al. 1980; Thompson & Heinberg 1999). Because the impact of the thin ideal on White and Asian and Latina women was clearly visible through the prevalence of various eating disorders, particularly anorexia, it was initially believed that Black women were immune to the social pressure to be thin. Recent literature has demonstrated that Black women are equally likely to engage in eating disorders after viewing media images (Botta 2000; Jones & Cook-Cottone 2013). The present study demonstrates that being thin remains a crucial element of the prevailing beauty ideal for both African Americans and Whites, but rather than manifesting through eating habits, the thin ideal translates into a desire to (1) be skinny and (2) to have a small midsection. Each of those desires is supported by wearing clothing and engaging in exercise designed to achieve that ideal.

Nine participants (five African American and four White women) articulated their preference for a skinny body type (Grabe et al. 2008; Schooler et al. 2004). In addition, 12 participants (nine African American and three White) expressed a desire for a small midsection. It is my contention that their preference for a small midsection is an extension of the thin ideal. Below are 12 particularly demonstrative quotations given by college students espousing the importance of being skinny.

Pressure to be skinny

Sophia (White) explained the magazines present images that influence how women think about themselves.

> Interviewer: Okay, all right, that works. Do you feel like there are any social pressures to be attractive or beautiful?
> Sophia: Yea, I think especially like what you see in magazines and stuff. It's always the…they're always done up to like a T, and they're skinny and they're…they look

perfect, and so I think that as women in the public, you feel like you have to live up to that, and I don't know that it's necessarily true that, you know, that any guy or anybody else would feel that way.

Karissa (White) described how the pressure to be thin impacts how much women eat.

Karissa: …Or it's kind of this perception that if you're more attractive, you'll be happier, and it's very much socialized that like, "oh if I drop a few pounds or if I feel bad for eating this slice of pizza, I'll feel better about myself, if I exercise for an hour." Just things like that, and I don't know it's just like that's out there and like it just goes around even despite people like…all the messages that are out there to prevent that, it's still like…it keeps showing up.

Interviewer: So the messages you've noticed in particular have to do with being thin?

K: Yea.

I: Like this dropping pounds, not eating too much, whatever that means? I like ice cream, you know?

Karen (White) said the pressure to be thin is linked to the ability to fit into certain styles.

Interviwer: Okay, yea, no that's good, that's a lot. Do you feel like there are any social pressures to be attractive, beautiful or fashionable?

Karen: I think a lot of times people expect girls to have long hair, smaller sizes maybe for just like dressing-wise or fit…I mean I don't think it matters if you're like in shape or not in shape just as long as you're like on the smaller side so…

Similarly, Dawn (African American) said that women feel pressure to lose weight to be comfortable in clothing.

Dawn: It's just like, to be like overweight, that's the main thing most girls talk about. As far as like clothes and hair and all that, it's fine, it's just going to lose weight, cleanse, or I need to drop some pounds. But not only to be like seen by guys, but for ourselves to feel comfortable in some stuff that we wear.

Small midsection

Janet (White) said there is a social pressure to be thin and, as a result, disliked her midsection but, at times, felt other parts of her body were too big to fit into her clothing. Similar to Kaw's assertion that social situations, such as airplane seating, publically reinforce insecurity about women's weight and reify social stigmas, Janet's comments highlight the ways in which dress behavior can reinforce social ideologies in private.

Interviewer: Do you feel like there are social pressures to be beautiful or attractive? And if so, what are they?

Janet: Well, I would say yes. And what are they? Well, probably to be thin.

….

I: Okay. Do you have any, would you say, likes or dislikes about your body besides your eyelashes that you like?

J: Oh, goodness, yes. My stomach, I have the pudge, which I am not a fan of.

….

I: Any other dislikes?

J: Everything I guess. I don't know, we all have those moments where like certain outfits, you're like, "my arms don't fit in these sleeves," or like, "shoot, my butt is not fitting in these jeans." So it just kind of depends on the outfit.

Charlotte (White) mentioned the pressure to have a small waist.

Interviewer: Okay yea. Do you feel like there are social pressures to be beautiful or attractive?
Charlotte: Yea.
I: Could you name a couple of the pressures?
C: I think like media has a lot to do with it, like you see like in a lot of the magazines. Like you see like in, like a lot of the magazines geared toward teens, it's always about…it's always something about like how to make yourself more beautiful or like how to have the perfect skin and like…especially in like the *Seventeen* magazine, there's always like a little section of…on like what you should like eat just to like, you know, keep your waistline down.

Jamilia (African American) said the social pressure to have a small waist had driven her friends to buy modern day corsets or "waist trainers," and she wanted to hide her stomach with her clothing.

Interviewer: Was just wondering social trends or pressures to be like beautiful and stuff.
Jamilia: A lot of girls are doing like the waist training thing, which I think is ridiculous because it's unhealthy, like you're just squeezing your body. No, it's stupid. That's a…a lot of my friends, two of my friends actually, have waist trainers and I'm just like…
….
I: Is there anything you want to hide through your clothes or conversely anything you want to show off?
J: I want to hide my stomach…
….
I: Do you feel like there are things you like and dislike about your body? If so, like what are they?
J: Want a flat stomach, but I'm lazy so I don't… I mean I…if I stay consistent with working out, I think I could get there, but I want a flat stomach.

As a result of the pressure to be thin, Harper (White) expressed desire to keep her midsection hidden.

Harper: I don't like having my stomach out. I'm not a big "tummy girl." I don't like…
Interviewer: So that's something that you feel like you want to hide? Like you want to keep under wraps.
H: Yea, I don't like my stomach.

For similar reasons, Kendall (White) also wanted to hide her midsection.

Interviewer: So you have any dislikes or likes about your body?
K: Yes.
I: What are they?
K: I dislike my stomach and my thighs.

Sandy (White) desired to have a smaller midsection so she exercised to attempt to change it.

> I: Okay, so what would you say are the likes and dislikes you have about your body?
> S: I really like my shoulders, my collarbone, I think, and like my back, I think…oh, I've been again, but since coming to school, I've definitely gained some weight, so I'm working out on like my midsection and also like the back of my arms, so like the triceps area.

Tanya (Latina) used body adornments to distract from her midsection, which she did not like.

> I: Okay, so when you look at your body, do you have any likes or dislikes, specifically? Like it could be like hair, skin color, I don't know, like arm size…
> T: I actually do. I guess I have like a little issue like right here [*points to midsection*] so I always try to use shirts that are really loose and stuff like that. So like the peplum shirts, like when they like came out I was like so in love with them because they like, they like hid it so much. But I always have issues like with my stomach area, so like, I like use like a little bit bigger shirt, so that's why I like the cardigans and the sweaters because it covers that, but like it looks really nice, too.

Sky (African American) was proud of her small midsection and chose to accentuate it but she still wanted a smaller waist.

> Interviewer: What are the features that you want to accentuate?
> Sky: Probably just flat stomach, long legs, that's about it.
> ….
> I: Okay, so what are some likes and dislikes you have about your body type?
> S: Dislikes, I probably would like to have less cellulite, probably have a bigger butt, maybe a slimmer waist or skinnier waist, but everything else I pretty much like. I have really nice boobs, nice legs, I still have a really nice stomach, nice and flat.
> I: You just would want it even flatter?
> S: Yea, because I have a little muscle, and it's a little fat at the bottom of the muscle, so I'd like that to go away, ideally.

The participants experienced social pressure to be thin, particularly in regard to their waistline. This translated into a desire to disguise their stomach through baggy shirts or draped attire. Additionally, they articulated strategies to achieve a smaller midsection through fitness and through various articles of clothing. These insights highlight not only the prominence of the thin ideal body type, but also the potentially destructive body modification techniques employed to achieve that type, such as corseting or waist trainers.

Part 3

Byrd-Bredbenner et al. (2005) found that the ideal body type for women has changed over time. In their exploration of magazines, pageant winners, and interview data, they found that during the early twentieth century, a less curvaceous body was preferred; in the mid-twentieth, century a more curvaceous body was preferred; and in the late twentieth century, a more curvaceous body was idealized. Though their study primarily focused on White women, their study highlights the variable nature of beauty ideal types over time. In 2010, Overstreet et al. found that both Black and White women preferred an hourglass figure, though Black women favored a figure with more emphasis on the hips and buttocks. My study suggests that another evolution of the ideal type has taken place, wherein Black and White women alike prefer even larger breasts and buttocks. This preference points to the hourglass body as a crucial element of the beauty ideal. Both African American and White participants articulated the pressure to have a curvaceous figure. African American women expressed the desire to further accentuate the hourglass shape with bigger breasts and butt (Yam 2013; Overstreet et al. 2010).

Nine participants (six African American and three White women) expressed desire for an hourglass figure. This marks a shift in the prevailing ideal type, away from the underweight, thin ideal (Evans & McConnell 2003; Boyce et al. 2013). The following are five poignant examples.

Sasha (African American) said that she preferred the hourglass shape, which she called a "Coke bottle."
> Interviewer: Okay, so what would you say is important to you about your body? Can you explain some likes or dislikes?
> Sasha: Yes. I like the ideal Coke figure.

Similarly, Brooklyn (African American) preferred the Coke bottle body type.
> Interviewer: What are the right places?
> B: Like bigger boobs, butt, hips; that sort of thing, like the Coke bottle shape.

Ava (White) states the social preference for an hourglass body type.

Ava: Definitely everybody wants that hourglass…it seems like most people want that hourglass. Most people dress to accentuate those features whether or not they have them, which is really interesting.

Olivia (African American) expounded on the exact measurements preferred by society.
Olivia: When it comes to body type, I feel like to be beautiful means to be…your measurements are starting to become more in trend, like waistline being like a 26 to 28, as like the maximum, and hips being a bit wider nowadays, when it used to be more thinner hips, but now it's wider hips are much more popular. So a girl can have like a curve, like an hourglass figure.

Kendall (White) gave examples of two women with curvaceous bodies with ideal figures.
Interviewer: In your world, who would be kind of like the "it girl" like…?
Kendall: I'd definitely say more of like the Kim Kardashian/Kate Upton because like curves are being embraced now, it's not so much like the models on a runway.

Accentuated Hourglass

Nine Black women desired to further accentuate the hourglass shape with larger breasts or buttocks (Yam 2013; Overstreet et al. 2010). Five African American women expressed a desire to have a bigger butt, and five African American women desired to have bigger breasts. Seven exceptionally illuminating examples are supplied below.

Bigger Butt

Sasha (African American) mentioned specific pressures on Black women's bodies, particularly having a large butt and using body modification techniques to achieve the look.
Sasha: And you know stereotypical Black female is supposed to have more butt than breasts so yea…and I don't know. I like to dress to where it looks somewhat balanced.
….
S: I have things to help with that. I know you've see like a waist-trainer, I have that, and I have…have you ever seen like the panties that have like the circles in them and kind of lift your butt.
I: Yea. You have those, too?
S: Yea.

Autumn (African American) spoke about how the curve of a women's butt is supposed to poke out or "pop" and wanted a larger butt for herself.
Interviewer: Okay, so would you say, so just to get really into the nitty-gritty, like your butt looks good, is there a certain like type of booty, you know what I'm saying? I like certain type of breasts? Like what… How should it look to look good?
Autumn: For it to look good, like your butt needs to be popping the most that it can because I have a smaller figure so mine isn't, you know, gonna pop that much. Like so,

like if you're wearing jeans or like if you're wearing a skirt, your butt needs to pop a little bit, you know what I'm saying?

…

A: So yeah, if I could like, like I don't know, like work out to get like a better like sized butt or like, you know, just something that looks toned and stuff, I would do that. So I guess that's my dislike.

Sky (African American) also desired a larger butt.

I: Okay, so what are some likes and dislikes you have about your body type?

B: Dislikes, I probably would like to have less cellulite, probably have a bigger butt…

Brooklyn (African American) explained the pressure for specific aspects of her body to be "thick," namely her butt.

Interviewer: Is there a certain body type or hairstyle or fashion style that women feel like they have to fit in to?

Brooklyn: I feel like body type, kind of skinny but thicker on the bottom in like, you know, in certain areas.

Bigger Breasts

In addition to pressure for a larger butt, Sky (African American) also felt pressure to have larger breasts.

Interviewer: Okay, do you feel like there are social pressures to be attractive or beautiful?

Sky: Very much.

I: What are they?

S: Probably to be like skinny, but have a butt, like a big butt. Big boobs, but still to have a skinny waist…

Autumn (African American) also explained that the most attractive body comes with larger breasts.

Autumn: Yeah, boobs need to be up there, you know what I'm saying, this shirt… You should have a little cleavage out, that's if you're trying to look really cute, depending on where you're going.

Brooklyn (African American) disliked her small breast size.

Brooklyn: I dislike my chest, I guess. And then…

Interviewer: Why?

B: Because I'm a little flat-chested.

The participants in the study signaled the arrival of a new iteration in body ideal type.

Their emphasis on and preference for the hourglass figure eclipsed the thin, narrow-hipped ideal

that has long characterized high-fashion models. These findings provide support for the variable

nature of ideal types.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I identified a few salient social pressures experienced by a diverse body of college women as they get dressed. Their daily dress choices are shaped by pressures to be coiffed and thin and to have an hourglass figure. Despite differences in how different racial groups feel about their bodies after observing fashion media, the present study found many similarities among how Black and White women assess their bodies at the moment of assemblage and the ideal type they hoped to embody. These findings suggest that outside stimuli, such as clothing options and portrayals of women in the media, potentially cause a high degree of variability in body assessment. Though women may feel negatively about their bodies while watching TV or reading magazines, at the moment of assemblage, they may see their body's potential to achieve elements of the ideal type, through the use of body modifications and adornments. The ability to achieve desired body elements through dress could result in a more positive body assessment overall or in an appreciation for the malleability of their physique.

In addition, these findings suggest that women are conscious of the social implications of their bodies, and, as a consequence, they dress to communicate messages about their competence and personality. Despite the pressures, the women interviewed did not always attempt to meet the social expectations. Instead, they cherry-picked and re-interpreted the dominant ideals they wanted to embody through their dress. As a result, their body modifications and adornments are a hodge-podge of dominant beauty and alternative and subversive ideals. This picking and choosing may be due to the realization that many of the media images of women are digitally photo-shopped, unrealistic, and unobtainable. As a consequence of that realization, they have pragmatically chosen to emulate qualities that they can achieve and to idealize celebrities whose fashion and bodies they are able to imitate through dress.

CHAPTER 4: MOMS, COMPLIMENTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

This chapter contains three distinct explorations of fashion and dress. Part 1 presents a challenge to the prevailing cultural idiom that moms present the perfect fashion foil to those who are trendy and stylish. Part 2 explores how women know what is attractive on their own bodies. Part 3 adds dimension to our understanding that people dress for particular occasions.

Part 1

Contrary to popular culture assumptions that moms' style is passé, my research shows that women look to their mothers for style advice. Articles, brands, and marketing campaigns beginning with the phrase "not you mom's…" litter the fashion and beauty industry. This particular cultural idiom hinges on the assumption that young women do not want to be styled like their mothers. Additionally, it reifies "ageist" and gendered stereotypes that older women are not attractive or sexually desirable (Hatch 2005; Clarke and Griffin 2008). Instead of disregarding their mothers' style, five women (one Middle Eastern and four White women) at Midwest University shopped with their mothers, and seven women (one African American, one Latina, and five White women) looked to their moms for style advice. Six particularly poignant examples are provided below.

Janet (White) described her mom as her best friend and as someone whose style advice she accepts.
> Interviewer: Is your mom someone you usually shop with?
> Janet: Yea, I'm one of those nerdy people who's like best friends with my mom. So whenever I go home or she comes here, she likes to take me out.
> I: Oh cute.
> J: Yea.
> I: So do you take your mom's style advice?
> J: Yes.

I: So you would say Natalie and your mom are the main people…Well, you said your other friends influence you, too, but…

J: Yea.

I: Are those the two main people that influence your style?

J: Probably because I go shopping with my mom more than anybody else so probably, yea.

Tanya (Latina) was influenced by the value her mom and dad placed on overall self-presentation.

Interviewer: Okay, so your father clearly influenced how you present yourself.

Tanya: Yea.

I: Okay, interesting. Anybody else in your family?

T: My mom wears… She dresses up all the time. She wears heels all the time, no matter if it's cold or hot or whatever.

I: Wow, okay.

T: So, I guess my mom does, too. She never goes out of the house without looking nice, even if its going to like Walmart, she'll put lipstick on, she'll put earrings, she'll put her heels on, and she'll go to the store. So, I guess both my parents influence a lot.

Sandy (White) learned how to style clothing from her mother.

Interviewer: So where did you learn about it? This, this aesthetic, like where, I don't know, who did you learn it from? Especially not in college. Where?

Sandy: Right, well my… Okay, so I'm very close with my mom and my sister, and my sister was in like the business world, she's older than me and my mom she dressed…she always taught us like you're supposed to, you know, look put together when you go out and, you know, it's kind of like, you know, just because like you can fit, doesn't mean it always look right, you know? Just like different things, sometimes, so I think like definitely the people in my life have influenced me, and then I think like I would just see like advertisements from the Limited and Express, I keep drawing from those two stores, but I really always enjoyed their styles.

Karen (White) has the same style and wears the same size as her mother. As a result, her mother often shopped for both of them.

Karen: …I feel like I have a lot of like styles, so I don't feel that I look up to one particular person. Me and my mom like to dress really similar, like I wear her clothes and stuff.

Interviewer: Oh my gosh.

K: So like she'll buy…like a lot of the times when I don't even want to go shopping, she'll go shopping for me because we're like the same size, so…

I: Oh, that's so nice.

K: So I guess I like to dress like her. I've always really dressed like her.

I: Okay, yea. Oh, that's cool. And then you guys have the same style, that's really cool actually.

K: Yea.

Lucy (White) shopped and learned her new style from her mother, as well as her aunt and sister.

Interviewer: So where have you…where do you get your idea of what's fashionable and trendy from? Where…where do you feel like?
L: Well, I…like when I…I don't go shopping like a ton but when I do I like will only go with like my mom or my aunt and like my sister, who's younger than me.

Harper (White) also learned style from her mom, as well as from other female relatives.
Interviewer: Is that the only relative? Would you say your mom or just your sister?
Harper: And my mom, yea for sure, and my dad has really good style. And my grandma, my grandma owned a clothing store.

                                          ….

I: Got it. Okay. So who or what would you say influences your dress the most?
H: Probably my mom and my sister and my grandma. My grandma actually picks out a lot of my clothes. She…we have cousins in New York, so she like would go shopping for me… go shopping every now and then, like sends me like a package because she was in the like retail world, so she'd… and she still keeps up, like she has friends in it, so…so she like sends me…she sends…I'll show you some of the things, you'd be like, "your grandma picked that out for you? Like…" some of my friends are like, "what?"

Though a number of participants in my study took fashion advice from their mothers, most of the Black women I spoke with did not shop with their mothers or take their mothers' advice. Additionally, one Black participant spoke of how even when she did shop with her mother, she did not like any of the clothes her mother chose for her. The different experiences may be due to the bicultural experiences of Black women. Yam (2013), borrowing from Dubois' *double-consciousness*, claims that the bicultural nature of being African American leads to identifying with two sets of cultural norms: Black and mainstream cultural values. When in the collegiate context, the African American participants may be focused on mainstream fashion, rather than on the Black cultural or ethnic fashion representative of their mothers' tastes. The White participants, who often do not have these bicultural experiences, see their mothers' fashion as seamlessly fitting into their current styles.

Part 2

It is often reported that women view fashion media, particularly models, as the central standard by which to assess their own bodies. Even as ideal types shifts across racial and cultural groups, it is often believed that women's understanding of their bodies is shaped by comparisons to a popularized ideal type shape (Overstreet et al. 2010). Yet women's analysis of themselves is also mediated through cultural communities. Yam (2013) found that cultural communities were important references for determining body image and satisfaction. My research with collegiate students found that a similar phenomenon occurs when women assess their dress selections. 13 participants (seven White, five African American, and one Middle Eastern women) use comments from member of their social networks to determine their attractiveness. Below are six revealing examples of the important role of social networks.

Harper (White) liked and disliked her own bodily features based on what her mom told her was attractive.

> Interviewer: What are some like, likes and dislikes?
> Harper: My mom calls me tushy, so she likes my tush. So everyone like…my, like that's a huge family joke that I have a big butt.
> I: Okay.
> H: Even though I don't really get it. Apparently I have good eyebrows.
> I: You do have really nice eyebrows.
> H: Thank you. I do have long eyelashes. My mom calls me cow eyes, too. She thinks I have cow eyes.
> I: What does that mean?
> H: Big eyes because cows have huge eyes, but like I don't, I don't know.

Victoria (White) took advice from her friend about what clothing looked good on her body. In so doing, she gained confidence that she could wear particular items she previously believed made her look unattractive. In addition, when deciding what to wear, she thought about what other people would think, rather than relying on her own assessment.

> Interviewer: Okay, so confidence. Okay, interesting. Are there people that you look up to when you get dressed? Like your style stars, like it could be a celebrity, friends, anybody.
> Victoria: Yea, actually. This is going to sound funny, like it's, I don't even really look to like celebrities, but my one… my best friend actually, she always like dresses super cute, and she's actually…like we've been friends for a while, but like in high school like I wasn't, you know, totally like into fashion like I, you know, I would make sure I looked

good and stuff, but like I wasn't like, like her. Like she like loved shopping, always putting new outfits together, and she would always be like, "you could like pull this off, like try this, try that." So like now when I, like, see things, I'm like, "you know, I could pull this off." Like I kind of like hear her voice in the back of my mind, but yea, I definitely…because she always, like she's really good at just like putting things together, like the jewelry, like things I wouldn't, like, think of putting together. So I definitely look up to her, I guess.

….

I: Yea, yea, yea. Okay. Okay, cool. So when you're getting ready, what are some things that you're thinking about? Like that you're very conscious of as you get dressed.
V: I mean, I definitely think like, "oh like, you know, does this match?" Will like people like, you know, think this is cute? Like will people, you know, I try to think like, like I'll look at my closet, and like I'll try to like come up with maybe like new combinations of clothes, you know, that I've never done before, and I'll be like, "have I seen, you know, someone doing, putting this and this together before, stuff like that, so I kind of use that as a guide, and then I also like question like, you like how will I feel in this like, you know, because like some days, you know like when you get ready really fast in the morning, it's like you're in class, and you're just like of, like keep[ing] your jacket on because you're not feeling too confident that day, but it's like, you know: will I be able to go to class and like, you know, feel good about myself, so I definitely keep that in mind.

Lucy (White) referred to comments from others when assessing her own body.
Lucy: Yea, I like my smile, I would say, and I've been told before that I have very small thin legs, so I like that about myself, I guess.

Similarly, Karissa (White) used comments from other people to know what was attractive.
Interviewer: Oh, okay that's good okay. So are there any other likes that you have, then? If you're not nitpicking but you have things that you're like, "oh my god, like this is really great?"
Karissa: I mean, I like my hair. I mean, people tell me that I have nice hair, and I've like never, don't anything to it, and I'm just like, "yea," and then I like eventually, over time am like, "eh," and then I just like… and people are like, "Oh!" and then I see like all these people like dying their hair and like doing all these things, and I'm just like, "oh you're destroying your hair," and then I'm just like, "oh, I like my hair now, and I'm glad I haven't done anything to it."

Autumn (African American) desired confirmation that she looked good.
Autumn: Like, I like, I want someone to be like "all my gosh, like she works out, like her body is nice" like I want to, like kind of…I want to like, you know, like whether it be lose weight or whatever or like work out more, like I want someone to be like "oh my gosh like, you know, what are you doing to like look this way?" type of thing, you know what I'm saying. But I need to be on my A game as far as working out, too, because I've been slacking lately so…

Lydia (African American) also wanted people to acknowledge the effort she put in to her appearance as confirmation that she was attractive.

> Interviewer: Okay, is there something you are hoping to achieve or hoping people would notice about your dress? When you do put an effort, what is it that you want people to notice?
> Lydia: When I do put in the effort, I just want them to be like… I just want a compliment out of somebody, to be honest.

Social networks are central to how women assess various aspects of their appearance. The participants stated that their friends and family played a central role in their own body assessments, body adornments, modifications, and style-stars. Molloy & Herzberger (1998) found that women are conscious of how potential suitors and mates assess their bodies, both on dating websites and in person. The present study illustrates that not only are women aware of how members of their social networks asses their bodies, but they are aware of assessments made about their body adornments and modifications. It further demonstrates women's reticence to assert their own beauty or stylishness; instead they defer to others' judgment of their appearance. These findings underscore the various layers of influence that society has on how women dress and assess their bodies.

Part 3

It is widely accepted in both popular culture and academic research that people dress for the occasion or specific location, such as a restaurant or coffee shop (Woodward 2007). Often this is referred to as *conspicuous consumption*; people display their wealth through bodily adornments and modifications (Veblen 1899). In such cases, their wealth is meant to be seen and witnessed by the appropriate audience. Furthermore, Woodward (2007) found that at the moment of assemblage, women look in the mirror and imagine how others will see their body, adornments, and modifications. Often focusing on the heterosexual *male gaze*, Woodward highlights that conspicuous consumption is not limited to presentation of wealth and class, but is

also shaped by gender dynamics. In the present study, the 13 participants (eight African American, four White, and one Latina woman) were not concerned with displays of wealth or with the male gaze; instead they were conscious of the status of potential attendees at a given occasion and how well they are acquainted with them. These findings suggest that social position and networks have an important role in determining how women dress.

Sasha (African American) dressed for the event and the type of people that might be present.
>Interviewer: Yep. Okay, so what are some things you think about when you like get ready, like in the morning, or to a party or something or to any function? What are things that are like important to you like, "got to make sure this looks right?"
>Sasha: Okay. It depends on who I'm going to run into. It also depends on the type of fun I'm going to have. If I know it's a party that nobody really knows about, and my friend is begging me to go, then I'll really be somewhat careless on what I wear, okay, I just throw a dress on, but if I know it's somebody who I really don't like and I want to do it all…

Similarly, Jamila (African American) considered the event and who would be in attendance.
>Jamila: I mean, you can't fit it, it's small, like it's too small for you, but basically, first I consider like where I'm going and then who's going to be there. Sometimes you do dress to impress like…just be honest about that. Just depending on where I'm going. If I'm going to church, I'm making sure that I'm not wearing, you know, something that's too short or whatever. If I'm going to, you know, the mall, I'll wear something comfortable because I'm going to be trying on clothes. So it just depends. But I…more than likely I just wear whatever because I don't really care.
>Interviewer: So when you say like "dress to impress," who…in what situations, who are you trying to impress?
>J: So, okay, for instance, if I go to…if I'm going somewhere where they don't know me, I'll wear, not my best, I'll wear whatever I think looks best. If I go to interview, I'll wear an outfit that will make me look like…that I was already an employee there. So like I work at Sparty's downstairs, so when I went to there, I didn't wear a suit, a suit jacket, and pants, I wore like you know, a nice sweater and, you know, some slacks. So you just have to know how to dress and like just consider the audience. So I would consider that dressing to impress.

Sky (African American) had the same concerns. She dressed for the people whom she might encounter.
>Interviewer: Do you feel like you want to look nice for anybody in particular, or do you feel like you get dressed with the idea of like you want to impress a particular group of people or anything like that?
>Sky: Like if I'm going to go out, then I'd probably…. I'll dress for…dress for the people I'm going around, but for the most part I just dress for me.
>I: So who are the people when you go out? Who do you see, like who's there that you feel like you're dressing for, like who's at the go-out spot?

S: Probably like people who are like really, like active on campus or like popular people, you know, that are on campus, probably like girls who always dress up so I don't, you know, want to be the odd one out.

Lydia (African American) focused on the same issues when deciding what to wear.
Lydia: …Based on like where I'm going and the friend group that I'm in, if their focus is on accentuating and making a certain part of their body look better then I might, you know, even look at myself and think twice sometimes, so I think that it's just like some of the type of people that you hang around and what they're focused on sometimes could have an effect on you and your style.

Participant concerns for who might view their dressed bodies spanned beyond demonstrating wealth and status for the *male gaze*; in fact, none of the participants specifically mentioned this as a concern. Instead they focused on issues of status and the relationship proximity of potential viewers. Despite the differences mentioned, participants were still concerned with the messages their dress conveyed.

CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 explored the methodological framework I used to undertake this study. Phase I began with positioning myself as the multicultural subject and researcher. I described my personal experiences and the biases that inevitably shaped the investigation. Phase II described the philosophical dimension of my researcher positionality. I focused on the ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions that undergird the investigative and interpretive techniques employed here. I assumed a collectivist ontological framework to uncover the layers of collective representations that shape the meaning and significance of dress. From this standpoint, women participate in collective constructions of dress and beauty. As a consequence, I asked questions about their friends and about the experiences that led to their current ideas about dress. The abductive epistemological framework dictated that the researcher and participant co-create new knowledge. Often the ideas relayed by the women did not fit into preexisting paradigms, thus precipitating the development of new theories of dress. Finally, the axiological frame dictated that I had to be mindful of the potential political and religious significance of participants' adornment and body modifications.

Phase III explicated the strategy of inquiry that guided the study. I used the "wardrobe studies" framework based in the constructionist grounded theoretical approach to conduct a combination of interviews and material analysis. As a consequence, the findings are suggestive rather than definitive and are designed to inspire new theory and research. Phase IV explained the data collection and analysis procedures. I explained why the diverse population at Midwest University was the ideal backdrop to explore fashion and dress among women ages 18-25. Next, I outlined the numerous recruitment strategies used, highlighting the difficulty of finding participants to partake in dress research. This section concludes with a basic guide to the

interview questions and the clothing observations. Finally, Phase V provided a discussion of evaluation techniques to measure the validity of my findings.

Chapter 2 delves into how race impacts dress. 15 of the women I interviewed said their racial identity was evident in their dress. None of the women identified their clothing as political, but some did think their race was somehow represented in their fashion choices. Even the women who did not believe their racial identity influenced their dress commented that their racially homogenous group of friends influenced their dress. Similarly, when asked to name celebrities whose style they admired, participants identified celebrities who matched their own racial identity.

Race significantly contributed to dress preferences and practices among a diverse group of collegiate students. Race is integrated into women's dress, through the influence of their friends and celebrities, as well as in terms of the way they understand the standards and expectations for their bodies in clothing. Even participants who did not intend for their clothes to have political messages about race said their racial identity influenced their clothing. This finding suggests that racial ideology infiltrates closets, wardrobes, and dress practices in other ways. For example, participants commented that particular items of dress were infused with race. Even though a cross-racial group wore those items, participants still viewed those clothes as racialized. These findings suggest that race is far more permeative than previous research in either sociology of fashion or dress studies has reported. Moreover, these findings demonstrate that racial narratives, stratification, and identity impact clothing in more ways than simply in terms of making a political statement.

The second half of Chapter 2 highlighted style trends and preferences specific to Black women. African American participants noted hairstyles, colorism, body type, and other styling

practices prevalent in Black communities. In addition, their comments suggested that adherence to the culture of respectability was a controlling framework for African American dress, but was not a major factor for the other participants. These findings suggest that Black women's contemporary corporal considerations mimic those of the 1950s and 1960s. Prior to this study, the artificial boundaries used to define the intersection of race and clothing limited our understanding of the multitude of possible ways in which race shapes dress practices. Thus, the findings of the present study further open up new avenues for research on the role of race in present day, routine activities.

Chapter 3 explores corporal ideal types and the pressure women feel as they consider how to adorn and modify their bodies. I began with an examination of the pressure to be "done up" and coiffed with clothing and makeup. Participants expressed a desire to display the effort and work used to accomplish their final look. This desire challenges the notion that women feel pressure to style their bodies only in accordance with dominant fashion trends. Instead, the participants were flexible on the final style or look as long as the effort required to achieve that look was made obvious.

Next, I reaffirm a well-established theme of fashion and body studies—the pressure to be thin. I found that, while getting dressed, the pressure to be thin manifested in a desire to have a small waist. As a result, the hourglass figure was popular across racial groups, but African American women put more emphasis on hip and butt size. These bodily evaluations differ from previous research on corporal assessment, which found that, after viewing advertisements, women focused on thigh size and weight, as well as on the midsection. The discrepancy suggests that at different moments of the day, women may make differing assessments about their bodies.

Chapter 4 operates as a catchall chapter for an assortment of fashion and dress themes. The first part of the chapter explores how participants valued their mothers' opinion of dress and often shopped with them. This finding contradicts cultural axioms that young women want to distance themselves from their mothers' style. Second, I found that women use comments from their friends and family to gauge their appearance and understand their physical attributes. They relied on the comments of others to assess their bodies, rather than using their own observations from popular culture references as points of comparison. This finding signifies the potential for a mediated relationship between media images and individual self-assessment. Third, I explored how Black women defined their understanding of formal and informal dress codes. Before attending an event, they considered the status and relational proximity of the attendees. The African American participants' considerations represent an additional layer of analysis of dress that none of the other participants made. Each of these findings add new dimensions to prevailing frameworks of dress and fashion.

I theorized that race would have a role in the dress practices of a diverse body of female college students at Midwestern University. The research supported this hypothesis, but in ways different than I expected. Rather than being a significant factor for making decisions about what to wear, the role of race was much more abstract. Race operated as a lens through which the participants made sense of fashion, dress, and their bodies. Even when the women wore styles that were similar, they still saw racial differences. In my estimation, the combination of the homogeneity of their friend groups and the large role those friend groups had in the participants' decisions about dress resulted in the construction of inaccurate understandings of racialized fashion and dress. In this way, race did have an impact on dress considerations, such as whom to take fashion advice from and how to assess reactions to their appearance. Though most women

articulated similar pressures, Black women discussed additional specific racialized pressures for their dress and bodies. This finding suggests that while participants' fashion choices and preferences may be similar across racial groups, the body modifications and adornments necessary for achieving a particular appearance may be greater for Black women.

Despite the substantial findings and wide-reaching implications of this study, there are a number of limitations to the study, most of which are related to the lack of diversity in the sample. For example, the sample did not include a wide variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. As a result, the observed racial differences in dress do little to explain in-group differences that may exist within racial groups. In addition, none of the participants identified as gender-nonconforming or LGBT. Finally, there was an overall lack of racial diversity in the study. There were no Asian participants and only one Latina participant and one Middle Eastern participant. As a result, the findings are only related to African Americans and Whites. Most of these limitations are due to the selected research site of Midwestern University. The present study represents only a small window into how race impacts contemporary dress practices. As the study is not representative in scope or scale, it is unclear whether the findings can be applied beyond the population at Midwestern University.

In the future, I hope to expand the study to include participants from multiple socio-economic backgrounds, racial groups, LGBT, and non-collegiate women across the United States. The first step is to develop a race and dress survey tool that addresses the issues garnered from participant responses. It is my hope to distribute the survey to a wider diversity of participants and to acquire statistically significant and representative data. I plan to examine how race and dress intersect with geographic location, socio-economic status, and sexuality.

The current study utilized samples of dress as reference tools during the interviews. The photographic images of the clothing and styling tools represent a rich source of data for performing visual and material culture analysis. Furthermore, the visual data could corroborate the findings and add new avenues of analysis. In addition to the avenues I plan to pursue, the present study provides the basis for exploring beyond the dichotomies of accommodation and resistance in future studies of race and dress.

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