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Mothers have been found to play a significant role in consumer education of their children (Minaham & Huddleston, 2008). Furthermore, mothers are often the most important role model for their daughters and have a strong influence on notions of how to appear as a female individual (Chodorow, 1989). However, researchers have focused little attention on impacts of the African American mother-daughter relationship on dress and appearance, even though it is known that African Americans put strong emphasis on appearance (Smith, Thompson, Raczynski, & Hilner, 1999). The purpose of this study was to explore how African American mothers socialize their daughters' consumer behavior toward dress.

Several theories guided the study. Taking a Black feminist perspective, Collins (1990) proposed that mothers actively work to keep their daughters from perpetuating common stereotypes about African American women through appearance. Afrocentric theory emphasizes the importance of examining the social space in which mothers inform their daughters about African American beauty and diversity (Moore & Kosut, 2010). Standpoint theory centers on mothers' and daughters' individual experiences in relation to how mothers socialize their daughters via their performance of gender in the public eye (Wood, 1994). African American mothers may be key agents in shaping their daughters' development of understanding of social marginalization and how to deal with marginalization through self-presentation. Understanding African American mother–daughter relationships toward dress and appearance will advance understanding of an understudied consumer group and an understudied relationship.

Research questions included: How do African American mothers "teach" or socialize their daughters about dress and appearance and shopping? Do the daughters reciprocally influence their mother's shopping behavior for dress? To what extent do the daughters mirror their mother's preferences, beliefs, and practices related to appearance modification? Do the mothers socialize their daughters about race and identity, and are dress and body image a part of this teaching?

Method. Sixteen mother-daughter pairs from Pine Bluff, Arkansas were interviewed. The daughters were 22 to 29 years old. Recruitment was conducted via snowball sampling; also, an announcement was posted in a listserv for professional women in the Pine Bluff area and a Facebook ad was created to advertise and inform potential participants. In depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted with each mother and each daughter separately. Participants were asked guided questions such as: "Tell me about your experience shopping with your mother." "What early lessons did you teach your daughter about beauty and womanhood?" Interviews were transcribed and inductively analyzed. A second coder checked all coding, with 97% agreement in assignment of themes.

Results and Discussion. Major themes were (a) parental style, (b) mother's overall influence on dress, (c) daughter's influence on mother's dress, (d) father's influence, (e) style outcomes, (f) being an African American woman--daughter's perspective, and (h) expression of African American femininity. The mothers described their approach to parenting as controlling; however, the relationships described by both mothers and daughters also indicated substantial warmth and connection, which is not characteristic of authoritarian parenting (Glasgow et al., 1997). These mothers purposefully set strong rules for their daughters' appearance while they were growing up to help them learn that appearance is important for African American women to avoid negative stereotypes commonly held in mainstream U.S. society about African American women. Mothers instilled in their daughters the importance of expression of femininity, as well as development of positive body image and self-esteem. Daughters recognized the substantial impact their mothers had on their shopping skills and manner of dress. The study provides critical insights into how African American mothers serve as role models and how they employ different teaching strategies to cultivate their daughters' learning about being female.

There was some evidence that income level of mothers and education level of daughters influenced how the mothers and daughters interacted about dress purchases. Fathers also were mentioned by a few of the daughters as socializing them to shop for quality products.

Conclusions. The findings in the study do not reflect the experiences of all African American mothers and daughters and their relationships in Pine Bluff or of African American mothers and daughters in the United States in general. This small sample of mother-daughter pairs was self-selected and may represent a bias toward very close and positive relationships.

The study offers a rich contextual understanding of the socialization process of these African American mothers and daughters and how the mothers shaped their daughters' consumer behavior toward dress. The findings highlight the intersectionality of race, class, and gender on socialization in the family unit.

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