A Clothing Journal Study: Decision-Making Factors in Clothing Choice

by

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Abstract

This qualitative study addresses how social environments affect clothing choice in millennial college-aged sorority women at Auburn University. Millennials have been determined to be an important demographic to study due to their unique placement in the consumer market, they are described as being a large, young generation with an active social media and Internet presence (Bapna, 2013; Tayler & Gao, 2014). The primary purpose of this study was to identify what specific factors affect decision-making as it pertains to clothing choice. Adapted nutrition diaries in the form of clothing journals were used to document daily clothing choice by tracking participants (n=3) clothing choices over a one-week period. Follow up interviews, in the form of focus groups, explored decision-making factors for daily clothing choices. This study explored Social Identity Theory (SIT), which predicts that social groups can influence, positively and negatively, clothing choices made by women. SIT aims to define how a social group influences a person and how that group could produce a unique set of characteristics for each social group (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

Findings revealed the presence of set dress norms for certain occasions to which sorority members conform. Findings also revealed that physical environment and destination were a decision-making factor in clothing choice. Findings from the study reinforced SIT and directly applied to clothing, a facet of expression not yet explored in relation to the theory. Shifts in consumer markets by the large millennial generation, including sorority women, have the ability to act as a primary consumer within the economy. Ultimately, the findings for this study provide specific information on how the sorority women target market makes decisions when it comes to clothing.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Introduction

Born between 1980 and 2000, millennials, were estimated to have a population of 83 million people in the U.S., which is larger than the Baby Boom, of 77 million people, generation (Marketing Charts; Milkman, 2014; Tayler & Gao, 2014). The millennial generation accounted for $600 billion annually in retail spending in 2014 (Smith, 2014; Sprague, 2014). Due to shifts in consumer markets caused by the large millennial generation spending, this group garnered the ability to act as a primary consumer within the economy. With millennial's increased presence in the marketplace and expansive Internet knowledge it was assumed that millennials were more knowledgeable with regard to current trends and brands because of their never-ending connection to social media and the Internet (Dyk, Hume, Larenaudie, & Toyama, 2008). The Millennial generation was therefore more likely to accept new fashion trends than the generations that came before them because they were aware of them first (Schifrin, 2014).

As a result, millennials sparked the creation of a variety of literature on group and social identity, as it pertained to consumer markets. The literature described concepts of brand consciousness, group membership as it relates to decision-making, and SIT affecting individual behaviors. Hogg, et. al (1995) stated that SIT was a social psychological theory that tried to account for group practices and the social self. To study SIT a social group was identified, paying particular attention to find a group with set standards and social components. By definition, a sorority is a prominent social group (Crandall, 1988) and therefore clearly defines its group characteristics. When an individual joins a social group and takes on its characteristics, their own identity is affected by those new characteristics, leading them to conform to a new set of norms. Sororities were chosen as a good example of a social group because they have extensive social gatherings and closely bonded friendships gained through group membership;

1

this made them a prime study choice for SIT. Sorority members situate themselves with other members and their environments, making them a good target not only for SIT but also for this particular study, because scholars have concluded that they spend copious amounts of time together (Hunt & Miller, 1997).

This study focused on college-age millennial women in sororities. Millennial sorority women focused on physical appearance that included social identity markers manifested in visual symbols. Scholars agree that sorority women place a high value on physical appearance (Arthur, 1997; Basow, Foran, & Bookwala, 2007; Berbary, 2013; Crandall, 1988). The study proposed that sorority women on Auburn University's campus could be identified by their specific dress. Midgley, Dowling, and Morrison (1989) stated that clothes are a social symbol, and that clothing was one of the most common visual symbols to identify (Arthur, 1997). Some studies also claim that dress and appearance reflect an individual's personality and culture (Hunt & Miller, 1997). In the researcher's own casual observation on Auburn University's campus, it was possible to identify this population by their distinctive oversized tops, athletic bottoms, and shoe choice. Meyer and Anderson (2000) agreed and stated that one of the most visible ways of conforming was through clothing.

However, this observation was researched further within the context of social norms. Crutchfield (1954) found that conformity to norms happened in other forms such as personality traits. In Cruthchfield's 1954 study none of the men sampled thought they would make a bad leader, a self-personality trait. Arthur (1997) implied the same notion by claiming that sorority women adopted the appearance of their sorority by remaining thin, specific hairstyle choice, applying dress norms, and surrounding themselves with their ideals in order to be a model member of the group. As a result, this study examined the role of clothing choice within the

larger context of decision-making factors within the context of Auburn University's sorority group.

  This study expected to find that sorority women dressed casually as a result of belonging to a sorority in an effort to socially integrate to their group's social standard for dress. In addition, the intent of this study was to further examine SIT's role in the decision making process for sorority membership with a new data collection tool for studying clothing choice and the decision making process. The tool was modified from a nutrition food diary and adapted as a clothing diary in order to document clothing choices. In the next section, key terms and definitions will be identified from existing literature.

Key Terms and Definitions

Clothing- visual, public representation of identity in the form of items worn to cover the body

      (Rademacher, 1997).

Conformity- observing and responding to the actions of social influences in a peer and reference

      group (Meyer & Anderson, 2000)

Norms- unofficial standards, made permanent over periods of time

Physical Environment - "color, texture, slope, quality of light," wind, sounds and scents (Ryden,

      1993, p. 38)

Social Identity- a person's understanding that he or she belongs to a specific social

      group, and the value and emotional importance attached to the membership

      (Greene, 2004, & Stets & Burke, 2000).

Social group- "a set of individuals who hold a common social identification" (Stets & Burke,

      2000, p. 225).

Social environment- the environment comprised of immediate physical surroundings and

      communal relationships. This environment is dynamic changing from

      internal and external agents. Social environment is contingent on the

      relationships between all existing environments (Barnett, 2001;

      Goode, 1904).

Trend- an act that occurs on a "natural time scale" (Wu, Huang, Long, & Peng, 2007)

Literature Review

Decision Making

Decisions are considered an extension of social behavior, and thus are a form of communicating information about an individual to others (Baumeister, 1982). Decisions are an important, motivated part of everyday life, made significant through the concept of value. Value decisions depend upon the seriousness of the decision and whether the outcome is positive or negative (Higgins, 2002). Higgins (2002) determined that value decisions were made by consumers and the consumer alone determined the value of a decision. Baumeister (1982) framed the discussion of decision making within a social behavior context where it served as a way of communicating information about an individual to others. The decision making process is often influenced by an individual's group membership rather than solely on individual characteristics. Wood and Hayes (2012) claimed that when it seems individuals are making a decision on their own they are often influenced by close peers. Other scholars echoed these claims and recognized group membership as the most prevalent determinant of the consumer decision-making process (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Rimal, 2008). Further confirmed by Venkatesan (1966) when he stated that individuals' are largely susceptible to group pressure. For social group influence to be possible members must actively identify with the behaviors and opinions of the group (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975). Once an individual has identified with a group, the influence of said group is informal, subtle and comes in the way of group norms (Venkatesan, 1966). Group norms can be defined as model patterns of behavior of the group (Venkatesan, 1966). It is important to discuss a groups influence over a member in order to better understand the clothing decision making process from the group identity perspective.

Group identity. Social group influence has been recognized in academic research with Childers & Rao (1992) seminal study that examines the influence of peer-based reference groups on consumer decisions. Many of the identifying factors of group membership may be described as lifestyle factors (Englis & Solomon, 1995). These factors may include opinions, attitudes, tangible possessions, and leisure activities (Englis & Solomon, 1995). Group membership provides members with support for their opinions and behaviors, helps members achieve joint goals, and fulfill the member's want of status and approval (Festinger & Newcomb, 1951). Childers and Rao (1992) thought that group members would act in accordance with the social group to which they belong. This included adhering to their set social norms. The group member would use all of these factors as guidelines for monitoring their own social behavior (Snyder, 1974).

One reason group members chose to follow the group's rules was the need to please the particular audience (Baumeister, 1982). According to Rimal (2008) this happens when members have a strong relationship with their social group. The closer the members were to the group and greater the amount of interaction with the group, the more influence the group would have on its members (Childers & Rao, 1992). Belonging to a social group could have other effects on an individual as a consumer. White and Dahl (2006) reported that identifying with a group would ultimately relate to a member's purchase intention. Group influence would also aid in determining a member's clothing and shopping preferences as a consumer (White & Dahl, 2006). There were other factors that affect group member's decision making, these factors could best be discussed as norms and conformity.

Norms. Some scholars argue that norms are personal and not set by social groups (Biddle, Bank, & Slavings, 1987). However, according to Rimal (2008) there are two types of

norms, (1) descriptive norms about what is normal and (2) injunction norms about what ought to be done in social settings; implying that norms are both personal and set by social groups. These two types of norms were also noted by Hunt and Miller (1997). Belonging to a social group as stated by Yun and Silk (2011) affects an individual's self-identity influencing them to accept the set group norms. Each social group sets its own norms. It is important to understand how a social group's set norms affect individuals, because individuals conform to group norms and lose some of their individualization in the process. There is potential for particular social groups to have stringent norms that group members conform to entirely. Once a member is aware of the group norms, the member will start to conform to them (Maslach, 1974). According to Meyer and Anderson (2000) conformity usually happens as a result of members trying to fit in with their social group.

Conformity. The pressure to conform is derived from two concepts, (1) the want to belong and (2) the constant surveillance of other group members (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975). One demographic where this can be examined is within the Millennial generation. Sprague (2014) stated that millennials were the first generation raised with easily accessible Internet, meaning they could master digital platforms with very little effort. Millennials were the most connected generational group to-date, and were connected through social media and mobile devices, leaving that particular group susceptible for constant scrutiny because their lives were broadcast across various media platforms. Being constantly connected had an impact on millennial group members because it made them apparent to when an individual was or was not following the group norms.

Baumeister (1982) stated that conformity occurred out of the need to yield to social group influences but in order to avoid negative opinions from others in their group. Group members

understood that their actions were a direct reflection of the group and the groups' solidarity

(Rimal, 2008). While group norms were usually thought of as attitudes and opinions; Crutchfield

(1954) found that conformity to norms could happen in opinions, attitudes and actions; it could

also go deeper into personality traits. Meyer and Anderson (2000) agreed with Crutchfield

(1954) and stated that one of the most visible ways of conforming was through clothing.

Dressing like other members of a social group was how group members fit in with their group;

fitting in provided security and encouragement to group members (Meyer & Anderson, 2000).

However, there were other decision-making factors that impacted clothing choices within the

context of norms and conformity that should be examined further.

Decision-making factors. As previously stated, many scholars noted that group members

made decisions based on their conformity to expectations of other group members (Cohen &

Golden, 1972; Baumeister, 1982). Cohen and Golden (1972) identified three potential sources of

social group influence: (1) conformity to information provided by other group members, (2)

extent of a members judgment as it is known to the other group members, and (3) a member's

reaction to other member's judgments. While these factors influenced social groups, social group

membership primarily influenced its members' decision-making process in two main areas: (1)

normative social influence and (2) informational influence (Meyer & Anderson, 2000).

Normative refers to the conformity factor previously discussed that relates to the likelihood of an

individual making a decision simply because his or her peers made that same decision, while

informational refers to group members acceptance of information provided by other group

members (Cohen & Golden, 1972). Wood and Hayes (2012) discussed the extent informational

influence on group members helped them maintain and understand their reality. This influence

was often a source of social pressures placed on the group and the need for other group members

to have positive reactions to their behavior (Bearden & Rose, 1990). A specific demographic that was susceptible to social-identity influence was the millennial group.

Demographic groups and consumer behavior. The Baby Boomer generation influenced the consumer market for many years (Thompson & Weissmann). However, the millennial consumers' purchasing behavior varied from the Baby Boomer's generation. This lead to a shift in market strategies by businesses trying to reach the Millennial population through brand loyalty. Brand loyalty affected consumers' decision-making processes by making decisions easier by eliminating various options (Huang & Sarigollu, 2011). According to Tiwari and Abraham (2010) brand loyalty was composed of two factors, (1) positive attitudes towards a brand, and (2) the act of re-purchasing.

Millennials earned a reputation for being disloyal. However, Sprague (2014) concluded that the perception of millennial disloyalty was a two dimensional argument to an issue that was multifaceted. Millennials were more likely to buy a product after making an educated decision as to whether or not the product was the same brand they had previously purchased (Sprague, 2014). In Sprague's (2014) research it was discovered that millennials also prefer in-store shopping rather than online shopping. In-store shopping provided millennial shoppers with two perks (1) instant gratification (2) an opportunity for them to test items themselves (Sprague, 2014). Fashion could be defined as a common thought or action dependent on current ideas demonstrated through clothing, accessories and hairstyles (Young, 1930). Millennial fashion was one area where brand loyalty, social group identification, and decision-making factors could be explored.

One major shift within the fashion industry that directly impacted millennial consumer behavior was the concept of "fast fashion." Fashion has been defined as fast changing and

transient (Roman & Medvedev, 2011). These fast fashions designs were created with current

runway looks in mind and brought to stores quickly at a more affordable price for the general

public to purchase (Much, 2014). Fashion analyst John Kernan claimed "the core of fast-

fashion's strategy is to quickly turn low-priced apparel and accessories to entice consumers to

consistently update their wardrobe" (Much, 2014). It could be concluded that millennials were

more knowledgeable about current trends and brands (Dyk, Hume, Larenaudie, & Toyama,

2008). The Millennial generation was therefore more likely to accept new fashion trends than the

generations that came before them (Schifrin, 2014). This could result from their direct

connection to digital and social media. According to Wu (2014) millennials spent 75 to 80

percent of their day on their mobile devices. The constant connection to the Internet and social

media allowed millennials the access needed to view fashions instantaneously. Dyk et al. (2008)

found in their study of millennials as luxury consumers that 70 percent of millennials agreed that

owning high fashion items helped them build a positive reputation. Roman and Medvedev (2011)

also found in their study the high fashion items helped individuals achieve peer approval.

Other studies have found that college-aged millennials are more progressive, racially and

ethnically diverse, and the highest educated generation (Milkman, 2014). Along with these

characteristics scholars have found that millennials have high amounts of student debt, averaging

$27,000 per each student (Ferri-Reed, 2013; Milkman, 2014). While Baby Boomers fueled the

economy with their brand loyal purchases, they did not have the debt that millennials have

accumulated (Thompson & Weissmann, 2012). However, others have found that this generation,

unlike the Boomers, does not wait to purchase their luxury products (Dyk et al., 2008). Products

related to social status are no longer products "earned" by status. Millennials have been

concerned about social status and social media has been used as one platform to convey their personal image to others.

Millennials, as consumers, have had the strongest social media presence; they were now connected through all social media applications and had a strong desire to have their digital and non-digital lives seamless ("Constructed Reality," 2014). This increased social media presence has given millennials the ability to broadcast what was once private, creating a controlled personal brand image ("Constructed Reality," 2014). Bapna (2013) stated the same fact by saying millennials' dress, post, and click according to the perception they want their friends to have of them. Social media gave millennials the ability to track, quantify and compare their lives with other social media users which led to an unease among consumers ("Constructed Reality," 2014). One scholar noted that this unease created a notion of self-entitlement and high expectations among millennials ("Constructed Reality," 2014). Millennials had a reputation for being lazy and narcissistic (Milkman, 2014). However, despite the unease within the generation, millennials were still known for working together towards a common goal by making communal intellectual decisions, encouraging brainstorming and critical thinking skills - more commonly called 'collaboration' (Smith, 2014; Byun, Kim, & Duffey, 2012; Gale, Martin, Martin, & Duffey, 2014). Millennial's tendency to collaborate could have been one reason millennials in social groups tended to consult other group members during the decision making process. Additionally, the millennials' tendency to lean towards social group practices provided a compelling argument to better understand SIT.

Social Identity Theory

Background. Hogg, et. al, (1995) stated that SIT was a social psychological theory that tried to account for group practices and the social self. SIT was based within the discipline of

psychology and was developed in the 1950s as a result of social belief details on racism and discrimination in England (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Reed, 2002). Tasdemir (2011) stated that SIT focused on three major concepts, (1) social identification, (2) social comparison, and (3) psychological distinctiveness. Tajfel (1981) stated that humans had a drive to evaluate their own opinions and abilities that was only comparable to another human's. Social comparison satisfied two human needs, (1) peer comparison function; and (2) self-esteem function (Noble, Haytko, & Phillips, 2009). Psychological distinctiveness was a process that developed after identification and comparison (Tajfel, 1981). Once an individual identified with a group, psychological distinctiveness was established within the group to ensure authority over members (Tajfel, 1981). While SIT focused on those three concepts, social comparison and psychological distinctiveness would not be possible without social identification (Tajfel, 1981). An individual must have known their own characteristics before they were able to compare them.

Leading SIT researcher Tajfel (1981) defined social identity as "that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from his or her knowledge of membership to a social group together with the value and the emotional significance attached to it" (p. 225). To further explain the concept of social identity, it was the part of a person's identity that develops connections with a social group (Reed, 2002; Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1998).

A key concept to social identity's definition was understanding the definition of self-concept. Ashforth and Mael (1989) defined self-concept as having two dimensions, (1) personal identity, and (2) social identity that included: physical looks, cognitive traits, and group classification. Self-concept was further defined as an individual's sense of self, how they differentiate themselves from their environments and others (Reed, 2002). An individual's social identity was where a person derives their self-concept and the knowledge that he or she is a

member of a certain organization (Greene, 2004; & Stets, & Burke, 2000). Van Vugt and Hart (2004) noted that a person's identity was partially determined by their social group. Hogg et al., (1995) also noted that a social group's defining characteristics provided a part of who one was and provided a sense of belonging. Social identity was salient in a consumer's self-concept structure (Reed, 2002) and had an important role in a consumer's emotional life (Cameron, 1999). SIT also looked to define how a social group defines a person and how this group produced a unique set of characteristics for each social group (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

Social identity could be broken into four general categories, (1) person-based social identities, (2) relational social identities, (3) group-based social identities, and (4) collective identities (Brewer, 2001). This study only focused on those group-based social identities that allowed an individual to be connected to the social world via social groups.

A second component of social identity's definition was understanding the formation of an organization. Hogg and Terry (2000) defined organizations as "internally structured groups that are characterized by power, status, and prestige differentials" (p.121). An organization was often referred to as a social group for this particular study, organization and social group were used interchangeably. A social group was made up of individuals who exhibit the same common social identities' members defined themselves and had the same attributes as other members (Stets & Burke, 2000; Hogg, Abrams, Otten, & Hinkle, 2004). Crandall (1988) supported this definition and added that members of a social group were consistent in their attitudes and behaviors that were paramount to the group. The more prominent the social group, the greater the pressure was to imitate group behaviors, creating a sense of uniformity within the group (Crandall, 1988). One example of a well-defined and prominent social group would be a college sorority, and as a result there are clearly defined group characteristics (Crandall, 1988). When an

individual joins a social group and takes on its characteristics their own identity takes on new characteristics; for example, by changing the way an individual dresses or defining new standards for actions.

An identity is reflexive, meaning it can be an object that is categorized in correlation to other social categories, this process is known as self-categorization (Stets & Burke, 2000). When an individual undergoes self-categorization the similarities between the group and the individual are heightened (Stets & Burke, 2000). The self-categorization process enhances group boundaries by creating group-distinctive characteristics (Hogg et al., 1995). Sororities have strong social influence (Crandall, 1988). Therefore, the individuals who join a sorority have a heightened sense of needing to belong and their social, academic, and even the ordinary aspects of life fall into accord with the group characteristics and social identity.

Social classifications have two functions, (1) they provide a systematic way of defining others that in turn provide order to the social environment, and (2) they allow individuals to define themselves within the social environment (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Hogg and Terry (2000) suggested that social identity was based within their group, but it was rooted from a deeper need for self-esteem. By identifying with a social group an individual can positively connect with other group members, achieve a sense of belonging, and ultimately develop self-esteem.

Social identity theory in group membership. An individuals' social identity comes from the social group they belong to and the actual people within that social group (Stets & Burke, 2011). For example, a person might work for a certain company and adhere to the rules and social norms of that company while at the same time conforming to how the people within that particular company office act as well. It is common for social groups like sororities to create

social norms for its members to follow (Crandall, 1988). Hunt and Miller (1997) noted in their study of sorority women that sororities had in fact created a situated identity for members to adhere to. Hogg et al., (2004) noted that norms from a social identity perspective were the influence in groups because norms were the prescriptive. Chan, Berger, and Boven (2012) agreed that conformity was a persons' way of communicating their desired social identities.

Hogg and Terry (2000) described the phenomena of depersonalization as when a person assimilates into a social group. Depersonalization may be seen as a change in a person's self-conceptualization and the way others perceive them (Hogg & Terry, 2000). According to Stets and Burke (2000) depersonalization was the "central cognitive process in social identity theory" and happened when the individual epitomized the characteristics of the social group (p. 231). SIT explained how group members understood societal processes and put them into practice (Hogg & Williams, 2000). Sororities require an allegiance to the group where members replace some of their individualism for prescribed group norms (Arthur, 1997).

One area where scholars agreed was that sorority women place a high value on physical appearance (Basow, Foran, & Bookwala, 2007; Crandall, 1988; Berbary, 2013; Arthur, 1997). One of the easiest ways to show identity was through visual symbols such as clothing (Arthur, 1997). As a result, each social group had its own characteristics, behaviors, attitudes, and boundaries. It is important for social group boundaries to be permeable to allow group members their own uniqueness (Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish, & Hodge, 1996). In an attempt to achieve uniqueness an individual had varying degrees of differentiation from their other group members (Chan, et al., 2012). According to Arthur (1997) dress was one way these symbolic features were communicated to the public. Rademacher (1997) also noted that clothing was a public marker of identity. When a symbol of identity was acknowledged the identity was then validated giving the

individual boosts in self-esteem (Arthur, 1997). When clothing was validated by the public it

created a greater group membership bond by further validating conformity to group norms.

Putting It All Together

Roman and Medvedev (2011) supplied evidence in their study on purchasing patterns in

college students that peer approval and group acceptance often played a role in the social setting.

Midgley, Dowling, and Morrison (1989) stated that clothes were a social symbol. Dress and

appearance reflected an individual's personality and culture (Hunt & Miller, 1997). The literature

supported dress being a representation of identity and group membership provided the guidelines

for creating a new identity.

As previously discussed, conformity to group norms was often in the form of clothing

(Midgley, et al., 1989). Rademacher (1997) stated that communicating a college identity usually

involved some level of conformity to a group norm. Maslach (1974) agreed in her research by

saying consumers used clothes to associate themselves with others. Hunt and Miller (1997)

found that groups set appearance norms and once those norms were violated the collective group

identity was at risk. In contemporary consumer culture clothing reflected an individuals' identity

as well as an individuals' group identity (Rademacher, 2007).

Clothing choice was important to study because it was in a constant state of change

causing consumers to make frequent decisions (Midgley, et al., 1989). It was important to note

that social and physical environments determined a consumer's life, because those environments

affected an individual's decision-making process (Cohen & Golden, 1972).

Sororities were an exemplary example of a social group making them a prime study

choice for SIT. Sorority members situated themselves to other members and their environments

making them a good target for this study, because they spent copious amounts of time together

(Hunt & Miller, 1997). According to Englis and Solomon (1995) college age millennials were in a transition phase of becoming a functioning adult in society and, therefore an ideal population for consumer research. Social group members, like those members in sororities, were known to change their personal style in order to communicate to peers that they belonged in a certain group (Rademacher, 2007). It was apparent that group influence was evident within sorority women, however there was little research about how that influence came to play during the decision making process (Venkatesan, 1966). It was important to study the influence of peers on clothing choice because fashion impacted the social life of millennials (Roman & Medvedev, 2011).

<center>**Pre-test**</center>

Before the start of the current study, the tools and methods were pretested for effectiveness, and observations were conducted in order to examine if different clothing items were present on Auburn's campus. Sommer and Sommer (2002) noted that observational methodology was better to discover a behavior's natural state. Observations were ideal for observing non-verbal behaviors such as clothing choice (Sommer & Sommer, 2002). Behaviors were more variable in natural surroundings and therefore were more unexpected and natural (Sommer & Sommer, 2002).

Observations

Observations were conducted for one hour a week during the fall semester at the Student Center near the Starbucks entrance. Every third female that walked by was noted as being dressed casually or dressy. Casual clothing was defined as cotton/spandex bottoms (e.g. Nike shorts, leggings, gym clothes) and some type of t-shirt, while dressier clothes were defined as jeans, dress or skirt, and a structured top. The observations discovered 94 women wearing casual clothing, while women dressed in business casual totaled 39. For the purpose of this study business causal is described as non-athletic clothing; business casual is sub-category within dressy. The observations occurred over the duration of a week when the temperature ranged from 40 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The greatest difference between casual and business casual clothes observed during the pre-test were the fifth and last day of the study. On that day more students were observed wearing casual clothes than business casual. One major finding from the observations, that needs to be tested further, was that weather seemed to affect the clothing choice. Casual clothing was the predominant clothing choice observed, and on colder days it was more prevalent.

<center>18</center>

These pilot findings revealed the variation in clothing choices of female students and suggested the need to better understand the decision-making process behind clothing choices. As a result, a clothing journal was developed as a second data collection tool. The original clothing journal was a hard copy survey on which participants were asked to document their clothing choices for a one-week period. It also required the participants to document what they were wearing throughout the day. The participants were conveniently sampled from the researcher's own current on-campus, for credit graduate course. Pre-test participants were juniors and seniors in the Department of Consumer and Design Sciences and enrolled in the Fall 2015 Fashion Forecasting class. Pre-test respondents were asked to take home the hardcopy journals to fill out for a predetermined week during the fall semester. The pre-test consisted of an original sample of five; one participant however lost the journal so the final sample of four.

The typical response for daytime clothing choices were shorts, t-shirts, and tennis shoes. Each participant made a point to describe what they wore when they went out at night, and it was typically jeans or something more structured than what they had worn during the day. If they were not wearing shorts, they had on some type of legging. An interesting finding that ties destination and activity with clothing choices was revealed from the written responses; two respondents described the same type of casual clothing, but only one wore it to the gym.

Additionally, preliminary findings revealed that clothes worn to sorority chapter meetings were the most structured clothes they wore all week. Requiring dressing up for chapter meetings implies a social norm set by the sorority. Additionally, on Saturday there was a football game participants attended. The clothes worn on that day were the second most structured clothes the women wore during this week. This was an interesting finding because weather did not seem to impact clothing choices as previously observed in the casual observations. The weather during

the period of the clothing journal was cool and partly rainy with average highs in the upper 60s and average lows in the low 40s (Fahrenheit).

Probable Implications

This study intends to give those in forecasting and marketing new insight into how to reach this particular target market. Sorority women on college campuses could be a specific target market that relies on their group membership. Therefore, insights to target that group and understand more specifically the frame of mind could be beneficial to the clothing industry. Additionally, it may contribute further to SIT and group theories by demonstrating how sorority membership can affect a member's decision-making process when related to clothing choices.

This is significant because past research (Stete & Burke, 2000; Tasdemir, 2011; Van Vugt & Hart, 2004) has not connected clothing choice decisions to SIT even though there are claims that clothing choices are a type of expression or visual symbol of self. Learning how women in sororities express themselves on a group and individual level will further our understanding of SIT as it relates to this population. Finally, this study has developed and will test a new tool for studying clothing choice and the decision making process by developing a clothing journal modified from nutrition food diaries. This form of data collection may be further modified for future use; however it does introduce a new tool for qualitative research specific to clothing decision making, which is often difficult to document.

Study Purpose

This study focused on college-aged female millennials in a sorority on Auburn University's campus. Millennial characteristics and those traits seen in SIT that include sorority women focused on physical appearance and social identity manifested in visual symbols, making this group an ideal group to study. This study proposed that sorority women on Auburn University's campus were identifiable by their specific dress. In casual observation, it was possible to identify this population by their distinctive oversized tops, athletic bottoms, and shoe choice. However, this observation needed to be further tested. Arthur (1997) suggested that sorority women adopted the appearance of their sorority by remaining thin, hairstyle choice, dress norms, and surrounding themselves with their ideals in order to be a model member. As a result, this study examined the role of clothing choice within the larger context of decision-making factors for college-aged sorority women at Auburn University.

Research Questions

1. What is the lived experience in an average week of sorority women on Auburn University's

campus during the spring semester as it relates to clothing choices?

2. What is the role of SIT in this subject group's clothing choices?

Research Design

Introduction

This study used a qualitative approach by applying a multiple case study research design

to analyze the clothing choices of sorority women from Auburn University. A qualitative

approach was chosen for this study based on Denzin and Lincoln's (2011) explanation of

phenomenal research as it relates to qualitative research. These authors state that qualitative

researchers study subjects in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of the phenomena in

terms of the meanings people bring to them. Other aspects of qualitative research include the

researcher acting as a key instrument and having an emergent research design (Creswell, 2013).

When the researcher is a key instrument in a study, the researcher "collects data themselves

through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants" (Creswell,

2013, p. 45). In qualitative research, having an emergent research design means the process itself

is emergent, "that all phases of the process may change or shirt after the researchers... begin to

collect data" (Creswell, 2013, p. 47).

By definition, case study research examines a particular case or cases within a real-life,

contemporary context or setting (Yin, 2009). According to Creswell (2013) there have been

several defining features of case study research. First, a researcher must identify a specific case

that can be bounded or described with certain guidelines (Creswell, 2013). Within that specific

case there must a distinct intent of conducting the case study and multiple forms of qualitative

data (Creswell, 2013). The researcher must also provide a description of the case, identifying themes or issues and specific situations to study (Creswell, 2013).

This study adopted a constructivist worldview. Constructivism was achieved through understanding the phenomena that were formed through participants and their subjective views (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). When participants provided their understandings, they spoke from meanings shaped by social interaction with others and formed their own personal histories (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). Constructivism applied inductive methodology, which meant participants' views were taken and built up to different patterns and generalizations (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007).

This study asked college-aged students questions regarding clothing choice through surveys and focus group interviews. Data from both data collections were compared (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). The survey design was meant to identify broad trends within a particular population (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). The participants of the survey were asked to participate in the interviews in order to follow up on survey responses and get more clothing choice details. By combining these data collections, the relationship between clothing choice and SIT was reinforced.

Prior to the study, a clothing scale (*Figure 1*) was established by the researcher to help categorize clothing into three groups: (1) casual, (2) semi-casual, and (3) nice clothing.

Figure 1a. Casual Clothing   *Figure 1b.* Semi-casual Clothing   *Figure 1c.* Nice Clothing

These three groups were determined based on the clothing the researcher casually observed on

Auburn University's campus. The researcher took the images in the scale after gathering similar

clothing to what was seen on campus for the images. These predetermined images served as a

guide to determine into what clothing category reported clothing from the clothing journal would

fit. *Figure 1a* is an example of casual clothing showing athletic pants, tennis shoes, and over-

sized t-shirt. Generally, the choice of pant and shoe were indicators of casual dress, and were

agreed upon by all scale raters. *Figure 1b* demonstrates semi-casual clothing with the same

oversized t-shirt, but the pants have changed to jeans, and boots are worn a more structured pant

(jeans) and shift to a boot was the rationale for a shift to semi-casual clothing. *Figure 1c* served

as an example of nice clothing showing jeans and boots worn with a blouse-like top. The

presence of structured clothing (e.g. jeans, boots, and dressier top) served as the indicator for

nice clothing in this study. The clothing scale was rated in its entirety by graduate students in the

Department of Consumer and Design Sciences and the general consensus was reached for this

scale system prior to the study. When the clothing journal images were categorized, the clothing scale served as the reference.

Case Study

This study addressed the research questions through Yin's (2003) case study approach by utilizing an embedded, multiple case study design. Yin (2003) defined a case study as an empirical study that investigated contemporary phenomenon wherein the boundaries between that phenomenon and the context of the study were not clearly seen (p. 1). A case study design was ideal for this particular research because there was little control over the observed events in a contemporary phenomenon. Yin (2003) recommended a case study for research questions that begin with "how" or "why", often meaning that the study has no control of participant's behavioral events, and the study relies on multiple sources of data.

This study contributed to SIT through analytical generalizations by using the existing SIT as a framework to compare the empirical results of this study. This study was an intrinsic, multiple case study, where the qualitative study was composed to illustrate a unique case of unusual interest that needed further description (Creswell, 2013). The data collection tools consisted of two tools: (1) clothing journals, modified from Zick, Sen, Han-Markey, and Harris' (2013) food diary and (2) respondent focus group interviews. The focus group interview was used in order to understand college-aged millennial women's decision-making processes in determining daily clothing choices. Table 1 serves as a visual chart describing this study's methods.

Table 1

Methods Review

	Method One	Method Two
Research Method	Clothing Journals	Focus Group Interview
Timing	First, to catalyst and direct the interview method	Second, with open ended questions guided by journal responses
Rationale	To get a general idea of women clothing choice on a day-to-day basis	To get a deeper understanding of clothing choice behavior of women in their environments
Addresses Question(s)	What is the lived experience of sorority women	What is the role of SIT in sorority women's clothing
Populations/Participants/ Place	College-aged millennials in Chi Omega sorority on Auburn University's campus	Women from the journal collection will participate in the interview
Sample & Sample Access	Purposeful sampling, by contacting the sorority president via email and asking for participants	Purposeful sampling by using the same sample
Data Analysis	Transcribe verbatim followed by coding, themes, and content analysis using Atlas.ti qualitative software	Transcribe verbatim followed by coding, themes, and content analysis using Atlas.ti qualitative software
Procedure	Launch survey online with Qualtrics survey software. Participants will fill out survey once a day	One interview to take place in a neutral place on campus.
Validity & Reliability	based off Zick et. al, food diaries intercoder reliability operational steps	based on Seidman interview protocol intercoder reliability operational steps

Sampling Procedure and Sample Characteristics

For this study the study population was college-aged millennial women in sororities on

Auburn University's campus. Based on Hunt and Miller's (1997) rationale, sorority women were

chosen because they are representative of a larger student culture. Purposeful sampling was conducted by contacting the campus sorority president of Chi Omega and asking her to announce the study at their next chapter meeting. Sommer and Sommer (2002) defined purposeful sampling as targeting individuals thought to be most central to the research question. This sorority was chosen based on its year of establishment on campus in 1923, making it the oldest.

The ideal sample size suggested by Yin (2003) for the clothing journals and focus group interviews was four to ten individual cases. This study sought to recruit three members from Chi Omega sorority to participate in the study. The focus group interview consisted of the same sample as the clothing journal in order to uncover more in depth information about clothing choices. However, during the interview process, if the point of saturation was not met from the findings, further interviews were to be conducted to achieve the research goal.

Method One - Clothing Journals

A clothing journal was developed and modified based on the Zick, Sen, Han-Markey, and Harris (2013) study in the field of nutrition and food science. The participants used a web-based journal to record clothing choice and other variables related to clothing choice (i.e., time of day, time of year, destination, etc.). The web-based journal, designed using Qualtrics software, asked respondents to record their clothing choices for the duration of one week. At the end of each day, participants answered questions that described their clothes and corresponding social setting. Each day participants answered 17 items that described what clothes the respondents were wearing, time of day, daily destinations, and other common daily behavioral questions (see Appendix A) in order to better understand clothing choices and decision making factors.

The clothing journals recorded the clothing choice of millennial-aged college sorority members (n=3) during an average week with the intention of measuring decision-making factors

as they applied to clothing choice. This process intended to provide a basic understanding of the clothing choice decision making process from each participant's point of view. Themes were identified and reported in narrative form by following Yin's (2003) suggestions that included: (1) making a matrix of categories, (2) creating data displays for data, (3) calculating the frequency of different events, and (4) placing information in chronological order.

Clothing journals asked participants to answer a series of eight close-ended questions followed by eight open-ended questions. The open-ended questions provided a deeper understanding of each subject related to clothing choice by giving the participant the opportunity to describe actual clothing worn throughout the day. The focus group interview process was guided by the findings from the analysis of the open-ended question responses from the clothing journal. The open-ended items left the researcher with questions about how jewelry relates to SIT; therefore, questions about jewelry were asked in the interview.

The journal included a total of 17 items. Three survey items related to demographic information: (1) gender and age, (2) nationality, and (3) grade level. Two survey items related to identity: (1) sorority and (2) username. There was one survey question that related to location; it querried (1) month, (2) date, (3) day of the week, and (4) time to better understand the participants' weather and state of mind when making these particular clothing decisions. There was one matrix question (see *Figure 2*) that related to destination and socialization of the participants.

| Check all the apply. | | | | | | | | | |
	Alone	Friend	Group of friends	Significant Other	Family	Teacher	Boss	Other	N/A
Apartment/Dorm	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Class	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Restaurant	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friends Apartment/Dorm	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Store	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Significant Others Apartment/Dorm	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Library	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Bar	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Gym	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Outdoor Activity	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Work	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Other	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Figure 2. Matrix Question

The purpose of the matrix questions was to allow participants to answer where they have been throughout their day and who accompanied them at those locations. Nine items related to clothing choice of participants. Those asked about visible clothing worn on the body (headdress, accessories, outerwear, tops, bottoms or dress, and shoes). Questions utilized a dichotomous (yes/no) format asking if the participant was wearing that article of clothing. If the participant answered yes, an open-ended question prompted the participant to describe the article of clothing in question. In order to minimize user error, each clothing type included a definition. Two more questions followed asking for descriptions of any other clothing not previously described and a file image upload. The participants were asked to take a picture of their wardrobe choice (face not to be included) and images were uploaded to Qualtrics using the file upload feature. Questions were designed to elicit personal and unstructured responses and were subject to qualitative analysis.

Each respondent participated in the clothing journal for the duration of one typical week (Monday through Sunday) during the spring semester. The participants were asked to update their journal at the end of every day. The clothing journals were modified to be accessible electronically by using the web-based survey software, Qualtrics.

Data analysis of clothing journal. Close-ended questions in the clothing journal were categorized by participant and yes/no responses were analyzed through descriptive statistics by the researcher to uncover what types of clothing were worn. Open-ended questions were exported into a qualitative data analysis software program, Atlas.ti, by the researcher to uncover themes by applying coding through the content analysis process. By definition content analysis systematically describes written or spoken material (Sommer & Sommer, 2002). According to Sommer and Sommer's (2002) description, content analysis was appropriate for this study because of its quantitative and qualitative approaches. It applied the process of quantification, meaning that it expressed the data in numbers (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007; Sommer & Sommer, 2002). The clothing journal questionnaire was subject to content analysis because it allowed the researcher to conduct social research without coming into contact with the subjects (Sommer & Sommer, 2002).

According to Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007), coding the data was the first step of analysis. In order to code the data, the text was divided into small units (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). Each unit was labeled and grouped according to its content (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). These groups represented broader perspectives that were then related and compared (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). Coding themes were established and validated by inter-rater reliability. Inter-rater reliability was established by having several individuals code a transcript

and then compare the results to determine whether they arrived at the same codes and themes (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). Coders used a four item coding scheme (see Table 2)

Table 2

Codes and Definitions

Categories	Definition
Tops	Anything worn on the top half of the body
Bottoms	Clothing worn on the bottom half of the body
Shoes	Clothing item that is worn on a person's feet
Jewelry	A piece added to an outfit that is not part of the main garments

predetermined by the researcher to assign codes (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). A coder is someone other than the researcher who helps validate data after collection. The predetermined coding scheme was established during data analysis, prior to the coding process, as recommended by Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007. The coding scheme was established by the researcher noting the most reported clothing items reported during the clothing journal and having coders agree upon those items. Individual coders were recruited from the researchers graduate program in the Department of Consumer and Design Sciences and trained after data collection.

The Qualtrics software provided counts and basic descriptive statistics of the closed-ended questions (8 items). The analysis of clothing journal data provided initial insights about the target population's decision-making factors when choosing clothing. The data gathered from the clothing journals helped answer the main research question by providing firsthand accounts of what participants wore during different parts of the day and to different social events.

Method Two: Focus Group Interview

      Following the clothing journal distribution, a focus group interview was conducted. The

purpose for conducting interviews according to Seidman (2006) was to document the

experiences of the participants with enough detail and depth to connect with the study. Also,

interviews helped deepen the researcher's understanding of the issues addressed. The focus group

interview was based on Seidman's (2006) interview protocol, which was modified to fit this

study (see Table 3) such that there was a shortened interview section within the focus group

instead of one-on-one interviews.

Table 3

Interview Comparison Of Seidman and Present Study

Seidman Approach	Present Study
Three separate interviews	One combined interview
One-on-one interviews	Focus group interview

Interview One
    Ask "how" questions
    90 minutes
    Establish participant experiences
	Part One
	    Ask "how" questions
	    30 minutes
	    Establish participant experiences

Interview Two
    Participants asked to reconstruct a day
    Tell about current lived experiences
    90 minutes
	Part Two
	    Participants asked to reconstruct a day
	    Tell about current lived experiences
	    30 minutes

Interview Three
    Address the intellectual and emotional questions
    How factors interact to bring them to current situations
    90 minutes
	Part Three
	    Address the intellectual and emotional questions
	    How factors interact to bring them to current situations
	    30 minutes

Seidman (2006) used an in-depth, phenomenologically based approach wherein the interview questions were primarily open-ended questions without a formal script. Hunt and Miller (1997) also used open-ended questions to allow the conversation to occur in a manner that was comfortable for participants. In this study, it was also concluded that group interviews (i.e., focus groups) stimulated more naturalistic settings (Hunt & Miller, 1997). Siedman's (2006) interview approach was a three-part interview process that included one-on-one interviews. This study modified this process to address all three points (establishing participant's past experiences, establishing participant's current experiences, and intellectual factors) within one interview. The first interview step asked "how" questions, aiming to understand participants' life histories and why each was involved in this study. The second interview step focused on the participants' lived experiences in the present. The third and final interview phase asked participants to reflect on the meanings of their experiences. In addition to the Seidman (2006) approach, the interview closely followed the protocol of the Hunt and Miller (1997) study that

focused on sorority women; interview questions were modified to fit within the current study's context. Interview questions built upon the responses from the clothing journals. Questions consisted of clothing and lifestyle related questions.

The planned focus group was conducted with the respondents from the clothing journal participants (n=3). The purpose for combining the topical interview segments into one single interview was to avoid possible loss of participants over the course of sequenced sessions. A sample size of nine (n=9) participants was the intended number of participants for the start of the clothing journals with a sample of n=3 fully responding. The Chi Omega president agreed to provide email addresses of potential students. The participants for the interview were recruited via email to set up interview time and location. The focus group interview was approximately one hour in duration. The interview took place in a classroom in Spidle Hall, a neutral place on campus that was accessible to all students. The first interview phase according to Seidman (2006) was to invite the participants to share their life histories. This interview phase established the context of the participants' experience and provided reasoning for why they were in the target population. For this interview phase six items were prepared to prompt the conversation. Sample interview questions based on Seidman (2006) and Hunt and Miller (1997) included questions about dress prior to college, types of clothes in their closets, and questions regarding ideal appearance. For a complete list of questions, see Table 4.

Table 4

Interview Questions

	Sample Questions
Interview One (Seidman, 2006; Hunt & Miller, 1997).	Focused Life History How did you dress before college? How long does it take you to get ready in the morning? What types of clothes are in your closet?

34

		Out of those clothes which do you have more of?
		If it is desirable to pay attention to your appearance, how do you communicate to others that you are paying attention to your appearance?
		Is there an ideal appearance or are there standards for a more general range of acceptable appearances?
Interview Two (Seidman, 2006; Hunt & Miller, 1997).		Details of Experience
		What are some of the things you consider when getting dressed on an average day?
		Do you change clothes throughout the day?
		How does your clothing choice differ between class and going out?
		Can you describe a normal day and the factors that affect your clothing decisions?
		How are personality traits communicated in dress and appearance?
Interview Three (Seidman, 2006; Hunt & Miller, 1997).		Reflection on the Meaning
		Do you think your clothes connect you to your sorority?
		What roles do dress and appearance play in the desire for group membership and identity along with a desire for individuality?
		In what ways do they connect or not connect you?
		To what extent do you let your social environments (e.g. class, bar, party, work) affect your clothing choice?
		To what extent do you let your physical environments (e.g. weather, indoor temperature, etc.) affect your clothing choice?

The second interview phase built on the first and allowed the interviewer to gain

knowledge of the details of the participant's lived experience (Seidman, 2006). This helped

prompt participants to share their experiences by askting them to reconstruct their days and share

their daily clothing decision making processes. For this segment, five items were prepared to

guide the conversation. The third interview phase built on the first and second stages (Seidman,

2006) by addressing intellectual and emotional aspects of participants' decision-making process

and how those processes brought them to their current situation. This phase reflected on the

meaning of the participants' experiences. Responses provided the interviewer with an

understanding of how factors in participants' lives brought them to their present clothing choice

decision making factors. For this phase, five items were prepared to prompt the conversation.

Data analysis of interviews. The focus group interview analysis followed Rademacher's

(2007) study that used a two-interview process with all notes transcribed verbatim at the end of

the interview. The transcribed focus group interview notes were reviewed by the researcher to

identify recurring themes within the transcribed focus group interview notes. A second review of

the transcribed data was conducted to cross-reference the previously identified themes. A third

reading of the transcripts sought to identify any emergent themes not previously identified.

As stated previously, the interview data was transcribed and coded verbatim into the

qualitative data analysis software program, Atlas.ti by the researcher. In order to code the data,

the text must be divided into different sub-categories (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). Each

quote was labeled and grouped according to that label (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). These

sub-categories represented broader perspectives that were then related and compared (Creswell

& Plano-Clark, 2007). Coding themes were established and validated by inter-rater reliability

that is defined as the degree of agreement among raters. Inter-rater reliability was established by

having two current graduate students in the Department of Consumer and Design Sciences at

Auburn University who were briefed on the study by the researcher, coded a transcript, and

compared the results to determine whether they arrived at the same codes and themes (Creswell

& Plano-Clark, 2007). Coders used a predetermined coding scheme to assign codes (Creswell &

Plano-Clark, 2007). The researcher established the coding scheme during data analysis, prior to

the coding process. The same two graduate students were recruited and trained to code after data collection.

Trustworthiness and credibility

To achieve trustworthiness and credibility, the study recognized and affirmed the human interviewer as the instruments. The study understood the author and researcher's role and bias as an interviewer. Trustworthiness and credibility were achieved by carrying out the three-stage modified Seidman approach (2006) defined and previously described. The three-stage modified approach provided internal consistency by allowing the interviewer to make connections among participants' individual experiences (Seidman, 2006). Internal consistency was also applied by using consistent syntax, diction, and nonverbal signals for each interview (Seidman, 2006).

In order to establish trustworthiness and credibility for the qualitative components, the researcher applied inter-rater reliability as discussed previously. To achieve credibility, the participants' accounts needed to be accurate (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). This was achieved by member checking, which allowed the researcher to ask participants if findings were an accurate depiction (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). For this study, member checking was achieved when the researcher asked participants about select journal responses during the focus group interview in order to compare their journal responses to their everyday life.

External validity was achieved by selecting a sample that was representative of a larger population. In order to help analyze participant responses, categories were created using themes from the research. Examples of potential themes included conformity and norms and were based on an extensive review of existing literature.

This research study sought to understand the clothing decisions of sorority women through two methods, a web-based clothing journal survey and a single focus group interview.

Together these methods provided a glimpse at sorority life and its members' lifestyles. Table 1 shows how the study started with a web-based clothing journal survey to get a general idea of women's clothing choices on a day-to-day basis. The journal was followed up by a focus group interview to get a deeper understanding of clothing choice behavior of women in their environments.

The clothing journals utilized in this study allowed the researcher to determine where the participants went socially, what they wore to those settings, and who they went with by reading the women's journal entries. This provided first hand insight into the minds and decision-making processes of these women. The focus group interview provided supplemental information about participants. Interview questions provided information on how their group membership affected their social identity and whether it was conscious or subconscious.

Results and Discussion

Introduction

The major questions addressed in this chapter included: (1) what were the lived

experiences in an average week of sorority women on Auburn University's campus during spring

semester as it related to clothing choice, and (2) what were the roles of SIT in a subject's

clothing choices in relation to their sorority. These were evaluated through a qualitative analysis

of clothing choices of women on Auburn University's campus. Clothing choices of participants

were captured through the journal instrument and interviews, both discussed in detail in the

Methods section. This section begins with a detailed analysis of the journal results, then follows

with an analysis of interview data and concludes by presenting the findings.

This multiple case study approach utilized a qualitative method for analysis; the journal

portion of the current study was previously tested in the pre-test. The pre-test revealed significant

modifications that were necessary to implement the primary study. These modifications included

changes in (1) journal from hardcopy to web-based, and (2) shifting from individual interviews

to a single focus group interview. The web-based survey provided an easier method of

submission and gave the participants specific questions to answer. In order to achieve more in-

depth data, an interview was added to the study. Participants for this study were contacted via

emails that were obtained through contacting the president of Chi Omega sorority who provided

possible participants emails. Three of nine students responded, yielding a 33% response rate.

After the survey was closed, participants who completed it were contacted by email and asked to

participate in the focus group interview. This yielded a 100% response rate with a sample of n=3.

The interview included the participants from the survey portion of the study and used survey data

to guide questions for the interview. During the interview, two questions were added to the existing list of predetermined questions (see Method section) to discuss certain issues that emerged during the clothing journal; these included jewelry and brand awareness. Questions were added based on a participant's use of certain brand names throughout the journal and the frequent mention of jewelry.

Demographics

This study consisted of three participants (n=3), with the addition of one partial response. The sample consisted of three women, ages 20 to 22. Each participant was an active member of Chi Omega sorority on Auburn University's campus. For the purpose of this study, 'active' was defined as a member who participates in sorority functions and was in 'good standing' with the sorority's grade, involvement, and financial policies. Chi Omega was chosen as the oldest sorority on Auburn University's campus and therefore was assumed to have the greatest influence over its members. Each participant represented different hometowns and college majors (see Table 5).

Table 5
Participant Information

	Hometown	Major	Age
Participant A	Montgomery, AL	Sports Management	22
Participant B	Atlanta, GA	Communication	20
Participant C	Memphis, TN	Public Relations	21

The journal was completed during one week that included the weekends (Monday – Sunday) in spring semester during the months of January and February 2016. Participant A started the survey on January 24th and ended on January 31st. Participant B started the survey January 24th and ended on February 3rd. Participant C started the survey January 30th and ended on February

6th. The weather was colder than average during these time frames with highs in the lower 50s and lows in the low 30s (Fahrenheit); this should be taken into account when reviewing clothing choices because temperatures could affect the decision making process as it applies to clothing.

Clothing Journal

The first method of analysis consisted of coding journal data based on Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007). The journal data were divided into categories that were previously identified or uncovered during the initial review of data and were based on clothing type: tops, bottoms, shoes, and jewelry. Table 2 shows the four categories and the definitions the researcher used during the coding process. These four categories represent the most common types of clothing discovered during the clothing journal survey. Inter-rater reliability was established by having two current graduate students in the Department of Consumer and Design Science at Auburn University who were briefed on the study by the researcher. Coders were given Table 2 to use as a reference while coding the journal transcript to arrive at the same code categories as the researcher.

Preliminary findings from journal entries revealed that the women wore mostly casual, athletic clothing. This included yoga pants, leggings, t-shirts, and tennis shoes. According to item 8 in the clothing journal survey, the participants' social environment did not affect their clothing choices. Participants would report going to different destinations with different people or alone, but participants' reported clothing was the same throughout the day. However, 100% of responses indicated physical environment did have an effect on their clothing choices by indicating that they wore layers on colder days. This was identified as a question that would be further confirmed in the interview. While participants did not change their clothing based on their companion, the weather and their location had some effect. The extent to which weather

and location had an effect will be explained further in the interview discussion. The journal

asked participants a series of questions based on their daily destinations (see Table 6).

Table 6

Participant Destination and Companion

#	Question	Alone	Friend	Group of Friends
1	Apartment/Dorm	2	1	3
2	Class	3	-	1
3	Restaurant	1	2	2
4	Friends Apartment/Dorm	-	2	-
5	Store	1	1	-
6	Significant Others	1	-	-
7	Library	-	-	-
8	Bar	-	-	-
9	Gym	1	-	-
10	Outdoor Activity	1	-	-
11	Work	1	-	-
12	Other	-	-	1

The typical clothing choice on any given day consisted of leggings, T-shirt, and tennis shoes (see

Figure 3). A few times during the week of the survey, participants might have a social

environment other than class that warranted nice clothing (*Figure 4*); motivations in clothing

choice for social environments will be discussed further below. When looking at the responses

individually the clothing journals revealed that participants did not change clothes throughout a

normal day. When comparing each participant's data, this study found similar responses. Two of

three participants wore casual athletic clothing on a daily basis, while one participant did wear

semi-casual clothing when going to work. Prior to data collection, a clothing scale was

established as a way of categorizing images of participants (see *Figures 1a,b,c*). During the

clothing journal survey, participants uploaded images of the clothing they reported (see

Appendix B). Using the predetermined scale it was possible to categorize reported survey images

by comparing uploaded survey images to the predetermined scale. For example in *Figure 3*, the

participant was wearing athletic pants and an oversized t-shirt. Those are the same clothing items worn in *Figure 1* of the predetermined scale meaning that *Figure 3* fit into the casual clothing category.

Figure 3. Casual Clothing

Figure 4. Nice Clothing

Focus Group Interview

The focus group interview took place two weeks following the collection of journal data in January of 2016. The interview consisted of the three participants (n=3) from the Chi Omega sorority who completed the clothing journal exercise. The interview duration was one hour, and the researcher transcribed the interview verbatim from voice recordings following the interview (see Appendix C). The transcribed notes were then reviewed and recurring themes were identified. A second and third reading of the transcript was conducted to verify the themes and identify any not previously found. The interview data were transcribed and coded verbatim into the qualitative data analysis software program Atlas.ti. It allowed the researcher to upload

verbatim-transcribed data. Once uploaded Atlas.ti allowed the user to highlight, categorize, and pull quotes in order to code data easily.

Table 7

Interview Categories, Groups, Descriptions

Categories	Sub-Categories	Description
Social	Greek	Clothing with Greek letters or clothing worn at a sorority's request
	College	Casual or nice clothing worn that was not worn before entering college, excluding Greek clothing
	Personality	Clothing worn as a way to show one's personality, could be casual or nice
	Special Occasion	Clothing outside the normal wardrobe and worn to a social event
Clothing	Casual Clothing	Athletic clothing (e.g. yoga pants, t-shirts, Nike shorts, tennis shoes)
	Nice Clothing	Structured clothing that does not include athletic wear (e.g. jeans, blouse, dresses)
	Seasonal	Clothing worn for cold or rainy weather (e.g. jackets, rain gear, layers)

Findings revealed seven separate categories of dress that were labeled and grouped (see Table 7). These categories represented perspectives on clothing choices for this population that were compared to the existing literature on this topic and will be further discussed in the interpretation of findings. Inter-rater reliability was established by having two current graduate students in the Department of Consumer and Design Sciences at Auburn University, who were briefed on the study, assist in coding the journal transcript to arrive at the same code categories.

Coders were given a table that serves as a reference (see Table 7) while coding the journal transcript to arrive at the same code categories as the researcher. The seven categories of dress included: casual clothing, college, nice clothing, Greek, special occasions, personality, and seasonal. These categories were sorted into two separate groups that included (1) clothing and (2) social. In the clothing group, item sub-categories included: casual clothing, nice clothes, and seasonal. In the social category, the sub-categories included college related items that included: Greek, special occasions, and personality (see Table 7). The code book shows coded quotes, categories, sub-categories, and code descriptions (see Appendix D).

When asked how they dressed before college, all participants said they wore casual clothes in high school, but not oversized clothing. Participant A stated "I remember my first year of college when we bought sorority shirts, I bought small shirts" (sub-category casual clothing). When asked about oversized clothing, participant B, when replying to the same question said, "I probably wore the same things that I wear in college; I still wore Nike shorts and large t-shirts." Both participants spoke to dressing in athletic clothing more often now that they were in college than during high school.

When probed with what they thought about people who wore non-athletic clothing to class, participants A and B both thought it was unusual. "When I see someone dressed up on the concourse, I'm like why are you wearing that" – participant A. Participant B, responding to the previous statement, said, "usually people only dress nice if they have a speech or an interview" (sub-category nice clothing). Dressing nice for class was discussed among participants during the focus group interview, and it was discussed as an age issue. Participant B said, "I've talked to older girls and they say they have to dress up for these classes. I think it's as you get older." Participant age and year levels can be seen in Table 4.

During the interview participants discussed how their Greek life affected their clothing choices. Ultimately, participants did not feel the effect of their sorority on their clothing choices. Unless it was for a particular sorority event, participants felt clothing norms were not set for members. Participants discussed that other than wearing Greek letter clothing, they were not affected by sorority involvement. The only exception to the use of athletic clothing was found when participants indicated they were going to a social event. The pressure to dress nicely for social events is derived from set rules (i.e., norms) that members were expected to follow. According to Meyer and Anderson (2000) conformity usually happens as a result of members trying to fit in with their social group by following group norms. Sorority members' clothing decisions when attending a social event for this study serve as an example of pressure to conform to group norms set by the group. Baumeister (1982) states that conformity occurs out of the need to yield to social group influences in order to avoid negative opinions from other members in their group. Sorority members attending a social event in clothing outside of the group norms could result in negative opinions towards them from other members who more closely follow set norms.

Interpretation of Findings

Millennials. At the start of the interview, a general discussion of clothing took place. This served as a comfortable topic to break the ice between the interviewer and interviewees. All participants for the current study were college-aged millennials in Chi Omega sorority. Millennials possess several traits that many cited authors have not addressed. Table 8 presents some of those traits while noting the current study's findings. Sprague (2014) noted that millennials want to make educated purchases, but his study did not focus on a particular part of the millennial generation. This study focused on college-age millennial women on Auburn

University's campus within a specific sorority, Chi Omega. This target market has been

determined to be important because they are the women most likely to embrace and follow

trends, due to recent claims that trend knowledge has been readily accessible to this particular

generational group (Dyk, Hume,

Larenaudie, & Toyama, 2008). However, during the course of this study, the researcher

discovered that while this group of individuals has the most access to trends, they also have the

most pressure to conform. A key indicator of the pressure to conform, as demonstrated in

responses, was participants' knowledge of certain popular brands. For this reason, the study

found that sorority women were brand conscious to some extent. The clothing items respondents

chose were trusted brands, but were also popular and/or trendy brands. Multiple times during the

interview, certain clothing brands (e.g. Nike, Free People, and Chaco) were brought up for

discussion. The notion of brand consciousness was not the focus of the study, and should be

Table 8

Millennials

Key Authors	Major Findings	Gaps	Actual Findings
Sprague, 2014	Millennials make educated purchases Millennials want to test items and receive instant gratification	Millennial women in college	Wear trusted items Brand conscious
Smith, 2014	Millennials tend to work together	Do millennials work together to make clothing decisions?	Share clothing Wear what they see

further examined in the future. Smith's (2014) study noted that millennials tend to work together

to make decisions. This study aimed to find out if that applied to clothing choices. In the current study the millennial, sorority women interviewed were likely to share clothing, especially when going to a social event. During the interview, participants confirmed these same notions by stating that they wore their roommates clothing more than their own.

Social identity theory. As discussed in the literature review several key authors presented varying points about SIT and Group Identity (Table 9).

In the case of SIT, Tajfel (1981) and Reed (2002) lead the research by understanding that a human goes through three major social concepts in order to reach social identification; social comparison and psychological distinctiveness follow identifying with a certain social group. A second key component to one's social identity is self-concept; the part of a person's identity that develops connections with a social group (Reed, 2002;Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1998). In this study gaps within the existing literature were identified and compared to the findings of.

Unlike Tajfel (1981), this study focused on a modern social group, a specific sample from a sorority on Auburn University's campus. This particular social group (a sorority) has been noted to have a strong social influence over its members (Crandall, 1988; Stets & Burke, 2000; Hogg et al., 1995). During the interview it became clear that the women were unaware of the effects on clothing choices due to their sorority involvement. Respondents would reference their

Table 9

Social Identity Theory

Key Authors	Major Finings	Gaps	Current Findings
Tajfel, 1981	Social comparison, psychological distinctiveness, and social identification	Focus on a specific social group - sororities	All 3 present in Chi Omega Members unaware
Reed, 2002	Defines self-concept	Balance between self-concept and social identity	Members were unable to differentiate

48

casual clothing choices, but could not explain why they chose to wear those types of clothes.

Self-concept is the personality-based component of social identity; it is completed by the group based social identities a person accepts. These two concepts (self-concept and group based identities) create a person's social identity. During the focus group interview sorority members were unable to differentiate their personal traits and the ones that came from belonging to the sorority. When asked about personality traits, one participant stated, "since I'm Greek (Chi Omega) I just don't know." Participants thought that because they were Greek, they could not speak to how their sorority influenced their decisions. This can be related back to group norms and how those norms can subtly affect a member's decision-making process. Hogg et al. (2004) noted that norms from a social identity perspective are the influence in groups because norms are the prescriptive. It can be assumed that these sorority members wanted to adhere to group norms set for them as a sense of belonging to their sorority.

Social groups. The major component of SIT is the social group itself, because without the social group there would be no SIT. In the current study the social group chosen to test the many different aspects of that theory was a sorority. Table 10 provides a visual summary of the key social group authors.

Table 10

Social Groups

Key Authors	Major Findings	Gaps	Actual Findings
Crandall, 1988	• More prominent the social group, greater the pressure to conform	• Will conformity apply to clothing?	• As freshman, yes

Arthur, 1997	• Clothing is a visual identity symbol	• Is clothing a visual symbol of group or individual identity?	• It can be both • Overarching "college look"
Rademacher, 2007	• Social group members will change to communicate certain group involvement	• What extent do group members change?	• Wearing Greek letters • Overarching "college look"

Crandall (1988) supported the researcher's assumption that the more prominent the social group, the greater the pressure is to conform. While conformity does not just apply to clothing, that was the focus of the current study. Based on the findings from the focus group interview and the clothing journal survey, it was concluded that conformity, as it applied to clothing through peer pressure, was greatest during the member's freshman year in that sorority.

Arthur (1997) noted that clothing was used as a visual symbol of identity. This study sought to examine if it was a visual symbol of group or individual identity. Findings revealed clothing to be a representation of both group and individual identity. During the focus group interview, participants discussed that the casual clothing phenomenon was more of an overall "college look." One participant stated, "girls on campus whether in a sorority or not wear flannels and Chacos"(sub-category Greek) when asked if it was only sorority women who dressed casually. The topic of stereotypes then came up, and participants agreed that stereotypes existed for a reason, but the respondent stated that they "…couldn't point out someone who wasn't in a sorority." The overall 'college look' was assumed by the respondents to be an ideal individual look. Rademacher (2007) focused on how one's college identity will change depending on group involvement. Entering college was a time when all students had a certain

level of freedom compared to being in high school. It was hard to determine whether changes in an individual's norms were group based or college-based. However, for the sorority women in this study, they attributed college influence as the major factor in clothing changes as freshman. The overall casual "college look" was yet again addressed in the interview; one participant stated, "I think people are trying to fit that mold of what it's supposed to look like to be a college student" (sub-category college). The only exception where the focus group interview participants noted that group involvement changed their clothing choices was if they wore Greek letters. For certain social events sorority members were required to wear their Greek letters; in those instances participants' clothing choices were influenced by their group involvement. It can also be assumed that sorority members were unaware of their conformity to the group norms set for them.

Table 11

Decision-Making Factors

Key Authors	Major Findings	Gaps	Actual Findings
Venkatesan, 1966	Group pressure leads to group norms	How group pressure will affect clothing choice decisions	No pressure for class Pressure to look put together going out
Childers & Rao, 1992	More group interaction leads to stronger influence over members	Focus on a specific social group - sororities	Belonging does have power over clothing for some occasions

Meyer & Anderson, 2000	Dressing alike provides encouragement to group members	In what clothes does this apply- t-shirts or other clothing?	The letters provide encouragement, not clothing.

Decision-making factors. Decision-making factors were the motivation for this study, the researcher had the desire to understand why sorority women dressed the way they did. Decision-making factors have been discussed at length in the literature review of this manuscript (see Literature Review and Table 11). Venkatesan (1966) said that group pressure would ultimately lead to group norms. This study sought to find if group pressure would affect clothing norms. During the course of the clothing journal and the focus group interview, the women did not alter their clothing for class, but the pressure to look nicer if going to a social event was present. Childers and Rao (1992) noted that group pressure would not be as strong if the member did not have significant group interaction. When this study focused on a single sorority group, Childers and Rao's point was evident. Several times during the interview participants acknowledged that when they were freshmen in Chi Omega, they were more involved in activities and often wore their Greek letters. "I remember freshman year it was all about those sorority letters, like you better be wearing a ChiO shirt" one participant stated. However, as a student progressed through college in their sorority, members identified less with their sorority and were less actively involved. This was supported with a statement from a participant who noted, "when you get older you're like yeah I'm Greek but who cares." For the sorority women in this study, as freshmen they often participated in sorority events and actively promoted that they were a member of Chi Omega; however, as time went on, sorority members interviewed said that they were less likely to announce their group involvement. Although, Meyer and

Anderson (2000) stated that dressing alike could provide encouragement to group members, their study did not focus on a particular group like sororities. This study suggests that encouragement was not found in clothing choices, but rather in the Greek letters of the sorority. During the interview it was discussed that as new members just starting college, the desire to fit in was stronger, and this was most likely the reason for freshman members' high level of involvement in the sorority. The use of Greek letters in the wardrobe was an accessible way for the group to provide encouragement in the form of involvement to new members. By wearing Greek letters, members showed peers that they belonged to a certain social group, giving them a sense of pride and superiority over non-members.

Conclusion

Significance

This study used Tajfel's (1981) SIT to relate decision-making factors to millennial sorority women's clothing choices. The findings suggest that sororities were an appropriate social group to study this theory. The participants in this study were mostly unaware of the norms set by their group. Levels of conformity varied depending on what year in standing each member held. A freshman in the group had more group involvement as a senior and therefore was more connected the sorority. To an active member clothing choice seemed unconnected to the sorority, suggesting that members were unaware of their conformity. However, it cannot be determined from this study that certain clothing types represent group involvement. The casual clothing phenomenon was present in sorority and non-sorority members in the form of the observed 'college look'. Participants discussed the average college student having a particular look. Greek letters were the only acknowledged type of visual evidence of sorority involvement.

Ultimately, this study contributes to SIT by providing insight on a particular social group, Chi Omega sorority members on Auburn University's campus and specific target market. The clothing journal used as a data collection tool that was developed for this study is new to this type of research, and proved to be insightful and more descriptive that traditional interview or self-reporting methods in understanding clothing choices.

Limitations

It is important to keep in mind that this study and its findings were framed within the researcher's adopted theoretical approaches (SIT) where there was emphasis on the social interaction of certain groups of people to gain insight into a particular phenomenon. Although the author was confident that this particular theory was the most appropriate fit for the research

topic; the author must also acknowledge possible limitations in this study due to this assumption. It is possible that if the data presented were analyzed using a different theoretical approach, the findings might be interpreted differently.

One other limitation of this study was the sample size (n=3) and brevity of the transcribed data from the focus group interview. The low response rate could be from the lack of motivation to take part in the current study or from how chaotic the spring semester can be. The low response rate ultimately left the research with limited data for interpretation and comparison. This impacted the focus group interview, where Participant A and Participant B were apparent friends, and Participant C often seemed to be outside of the discussion. As a facilitator of the focus group interview, it was the researcher's responsibility to include all participants, but the study could have benefitted from individual interviews with each member. The rationale for not including separate interviews in this study was to ensure that there was 100% participation in the focus group interview. As a result, it is the researcher's belief that the focus group is a limitation, but a necessary limitation to ensure that the research question for this study could be addressed. Additionally, the intent of this study was not to generalize across a population. However, the low response rate may question the overall transferability of the findings. It should be discussed that in qualitative research, the goal was not for transferability, but rather the goal was to uncover individual-lived experiences as they related to a particular phenomenon. For the current study the goal was to reveal the lived experience of Chi Omega sorority women on Auburn University's campus as related to clothing choices.

Future Research

This research would benefit from a longitudinal approach where sorority members are tracked over a greater period of time. In qualitative research, longitudinal studies allow

researchers to explore themes uncovered during the research process. This would allow for the researcher to identify clothing choices over all four years of group involvement. This particular area for future investigation was of interest due to participants' descriptions of varying levels of involvement during their time as members. By following members during their four years as an active member, it would be possible to examine changes in group involvement and clothing choices from freshman to senior year. The clothing journal portion of this study would also benefit from adding a day and evening entry option. During the current study participants answered questions based on what they wore during the daytime even though they were told to describe all clothing worn. By adding a separate evening entry form it would eliminate the documentation of clothing choice confusion. Additionally, the addition of a time-stamped photo option might also help eliminate submission confusion. Finally, this research would also benefit from studying other sorority women outside of Chi Omega on Auburn University's campus and sorority women at other four-year universities for regional comparisons. SIT could also be researched within other social groups such as marching bands and other on campus organizations.

During the course of this study, two areas in need of further research emerged. One area to further examine is the population's attention to jewelry. Every participant indicated wearing some form of jewelry each day during the journal, no matter what type of clothing was worn. When asked about jewelry in the focus group interview participants acknowledged they wore it out of habit. For future studies jewelry attachment should be investigated to discover if jewelry is worn out of sentimental attachment. Is it a fashion statement or is it how a person's individual identity is projected through their social identity? The second area of interest in need of future study was brand consciousness of this particular population. In this study participants mentioned

specific brands when referring to types of clothing that they wore. For example, participants would call any athletic short a Nike short even if the shorts were not Nike brand. This suggests sorority women being brand conscious, but not necessarily brand loyal. While there is literature on this subject emerging, the notion of brand conscious sorority women would add to the growing body of literature on this topic.

In the future, the use of a clothing journal survey as a method for clothing choice documentation should note the limitations and barriers that occurred during this study. The pre-testing of the clothing journal survey tool proved to be beneficial in making it a web-based survey. However, with emerging technology and new applications, perhaps there could be more innovative ways to capture this particular groups clothing choices. For example, it is possible to have participants only submit time stamped photos that could provide adequate data while making it easier for participants to be in a week long study. In regards to the focus group interview, having participants that know each other was great for discussion. However, this also became an issue with the information given from Participant C, who mostly affirmed the discussion from Participant A and B. Moving forward, the environmental aspects of where participants are physically located could also be researched further. It could be possible to apply behavior-setting theory to the same type of study.

The three components of SIT have been discussed: social comparison, psychological distinctiveness, and social identification. Table 12 explains how these three components can be discussed in terms of this study.

Table 12

SIT Components

Social Comparison	Psychological Distinctiveness	Social Identification
Members compare themselves to other sororities, not to peers within their group in order to satisfy this component.	Distinctiveness is established after comparison and identification, because of that it is not yet developed within sorority membership. Jewelry	Members identify earlier on to their sorority membership, this gives them a strong sense of belonging and self-esteem.

With regards to social identification, participants in this study identified earlier in their student career with their sorority. Creating a sense of belonging at the earlier stages of membership social identification gives members a stronger sense of self-esteem than non-group members (Tajfel, 1981). Social comparison helps group members judge themselves by comparing themselves to a peer (Tajfel, 1981). Findings from this study revealed that in terms of this sample population, this group did not compare themselves to other members of their sorority, but did compare themselves to members of other sororities. Meaning this finding does satisfy the social comparison component by having Chi Omega sorority members compare themselves to other on campus sororities, creating a sense of superiority over other sororities. Psychological distinctiveness cannot exist without social comparison and social identification (Tajfel, 1981). For this study psychological distinctiveness was not established to enough of an extent to be reported. This leads the researcher to believe that psychological distinctiveness should be investigated further. The subject of jewelry is one factor that could be further examined within the context of psychological distinctiveness. These SIT components (Table 12) assisted in guiding the current study and will continue to help guide future work within this research topic.

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Appendix A

Clothing Journal Survey

Directions

The following clothing journal survey has seven sections, starting with date/time questions ending with specific questions one for each day of the week. Fill out one section at the end of each day. The next time you sign into the survey your previous answers will be saved and you can start with the next time/date question.

Be sure when answering the clothing questions to account for any clothing worn throughout the day.

You have now read the instructions and information email about this survey. By clicking yes you consent to take this survey and have your data be used in this study.

Yes
No

Demographic Info

Please answer the following demographic questions.

Gender
Age

68

Which of the following ethnic groups do you consider yourself to be a member of?

American Indian/ Alaskan Native

Asian/ Pacific Islander

Hispanic

Non-Hispanic black

Non-Hispanic White

Other

What is your level in school?

Freshman

Sophmore

Junior

Senior

Graduate Student

Other

Identity Info

Which sorority are you a member of?

Alpha Chi Omega

Alpha Delta Pi

Alpha Gamma Delta

Alpha Omicron Pi

69

Alpha Xi Delta

Chi Omega

Delta Delta Delta

Delta Gamma

Delta Zeta

Gamma Phi Beta

Kappa Alpha Theta

Kappa Delta

Kappa Kappa Gamma

Phi Mu

Pi Beta Phi

Sigma Kappa

Zeta Tau Alpha

Other

Please enter the first two letters of your first name and the last three numbers of your phone number as a username.

Date

Please fill in the following information based on today's information.

Month

Date

70

Day of the week

Time

Location

Please indicate the locations you went today and who accompanied you.

Check all the apply.

	Alone	Friend	Group of friends	Significant Other	Family	Teacher	Boss	Other
Apartment/ Dorm	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Class	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Restaurant	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Friends Apartment/Dorm	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Store	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Significant Others Apartment/Dorm	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Library	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Bar	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Gym	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Outdoor Activity	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

71

Work	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Other	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Clothing

Did you wear a headdress?

Headdress is defined as any type of accessory worn on the head (For example: hat, headband, ribbon, etc.)

Yes

No

If you answered yes, please describe your headdress.

Did you wear any jewelry or accessories?

Accessory is defined as any piece added to an outfit that is not part of the main garments (For example: scarf, belt, jewelry, temporary tattoo, etc.)

yes

No

If you answered yes, please describe your jewelry or accessories.

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Did you wear any outerwear?

Outerwear is defined as the outermost layer of clothing worn over daily garments. (For example: jacket, cardigan, cape, shawl, etc.)

yes

No

If you answered yes, please describe your outerwear.

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Did you wear any tops?

Tops are defined as anything worn on the top half of the body, excluding lingerie worn. (For example: shirts, sweaters, blouse, etc.)

yes

No

73

If you answered yes, please describe the tops you are wearing.

```
[                                                                    ]
[                                                                    ]
[                                                                    ]
```

Did you wear any bottoms?

Bottoms are defined as clothing worn on the bottom half of the body, excluding lingerie worn. (For example: pants,shorts, skirts, etc.)

yes

No

If you answered yes, please describe the bottoms you are wearing.

```
[                                                                    ]
[                                                                    ]
[                                                                    ]
```

Did you wear a dress?

A dress is defined as an item of clothing that is worn over the top and bottom half of the body.

yes

No

If you answered yes, please describe the dress you are wearing.

Did you wear shoes?

Yes

No

If you answered yes, please describe the shoes you are wearing.

Please describe any other clothing worn throughout your day.

Please attach an image of the clothes you wore today.

[Choose File] no file selected

75

Appendix B

Survey Images

Participant C

Participant C

Participant C

Participant B

Participant A

Participant A

Participant A

Participant A

Participant A

Participant A

Appendix C

Transcribed Interview Notes

R: How did you dress before college/ in high school what did you wear?

A: I went to a private school so we wore uniforms. Outside of school I feel like I dressed cute. Again, I went to a private school so there was that reputation of being snobby. So I felt like I really fit into that. It was labels The summer before I came to college I remember wearing small t-shirts, I wore stuff that fit me. Nike shorts shorter shirts I wore a small or extra small. When I got to college I started wearing the bigger stuff

B: I went to private school too, but we didn't have uniforms. We did have a dress code. We weren't allowed to wear shorts, and our dresses and skirts had to come basically to the knee. So not cute clothes I wore in high school. Lots of pants and jeans, ugly dresses. On the weekends, honestly I probably wore the same things that I wore in college, I still wore Nike short and large tshirts. I have never been one to wear really cute clothes

R: I wonder if we factor in your ages if wearing a large shirt had already become a thing.

A: I remember my first year of college when we bought sorority shirts I bought small shirts. I remember other girls in my pledge class wearing smalls too. But I think as time went on we wondered why we were wearing these.

R: Do you think in your head or what you see that there is an ideal appearance or set of standards? That can be on the cute end or the casual.

B: For class or going out.

R: Both

B: I would say for class, t shirt and shorts and tennis shoes. I feel like an outlier is when some is dressed up for class. (to Ellis "what do you think")

A: Yeah, when I see someone dressed up on the concourse I'm like why are you wearing that

B: Yeah usually people only dress nice if they have a speech or an interview

A: I've recently seen girls get cuter over the years. Maybe as your get older

B: I think as you get older, people have jobs and interviews and internships, I've talked to older girls and they say they have to dress up for these classes. I think it's as you get older.

B: I think kind of a trend right now is you know church clothes kind of. Jeans and a Flowy sweater. more hipstery look.

R: Still comfortable, but put together.

B: looking like you're not trying to try but trying. That's become kind of a trend. Sometimes to class, but defiantly outside of class.

R: Compared to your casual clothes to what you wear when you go out.

A: I feel like mine is black and white. I wear super tight shirts when I go out probably, Flaunt what you got when you got out. We dancing we going out and it's fun to not wear stuff you would normally wear. To really get dressed up and wear make up and do all that stuff

B: I don't know about all that though. I feel like some of the clothes I wear out I would also wear to church. I wouldn't say I have that many going out clothes. I'm always borrowing other peoples clothes to go out. I wouldn't say mine is that crazy, but I would say a lot of peoples are. I definitely see people out and am like you would literally never wear that anywhere else.

R: probe – Auburns campus is so big and you have to walk everywhere. Does that make it harder to dress cute?

B: I wear tennis shoes everywhere I go. I had an interview the other day and I was literally in business professional and I had tennis shoes on. I can't walk in those heels all the way across campus.

A: I wear chacos when I have to do that.

R: Does you roommate dress in the casual as much, since you borrow their clothes a lot?

B: nah, they wear baggy clothes

A: Um, I have 3 roommates. One of them is a year younger than me and in education and she dresses a lot cuter than me because she goes to teach. My other roommate is in business, she has to dress business professional like 2 or 3 days a week for week. My last roommate is basically cut out wearing sorority shirts, she wears nicer shirts but still big. Like a vneck.

B: I think that's becoming a trend too. Kind of like a nicer shirt with nike shorts.

A: Like almost cute, but not.

B: I remember freshman year it was all about those sorority letters, like you better be wearing a ChiO shirt. But then now it's less. That may be because you had just gotten in and you wanted to show everyone.

A: When you get older you're like yeah I'm greek but who cares

B: I think once you get older you're kind of required to wear nice clothes some places.

A: For my major, I'm sports management. we don't ever have to dress up. I'll wear this (her oversized tee and yoga capri) forever. Yeah, my roommates 100% dress me when we go out. I don't even look at my own stuff anymore.

R: Do you change clothes throughout the day

B: I change throughout the day. It depends on when I'm working out. I'll go to class in this and then I'll go home and work out and right after I work out I need a shower and put new clothes on because I'm gross and I do work out a lot so I think that's why I change. But on days where I don't work out, I'll probably wear the same thing all day. If I have something at night, usually I'll shower right before that and put new clothes on and usually I would wear Nike shorts and a nicer shorts

A: I love that what we consider nice is a non-sorority shirt. For me, I'll probably wear the same thing all day, but I'm weird about germs. Like I won't sit in my bed like this. If I come home I will put on something else, sit on my bed and do homework, and then I'll wear that wherever my next thing is and then if I come home again I'll change again.

R: Sometimes you'll see the person in their t-shirt and shorts, but their face and their hair is done. You're getting up in time to do that. So why not put on the nice clothes

B: I think that's a thing for college. I think people are trying to fit that mold of what it's supposed to look like to be a college student.

A: It's not like we don't know they were up an hour early to do all that. Finish the race. I know my roommates put on a full face they're going to put on a nicer outfit. I think when I put on makeup I'll put on nicer shorts.

R: How are personality traits portrayed through clothes?

B: A more put together personality gets up puts on a little bit of make up and little bit nicer clothes. I have a friend that likes to wear nicer clothes to class. she doesn't like to wear bagging shirt and Nike shorts. She puts on a little but of make up. That person is more organized.

A: sometimes I'm terrible and I sleep in make up. I'll wake up and wipe off the eye shadow from before and put other on. I'm only doing it because I know it looked scary before. Not to make me look more put together.

B: I think too, the people that put on a ton of makeup and do their hair and still dress casual. I thin those people care about what people think. Trying to fit in.

A: I recently started dating someone, but even if I didn't I would still look like this.

R: Do you think your clothes connect you to your sorority?

A: I feel like if I didn't wear greek letters people wouldn't know I was greek. I feel like it's a universal thing what we wear. Girls would wear this. she could be greek she could not be. Unless she has on greek letter you just wouldn't know.

B: I would agree. When I came to college my style 100% changed, Not necessarily because of ChiO just in general. It definitely guided me, it directed me into a group of people that dressed differently than I used to. But I think it would have happened if I wasn't in ChiO at that point. Although, I will say, not drastically but ChiOs have a stereotype look. Like flannels, free people.

A: Chacos, bohemian style

B: Which I geuss if you think about it is different than KD. They wear more, tailored, preppy put together. ChiOs aren't the only ones who wear things like that. Girls on campus whether in a sorority or not wear flannels and chacos. But it is a sterotype and those are there for a reason.

R: probe: bigger shirts became a thing because they want to show that this is a guys shirt not mine. Are the Greeks setting the standard for college dress?

A: I don't know if Auburn is one of those campuses that greeks determine everything, but I know Alabama is 100% like that. Since we're greek we just don't know.

B: I can't speak to that because I agree, but I'm also in a sorority so I don't know. But I definitely couldn't point out someone who wasn't in a sorority.

A: I could tell guys who aren't greek a lot easier.

R: That's a whole different study

R: How much changes from the group you join or just college in general.

R: what extent do you let your physical environment affect your clothing choice?

A: Depending on the weather it was cold when I left for class. I wore like 4 shirts. I'm known for layering. If we went out for someone's birthday I would wear something cuter than if we just went to grab lunch.

R: Everyone brought up jewelry in their surveys

R: In your closet would you say you have equal amonts of casual and nicer clothes?

A: I would say I have more nicer stuff than I do athletic wear. I have changed size since high school so it's still in my closet.

B: I would agree with that, but I only wear half of my nice clothes. I have tons of Nike shorts, I wear all of them. I have tons of T shirts I wear those.

A: I have a lot of t shirts but I have tons of jeans and cords. In my head it seemed more but maybe not.

R: It doesn't get worn the same.

A & B: no, def not.

B: I wear this every day and I only wear nice clothes to church and chapter. Going out I have a few outfits I rotate through.

B: (speaking on church) it's a vibe too. People are trying to look casual, but you have to try. You want to look cute, but it can't be tight.

Appendix D

Focus Group Interview Coding Table

Categories	Sub-Categories	Definition	Participants' Response	Main Findings/Conclusions
Clothing	*Casual Clothing*	*Athletic clothing (e.g. yoga pants, t-shirts, Nike shorts, tennis shoes)*	• *The summer before I came to college I remember wearing small t-shirts, I wore stuff that fit me. Participant A* • *I remember my first year of college when we bought sorority shirts I bought small shirts. Participant A* • *When I got to college I started wearing the bigger stuff Participant A*	• *Participants admitting wearing more casual and oversized clothing now that in college* • *Meyer and Anderson (2000) stated dressing alike provided encouragement to group members. It is possible the women in the current study started dressing in casual oversized clothing in order to fit into their social group.*
Clothing	*Nice Clothing*	*Structured clothing that does not include athletic wear (e.g. jeans, blouse, dresses)*	• *Usually people only dress nice if they have a speech or an interview Participant B* • *When I see someone dressed up on the concourse I'm like why are you wearing that Participant A* • *I think kind of a trend right now is you know jeans and a flowy sweater, more hipstery look. Participant B* • *I think that's becoming a trend too. Kind of like a nicer shirt with Nike shorts. Participant B* • *I love that what*	• *Participants decided that dressing nice for class was an age issue. Older students were required to dress nice.* • *Venkatesan (1966) group pressure leads to conforming to group norms.* • *Participants only felt pressure to dress nice if going to a social event. Those occasions fall into a separate sub-category.*

			we consider nice is a non-sorority shirt. *Participant A*	
Clothing	*Seasonal*	*Clothing worn for cold or rainy weather (e.g. jackets, rain gear, layers)*	• *Depending on the weather it was cold when I left for class. I wore like 4 shirts. I'm known for layering.* *Participant A*	• *Temperatures during the study had highs in the lower 50s and lows in the low 30s.* • *The colder weather meant participants reported certain clothing (e.g. sweatshirts and jackets) that might not have been reported in other circumstances.*
Social	*Greek*	*Clothing with Greek letters or clothing worn at sororities request*	• *I remember freshman year it was all about those sorority letters, like you better be wearing a ChiO shirt.* *Participant B* • *When you get older you're like yeah I'm Greek but who cares.* *Participant A* • *Girls on campus whether in a sorority or not wear flannels and Chaco's. But it is a stereotype and those are there for a reason.* *Participant B*	• *Crandall (1988) defines a sorority as a prominent social group.* • *For the women in this study group norms subtly affected their decision-making process.* • *Rademacher (2007) said a person's identity would change depending on group involvement.* • *Greek letters provided encouragement to group members.*
Social	*College*	*Casual or nice clothing worn that was not worn before entering*	• *I think people are trying to fit that mold of what it's supposed to look like to be a college student.* *Participant B* • *I feel like if I*	• *Participants in this study decided there was a specific college look that applied to all college students not just sorority members.*

		college, excluding Greek clothing	*didn't wear Greek letters people wouldn't know I was Greek. I feel like it's a universal thing what we wear. Participant A* • *I know my roommates put on a full face they're going to put on a nicer outfit. I think when I put on makeup I'll put on nicer shorts. Participant A*	• *Arthur (1997) noted clothing could be visual symbol of identity.* • *Clothing in this study was determined as a visual symbol of both group and individual identity.*
Social	*Personality*	*Clothing worn as a way to show one's personality could be casual or nice*	• *A more put together personality gets up puts on a little bit of make up and little bit nicer clothes. Participant B* • *The people that put on a ton of makeup and do their hair and still dress casual. I think those people care about what people think. Participant B* • *I wear tennis shoes everywhere I go. I had an interview the other day and I was literally in business professional and I had tennis shoes on Participant B*	• *Participants again discussed dressing nice as something older students do.* • *Participants in the current study admitted wearing casual clothing often, but could not determine why.* • *Again, for this study it could be that group norms are subtle.*
Social	*Special Occasion*	*Clothing outside the normal wardrobe and worn to a social event*	• *If I have something at night, usually I'll shower right before that and put new clothes on and usually I*	• *Participants in this study wore nice clothes for any social event outside of class.* • *Childers and Rao (1992) noted that*

would wear Nike shorts and a nicer shorts. Participant B	*the group pressure would not be as strong if the member did not significant group interaction.*
• *If we went out for someone's birthday I would wear something cuter than if we just went to grab lunch.* Participant A	• *For social events participants felt stronger pressure to dress nicer than in any other setting.*
• *It's fun to not wear stuff you would normally wear. To really get dressed up and wear make up and do all that stuff.* Participant A	•
• *I wear this (athletic clothing) every day and I only wear nice clothes to church and chapter. Going out I have a few outfits I rotate through.* Participant B	

Appendix E

IRB Approval Form

DEPARTMENT OF
CONSUMER AND
DESIGN SCIENCES

AUBURN UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

INFORMATION LETTER
for a Research Study entitled
"A Clothing Journal Study: Decision-Making Factors in Clothing Choice"

You are invited to participate in a research study of sorority females and their clothing choices. The study is being conducted by _Abbi-Storm McCann_, under the direction of Dr. Melanie Duffey i the Auburn University Department of Consumer and Design Science. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a member of an Auburn University sorority and are age 19 oi older.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will complete an online survey (see link below). The survey should take 30 minutes once a day for one week to complete. Later we will contact you about participating in an interview, which shoulc take approximately one hour

Are there any benefits to yourself or others?
There are no benefits related to this study.

Will you receive compensation for participating? To thank you for your time you will be offerec a $10 gift card after the completion of the survey and the focus group interview.

Are there any costs? There are no cost involved in this study.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdraw as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of Consumer and Design Science.

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Participants will use code names to help remain anonymous. Information obtained through your participation may be *used* to fulfill an educational requirement, published in a professional journal, or presented at a professional meeting.

If you have questions about this study, *please ask them now or* contact Abbi-Storm McCann at azm0077@tigermail.auburn.edu or Dr. Duffey at alemama@auburn.edu. A copy of this document will be given to you to keep.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334) 844-5966 or e-mail at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION ABOVE, YOU MUST DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, PLEASE CLICK ON THE LINK BELOW.
YOU MAY PRINT A COPY OF THIS LETTER TO KEEP.

Abbi-Storm McCann 1/8/2016

_____

Investigator   **Date**

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from November 8, 2015 to November 7, 2016. Protocol #15-414 EP 1511."

LINK TO SURVEY
https://auburn.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_a90d2EouLjolpnn

(NOTE: DO NOT SIGN THIS DOCUMENT UNLESS AN IRB APPROVAL STAMP WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN APPLIED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

INFORMED CONSENT
for a Research Study entitled
"A Clothing Journal Study: Decision-Making Factors in Clothing Choice"

You are invited to participate in a research study of sorority females and their clothing choices. The study is being conducted by *Abbi-Storm McCann*, under the direction of Dr. Melanie Duffey in the Auburn University Department of Consumer and Design Science. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a member of an Auburn University sorority and are age 19 or older.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this part of the research study, you have already completed the survey portion of this study and are now consenting to participate in the focus group interview portion. During the focus group interview your responses will be recorded for analysis purposes only. Your total time commitment for the interview will be approximately 1 hour.

Are there any risks or discomforts? The risk associated with participating in this study is a loss of confidentiality. To minimize these risks, we will use code names for participants and destroy interview recordings.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? There are no benefits related to this study.

Will you receive compensation for participating? To thank you for your time you will be offered a $10 gift card at the conclusion of the focus group interview, if you have completed the interview and the survey.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of Consumer and Design Science.

Participant's initials _____   Page 1 of 2

93

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Participants will use code names to help remain anonymous. Information obtained through your participation may be *used* to fulfill an educational requirement, published in a professional journal, or presented at a professional meeting.

If you have questions about this study, *please ask them now or* contact Abbi-Storm McCann at azm0077@tigermail.auburn.edu or Dr. Duffey at _alemama@auburn.edu. A copy of this document will be given to you to keep.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.

_____   _____
Participant's signature   Date   Investigator obtaining consent   Date

_____   _____
Printed Name   Printed Name

94