

Clothing and Identity of Military Wives

By: Elizabeth George

How Do Military Wives Use Clothing Strategically To Construct Their Social Identity?

Research Population

- 8 military wives stationed at Scott AFB in Illinois
- age range: 23-33 years old
- 1 mother



Benefits of Study

- Marketing Industry
 - Better understand female consumers' perspectives
- Participants
 - Better understand clothing wants and needs
 - Better understand how identity is created through clothing decisions

Previous Research

- Purposes of Clothing
 - Functions and Social Contexts (Creed 2002)
 - Lifestyle and Class (Polhemus 2011)
 - Interpersonal Communication (Roach-Higgin 1992)
 - Individualism (Douglas 2008)
- Theory of Clothing: Pierre Bourdieu
 - A person's taste in clothing is indicative of their social standing (Bourdieu 1984).
 - Class is represented by clothing style; Style represents class (Bourdieu 1984).

Social Identity & Clothing

Thesis: Through selective acquisition and creative ensemble composition, military wives use clothing strategically to construct and maintain their characteristic identity traits.



Methods

- Respondents were told to select outfits that describe their lifestyle
- Semi-structured Interviews
 - Lifestyle/Identity
 - Clothing Ensemble Composition
 - Clothing Acquisition
- Audio Recorded, Transcribed and Coded
- Visual Anthropology

Interview Questions

- Identity:
 - What type of event(s) would you wear this outfit to?
- Composition:
 - What is the first thing you considered when putting this outfit together?
- Acquisition:
 - How do you decide what clothing to buy?

Goals

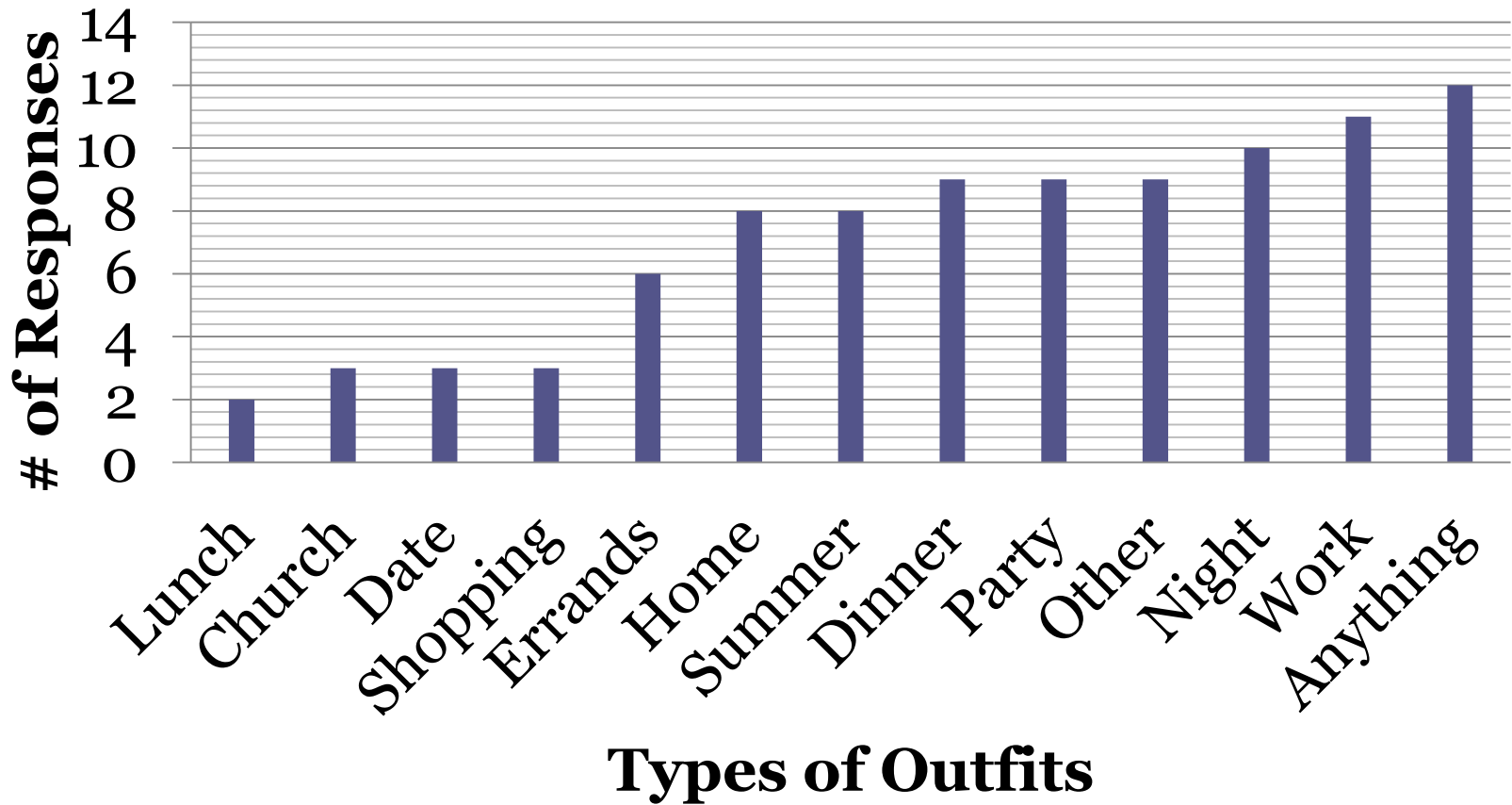
- Emic Perspective
 - Respondent Led
 - Open Ended Questions
 - Probes
- Etic Perspective
 - Digital Photography



Emic and Etic Perspectives



What types of event(s) would you wear this outfit to?



Most Common Types of Outfits



Work



Anything



Night

Similar Factors Considered During Composition and Acquisition

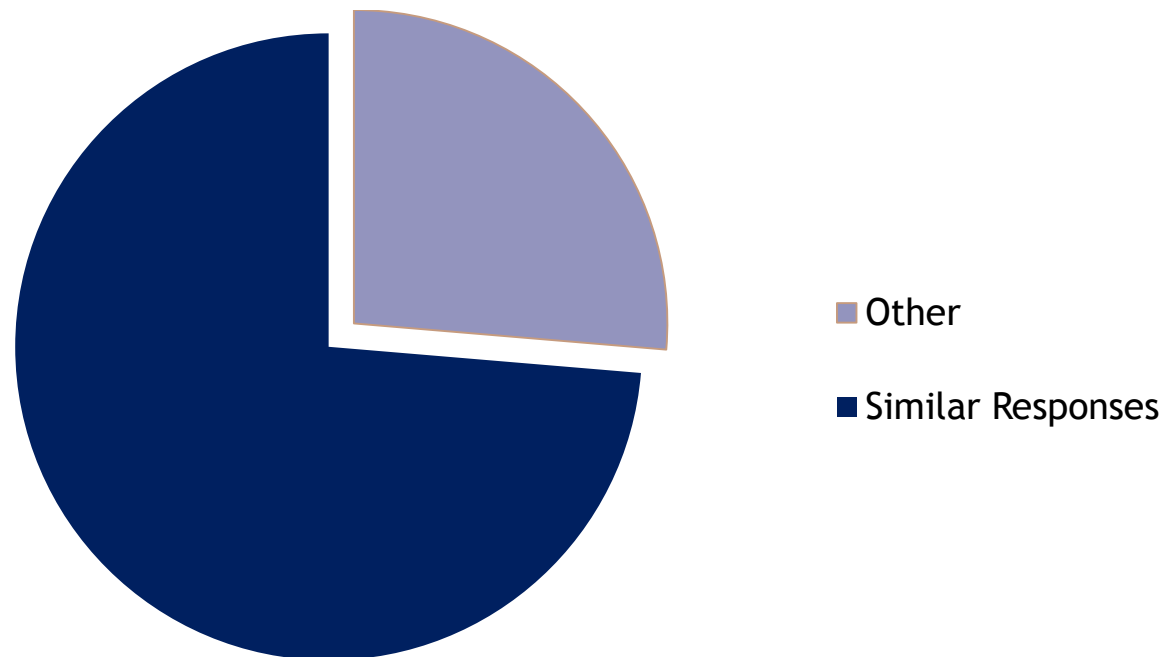
Factors	Number of Responses	Percentage
Practical	35	14%
Comfortable	34	14%
Classic	26	10%
Color	26	10%
Interpersonal	15	6%
Coordinating	14	6%
Flattering	14	6%
Attractive	13	5%
Detail	13	5%
Fit	13	5%
Quality	11	4%
Feminine	9	4%
Trendy	9	4%
Modesty	8	3%
Sentimental	5	2%
Casual	2	1%
Support	2	1%

Similar Factors Considered During Composition and Acquisition

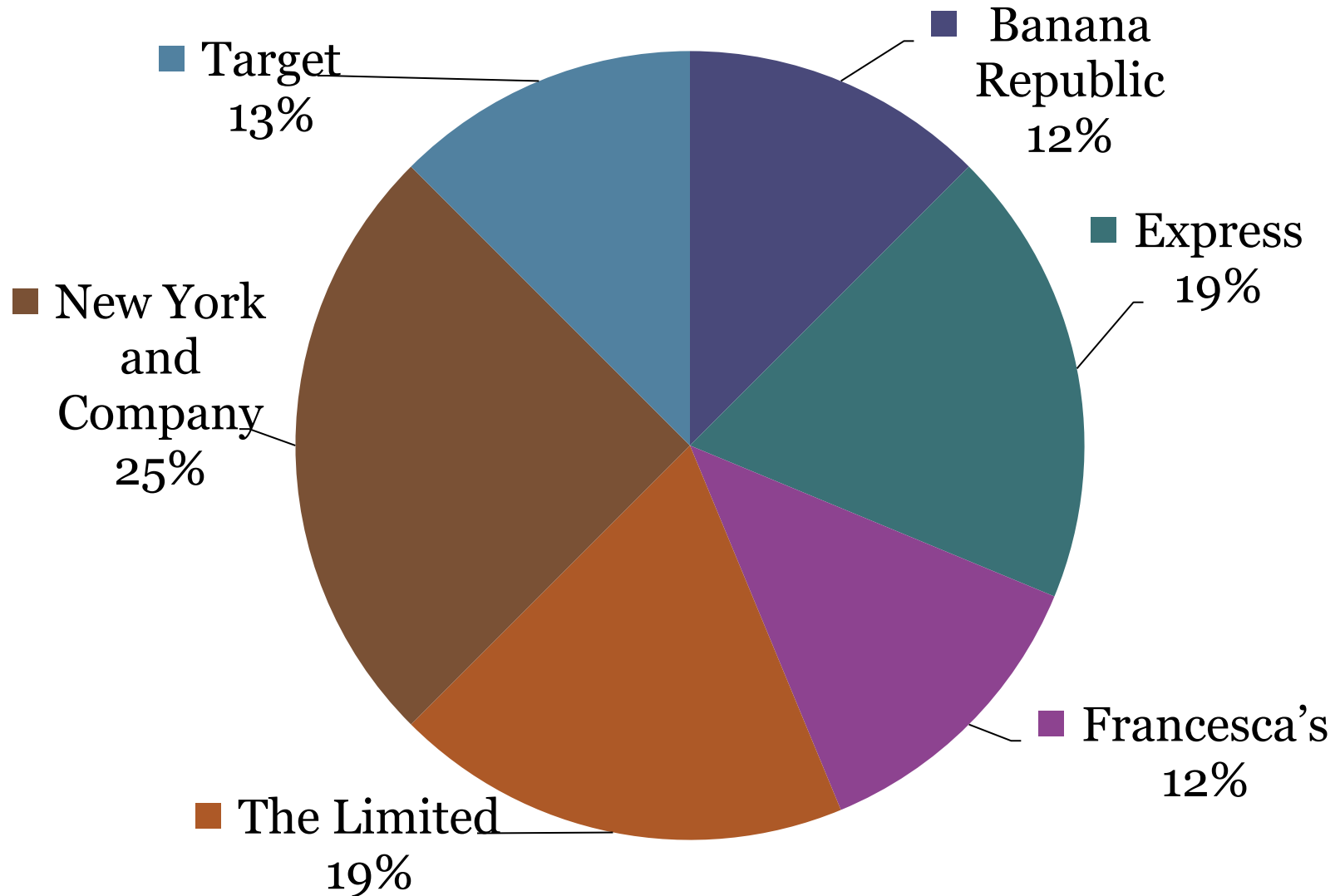
Total Number of Factors Mentioned: 338

Similar Responses: 74%

Other Responses: 26%



Favorite Stores



Examples of Clothing from Favorite Stores



Characteristic Identity Traits Defined by Class and Lifestyle



- Cosmopolitan
- Diverse Lifestyle
 - Work
 - Night
 - Anything
- Social Life
- Career

Acquisition and Composition Used to Maintain Identity Characteristics

- Marketing of favorite stores appeals to their lifestyle
- International availability
- Versatility in clothing
- Main factors considered:
 - Practical
 - Classic
 - Comfortable
 - Color Selection

Unexpected Results

- Independent Identity
 - Freedom
 - Youth
 - Career
 - No Children
 - Cosmopolitan Lifestyle
- Further Studies
 - Larger Sample Size
 - Older Age Range

Thank You

- Dr. Cory Willmott
- Anthropology Department Faculty at SIUE
- My Husband, Dustin Duvall
- Military Wives at Scott AFB: Christine, Jessica, Kendra, Paula, Ranita, Tiffany, Tricia, and Veronica



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