

The Cult of Cultural Consumption in the United States:  
How Class Stratification Shapes The Social Realms of Consumer Brand Perception

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## ABSTRACT

BOFF, NELLIE: The Cult of Cultural Consumption in the United States: How The Social Realms of Consumer Brand Perception are Shaped by Class Stratification

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An individual's social position shapes taste culture as it pertains to fashion and branding. The purpose of this research is to develop more knowledge on who or what social factors are driving consumer's perception of the brands they want, or don't want to buy. The perspective of consumption seems to transcend self-interest alone and this thesis aims to analyze the extension of that transcendence.

Brands are not merely relating to consumers through a relationship of functional need, but also interfere and are driven by social relationships between consumers. There is evidence that suggest that consumers might interact with brands that closely mirror their social interactions, but do consumers change the way they interact with brands because of their perception of other consumers, and how does one's socioeconomic status influence this?

The first chapter in this thesis defines what a 'brand' is and then analyzes six well-known theoretical perspectives in attempt to define what the social factors driving consumer consumption habits are. The second, third and fourth chapters contain empirical observations which discuss the methods, trends and relationships drawn from a quantitative survey of the women from Union College, Schenectady aged 18-23. The women are asked 80 questions about their socioeconomic status, purchasing preferences, and consumption orientations. The observations are used to determine what theoretical perspectives influence the consumption of branded clothing. The fifth and final chapter of this thesis contains conclusions and discussions,

shaped from the analyses, as well as implications of these results and future suggestions for marketers in 2015.

The results of the analysis were that socioeconomic status and consumption orientations affect consumption patterns. A woman's taste is a function of social orientation and can be explained by theories of social comparison, conspicuous consumption, imitation, social closure, and the distinction of capital defined in chapter one.

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### ***The Brand***

A brand is a particular name, term, design, symbol, label or any other feature that makes a product distinct. Branding is used throughout many facets of consumption as an intangible asset making an item valuable in some sense. Branding has a powerful means for creating and sustaining competitive advantage in the world of consumption particularly as it pertains to fashion (Aggarwal 2004: 87). Today, anyone can own a purse, a watch, or a pair of shoes, but specific brands of purses, watches, and shoes are a distinguishing feature for certain classes of consumers (Han et al. 2010: 15). Extensive research has been dedicated to differences in how consumers perceive and evaluate brands. For example, through considering brand equity, brand personality and brand extensions. Also, it has been noted that consumers differ not only in how they perceive brands, but also in how they relate to brands (Aggarwal 2004: 87). Brands are not merely relating to consumers through a relationship of functional need, but also interfere with social relationships between consumers and have effects on consumer behavior and attitudes (Aggarwal 2004). “The idea that people form relationships with brands is not without controversy” (Aggarwal 2004: 88). Shown through a simple sentence: If like a brand of clothing that I can afford, I buy it (usually). However, this simple relationship is easily skewed based on the extent of social stimuli (other people) unconsciously adding inferred abstract information that customers perceive in particular ways (Aggarwal 2004). Therefore, the initial judgment of a purchase has an effect on subsequent judgments of branded products and can change based on social relationships and an individual’s class position.

There is evidence that suggests that consumers might interact with brands that closely mirror their social interactions, but do consumers change the way they interact with brands because of their perception of other consumers, and does this have anything to do with their socioeconomic background, where their from, and who’s paying for the branded products they

want to purchase? It is easy to fall back on social relationships as a guide to what purchases consumers make in our ever-changing world of branded and even non-branded fashion.

It is accurate that some relationships between consumers and products are based solely on economic factors. I agree that buying branded clothing is based on being able to afford it financially (having economic capital). However, I also argue that this relationship involves social factors, which involve exchange and relational comparisons among consumers and their perceptions of each other when considering what to purchase (Aggarwal 2004). In this case, we as consumers take on a “perspective that transcends emphasis on self-interest alone” (Aggarwal 2004: 88). This thesis intends to analyze and argue that the relationships people form with others contain distinct norms and behaviors that are naturally involved in these relationships, and then how norms and behaviors have an effect on consumer decisions when it comes to fashion brands, and what that is exactly. Therefore, when it comes to branded fashion items, the norms developed through social interactions between consumers, guide the behavior of other consumers and their evaluations of brands based on actions that violate or conform to our social world’s norms.

### ***Brand versus Product***

There is an important distinction to make between purchasing a “product” and purchasing a “brand”. Fashionable products and fashionable brands are bought and worn for many purposes; one is to be seen by others. Which elements do consumers notice on others? Certainly one is the product itself, but another is the brand of this product (Beardon & Etzel 1982: 184). This thesis aims to focus on *publicly* purchased luxuries and necessities and how value-expressive reference groups influence a consumer to behave in a manner that will improve *her* self-image or create the impression of attachment to a particular group. I choose to focus on public products because

publicly consumed luxuries are products consumed in the public eye and not as frequently owned or used. When items are publicly displayed, there may be different factors effecting whether we buy the product and if we do, what brand we choose (Beardon & Etzel 1982: 184). Publicly consumed necessities are products consumed in the public view that most people own (i.e. blue jeans). Essentially, all people or a high proportion of people use and own these products, but may differ when it comes to what type of brand they choose to buy (Beardon & Etzel 1982: 185). The reason I only put a slight focus on privately consumed luxuries and necessities is because the influence for brand product is weak due to the fact that the product is outside of the public view (Beardon & Etzel 1982: 185).

### ***The Socioeconomic Factor***

“Ambivalent meaning of dress can originate from class differences. From Simmel to Bourdieu, sociology has a long tradition of studying clothes as an indicator of class differentiation” (Peretz 1994: 338). The idea of social positioning in the United States in attempt to explore the social stratification of taste culture and brand perception has transformed consumer purchasing decisions in response to a number of different sociological theories. These include: conspicuous consumption, social comparison theory, symbolic interactionist theory, the theory of distinction, social closure theory, and imitation. The theories of Bourdieu, Simmel, Veblen and Warner and others provide insight on distinction, imitation and the “fashionable” person, along with how social strata effects a community.

### ***Symbolic Interaction Theory***

George Herbert Mead influenced the symbolic interaction theory, originally. According to the theory, people live in both a natural and symbolic environment (Aksan et al. 2009).

“Symbolic interaction is a process that is enlivened in the reciprocal meaning and values by aid

of the symbols in the mind. Meanings constitute of reciprocal interaction between persons. Objects don't have meaning on their own. But objects get their meanings from social actors" (Aksan et al. 2009: 902). Symbolic interaction is a dynamic theory because, "objects feature meanings within themselves and individuals formulate their activities in the direction of their evaluation of themselves and also people and objects around them. Thus, it is the social actors that attribute meaning to objects according to this perspective" (Aksan et al.2009: 902-3). Also, the symbolic meaning consumers derive from a particular brand is often based on associations between the brand and its users or the "type" of consumer who buys that brand (Han et al. 2010: 18).

This thesis intends to focus on the objects of branded versus non-branded clothing, and the consumer perception of these objects and how we as consumers give them symbolic value through social relationships. Consumers who buy branded fashion products enjoy not only the functional needs of the products but also the excitement and other social factors that come along with these purchases. This includes self-image projection, showing desirable lifestyle and social status, etc. (Choi 2014: 3). Because fashion brands are "constantly refreshing and reinventing their identity in today's marketplace" (Choi 2014: 3) the symbolic interaction theory offers a way to understand the process of negotiating brand meaning within a social context for fashion brands that are constantly changing. "Fashion is ambivalent-for when we dress we wear inscribed upon our bodies the often obscure relationship of art, personal psychology and the social order. And that is why we remain endlessly troubled by fashion—drawn to it, yet repelled by a fear of what we might find hidden within its purposes" (Kaiser et al. 1991: 165).

The range of choice in the fashion marketplace contributes to a state of confusion bordering on chaos at best. Culture itself becomes ambivalent, sending contradictory and



confusing messages to individuals about what appearance styles are fashionable (Kaiser et al. 1991: 166). Consequently, the basic doctrine of the symbolic-interactionist perspective, relevant as it has always been, surfaces as being absolutely critical to an explanation of contemporary fashion change and the way in which consumers respond, or believe they should respond, to the perception of branded clothing (Kaiser et al. 1991: 167).

The idea of the value of clothing is of relevant context when comparing branded and non-branded fashion. Neomania assumes that purchasing the new is the same as acquiring value. In the socioeconomic context of advanced capitalism, the ideology of neomania becomes problematic. Also, “there is a consumer philosophy that it is not enough merely to possess what is new. Now one must show how *well* he or she possesses, resulting in rituals of framing and underscoring what one has” or does not have (Kaiser et al. 1991: 170). Due to the “diversity of appearance-related commodities in the marketplace, consumers are confronted with less-than-clear cut messages about how to look ‘fashionable’. They are justifiably unsure as to which appearance styles are socially correct, how they can be constructed, and what they mean” (Kaiser et al. 1991: 172). This ambivalence that consumers face is linked not only to the logic of symbolic exchange when it comes to consumption, but also to identity tensions and changing aesthetic codes at a rapid pace:

Designers, retailers, and consumers encounter cultural ambivalence, explore avenues for expressing it, seek inspiration from a variety of sources, and contribute to the construction of an infinite variety of appearance styles, in parts or in wholes. Appearance management and perception become more challenging and stimulating processes in the context of social transactions (Kaiser et al. 1991: 171)

which is why we as humans turn to the symbolic interaction theory.

I do not believe the apparel industry will ever be able to fully anticipate or determine how consumers will wear articles of clothing. Kaiser states that “fashion affords an outlet for expressing cultural contradictions; in fact, it is one of the most accessible and flexible means for disclosing the ironies of social life” (171). Thus, “appearance management becomes a process for constructing and negotiating a sense of self, based in part on an attempt to resolve simultaneous and contradictory emotions” about (a) what we view as both visually pleasing and socially acceptable (b) feelings of pleasure about the creative opportunities offered in the arena of style, as contrasted with a sense of guilt about economic wastefulness, and (c) who we are and how (and if) we fit into the cultural mainstream (Kaiser et al. 1991: 172). This amounts to the theory of fashion, as follows:

There is an increased amount of cultural ambivalence, which results in the emergence of a broad variety of clothing styles in our free market system. The clothing styles that emerge clarify and lend expression to the cultural ambivalence. The broad variety of clothing styles in turn creates a high degree of ambiguity in individually constructed appearance styles, which in turn causes the meaning to be collectively negotiated through social interactions. During this, certain styles and brands are adopted by a majority of consumers within certain social systems. Because clothing styles are adopted to clarify and lend expression to the cultural ambivalence, failure of the styles to do so results in fashion change in an ongoing dialectic process (Kaiser et al. 1991: 180).

What Kaiser is setting us up for is that we, as simple individuals, (and depending on what class position we are in) may experience confusion as to what’s “cool”, and “new” and “trendy”. Thus,

we may make decisions on what to buy based on the social interactions we experience, which are a result of the class group we are in.

### ***Social Comparison Theory***

In 1954, Festinger developed a theory of social comparison as a motivating force in human behavior. Social comparison theory says individuals compare themselves to others by self-evaluating, self-comparing, and attempting to self-improve based on gaining accurate self-evaluations from other people (Festinger 1954). Clothing brands often consciously or subconsciously cause consumers to view themselves in comparison to what they see other people buying and wearing. Festinger believes that for self-evaluation, one will target the comparison to someone who is similar to themselves (in their mind) (Festinger 1954). Therefore, in order to make a social comparison, one must be “mutable and attainable”, someone who is in their reach when it comes to comparing them on social level (Lockwood & Kunda 1997). For self-enhancement or defensive self-evaluation, one will look towards what they believe to be inferior standards, wanting to improve their self-esteem. Festinger argues that looking at inferior standards will make one feel as if they are better. To view inferior standards, or to self-enhance, is known as a “downward comparison” a concept founded by Wills in 1981 (Festinger 1954). Society has a constant need to not only self-enhance or self-evaluate, but also to self-improve. To do this, people seek comparison particularly with upward standards – those who are perceived as better than themselves (Festinger 1954). For self-improvement, one participates in an ‘upward comparison’. Lastly, I consider the perception of competition that stems from social comparisons between stratified social groups.

As it pertains to fashion, I intend to draw attention to two of Festinger’s nine hypotheses. These are 1) the tendency to compare oneself to another person decreases as the difference

between their opinion and abilities becomes more divergent, 2) that there are non-social restraints that make it difficult or even impossible to change one's ability but these restraints are not present for opinions (i.e. people can change their opinions if they want but no matter how stimulated people may be to improve their ability, there may be other elements that make this impossible— such as the lack of financial capital to do so (Festinger 1954). I focus most closely on these because, in order to make social comparisons and form perceptions of others that are significant, consumers must be able to be close enough on a social scale to be relatable and comparable. For example, my sample will not be focused at poverty-stricken young women who have difficulty paying rent versus affluent women aged 65 and over who can afford Miu Miu (women's high fashion brand from the Prada fashion house) without thinking twice. Instead I will focus on women (aged 18-23) who have both the ability to buy branded fashionable products, and the mind-set, or opinion to do so based on the fact that they are students at Union College.

### ***Fashion, Innovation and Imitation***

There has been a great deal of attention around the idea of imitation, founded by Georg Simmel, along with the element of demarcation, constituting an important factor of the world of fashion. According to Simmel's theory of imitation:

Imitation... gives to the individual the satisfaction of not standing alone in his actions. Whenever we imitate, we transfer not only the demand for creative activity, but also the responsibility for the action from ourselves to another. Thus, the individual is freed from the worry of choosing and appears simply as a creature of the group (Simmel 1957: 543).

It is interesting that fashion has the characteristics to render a degree of social obedience, which is also a form of individual differentiation. Simmel argues that fashion can do this because in its very nature it represents a certain standard that can never be accepted or produced by all (Simmel 1957: 549).

A person's social standing as it relates to class may affect their, "tendency towards imitation as it characterizes a stage of development in which the desire for expedient personal activity is present, but from which the capacity for possessing the individual acquirements is absent" (Simmel 1957: 543). In relation to being dominant versus being dominated, Simmel acknowledges that, "the imitator is the passive individual, who believes in social similarity and adapts himself to existing elements; the teleological individual, on the other hand, is ever experimenting, always restlessly striving, and he relies on his own personal conviction" (543). Imitation is seen as a productive factor that "represents one of the fundamental tendencies of our character, namely, that which contents itself with similarity, with uniformity, with the adaptation of the special to the general, and accentuates the constant element in change. Conversely, wherever prominence is given to change, wherever individual differentiation, independence, and relief from generality are sought, there imitation is the negative and obstructive principle" (Simmel 1957: 543).

Simmel discusses how imitation influences fashion extensively. He claims that fashion is the imitation of a given example and satisfies the demand for social adaptation; it "leads the individual upon the road which all travel, and furnishes a general condition, which resolves the conduct of every individual into a mere example" (543). At the same time, it satisfies in no less degree the need of differentiation, the tendency towards divergence, the desire for change and contrast, which gives to the fashion of today an individual stamp as opposed to that of yesterday

and of tomorrow, on the one hand because fashions differ for different classes— the fashions of the upper stratum of society are never identical with those of the lower— in fact, they are “abandoned by the former as soon as the latter prepares to appropriate them” (Simmel 1957: 543). Simmel says that fashion is a mere product of social demand, proven by the notion that very frequently not the slightest reason can be found for the creation of fashion from the standpoint of an objective, aesthetic, or other expediency (543).

Simmel asserts a top down model; in which the higher classes dictate the lower classes perception of the “fashionable person”. Fashion is a field that, we can most easily relinquish to the bend towards imitation, and Simmel’s work suggests that this “bend” does indeed depend on which class you are in. For example, “social forms, apparel, aesthetic judgment, the whole style of human expression, are constantly transformed by fashion, in such a way, however, that fashion— i.e., the latest fashion— in all these things affects only the upper classes” (Simmel 1957: 544). Just as soon as the lower classes begin to copy their style, thereby crossing the line of demarcation, the upper classes have drawn and destroying the uniformity of their coherence, the upper classes turn away from this style and adopt a new one, which in its turn differentiates them from the masses; and this pattern goes on and on (Simmel 1957). Naturally, the lower classes look and strive towards the upper, and they encounter the least resistance in those fields which are subject to the whims of fashions; for it is here that mere external imitation is most readily applied... We may often observe that the more nearly one set has approached another, the more frantic becomes the desire for imitation from below and the seeking for the new from above. Something to consider here is an implication drawn from the social comparison theory that states that we look to compare ourselves with others who are attainable. This would be that the classes which compare themselves to the higher classes must be more similar than not. The

increase of wealth is bound to hasten the process considerably and render it visible, because the objects of fashion, embracing as they do the externals of life, are most accessible to the mere call of money (Simmel 1957: 545). Lastly, “fashions of the upper classes develop their power of exclusion against the lower in proportion as general culture advances, at least until the mingling of the classes and the leveling effect of democracy exert a counter-influence” (Simmel 1957: 546).

Consequently, “two social tendencies are essential to the establishment of fashion, namely, the need of union on the one hand and the need of isolation on the other” (Simmel 1957: 546). The ‘fashionable person’ is regarded with mingled feelings of approval and envy. We envy him as an individual, but approve of him as a member of a set or group that we aspire to be like (Simmel 1957). “Speaking broadly, it is characteristic of a standard set by a general body, that its acceptance by any one individual does not call attention to him; in other words, a positive adoption of a given norm signifies nothing” (Simmel 1957: 548). Whoever lives up to the social forms prescribed by his class, gains no conspicuousness or notoriety. However, the slightest contravention or opposition is immediately noticed and places the individual in an exceptional position by calling the attention of the public to his action.

### ***The Theory of Distinction***

Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* discusses a social life that was observed in 1960’s French society. Bourdieu conceived the social life as a multidimensional status game in which people draw on three different types of resources. He terms these economic capital, cultural capital and social capital in order to compete for status— something he terms symbolic capital (Holt 1998: 3). Bourdieu acknowledges that these multiple forms of capital transcend the economic theory of capital (Szeman 2011). He

claims economic capital is convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights (Szeman 2011), while cultural capital is convertible in certain ways into economic capital but may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications. Finally, social capital consists of social obligations and connections, which are convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility (Szeman 2011).

Habitus, another term coined by Bourdieu, is important to the concept of cultural capital. Habitus is not only formed by one's upbringing but also by the objective chances of the class to which the individual belongs (King, 2005: 222). Habitus is developed through processes of socialization and it determines a wide range of dispositions that shape individuals in their society. It is not a 'structure' but a stable set of dispositions that are formed, stored, recorded and in turn, exert influence to mold forms of human behavior and decision-making (King 2005). It may vary in accordance to the person's social environment or social class. It reinforces cohesion but also stimulates change and innovation, especially when it does not fit the surrounding social world where it evolves (Navarro 2006: 16). These dispositions also causes individuals to "think, feel, and act in determinate ways, which then guide individuals in their creative responses to the constraints and solicitations of their extant milieu" (Wacquant 2005: 316). Bourdieu goes on to state that these dispositions are internalized at a young age and guide people towards their appropriate social positions, how one chooses to present one's social space to the world, and one's aesthetic dispositions (Szeman 2011).

This thesis intends to focus on social capital and cultural capital most closely. Social capital is, "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships... in other words; membership



to a group” (Bourdieu 1986: 86). On the other hand, cultural capital plays a fundamental role in societal power relations, and provides the means for a non-economic form of domination and hierarchy by classes distinguishing themselves through tastes (Bourdieu 1986). These two forms of capital are interdependent such that social order is inscribed in people’s minds through the cultural products they have or do not have, which lead up to social differences and hierarchies along with a sense of one’s place in society (Bourdieu 1986). The conversion between economic and social capital are fascinating. Economic capital gives immediate access to some goods without other costs, however other things can be obtained only by a virtue of social capital. According to Bourdieu, taste becomes a "social weapon" that defines and marks off the high from the low, the sacred from the profane, and the "legitimate" from the "illegitimate" in matters such as fashion and consumer consumption (Allen & Anderson 1994). Therefore, those who possess large amounts of economic or cultural capital (or both) are "dominant" and will seek to impose a hierarchy of taste or preference on those with less capital—the "dominated" (Allen & Anderson 1994).

Reflecting their relative advantage in the status marketplace, people whose capital volume is strongly weighted toward economic rather than cultural capital tend to consume using a materialist style of consumption. For economic elites, this means pursuing the newest fashions, the latest technologies, the most luxurious, pampering products and services. For the majority with relatively small and declining incomes, living in a society that so emphasizes material satisfactions constructs relative material deprivation as an intense lack, and, thus, their tastes are structured around attaining glimpses or simulacra of elite comforts (Holt 1998: 20).

Extensive work has been done in the field of consumption in regards to “taste” specifically building on Bourdieu’s work. “Bourdieu has shown how crucial certain consumption patterns have become in the development of socio-cultural identities, most significantly by focusing on the ‘dynamics of taste’” (Rocamora 2002: 342). Bourdieu’s distinction between individuals who possess a relatively high volume of capital where that capital is more economic than cultural seem to behave in ways that are more competitive, aggressive and individualistic (Friedland et al. 2007). This cluster is defined by, “their consumption of products... clothing, fashion... are important badges of their social and economic position. They frequent high-end and upper-middle-tier department stores like Neiman-Marcus and Macy’s” (Friedland et al 2007: 43). Lastly, “fields are the key arenas in which actors compete for placement in the social hierarchy through acquisition of the statuses distinctive to the field” (Holt 1998: 4). Also, there is a “similar homology between classes of products and classes of consumers” (Bourdieu 1975: 32-33) and this is precisely because a cultural object is the objectification of the already ‘constituted taste’ of the producer (Bourdieu 1996: 231).

Bourdieu connects the production, consumption and valuation of cultural capital by means of social practices in establishing hierarchies. The question of “taste” arises within these social practices. More closely, the history between the dominant and dominated struggles with the notion that taste classifies the classifier, and that, “social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make” (Friedland et al. 2007: 32). Bourdieu’s relational perspective claims that class distinctions exist only as features of social space. (Friedland et al. 2007). We as consumers take this to mean that, “social space itself consists of the relative status positions people perceive themselves to occupy, along with their perceptions of the positions that other people occupy. It is always with reference to these

perceived relations in social space that people acquire and judge cultural tastes” (Friedland et al. 2007: 34). Also, according to Holt, societies segregate into different reputations; groupings based not only on economic position, but also on noneconomic criteria such as morals, culture, and lifestyle that are sustained because of ones interaction with their social peers (2).

Bourdieu declares that cultural hegemony is maintained by the dominant because the middle and working classes mistake the arbitrary and socially structured judgments of these classes for choices that require special cultural knowledge. Thus, the door is open for enterprising marketers to offer mobility aspirants (particularly among the middle classes) what has come to be known as "middlebrow" culture. Invariably, such cultural forms are "knock-off" versions of the "legitimate" forms that have been appropriated by the dominant. As a result, a whole "industry" has emerged that specializes in providing palatable versions of legitimate culture and the "knowledge-tools" necessary to appropriate (and appreciate) said forms (Allen & Anderson 1994). “A rich man is not just a poor man with more money. He probably has different ideals, different personality forces... and many different notions of right and wrong, all largely stemming from social class differentials” (Martineau 1958: 16). With its disciplinary pressures of approval and disapproval, belonging versus ostracism, social class is a major factor shaping the individual’s style of life (Martineau 1958). Therefore, for a marketing program to be effective, it must be designed to reach the social class that fits the particular product or service (Rich & Jain 1968: 41).

### ***Bourdieu’s Critics***

Friedland et al. (2007) provide parallels to Bourdieu’s determinants of taste, cultural discrimination, and choice within the field. Friedland suggests, “there are also some notable differences in terms of the consumption of cultural capital consistent with the concept of

omnivorousness” (31). The question of whether or not omnivorousness is replacing snobbishness among Americans of highbrow status has emerged. Omnivorous taste is defined as openness to appreciating everything. It is “antithetical to snobbishness, which is based fundamentally on rigid rules of exclusion” (Peterson & Kern 1996: 904). The emergence of ‘omnivorous taste’ may suggest the “formulation of new rules governing symbolic boundaries” (Peterson & Kern 1996: 904). Peterson and Kern also state that, “changes in fashion are often ephemeral, but a shift in the basis of taste from snobbishness to omnivorousness suggests that significant alterations in social power relationships are involved” (904-5). Certain factors may be contributing to the shifting grounds of status group politics. Looking closely at structural changes, we observe the way social processes over the past century make exclusion increasingly difficult and in turn shape opportunity. Presenting art via the media has made elite aesthetic tastes more accessible to wider segments of the population and aesthetic tastes of different segments of the population more transparent than ever (Peterson & Kern 1996). Elements of popular culture seem to be becoming more gentrified and incorporated into the dominant status-group culture and “omnivorous inclusion seems better adapted to an increasingly global world” (Peterson & Kern 1996: 906).

Bourdieu’s *Distinction* earned widespread influence for its elaborate analysis of the economy of cultural goods and the way social conditions affect their production, consumption and valuation (Friedland et al. 2007: 31). Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital and taste offers the most comprehensive and influential attempts to develop a theoretical framework to plumb the social patterning of consumption in an increasingly mystified social world. Yet, according to Holt, this theory has received a chilly reception in the United States, routinely subject to both theoretical critique and empirical refutation (Holt 1998: 1). Attention must be drawn to the major role played not only by an individual’s “taste” but also the increasing formation of identities

around media and consumption, leading to a more gendered and ideological positioning of taste cultures in the U.S. context (Friedland et al. 2007: 31). For example, “men are subject to a restricted dressing code, women are, instead allowed to follow a more elaborate code...they may borrow items and fashion styles from men, whereas the converse seldom happens” (Davis 1992: 42). Also, “fashion today is the prerogative of a substantial majority of our population – men, women and children” (Rich & Jain 1968: 42) and Bourdieu barely touches on these points.

While one can agree that the distribution of positions is largely defined by patterns of taste, a major role is played through marketing and advertising tactics in such an increasingly millennial generation. Davis (1992) discusses the relationship between social status and clothing in another way: “The sartorial dialectic of status assumes many voices, each somewhat differently toned from the other but all seeking, however unwittingly, to register a fitting representation of self, be it by overplaying status signals, underplaying them or mixing them” (63).

According to Rocamora (2002), Bourdieu fails to reflect on the significance of mass fashion and its influence on the field of high fashion. Defining mass fashion means understanding that it falls under the field of “large-scale production” (Rocamora 2002: 344). Although it is a “discredited field” according to Bourdieu (Rocamora 2002: 344-345) it caters for a wide audience and its market is what is referred to as “mass” or “popular culture” (Rocamora 2002: 345). There are many fashion designers who have transgressed the line between high and popular fashion by designing collections for the mass market, “such as Ribeiro for Dorothy Perkins, and John Rocha for Debenhams in the UK” (Rocamora 2002: 346). In Bourdieu’s work, the fashion players situated in the subfield of high fashion are restricted by this field. The variety of movements a player might make across fields, and the complex structuring of these

movements by both the subfield of high fashion and the subfield of mass fashion, are not focused on, (Rocamora 2002: 348) but could indeed lead to critical insights in regards to marketing approaches and consumer perception for mass fashion that Bourdieu does not touch upon. Rocamora goes on to say that there is “constant movement existing between high and popular fashion and the transgression of the boundary between the two” (Rocamora 2002: 348). This leads to the confusion of who or what is driving people’s perception of the brands they want or don’t want to buy. Bourdieu focuses closely on producers, not fully considering the way consumers shape marketing trends over time.

Bourdieu seems to strictly focus on the designers (the direct producers of clothing) While Rocamora draws attention to the actuality that those producers and agents are mere “parts” of the whole in regards to the field of production. Bourdieu’s insights are critiqued because they do not, “consider consumers as active makers of culture and cultural artifacts. Many fashions, however, have started outside of the fashion industry and were not the product of the subfield of high fashion and its producers only” (Rocamora 2002: 353). Rocamora gives the following example, “I am thinking of trends which originate in youth and/or ethnic groups, for instance which are then appropriated by high-fashion designers” (Rocamora 2002: 353). Brands in 2014 cannot base their marketing strategies on Bourdieu’s restrictive definition of consumption in which, “transitional states, irregularities and dissonances are minimized and simply left unexplored” (Rocamora 2002: 359). Because of the way fashion “has become a global post-fordist industry” (Rocamora 2002: 359) it is crucial to understand what tactics marketers are using to keep up with the unavoidable transformation of consumers’ consumption patterns and the ways they themselves, are shaping today’s brand identity.

### ***The Warnerian Approach***

The Warnerian approach has been introduced by Holt, as an advancement in an important formulation of the relationship between social class and lifestyle that is foundational for the advances made by Bourdieu and Simmel. For instance, “Warner and Bourdieu both argue that status is expressed and reproduced through implicit evaluations in everyday social interactions... public signaling of these consensus goods affirms one’s social position” (Holt 1998: 4). The Warnerian approach to class describes the primary social strata within a community by mapping the “relative amount of respect and deference accorded to each group” (Holt 1998: 2). Warner finds that consumer behaviors (e.g., the ‘right’ kind of house, the ‘right’ brand, the ‘right’ furniture) are among the most important expressions of particular status positions in a community (Holt 1998). Warner views consumption objects as positional markers reinforcing status boundaries. In this emulationist model, elites are engaged in a continual game with those below in which elite consumption patterns are universally valorized, and thus lower-class groups attempt to emulate them, leading elites to defend the distinctiveness of their consumption through pecuniary symbolism (Veblen), stylistic innovation (Simmel), and activities bounded by closed social networks (Warner) (Holt 1998).

### ***Social Closure***

Frank Parkin is known for his theory of social closure. This theory discusses the restriction of access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of people who are eligible (Scase & Smith 1974). The initial example included the Bourgeoisie (who owned the means of production) and the Proletariat. According to Mackert (2012), first; social closure establishes boundaries of different kinds between those who are in and those who are out; second, social closure processes produce a specific identity of those who are in; third, closure consequently triggers the creation of a certain type of community. While some social groups and organizations

are inclusive and open to everyone, access to others is limited due to certain criteria that either allow people to become members or exclude them from becoming members (Scase & Smith 1974). Therefore, social closure is a ubiquitous, everyday phenomenon that can be observed in almost every area of the social world.

This theory involves the singling out of certain social, or physical characteristics as the justification basis for exclusion (Scase & Smith 1974). The purpose of social closure is to exclude social and economic opportunities to outsiders (Scase & Smith 1974). This closure comes from a certain amount of economic and/or social capital that is respective towards a certain social network. For example, the criteria that allows one person to belong to a particular social class but not the other, or a person's financial capability to afford branded clothing.

Parkin identifies two main types of closure, exclusionary and usurpationary. Exclusionary closure is the attempt by one group to secure for itself a privileged position at the expense of some other group through processes of subordination— or a 'power downwards' approach (Scase & Smith 1974). Usurpationary closure is 'power upwards', by the groups of subordinates created by the exclusionary closure, aimed at winning a greater share of resources (Scase & Smith 1974).

### ***Conspicuous Consumption***

In his *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Thorstein Veblen discusses the concepts of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure. Conspicuous consumption is the use of money, and other resources, to display a higher social-status (Szeman 2011). Veblen discusses "socially visible" consumer goods, as opposed to goods that are consumed in private. Veblen says there are two motives for consuming conspicuous goods: either 'invidious comparisons' or 'pecuniary emulation'. Invidious comparison is when members of the high class consume



conspicuously to distinguish themselves from members of a lower class. Pecuniary emulation occurs when a member of a lower class consumes conspicuously so that he/she will be thought of as a member of a higher class (Bagwell & Bernheim 1996: 350). According to Veblen, the basis on which good repute in any highly organized community rests is pecuniary strength; and the ability to show pecuniary strength, and so to gain or maintain a good name, leisure and conspicuous consumption of goods must be evident (Szeman 2011)

Bourdieu's main work, "bears comparison, in character and importance with Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*" (Szeman 2011). The leisure class stands at the head of the social structure in regards to their reputation. Therefore the manner of life and the standards of worth of the upper class offer the norm of reputability for the community. The observance of these standards (through some degree of approximation), become present upon all classes lower in the scale. The lines of demarcation between social classes have grown vague and transient, and wherever this happens the norm of reputability imposed by the upper class extends its coercive influence with but slight difficulty down through the social structure to the lowest class. "They must conform to the accepted code, at least in appearance" (Veblen 1899: 23). The result is that the members of each stratum accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum, and their energies attempt to live up to this ideal (Veblen 1899).

Veblen provides another approach to the theory of consumption in which preferences are determined in regards to the positions of people's relation to one another in a social hierarchy (Trigg 2001: 99). More specifically, "individuals emulate consumption patterns of other individuals situated at higher points in the hierarchy" (Trigg 2001: 101). Veblen recognizes that one way to identify how an individual displays wealth is through their lavish spending on consumption and services (Trigg 2001). He goes on to say that having the element of waste, as it

pertains to goods, “is the key way in which members of the leisure class display their status and wealth” (Trigg 2001: 101). The social norms that govern such emulation change as the economy and its social fabric evolve over time (Trigg 2001).

### ***Veblen’s Critics***

Veblen’s trickle-down approach and theory of conspicuous consumption in which the leisure class spends money and acquires luxurious good and services in order to display their economic power has been called “too restrictive to address the multifarious lifestyles that characterize contemporary capitalism” (Trigg 2001: 113). Critics claim that consumption patterns are no longer only relying on the top of the social hierarchy but that “pacesetters for consumptions may also be those at the bottom of the hierarchy” (Trigg 2001: 99). Other critics examine the fact that consumers aren’t displaying their wealth as conspicuously. Seemingly, status is conveyed in more, “sophisticated and subtle ways” (Trigg 2001: 99). The last critique of the trickle down approach of conspicuous consumption is that in postmodernism, consumer behavior is now being shaped by lifestyles that cut across the social hierarchy rather than by positions of social class (Trigg 2001: 99).

Other critics have touched upon the emphasis that the trickle-down effect is no longer the way emulation works. George Field (1970) and Yngve Ramstad (1998, 13) look at the “status float” phenomenon, which is “the tendency of fashionable practices to percolate upward from lower to higher status groups” (Trigg 2001: 102). Fine and Leopold illustrated this phenomenon in 1993 using the case of blue jeans. Blue jeans are known in the United States as an affordable, strong and longwearing item of work clothing. While jeans are a very American product—related to wealth and prosperity— the point is made that the social origin of this product comes from working-class consumers (Trigg 2001). The original success of jeans as a mass-produced

item of consumption did not occur due to the behavior of the upper classes buying the expensive brands that now exist. Therefore, Veblen may be too restrictive because there can also be a trickle-up effects from the taste at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

### ***The “Label”***

The labels that give the brand name of certain products their ‘status’ have become gradually more important. The label, Bourdieu (1975) argues, “operates a process of transubstantiation of the material object to which it is applied, which then takes on the high value attached to the name (21). The label does not change the materiality of the product, but its social characteristic (Bourdieu 1975). It is the perceptible manifestation of a transfer of symbolic value” (Rocamora 2002: 349). The aspect of the symbolic value and consumption of a good is as follows: “goods are endowed with value by the agreement of fellow consumers” (Douglas & Isherwood, 51). Also, studies have shown that clothing speaks through visual codes, rather than linguistic ones. This depends on the contexts, on the relations between the persons who wear clothes and those who observe them (Peretz 1994: 338). Holt goes on to say, “consuming is significantly an autotelic activity in which tastes are formed around the desires for and pleasures gained from particular goods and activities relative to *others*” (3). As a result, enjoyment of physical consumption is only a part of the service yielded by goods. The symbolic value has been found within the reality that consumers value the “enjoyment of sharing names”, turning fashion into a pleasurable experience by acquiring branded clothing (Rocamora 2002: 351). Similarly, pleasure in the sharing of the name of high designers’ labels surely accounts for the interest in the consumption of the products, which carry these labels (Rocamora 2002: 351).

### ***Decommodification and the Implications for Marketing***

Many brands, along with the way marketers sell these brands, have changed considerably over time. Is this because marketers are leading these consumers in new directions, or following

these consumers, as certain millennial trends become the “cool”, the “now”? The United States is holding fast to a cultural structure in which consumption is less clearly the outcome of the intersection of class and culture but instead is actively shaping it (Friedland et al. 2006: 33). For example, “among highbrows, the snob is one who does not participate in any lowbrow or middlebrow activity, while the omnivore is at least open to appreciating them all” (Peterson & Kern 1996: 901). A study shows the idea of the perfect snob becoming more rare in the United States (Peterson & Kern 1996).

This historical shift may be coming from marketing tactics and advertising agencies, however shifts have been suggested to come from mass media as well. For instance, “Middlebrow culture (what Bourdieu refers to as middle-class) have been exposed to the phenomenon of gaining access to high culture only after it has first been mediated by mass culture” (Friedland et al. 2006: 35). Also, “what makes high culture middlebrow in America is that the mode of experiencing it is initially filtered through, and therefore made significant by the mass media” (Friedland et al. 2006: 35). In a study that looked at music genres, the results indicated that there has been a statistically significant increase of highbrows choosing middlebrow and lowbrow music genres, from 1982 to 1992, contradicting the expectations that highbrows will shun middlebrow forms (Peterson & Kern 1996). What are the possible explanations of this as it pertains to other tastes within American culture? Such as—fashion brands and luxury branded items. One possibility is that older cohorts of highbrows had more snob-like tastes and have been replaced by younger, more omnivorous cohorts, meaning that the year of one’s birth may be dramatically changing one’s values (Peterson & Kern 1996: 902). According to Peterson and Kern (1996), class differences in American consumption may have gone underground; and it could be that it is no longer easy to identify with the goods

consumed... as popular goods become ‘aestheticized’ and as elite goods become ‘massified’ (Peterson and Kern 1996). Another explanation is that consumer goods are becoming decommodified.

Holt says that the foundational axiom of consumer society is that individual subjectivities are continual by consuming products that carry distinctive identities that are presented through consumption (Holt 1998: 21). The idea of decommodification as class practice has also been discussed in a study done by Levy. Levy (1996) argues that brands are already decommodified because they are differentiated through the marketing mix. “Brands offer a diverse plethora of images and personalities that individuals selectively combine to express a unique identity” (Levy 1996). Therefore, Holt goes on to suggest that decommodification has become a central resource used in consumer societies to form class boundaries. The HCCs— the top quintile of cultural capital resources in a small city— experience this contradiction of postmodern culture more intensely than the LCCs— the bottom quintile of cultural capital resources in a small city— because individualized subjectivity is so central to their habitus. The LCCs more readily accept the marketized meaning of branded products, but, in contrast to Levy’s arguments, this is precisely because they are less concerned with the brand’s claims to impart particularized subjectivities. Instead they treat brands much as economists theorize, “as signals of functional utility and economic scarcity” (Holt 1998: 21). On the other hand, the HCCs are more often than not looking to avoid market-constructed images, categorizing them as contrived (Holt 1998). The issue for HCCs is rooted in the aims to distinguish one’s consumption in a world in which market offerings have in some sense tainted the possible alternatives that HCCs are accustomed to. “The pursuit of individual style in the face of pervasive homogenizing forces is problematic only for HCCs for whom originality and authenticity is a highly valued mark of distinction in

their social class” (Holt 1998: 21). Contrarily, the LCCs do not encounter this problem, because they pursue lifestyles in a less individualized manner that neither rules out commodities or demands unique identities (Holt 1998).

This finding gives explanation to the growing success of marketers who position products targeted to HCCs as authentic (as opposed to mass-produced). A good example is the persistent opposition to Wal-Mart stores, which can be read as a class-marked debate (Holt 1998). The HCCs, with access to and influence over the media, opposed Wal-Mart in favor of small, locally owned shops... while working-class LCCs are enthusiastic about Wal-Mart’s presence, if the chain’s market success in merchandising to this group is any indication. HCCs have strong, positive feelings towards small owner-operated local retail stores that sell artisanal hard-to-find goods. Such stores, often found in boutique shopping districts in gentrified areas of cities, are perceived as offering a decommodified retail experience that allows for individuation (Holt 1998).

Holt argues that there “may be a high degree of overlap in consumer preferences across social categories making it increasingly difficult to infer status directly from consumption objects” (5). If this is the case, how are marketers relating to consumers and staying on top of ever-changing businesses and consumer trends? Although status judgments based on the goods one owns and the activities in which one participates have merit for describing small, isolated, relatively immobile populations, they are of little value for most of the population in an era of transnational consumer capitalism. Status construction now must contend with the tremendous geographic mobility of American professionals and managers, the privatization of social life, and the proliferation of media. With interactional groups multiplying and in constant flux, it becomes exceedingly difficult to develop stable consensus goods that represent the group (Holt

1998). Should marketers market according to population demographics or advanced analytics such as statistical modeling, real-time buying, multivariate testing or media-mix modeling to understand individuals? “The utility of goods as consensus class markers has weakened substantially, owing to a variety of widely noted historical shifts. Technological advances have led to the wide accessibility of goods and media by all but the poor (Bell 1976). Innovative styles and designs now diffuse rapidly between haute and mass markets, and between core and periphery states, thus dissolving lags that once allowed for stylistic leadership” (Holt 1998: 5). Another trend that is vastly impacting marketing strategies is that real-time customer decisions are bigger than ever; “A full 84% of customers trust third-party reviews for information related to the buying process. Consumers are increasingly searching for information before making purchases—even about incidental items such as soap—and they're increasingly doing so in-store from their smart phones. This puts an even greater emphasis on tailoring marketing execution to be at the right place at the right time” (CMO by Adobe). Are marketers providing access to the same products, services and assistance across all of the brands distribution points— such as store, web, salesperson, phone, etc.? Also, mobile marketing along with social media can fundamentally change shopping and buying decisions and is something else that should be explored as it relates to the consumer perception of brands (CMO by Adobe).

## ***Chapter 2: Methods***

The data in this thesis comes from a quantitative survey, which attempts to explore who or what is driving women's perception of the brands they want or don't want to buy. I explore their socioeconomic background along with their shopping tendencies and the relationship they may or may not have with branded clothing. I then make distinctions based on the results of the responses between having social, economic and cultural capital and how this in turn affects taste culture.

SPSS Statistics was used to analyze the data. SPSS is a software package used for statistical analysis in social sciences. I have used descriptive statistics to analyze frequencies and cross tabulations of univariate and bivariate tests.

There were 176 participants in my study, all females aging from 18-23 years old. Each woman attends Union College and the majority (155) were white; 11 were Asian, 5 were Black and one participant was Native Hawaiian. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix 1 by clicking on the corresponding link.

Univariate analyses were run for every variable in my survey. The independent variables included; age, gender, whether or not the participant was Hispanic or Latino, the racial category/categories they most closely identify with, father's occupation, mother's occupation, total household income, how they consider themselves (in regards to socioeconomic status), how many children in their family are under the age of 21, whether they get an allowance, and if so—how much, if they own a credit or debit card, and if they retain any sort of job, either a work study (on-campus) or off-campus.

The dependent variables in my study were extensive. I began with multiple-choice questions that pried at their overall shopping tendencies, and the fundamentals of how they felt



about branded clothing. Branded clothing was defined as, 'Clothing that bears the logo of a recognizable fashion designer'. Other dependent variables in this section included: Who pays for the clothing you wear? Why do you like branded clothing? Why do you not like branded clothing? How much do you spend annually for clothing (this question was open-ended but later recoded in a multiple choice question). Where do you do most of your shopping? How often do you go shopping for clothes/shoes? Where are you most likely to find out about what to wear and new trends? What percentage of the clothes that you buy do you purchase on sale? How important is price when you find something you love? How many name branded clothing articles do you own? Your purchasing jeans, which brand would you buy?

The next set of questions asked participants to rank the following criteria in order of importance when purchasing new clothing. "1" was the most important and "5" being the least important to them. The questions in this section were as follows: The item is a well-known brand, the item has a good price, the item has good quality, the item is comfortable, and the item is stylish and trendy. The next sets of questions were scaled questions. Women were asked to indicate the degree of influence the following factors have on their purchase of branded clothing. The scale ranged from, strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither, somewhat agree, to strongly agree. The questions contained the following statements: You have seen other people wearing them (branded clothing) and like the way they look, your available income, the well-known brand name or logo of the product, the quality and comfort of the product, your satisfaction of a previous product from the same brand, your position in society being a very important fashion example to others, and trend relevance. Next, the survey contained scaled questions that had 27 statements about women's shopping motivations. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Before running the

descriptive statistics on these variables, confirmatory factor analysis was used to identify 5 dimensions of shopping motivation, and then the frequencies and cross tabulations were run. The dimensions were: brand consciousness, social aspects, quality consciousness, price consciousness, and class position. The brand consciousness grouping consisted of a series of 5 variables which were: “The fashion appeal of my clothes is important, but a lot of times the quality and brand name makes a difference on whether or not I purchase it”, + “I prefer to buy designer-labeled clothing and shoes over store-branded clothing and shoes”, + “I am confident in my ability to recognize brand name and fashion trends”, + “I like branded clothing and shoes”, + “I buy/wear branded clothing and shoes”. The social aspects of shopping were formed from 8 variables. These were: “Clothes are one of the ways I can express my personality”, + “The apparel I buy is influenced by the people around me whom I admire”, + “I am not the type of person who compares myself with others”, + “I set the pace when it comes to new styles, trying new brands and labels all the time that I have never even heard of”, + “My friends think of me as a good source of advice regarding fashion”, + “It is important to be well dressed”, + “I buy well-known designer labels rather than taking chance on authentic or unknown brands”, + “I feel good when I buy something new, even though it was pricy”. The quality consciousness was made from 4 variables. They are as follows: “I get bored with clothes after several months”, + “The way I make purchases is described as ‘Just buy it’”, + “I spend a lot of money on clothes and shoes”, + “My purchases are usually spontaneous rather than planned”. The indicator of price consciousness came from 4 variables which included: “When prices are high, spending large amounts of money on clothing is nonsensical”, + “I feel guilty buying pricy clothing if someone else is paying for it”, + “I pay attention more to the prices and wearability of clothing I’m buying and less to the brand names”, + “I feel guilty buying pricy clothing because I paid for it

with my own earned money”. The final group was titled class position and constructed from a sequence of 2 variables which included: “What someone wears is a good indicator of their class position”, + “Buying branded clothing indicates status”.

The next dependent variables presented participants with 11 questions that contained pictures, and asked them to indicate which of the pictures of clothing they would buy, or were most likely to buy. The pictures included articles of workout attire, jeans, tank tops, black sweaters, athletic headbands, sneakers, heels, scarves, sweatpants, rompers, and hats. The first picture question participants answered contained three brand names which all sell athletic attire. The second question had four jean brands. The third question contained two pictures of models, the first model was wearing a branded C&C tank top that cost \$34 and came in both black and white. The second model in this photo was wearing a “Long Jersey Tank Top” that just went on sale from \$5.95 to \$5.05, and came in 4 different colors; black, white, grey and beige. The third question contained 3 models all wearing black sweaters. The brand in this case wasn’t included but the price was. The first model’s sweater cost \$242, the second cost \$34.99, and the third cost \$128. The fourth picture question asked participants to indicate their preference of athletic headband. There were three choices and each contained the brand or store the headband was from and its price. The first was a “5 PACK: Single Layer Cotton Spandex 4.5’ Raw Edge Sports & Yoga Headband that one could get at a chain such as Target. There were 5 different options for colors and cost \$9.99. The second headband was “Under Armour Women’s Fly-By Headband”, came in one color and cost \$16.99. The third headband was from Lululemon called the “Bang Buster Headband \* Reversible”. It came in 5 different reversible colors and cost \$18.00. The next picture question had two pairs of heeled booties. Neither had the price and/or brand on the question. However, one was much more expensive than the other even though they

were nearly identical. The next question had participants choose between two photos of black infinity scarves. The first was from “SCOOP NYC”, came in 3 colors and was \$215. The second scarf had no brand, had 5 options of colors to choose from and was \$38. The next picture question was a choice of sweatpants containing both brand and price in the description. The first pair of sweatpants was “Women’s James Perse Slim Cotton Sweatpants Heather Grey from Nordstrom for \$80.98 and the second was “Free City Cotton Sweatpants” for \$148 which came in three different colors. The next question contained two pictures of off-white rompers. The first, a “Lace Peplum Romper in ivory” from dailylook.com was \$18.95 and the second, an “Eberjey Strapless Warrior Lace Romper” from SCOOP NYC for \$198. The next picture question contained two grey beanie hats. The first was a “Coal Parks Beanie- Women’s Light Grey” from DogFunk.com for \$22.26 and the second was a “Jill Beanie from Eugenia Kim” for \$225. The 11<sup>th</sup> question was two photos of fashionable sneakers. The first were brown from Superga, on sale for \$39—marked down from \$65, and the second photo was brown sneakers from Vince at Bloomingdale’s on sale for \$175.52 marked down from \$195.

The last section of dependent variables was open-ended questions, which were analyzed qualitatively as opposed to the rest, which were quantitative and done through SPSS. The first two questions gave a long list of brands (each questions had the same brand names). The first question of the two asked participants to select every brand they had heard of. The second question asked participants to select the clothing brands that they usually buy. The next question asked the women where they usually go to buy their clothes. The following questions asked what their favorite store to shop in was. The next question asked (if they indicated that they buy branded clothing), what their top two favorite brands were and the final question in this section asked what their favorite place to buy clothing online was.

### Chapter 3: *Univariate Analysis*

The first variables aimed to obtain demographic background about the participants. All participants in this study were females, aged 18-23. The central tendency of age ranged from 19-21 years old. Twenty-nine percent of participants reported that they were 21. See Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1: *What is your age?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
17	1	.6%
18	25	14.2%
19	45	25.6%
20	38	21.6%
21	51	29.0%
22	15	8.5%
23	1	.6%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

Close to all of the women surveyed—88.1% said they were White when asked to select the racial category they identify most closely with. See Table 3.2 below:

Table 3.2: *Select the racial category or categories with which you most closely identify.*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Asian	11	6.3%
Black or African American	5	2.8%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	.6%
White	155	88.1%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

Two questions based on socioeconomic background were given to the women surveyed. The first asked them to select how they considered themselves on a scale of rich to poor. Only about 1% and below labeled themselves “Very rich” and “Very poor”. The majority of people (65.9%) said

they considered themselves to be of “middle-income categories”, while “lower-middle income” and “rich” were equal at about 13%. See Table 3.3 below:

Table 3.3: *How do you consider yourself?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Very poor	2	1.1%
Poor	8	4.5%
Lower-middle income	23	13.1%
Middle-income	116	65.9%
Rich	24	13.6%
Very rich	1	.6%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

The next question asked participants to state (approximately) their total household income. The largest number of those surveyed responded with \$100,00-\$149,000. See Table 3.4 below:

Table 3.4: *What is your total household income?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
\$10,000-\$19,000	4	2.4%
\$20,000-\$29,000	7	4.2%
\$30,000-\$39,000	5	3.0%
\$40,000-\$49,000	3	1.8%
\$50,000-\$59,000	7	4.2%
\$60,000-\$69,000	7	4.2%
\$70,000-\$79,000	5	3.0%
\$80,000-\$89,000	13	7.8%
\$90,000-\$99,000	12	7.2%
\$100,000-\$149,000	38	22.8%
\$150,000-\$299,000	32	19.2%
\$300,000-\$499,000	14	8.4%
\$500,000-\$699,000	10	6.0%
\$700,000+	10	6.0%
Missing System	9	
<b>Total</b>	167	100.0%

Participants were asked about both their father’s and mother’s occupation. Originally, this was an open-ended question, but after collecting data the occupations were recoded into the

following. For father’s occupation: Legal, Medicine/Health, Education, High Management, Protective Service Operations, Office/ Administrative Support, Food Prep/ Transportation/Construction and N/A. For mother’s occupation the recodes included: Legal, Medicine/Health, Education, High Management, Office/Administrative Support, Food Prep/Arts and N/A. For father’s occupations most participants said their father’s were involved in Office or Administrative support occupations (30.7%), followed by High Management occupations. In regards to their mother’s occupations, many respondents also said their mother’s occupied Office and Administrative Support positions (28.4%) followed by the category “N/A” (22.2). Keeping in mind that “stay-at-home-mother” was included in this category, which is what a good deal of women surveyed recorded. See Tables 3.5 and 3.6 below:

Table 3.5: *Father’s Occupation*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Legal	14	8.0%
Medical	15	8.5%
Education	10	5.7%
High Management	26	14.8%
Protective Service Operations	11	6.3%
Office/Administrative Support	54	30.7%
Food prep/Transportation/ Construction	20	30.7%
N/A	26	11.4%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

Table 3.6: *Mother’s Occupation*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Legal	7	4.0%
Medical	23	13.1%
Education	32	18.3%
High Management	10	5.7%
Food Prep/ Arts	14	8.0%
Office/Administrative Support	50	28.6%
N/A	39	22.3%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

The next set of variables was based on participants' relationship to shopping and brand recognition. Branded clothing was defined for participants within the survey as "clothing that bears the logo of a recognizable fashion designer". Out of all the participants, 61.4% said they wear branded clothing and 38.1% said they did not. See Table 3.7 below:

Table 3.7: *Do you wear branded clothing?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
No	67	38.1%
Yes	108	61.4%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

When asked how many articles of branded clothing these women own, 34.1% indicated that, "most of my clothing is branded items". Only 6.3% of women surveyed said they did not own any articles of branded clothing. The rest of the results are located in Table 3.8 below:

Table 3.8: *How many name branded clothing articles do you own?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
None	11	6.3%
2-5	35	19.9%
6-10	35	19.9%
11-20	32	18.2%
Most of my clothing is branded items	60	34.1%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

Participants were given 5 statements and told to "select all that apply" in regards to why they like to wear branded clothing. The statements were: They have better quality, they have better design, they make me feel more confident, I've been exposed to branded clothing from someone in my family, and I want to be like the rest of my classmates. The most common response was that 'branded clothing had better quality' (35.2%), followed by 'branded clothing has better design'. Out of the 38.1% of women who said they did not wear branded clothing, they also had to



indicate why. The most common response to this was that ‘branded clothing is too expensive’, followed by ‘their design isn’t any different than non-branded clothing’. See Table 3.9 below:

Table 3.9: *If you answered “no” to wearing branded clothing, why do you not wear it?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
I don’t want to look like the rest of my classmates.	7	10.1%
Their design isn’t any different than non-branded clothing.	11	15.9%
Their quality isn’t better than non-branded clothes.	10	14.5%
They are too expensive.	41	59.4%
<b>Total</b>	69	100.0%

In regards to how much people spend annually for clothing, 39.8% (most) spent 0-\$500, 25.9% spent \$501-\$1,000, 19.9% spent \$1,001-\$3,000, 8.4% spent \$3,001-\$5,000, and 6% spent over \$5,001. See Table 3.10 below:

Table 3.10: *How much do you spend annually for clothing?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
0-\$500	66	39.8%
\$501-\$1,000	43	25.9%
\$1,001-\$3,000	33	19.9%
\$3,001-\$5,000	14	8.4%
\$5,001+	10	6.0%
<b>Total</b>	166	100.0%

Participants were asked where they do most of their shopping. The options were: Big Department Stores, Online, Outlets and small boutiques. The most frequent response was big department stores (38.1%). See Table 3.11 below:

Table 3.11: *Where do you do most of your shopping?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
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Big Department Stores	67	38.1%
Online	61	34.7%
Outlets	29	16.5%
Small Boutiques	18	10.2%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

When asked how often they went shopping, women's most frequent response was once per month, followed by 6-10 times per year. The results are included in Table 3.12 below:

Table 3.12: *How often do you go shopping for clothes/shoes?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
8+ /month	2	1.1%
4-7/ month	8	4.5%
2-3/ month	24	13.6%
Once/month	42	23.9%
6-10/ year	36	20.5%
5/ year	35	19.9%
Rarely, only if I need something	28	15.9%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

The survey asked women what percentage of clothing that they buy do they purchase on sale.

Thirty-eight percent of women said they purchase 50-70% of their clothing on sale. See Table 3.13 for the results:

Table 3.13: *What percentage of the clothes that you buy do you purchase on sale?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Less than 10%	5	2.8%
15%-30%	18	10.2%
30%-50%	48	27.3%
50%- 70%	68	38.6%
More than 70%	36	20.5%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

The women were asked where they were most likely to find out about what to wear and new trends. Participants were most likely to find out from their friends and peers about (39.8%), and the next most common way was from styles seen in stores. See Table 3.14 below:

Table 3.14: *Where are you most likely to find out about what to wear and new trends?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Celebrities	6	3.4%
Friends/Peers	70	39.8%
Magazine	11	6.3%
Styles I see in stores	45	25.6%
I don't care about new trends	43	24.4%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

Participants were asked who pays for the clothing they own and wear. The most common response was 'me' (the women themselves), followed by 'both' which meant both the woman and her parents share the cost of the clothes. See Table 3.15 below:

Table 3.15: *Who pays for the clothing you wear?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Me	77	44.0%
Parents	31	17.7%
Both	64	36.6%
Other	3	1.7%
Missing System	1	
<b>Total</b>	175	100.0%

The women were asked whether they had their own debit or credit card, or neither. A majority of respondents (77.3%) indicated that they had their own debit card. See Table 3.16 below:

Table 3.16: *Do you have your own credit card or debit card?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
No	5	2.8%
Yes, credit card	34	19.3%
Yes, debit card	136	77.3%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

The women were given 7 brands of jeans/stores and asked to select which one they would most likely buy from. A majority of the women (n=65) said American Eagle is the place they would go and the least frequent response was a tie between more elite brands named Rag & Bone and Top Shop (both 4%). See Table 3.17 below:

Table 3.17: *You're purchasing jeans. Which brand would you buy?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
American Eagle	62	35.2%
Forever 21	17	9.7%
H&M	22	12.5%
J-BRAND	22	12.5%
Lucky Brand Jeans	28	15.9%
RAG&BONE	7	4.0%
Top Shop	7	4.0%
Uniqlo	5	2.8%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

In order to find out how price sensitive the women were, the survey asked how important is price in determining whether or not you will buy something you found if you “loved” the item? Only n=1 person claimed they would buy the item no matter how much it cost, while many of the respondents— 48.3%, proved to be price sensitive when they said price was ‘important’. See Table 3.18 below.

Table 3.18: *How important is price when you find something you love?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Crucial	27	15.3%
Important	85	48.3%
Not important	6	3.4%
Somewhere in the middle	56	31.8%
I'm buying it no matter what	1	.6%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

Participants were asked to rate 5 different criteria on order of importance when it comes to purchasing new clothing, From 1 (most important) to 5 (least important). The categories were as



I presented participants with 11 questions that included colored pictures of the same article of clothing (shoes, scarves, jeans, etc.) with different information about what brand it was, where it was from and how much it cost. Some items had just the brand name and/or logo included in the pictures, others had just price, some had both the brand name and price and a few had neither. I asked the women which brand they would buy if given the option from the items I presented, and they could choose to buy one of the options given, or none or select “other” if they wanted to. The first question was which type of branded workout attire they would buy. The options were between a highly priced brand (Lululemon), a moderately priced brand (Athleta) and a lower priced brand (American eagle outfitters). Many of the women (34.7%) chose Lululemon, the high-end brand. Most of the picture questions had a range of options that were low, medium and high for either the price or brand quality. The results are included in Table 3.21:

Table 3.21: *Where are you most likely to buy workout attire from?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
<b>American Eagle</b>	20	11.4%
<b>Lululemon</b>	61	34.7%
<b>Athleta</b>	13	7.4%
<b>None</b>	29	16.5%
<b>Other</b>	53	30.1%
Total	176	100.0%

Participants were asked where they would buy jeans. There were four options of brands presented. Many of the women (31.3%) selected “Other”. See Table 3.22 below:

Table 3.22: *Where are you most likely to buy jeans from?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
H&M	43	24.4%
JBRAND	19	10.8%
Joe’s	18	10.2%
True Religion	20	11.4%
None	21	11.9%

Other	55	31.3%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

When asked which tank top they would buy, 53.4% of participants selected the cheaper option.

See results in Table 3.23 below:

Table 3.23: *Which tank top are you more likely to buy?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
\$34 C&C Tank	39	22.2%
\$5 Tank	94	53.4%
None	32	18.2%
Other	11	6.3%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

Majority of participants (55.7%) indicated that they would buy the cheapest of the three black sweaters presented. See Table 3.24 below:

Table 3.24: *Which black sweater would you purchase?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
\$34	98	55.7%
\$128	34	19.3%
\$242	7	4.0%
None	30	17.0%
Other	7	4.0%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

When presented with pictures of three types of athletic headbands, n=53 people chose the cotton headband and n=45 people chose the Lululemon headband. Results are below in Table 3.25:

Table 3.25: *Which athletic headband would you purchase?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Cotton	53	30.1%
Lululemon	45	25.6%
Under Armour	36	20.5%
None	38	21.6%
Other	4	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

Participants indicated that they would rather buy the knock-of shoes as opposed to the expensive branded shoes. There was no brand name or price indicated on these pictures. See Table 3.26 below:

Table 3.26: *Which pair of shoes would you buy?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Knock-offs	85	48.3%
Rag & Bone	56	31.8%
None	31	17.6%
Other	4	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

Majority of women said they would buy the \$38 scarf over the \$215 one (only 5.7% of people said they would buy the latter). See Table 3.27 below:

Table 3.27: *Which scarf would you purchase?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
\$38	128	72.7%
\$215	10	5.7%
None	31	17.6%
Other	7	4.0%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

When asked which sweatpants they would buy, majority of participants claimed they would buy none. See Table 3.28 below:

Table 3.28: *Which sweatpants are you more likely to purchase?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
\$148 Free City	10	5.7%
\$80 James Perse	61	34.7%
None	95	54.0%
Other	10	5.7%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

Participants were given the choice between two rompers, a cheap one and an expensive one. The largest number of people (n=80) claimed they wouldn't buy either, n=73 said they would buy the cheap one and n=18 people said they would buy the expensive romper. See Table 3.29 below:



Table 3.29: *Which romper would you buy?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
\$18	73	41.5%
\$198	18	10.2%
None	80	45.5%
Other	5	2.8%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

Women were asked which hat they would buy. Sixty-nine percent said they would buy the one that was \$22 over the \$225 one. Participants would rather buy no hat (20.5%) than by the more expensive one. See Table 3.30 below:

Table 3.30: *Which hat would you buy?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
\$22	122	69.3%
\$225	11	6.3%
None	36	20.5%
Other	7	4.0%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

When given the choice between fashionable sneakers (both on sale), a majority of women chose the cheaper brand as opposed to the more expensive one. See Table 3.31 below:

Table 3.31: *Which pair of shoes are you more likely to purchase?*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Superga	82	46.6%
Vince	21	11.9%
None	68	38.6%
Other	5	2.8%
<b>Total</b>	176	100.0%

Using confirmatory factor analysis, on the set of 27 shopping motivation measures, I identified 5 dimensions of shopping motivation: brand consciousness, social aspects, quality consciousness, price consciousness, and class position.

The index of brand consciousness was constructed from a series of 5 variables (questions 30, 31, 34, 37 and 38—from the survey in the appendix). Respondents most often scored 2.00-

3.00 on the index, indicating high-moderate brand consciousness. These results are reported in Table 3.32 below.

The index of social aspects of shopping was created from 8 variables (questions 28, 32, 36, 40, 41, 50, 52, and 53 from the questionnaire in the appendix). Respondents most often scored 2.00 on the index, indicating moderate social appeal of shopping. These results are reported in Table 3.32 below.

The index of quality consciousness was constructed from a series of 4 variables (questions 35, 42, 49 and 54—from the survey in the appendix). Respondents most often scored 3.00 on the index, indicating moderate quality consciousness. These results are reported in Table 3.32 below.

The index of price consciousness was constructed from a series of 4 variables (questions 43, 46, 47 and 48— from the survey in the appendix). Respondents most often scored 2.00 on the index, indicating that respondents are more sensitive to price than not. These results are reported in Table 3.32 below.

The index of class position was constructed from a series of 2 variables (questions “29 and 44—from the survey in the appendix). Respondents most often scored 2.00 on the index, indicating that class position matters. These results are reported in Table 3.32 below.

	Brand Consciousness	Social Aspects	Quality Consciousness	Price Consciousness	Class Position
	<b>Valid Percent</b>				
1.00=High	12.2%	3.5%	6.4%	38.6%	7.5%
2.00	33.1%	49.7%	20.9%	43.9%	34.1%
3.00=Moderate	27.9%	41.6%	43.6%	12.9%	31.8%
4.00	25.6%	5.2%	26.7%	3.5%	19.7%
5.00=Low	1.2%	N/A	2.3%	1.2%	6.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### ***Chapter 4: Bivariate Analysis***

The relationships between socioeconomic status and consumption orientations affect consumption patterns. The results in this section show how the lifestyle, values, dispositions and expectations of particular social groups acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life cause women to embody the social structures which are embedded in us and then reproduced through tastes, preferences or actions when it comes to purchasing preferences of branded and non-branded clothing.

#### ***Class position and Shopping Preferences***

This section measures the different ways in which women from three distinct socioeconomic backgrounds have different consumption patterns based on their lifestyles, values, dispositions and expectations of the particular social groups they belong to. The three groups in this study come from their recorded total household income, and their perception of which class they fall into. The lower class women come from households with incomes ranging from \$10,000-\$79,000. The middle-class women household incomes range from \$80,000-\$149,000, and the upper-class respondents reported a household income of \$150,000 and above. In order to analyze one's perceived class and be able to relate it to the objective measure of social class, both the respondents' father's and mother's occupations were crossed with participants perceived class. Twenty percent of people who thought of themselves as "very poor" or "poor" said that their father's had occupations in either the food preparation, transportation or construction business. Respondents who perceived themselves as "lower-middle" or "middle-class" women had father's who worked mostly in the protective services (90.9%), or in the education sector (90%). Respondents who indicated that they considered themselves "rich" or "very rich" had father's who worked in the medical (33.3%) or legal (7.1%) professions or the office and administrative support occupations (75.9%). In regards to how the

participants considered themselves socioeconomically according to their mother’s occupation, the “very poor” and “poor” had occupations in the N/A category, meaning they either didn’t have jobs or the respondent did not provide a response. Women who considered themselves “lower-middle” or “middle” class had mothers with jobs in the protective service or education sectors of occupation. Women who said they were either “rich” or “very rich” had mothers who worked in the arts and food preparations industry or had high management positions. The  $\chi^2$  values for these tables suggest that we can be confident that these are in fact “real” differences not attributable to sampling error because the p values are less than .05.

See Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below:

**Table 4.1:** Attitudes about perceived class by Father’s Occupation

	Legal %	Medicine/Health %	Education %	High Management %	Protective Services %	Office/Admin Support %	Food/Transportation/Construction %	N/A %	Total %
Very Poor	0%	6.7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.8%	1.1% (2)
Poor	7.1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9.1%	20%	7.7%	4.5% (8)
Lower Middle	7.1%	0%	0%	11.5%	9.1%	11.1%	10%	38.5%	13.1% (23)
Middle	64.3%	60%	90%	65.4%	90.9%	75.9%	70%	26.9%	65.9% (116)
Rich	7.1%	33.3%	10%	23.1%	0%	11.1%	0%	19.2%	13.6% (24)
Very Rich	7.1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	.6% (1)
<b>Total (n)</b>	100% (14)	100% (15)	100% (10)	100% (26)	100% (11)	100% (54)	100% (20)	100% (26)	100% (176)

$\chi^2 = 78.863, p = .000$

**Table 4.2:** Attitudes about perceived class by Mother’s Occupation

	Legal %	Medicine/Health %	Education %	High Management %	Office/Admin Support %	FoodPrep/Arts %	N/A %	Total %
Very Poor	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	1.1% (2)

Poor	0%	4.3%	0%	0%	2.0%	0%	15.4%	4.6% (8)
Lower Middle	0%	8.7%	18.8%	0%	14%	28.6%	10.3%	13.1% (23)
Middle	71.4%	78.3%	75%	40%	72%	42.9%	59%	66.3% (116)
Rich	14.3%	8.7%	6.3%	60%	8%	28.6%	12.8%	13.7% (24)
Very Rich	14.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	.6% (1)
<b>Total (n)</b>	100% (7)	100% (23)	100% (32)	100% (10)	100% (50)	100% (14)	100% (39)	100% (175)

$\chi^2 = 76.691, p = .000$

Turning now to the relationship between socioeconomic status and how this affects women wearing branded clothing, the figures in Table 4.3 suggest that wearing branded clothing is not uniform across one's socioeconomic status. For the middle class and upper classes, more women said they wear branded clothing than did not. For instance, 69.7% of women who fall into the upper class wear branded clothing while 30.3% indicated that they did not. Similarly, 63.5% of women from the middle-class group said they wear branded clothing while 36.5% said they did not, almost mimicking the upper class numbers. However in the lowest class of the three, more women (52.6%) said they did *not* wear branded clothing as opposed to the 47.4% who said they did. However, we cannot be confident that these are “real” differences due to the fact that they are not statistically significant. See Table 4.3 below:

**Table 4.3:** Do you wear branded clothing by socioeconomic status

	Lower Class %	Middle Class %	Upper Class %	<b>Total %</b>
No	52.6%	36.5%	30.3%	37.7% (63)
Yes	47.4%	63.5%	69.7%	62.3% (104)
<b>Total (n)</b>	100% (38)	100% (63)	100% (66)	100% (167)

$\chi^2 = 5.181, p = .075$

When women were asked where they were most likely to find out about what to wear and new trends, the majority of people in all three socioeconomic classes indicated that their friends and peers are where they see the latest styles and what’s “in”. This indicated that there are huge social components to what we decide we want/don’t want to buy. The middle-class group is the one who ranked the highest in this category, and the lowest ranking came from the lower-class socioeconomic group. It is important to note that along with looking towards peers/friends for new trends, the upper class women (out of all three classes) were more likely to report that they simply look at ‘styles they see in stores’ or even at ‘celebrities or magazines’. This could mean that each class looks “up” (top-down control) at the higher social class to find out about new trends. Meaning that for the upper class to “look up” at new trends, they would have to look at trends in stores and at celebrities. This relationship is not statistically significant because the value of  $\chi^2$  was equal to .522, meaning these results may not be able to be applicable to the larger population. See Table 4.4 below for additional results:

**Table 4.4:** Where women are most likely to find out about new trends by socioeconomic status

	Lower Class %	Middle Class %	Upper Class %	Total %
Celebrities	5.3%	0%	6.1%	3.6% (6)
Friends/Peers	36.8%	42.9%	39.4%	40.1% (67)
Magazine	10.5%	3.2%	6.1%	6.0% (10)
Styles I see in stores	21.1%	25.4%	27.3%	25.1% (42)
I don’t care about new trends	26.3%	28.6%	21.2%	25.1% (42)
<b>Total (n)</b>	100% (38)	100% (63)	100% (66)	100% (167)

$\chi^2 = 7.140, p = .522$

Participants were asked who pays for the clothing they buy according to their socioeconomic status. The upper-class women were most likely to report that both they, and their parents pay for their clothing. On the other hand, a majority of both the middle class (57.1%) and lower class (52.6%) reported that they themselves pay for the clothes they buy. This could have an effect on the number of expensive items of branded clothing they choose to buy. These results are statistically significant such that these are “real” differences not attributable to sampling error. See Table 4.5 below:

**Table 4.5:** Who pays for your clothing by socioeconomic status

	Lower Class %	Middle Class %	Upper Class %	Total %
Me	52.6%	57.1%	27.3%	44.3% (74)
Parents	13.2%	7.9%	28.8%	17.4% (29)
Both	34.2%	34.9%	40.9%	37.1% (62)
Other	0%	0%	3.0%	1.2% (2)
<b>Total (n)</b>	100% (38)	100% (63)	100% (66)	100% (167)

$\chi^2 = 19.315, p = .004$

The women were asked about the number of branded articles of clothing they own, based on their socioeconomic status. The results fell where expected. The majority of the lower classes (42.1%) indicated that they either owned no branded clothing (13.2%) or 2-5 items (28.9%). However, it was fascinating that 34.2% of the lower classes (people with annual family incomes ranging from \$10,000-\$79,000) said that most of the clothing they owned is branded items. This is higher than the percent of middle-class women who said that most of their clothing was branded items (22.2%). A majority of the middle class said they either owned 6-10 or 11-20 items of branded clothing. Close to half (48.5%) of the upper class women indicated that most of

their clothing was branded items and only 1.5% of these women said that they owned no articles of branded clothing. These results are statistically significant with an  $\chi^2$  value of .026 indicating that the results are “real”. See Table 5.5 below:

**Table 5.5:** How many name branded clothing articles women own based on socioeconomic status

	Lower Class %	Middle Class %	Upper Class %	<b>Total %</b>
None	13.2%	7.9%	1.5%	6.6% (11)
2-5	28.9%	20.6%	13.6%	19.8% (33)
6-10	13.2%	25.4%	18.2%	19.8% (33)
11-20	10.5%	23.8%	16.7%	18% (30)
Most of my clothing is branded items	34.2%	22.2%	48.5%	35.3% (59)
<b>Total (n)</b>	100% 38	100% (63)	100% (66)	100% (167)

$\chi^2 = 20.348, p = .026$

Respondents were asked seven questions about how “influential” certain factors are when buying branded clothing. Three of the seven factors proved to be statistically significant, such that the results be representative of the larger population. The three factors were “influence of available income,” “you’ve seen other people wearing them and you like the way they look,” and “the well-known brand/logo of the product”.

In regards to one’s available income, everyone in the lower class group said this was influential in some way (either that it was influential, or strongly influential). The middle-class and upper class groups had similar responses. This is interesting because the upper class have more economic capital than the middle-class and lower class groups. Since the middle-class groups gave similar responses to the upper-class women, it may indicate that the middle-class may be striving to acquire cultural status (even though their economic capital is not as large as



the upper class women) by buying branded clothing. The  $\chi^2$  values for this table suggest that we can be confident that these are in fact “real” differences, not attributable to sampling error because the p value is equal to .015. See Table 5.6 below:

**Table 5.6:** Influence of available income on buying branded clothing by socioeconomic status

	Lower Class %	Middle Class %	Upper Class %	Total %
Strongly Non-influential	2.6%	3.2%	0%	1.8% (3)
Non-influential	0%	3.2%	0%	40.1% (67)
Neutral	2.6%	6.3%	7.6%	6.0% (10)
Influential	28.9%	41.3%	56.1%	44.3% (74)
Strongly Influential	50.0%	42.9%	34.8%	41.3% (69)
<b>Total (n)</b>	100% (38)	100% (63)	100% (66)	100% (167)

$\chi^2 = 21.956, p = .015$

The next influential factor was, “You have seen other people wearing them (branded clothing) and you like the way they look” according to socioeconomic status. The highest frequency of response rate across all classes was that this statement was influential or strongly influential. The highest response rate came from the upper-class group, however, out of the lower-class group, 57.9% of respondents said other people wearing branded clothing was either influential (50%) or strongly influential (7.9%). Branded clothing may represent some sort of symbolic value even if women don’t have the economic status to acquire as much of it as the upper and middle classes. The results in this test are statistically significant with a p value of .039, meaning the results may be applicable to a larger population. See Table 5.7 for additional results.

**Table 5.7:** Influence of other people wearing branded clothing and you liking the way they look according to socioeconomic status

	Lower Class %	Middle Class %	Upper Class %	Total %
Strongly Non-influential	10.5%	6.3%	0%	4.8% (8)
Non-influential	0%	3.2%	4.5%	40.1% (67)
Neutral	18.4%	17.5%	10.6%	6.0% (10)
Influential	50%	52.4%	56.1%	44.3% (74)
Strongly Influential	7.9%	17.5%	25.8%	18.6% (31)
<b>Total (n)</b>	100% (38)	100% (63)	100% (66)	100% (167)

$\chi^2 = 19.073, p = .039$

I asked respondents to indicate the degree of influence the “well-known brand/logo of the product” had on their decision to buy or not to buy branded clothing. According to one’s socioeconomic status, the poor were most likely to say the brand name was non-influential, while the middle class and upper classes both indicated that brand names and logos were influential to some degree. The upper classes were slightly more likely to say that the brand name of the product was influential in whether or not they would buy it. These results were statistically significant so that the results are “real” and may be applied to a larger population. See table 5.8 below:

**Table 5.8:** The degree of influence the well-known brand/logo name has on consumer’s purchasing decisions by socioeconomic status

	Lower Class %	Middle Class %	Upper Class %	Total %
Strongly Non-influential	23.7%	14.3%	12.2%	15.6% (26)
Non-influential	31.6%	27%	16.7%	24% (40)
Neutral	13.2%	23.8%	31.8%	24.6% (41)
Influential	10.5%	30.2%	31.8%	26.3% (44)

Strongly Influential	7.9%	0%	4.5%	3.6% (6)
<b>Total (n)</b>	100% (38)	100% (63)	100% (66)	100% (167)

$\chi^2 = 21.728, p = .017$

The other four factors did not prove to be statistically significant but do provide us with insight that it applicable to the population surveyed. Out of the women asked, almost 90% of upper class women said that their satisfaction with a previous product from the same brand, would be influential in their decision to buy branded clothing again. Similarly, 80% of middle-class women indicated this same influence, and only 6% said that this factor would not influence them. The lower class as well had similar results in that approximately 73% of women said that a brand they already know and liked would influence their decision to buy more items from the same brand.

### ***Class Position and Specific Brands***

The relationship between specific brands of clothing and women’s socioeconomic backgrounds were thoroughly analyzed. Jeans were one of the articles of clothing that women were asked about. The upper-class women indicated that they would buy Rag & Bone, J-Brand and Lucky Brand much more frequently than the middle class and lower class women did. Keeping in mind that these three brands are the most expensive and the upper class patterns are reflected in their decision to buy these brands as opposed to the other options presented. The lower-class women were most likely to say that they bought jeans from Forever 21 and American Eagle (two brands that are much more affordable). The middle-class women reported that they purchased jeans from American Eagle and H&M. There was one brand that was uniform throughout all socioeconomic groups. This was American Eagle. The results for this relationship are statistically significant, indicating that the results may be used to generalize the greater population. See table 5.9 below.

**Table 5.9:** Jean brands consumers would buy based on socioeconomic status

	Lower Class %	Middle Class %	Upper Class %	Total %
American Eagle	47.4%	34.9%	28.8%	35.3% (59)
Forever 21	18.4%	9.5%	4.5%	9.6% (16)
H&M	7.9%	22.2%	6.1%	12.6% (21)
J-Brand	2.6%	7.9%	24.2%	13.2% (22)
Lucky Brand Jeans	13.2%	12.7%	19.7%	15.6% (26)
Rag & Bone	0%	1.6%	9.1%	4.2% (7)
Top Shop	2.6%	4.8%	4.5%	4.2% (7)
Uniqlo	5.3%	3.2%	1.5%	3.0% (5)
<b>Total (n)</b>	100% (38)	100% (63)	100% (66)	100% (167)

$\chi^2 = 34.819, p = .004$

Respondents who indicated that seeing someone else wearing a brand and liking the way it looked were most likely to buy workout attire from Lululemon (the more expensive and prestigious of the brands given), as opposed to American Eagle, Athleta or somewhere else.

Women who said that seeing someone else wearing a brand was non-influential towards them buying it, were more likely to either not buy workout attire, or said they would buy it from somewhere else. See Table 5.10 below:

**Table 5.10:** Consumer brand preferences by “You’ve seen other people wearing branded clothing and like the way it looks”

	Strongly Influential %	Influential %	Neutral %	Non-influential %	Strongly non-influential %	Total %
American Eagle	21.9%	9.4%	8%	0%	12.5%	11.4%
Athleta	6.3%	10.4%	0%	0%	0%	7.4%

Lululemon	53.1%	33.3%	20%	40%	12.5%	34.7%
None	12.5%	14.6%	24%	0%	62.5%	16.5%
Other	6.3%	32.3%	48%	60%	12.5%	30.1%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>(n)</b>	(32)	(96)	(25)	(5)	(8)	(176)

$\chi^2 = 40.061, p = .005$

### ***Class Position and Consumption Orientation***

Participants were given a number of different statements and asked to what degree they agreed or did not agree with them. I recoded these into 5 major groups that would tell me more about the women’s consumption orientations and perspectives towards brands and which categories certain classes fell into by their consumption patterns. The categories were: How brand conscious are these women? The next looked at whether there were strong social ties that influenced women’s consumption patterns. The third explored whether the women were conscious of the quality of their clothing and the fourth measured how price conscious the women were. The final group looked at the ways in which class position was tied to branded clothing.

The relationships of all 5 factors were rated on a scale of 1.00 (High) to 5.00 (Low) and 3.00 was a moderate intensity. The smaller the number, the stronger the tie to the variable being analyzed. The relationship between brand consciousness and socioeconomic status showed that upper-class women are the most brand conscious out of the three groups, the middle-class women fall somewhere in the middle, close to the 3.00 range, and the lower class women are the least brand conscious out of all three groups.

When analyzing the relationship between social ties to brands and socioeconomic status, the lower-class women tended to fall somewhere in the middle while leaning towards weak

social ties with brands, the middle-class participants fell somewhere in the middle and the upper class fell in the middle but leaned towards stronger social ties with brands.

The relationship between how quality conscious the women were according to their socioeconomic status fell in the middle (3.00) for all classes.

The relationship between how price conscious the women are when it comes to branded clothing according to their socioeconomic background swayed towards high price consciousness. The majority of the lower-class groups (54.1%) showed highly price conscious patterns (a value of 1.00) when it came to brands, and the remaining lower-class opinions fell very close to this value as well (43.2%). The middle class women were slightly less price conscious having higher scores in the 2.00-3.00 range. The upper-class women were price conscious, but not nearly as much as the two lower groups. The rankings for the upper-class group were scattered from values of 1.00 (high)-4.00 (moderate/low) but majority (50.8%) were in the 2.00 value. The results here are statistically significant such that they are “real” and could be applied the greater population outside of this survey.

The relationship between the women’s opinion of class position having an effect on branded clothing according to a their socioeconomic status was interesting. The middle class had strong ties to class position when it came to agreeing with statements such as: “what someone wears is a good indicator of their class position” and “buying branded clothing indicates status”. Middle-class women seemed to agree strongly with these statements, while lower-class women leaned more towards 5.00 on the scale of wearing branded clothing indicating a higher class position. Upper class women fell in the middle in this scale. See Table 5.11 below:

**Table 5.11: Consumer Orientation by Class Position**

	Consumer Orientation	Socioeconomic Status			Total	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	P Value
	Brand Consciousness	Lower Class	Middle Class	Upper Class			
	High	5.4%	9.5%	20.3%	12.8%		
		32.4%	31.7%	35.9%	33.5%		
	Moderate	21.6%	33.3%	23.4%	26.8%		
		40.5%	22.2%	20.3%	25.6%		
	Low	0.0%	3.2%	0.0%	1.2%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	14.165	0.078
	Social Aspects						
	High	0.0%	4.8%	4.6%	3.6%		
		40.5%	47.6%	56.9%	49.7%		
		51.4%	38.1%	38.5%	41.2%		
	Low	8.1%	9.5%	0.0%	5.5%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	10.225	0.116
	Quality Consciousness						
	High	5.4%	4.8%	9.2%	6.7%		
		13.5%	22.6%	23.1%	20.7%		
	Moderate	45.9%	38.7%	44.6%	42.7%		
		29.7%	32.3%	21.5%	27.4%		
	Low	5.4%	1.6%	1.5%	2.4%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	5.761	0.674
	Price Consciousness						
	High	54.1%	42.6%	26.2%	38.7%		
		43.2%	36.1%	50.8%	43.6%		
	Moderate	2.7%	14.8%	16.9%	12.9%		
		0.0%	3.3%	6.2%	3.7%		
	Low	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%	1.2%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	16.488	0.036
	Class Position						
	High	5.4%	11.1%	4.6%	7.3%		
		24.3%	39.7%	36.9%	35.2%		
	Moderate	37.8%	28.6%	29.2%	30.9%		
		21.6%	17.5%	20.0%	19.4%		
	Low	10.8%	3.2%	9.2%	7.3%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	7.153	0.52

### ***Class Position and Consumption Patterns***

The survey contained 11 questions, which included pictures of items that either had the brand name, price tag, neither, or both on them. The relationship between socioeconomic status and which articles of clothing people were more likely to buy is in Table 5.12 below.

Due to the fact that class position shapes consumption orientations, it also affects consumption patterns. The women were given 11 questions with pictures of different articles of clothing and asked to select which they would buy. This was then analyzed based on their socioeconomic status. The tests I discuss in this section are all statistically significant, such that the results can be generalized to a wider population outside of this survey.

The first picture questioned women about where they buy workout attire. The lower classes indicated that they were most likely to not buy the brands presented to them, or buy workout attire elsewhere. Thirty-three percent of the middle-class said they would buy workout attire from Lululemon (the most expensive and elite brands of the ones given) and half of the upper class (50%) said they would also buy from Lululemon.

The next statistically significant picture question asked women where they would buy jeans from and was crossed with their class position. The lower classes indicated that they were most likely to buy from H&M (26.3%), the most inexpensive of the brands given, or from somewhere else (39.5%). The middle class also indicated that they would buy from H&M (31.7%) or somewhere else (33.3%). The upper-class frequencies were more scattered such that they said they would buy from J-Brand 25.8% (more expensive brand) followed by somewhere else not indicated on the survey (19.7%).

The next question asked women to indicate which white tank top they would buy. One was \$5 with no brand and the other was a C&C tank top for approximately \$35. The lowest class



said they would either buy the cheap tank top, or no tank top. The middle class said they would buy the cheap \$5 tank top (71.4%) and 19% said they would buy the branded tank top. Forty-seven percent of women in the upper class said they would buy the cheaper tank top, but numbers are much more close for this socioeconomic group since 33.3% of upper-class women said they would buy the more expensive, branded tank top.

The women were given a choice of three different sweaters; all were mostly identical except for their price. One was \$34, one was \$128, and the third was \$242. The majority (60.5%) of the lowest class said they would buy the \$34 sweater as did the middle class, whose numbers were even higher (66.7%) in regards to the amount of people who would buy the cheapest \$34 sweater. The upper class indicated that they were most likely to buy the \$34 sweater (42.4%) followed by the \$128 sweater (31.8%). It was interesting that out of all the classes the highest percentage of women who would buy the \$242 sweater came from the middle-class group. The lower-class group was most likely to say they wouldn't buy any of the black sweaters compared to the other two groups.

For one of the picture questions I decided to include a photo of a pair of heeled booties. What was distinct about this picture was that there was no name, or brand on either of the pairs of shoes. From what we have seen, we would assume that the upper class would still know the branded shoe without the brand name because of their cultural and social capital and through the responses we have seen on most of their other answers. However, 50% of upper-class women chose the knock-off, as opposed to the branded Rag & Bone bootie. This could be due to the fact that the women didn't know the brand of the shoe, further indicating that those who have the economic capital to afford it, will choose the brand named article of clothing over the non-branded article of clothing simply because of the name/logo it bears.

There was a question about which sweatpants consumers would buy. Both items were branded but distinct in price. One was an \$80 brand and the other was a \$148 brand. Majority of the lowest class (73.7%) said they would buy neither and 15.8% said they would buy the \$80 brand. The middle-class women showed the same patterns with less exacerbated numbers: 61.9% said they would buy neither pair of sweatpants and 33.3% said they would buy the \$80 pair. The upper class tells a different story. Majority (50%) said they would buy the \$80 James Perse sweatpants, 33.3% said they would buy neither, and 9.1% said they would buy the \$148 Free City Pair.

Similar stories are extracted from the variables but are not statistically significant; athletic headband, scarf, romper, beanie Hat, and fashionable sneakers. See table 5.12 below for additional results:

**Table 5.12:** Women’s purchasing preferences according to socioeconomic status:

	Purchasing Preferences	Socioeconomic Status			Total	Chi-Square (x <sup>2</sup> )	P Value
	Workout Attire	Lower Class	Middle Class	Upper Class			
	American Eagle	15.8%	12.7%	9.1%	12.0%		
	Athleta	10.5%	7.9%	6.1%	7.8%		
	Lululemon	10.5%	33.3%	50.0%	34.7%		
	None	23.7%	17.5%	13.6%	17.4%		
	Other	39.5%	28.6%	21.2%	28.1%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	16.711	0.033
	Jeans						
	H&M	26.3%	31.7%	16.7%	24.6%		
	J Brand	0.0%	3.2%	25.8%	11.4%		
	Joe's	5.3%	9.5%	13.6%	10.2%		
	True Religion	18.4%	12.7%	9.1%	12.6%		
	None	39.5%	33.3%	19.7%	29.3%		
	Other	10.5%	9.5%	15.2%	12.0%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	31.170	0.001
	Tank-Top						
	C&C	10.5%	19.0%	33.3%	22.8%		
	\$5	39.5%	71.4%	47.0%	54.5%		
	None	36.8%	6.3%	15.2%	16.8%		
	Other	13.2%	3.2%	4.5%	6.0%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	29.337	0.000
	Black Sweater						
	\$34	60.5%	66.7%	42.4%	19.2%		
	\$128	7.9%	12.7%	31.8%	4.2%		
	\$242	2.6%	6.3%	3.0%	55.7%		
	None	26.3%	12.7%	16.7%	17.4%		
	Other	2.6%	1.6%	6.1%	3.6%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	18.633	0.017
	Athletic Headband						
	Cotton	39.5%	34.9%	21.2%	30.5%		
	Lululemon	18.4%	20.6%	34.8%	25.7%		
	Under Armour	21.1%	20.6%	19.7%	21.6%		
	None	18.4%	23.8%	21.2%	1.8%		
	Other	2.6%	0.0%	3.0%	20.4%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	9.014	0.341
	Heels						
	Knock-offs	57.9%	41.3%	50.0%	48.5%		
	Rag & Bone	21.1%	34.9%	36.4%	32.3%		
	None	18.4%	23.8%	10.6%	17.4%		
	Other	2.6%	0.0%	3.0%	1.8%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	8.465	0.206
	Scarf						
	\$38	68.4%	69.8%	77.3%	72.5%		
	\$215	2.6%	4.8%	9.1%	6.0%		
	None	23.7%	25.4%	7.6%	18.0%		
	Other	5.3%	0.0%	6.1%	3.6%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	12.562	0.051
	Sweatpants						
	\$80 Jperse	15.8%	33.3%	50.0%	35.9%		
	\$148 FreeCity	5.3%	3.2%	9.1%	6.0%		
	None	73.7%	61.9%	33.3%	53.5%		
	Other	5.3%	1.6%	7.6%	4.8%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	21.184	0.002
	Romper						
	\$18	50.0%	41.3%	37.9%	41.9%		
	\$198	7.9%	9.5%	13.6%	10.8%		
	None	39.5%	49.2%	43.9%	44.9%		
	Other	2.6%	0.0%	4.5%	2.4%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	5.055	0.537
	Beanie Hat						
	\$22	63.2%	74.6%	68.2%	69.5%		
	\$225	2.6%	7.9%	7.6%	6.6%		
	None	28.9%	17.5%	18.2%	20.4%		
	Other	5.3%	0.0%	6.1%	3.6%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	7.115	0.310
	Sneakers						
	Superga	42.1%	52.4%	45.5%	47.3%		
	Vince	5.3%	15.9%	12.1%	12.0%		
	None	50.0%	30.2%	39.4%	38.3%		
	Other	2.6%	1.6%	3.0%	2.4%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	5.597	0.470

### ***Consumption Orientations and Consumption Patterns***

The next relationships observed were the women's consumption patterns according to their consumption orientations. The women's consumption patterns were analyzed based on the 11 picture questions and the consumption orientations were according to their brand consciousness, social aspects, quality consciousness, price consciousness and class position.

#### ***Brand Consciousness***

The first relationship that was statistically significant is how brand consciousness affects purchasing patterns. Women that had high brand consciousness, said they would buy Lululemon (71.4%) and when women became less brand conscious they were more likely to indicate that they bought workout attire from somewhere else, or still from Lululemon.

The next significant relationship was between how brand conscious the women are and which jeans they would purchase. The most brand conscious women (value of 1.00) said they would buy from the two most expensive brands: J-Brand and True Religion (both 28.6%). The least brand conscious women were likely to buy jeans from H&M or from none of the names listed.

The relationship between brand consciousness and which tank top consumers would buy indicated that the most brand conscious consumers, majority of the time, would buy the branded tank top (57.1%) while the least brand conscious women would buy either the \$5 tank top or neither tank top.

The relationship between the purchasing preference of the black sweater and brand consciousness indicated that the most brand conscious women would buy the \$128 sweater, and these women had the highest (although still very low- 4.8%) preference for buying the \$242 sweater. The least brand conscious women said they would buy the \$34 sweater.

The same correlation continues for the next relationship between which athletic headband women would buy based on how brand conscious they are. Sixty-one percent of women who were the most brand conscious indicated that they would buy the most expensive and highly recognized brand- Lululemon, followed by the second most expensive brand, Under Armour at 23.8%. The consumers that were in the middle, or moderate region when it came to brand consciousness said they were most likely to buy the cotton athletic headband—31.3% (sold in stores such as Target and Walmart and CVS) or none of the options (29.2%). The least brand conscious people showed the same trends as the moderately brand conscious women.

The next statistically significant relationship was between how brand conscious the women are and which sweatpants they would buy. The most brand conscious women (1.00 on the scale) said they were more likely to buy sweatpants from James Perse for \$80, 57.1% said this. Moving down the scale towards less and least brand conscious, women start to indicate that they would buy the James Perse Sweatpants, then move towards buying neither pair of sweatpants— the less and less brand conscious they become. As suspected, 19% (and the largest percent) of the most brand conscious women say they would buy the branded and most expensive \$148 Free city sweatpants.

The relationship between the romper and degree of brand consciousness tells us that the most brand conscious women would buy neither romper (38.1%), followed by the \$198 romper (33.3%) and then the \$18 romper (28.6%). The least brand conscious people said they would buy neither romper and the women in the moderate region of brand consciousness said they would buy neither romper, or the \$18 one.

The relationship between purchasing preferences for the hat and brand consciousness were distinct. Even the most brand conscious women said they would buy the \$22 hat (57.1%)

over the \$225 hat (19%). This may be due to the fact that \$225 is a huge amount to pay for a hat. I would be curious if there had been a hat priced in the middle of the \$22-\$225 range, what the most brand conscious women would have preferred.

The relationship between brand consciousness and which pair of fashion sneakers women would buy indicated that the most brand conscious women would buy the less expensive of the two brands of shoes (Supergas over Vince), 52.4% would buy Supergas and 23.8% would buy Vince or none of the shoes. As the women become less brand conscious they are more likely to report the desire to buy neither shoe, and less likely to report that they would buy the more expensive Vince brand. See table 5.13 below for additional results:

**Table 5.13: Purchasing preferences by degree of brand consciousness:**

Purchasing Preferences	Consumer Orientation	Brand Consciousness					Total	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	P Value
			High	Moderate	Low				
Workout Attire	American Eagle	9.5%	7.0%	14.6%	15.9%	0.0%	11.6%	46.844	0.000
	Athleta	9.5%	10.5%	8.3%	2.3%	0.0%	7.6%		
	Lululemon	71.4%	50.9%	18.8%	13.6%	50.0%	34.9%		
	None	4.8%	8.8%	16.7%	31.8%	50.0%	16.9%		
	Other	4.8%	22.8%	41.7%	36.4%	0.0%	29.1%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
Jeans	H&M	14.3%	15.8%	31.3%	36.4%	0.0%	25.0%	46.330	0.001
	J Brand	28.6%	12.3%	8.3%	2.3%	0.0%	10.5%		
	Joe's	14.3%	15.8%	8.3%	2.3%	0.0%	9.9%		
	True Religion	28.6%	12.3%	6.3%	6.8%	50.0%	11.6%		
	None	4.8%	8.8%	6.3%	22.7%	50.0%	11.6%		
	Other	9.5%	35.1%	39.6%	29.5%	0.0%	31.4%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
Tank-Top	C&C	57.1%	22.8%	20.8%	9.1%	0.0%	22.7%	24.992	0.015
	\$5	23.8%	57.9%	60.4%	59.1%	50.0%	54.7%		
	None	14.3%	14.0%	16.7%	20.5%	50.0%	16.9%		
	Other	4.8%	5.3%	2.1%	11.4%	0.0%	5.8%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
Black Sweater	\$34	23.8%	59.6%	62.5%	56.8%	50.0%	55.2%	43.171	0.000
	\$128	61.9%	24.6%	10.4%	2.3%	50.0%	19.8%		
	\$242	4.8%	3.5%	4.2%	4.5%	0.0%	4.1%		
	None	9.5%	10.5%	18.8%	29.5%	0.0%	17.4%		
	Other	0.0%	1.8%	4.2%	6.8%	0.0%	3.5%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
Athletic Headband	Cotton	4.8%	31.6%	31.3%	38.6%	50.0%	30.2%	40.535	0.001
	Lululemon	61.9%	26.3%	20.8%	13.6%	0.0%	25.6%		
	Under Armour	23.8%	2980.0%	18.8%	11.4%	0.0%	20.9%		
	None	9.5%	12.3%	29.2%	29.5%	50.0%	21.5%		
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.8%	0.0%	1.7%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
Heels	Knock-offs	47.6%	47.4%	52.1%	50.0%	0.0%	48.8%	13.187	0.356
	Rag & Bone	33.3%	36.8%	31.3%	22.7%	50.0%	31.4%		
	None	19.0%	15.8%	16.7%	20.5%	50.0%	18.0%		
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.8%	0.0%	1.7%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
Scarf	\$38	85.7%	75.4%	75.0%	63.6%	50.0%	73.3%	17.076	0.147
	\$215	4.8%	8.8%	6.3%	2.3%	0.0%	5.8%		
	None	9.5%	14.0%	18.8%	22.7%	50.0%	17.4%		
	Other	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	11.4%	0.0%	3.5%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
Sweatpants	\$80 Jperse	57.1%	49.1%	25.0%	18.2%	50.0%	35.5%	31.874	0.001
	\$148 FreeCity	19.0%	3.5%	4.2%	4.5%	0.0%	5.8%		
	None	23.8%	42.1%	68.8%	65.9%	50.0%	53.5%		
	Other	0.0%	5.3%	2.1%	11.4%	0.0%	5.2%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
Romper	\$18	28.6%	52.6%	37.5%	40.9%	0.0%	41.9%	30.748	0.002
	\$198	33.3%	12.3%	4.2%	2.3%	0.0%	9.9%		
	None	38.1%	33.3%	58.3%	50.0%	100.0%	45.9%		
	Other	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	6.8%	0.0%	2.3%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
Beanie Hat	\$22	57.1%	77.2%	72.9%	65.9%	0.0%	69.8%	27.621	0.006
	\$225	19.0%	7.0%	2.1%	4.5%	0.0%	6.4%		
	None	23.8%	15.8%	22.9%	18.2%	100.0%	20.3%		
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	11.4%	0.0%	3.5%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
Sneakers	Superga	52.4%	49.1%	47.9%	40.9%	0.0%	46.5%	22.460	0.033
	Vince	23.8%	15.8%	10.4%	4.5%	0.0%	12.2%		
	None	23.8%	35.1%	41.7%	45.5%	100.0%	39.0%		
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	2.3%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

### *Social Ties*

The next series of relationships observed were between the social ties women felt towards brands (consumption orientation) and their actual consumption patterns (which brand they would buy when given the option).

The first statistically significant relationship was between which tank top women would buy in regards to how strongly they felt social ties related to brands. The stronger the social tie, the more likely women were to buy the more expensive C&C tank top (66.7%) as opposed to the 33.3% who said they would buy the \$5 non-branded tank top. Not surprisingly, the women with the lowest social ties to branded clothing indicated that they would buy the \$5 tank top (66.7%) over the branded one (11.1%).

The relationship between the social ties to shopping and which black sweater women would buy showed a similar trend. The women with the highest social ties to shopping indicated that they were the most likely to buy the \$128 sweater (66.7%) followed by 16.7% of women with strong social ties to fashion saying they would buy either the \$34 or \$242 sweater. As the social ties become less strong, the numbers of women who buy the most expensive sweater decrease, and the women who buy the \$34 sweater increase, along with the increase of women who indicate that they would buy none of the pictured sweaters.

The relationship between the women who had strong social ties to shopping according to which athletic headband they would purchase indicated that the strong social ties meant that they would buy the Lululemon headband (50%), followed by the Under Armour headband (33.3%). The women with the weakest ties to the social aspects of shopping said they would buy the cotton headband (44.4%), followed by none of the headbands (22.2%).



The statistically significant relationship between which romper women would buy according to their opinion about the social ties of shopping showed that the women with the strongest ties to social aspects would buy the \$198 romper (50%) as opposed to the 33.3% of women who would buy the \$18 romper. The moderate region of women who had social ties to shopping said they would buy the \$18 romper (~40%) and the women with the lowest social ties to fashion indicated that they would buy neither romper (66.7%).

The final statistically significant relationship for the degree of social ties women had to shopping was with which pair of fashion sneakers they would purchase. The women with the strongest social ties to fashion said they would buy the more expensive brand of Vince sneakers (50%) followed by the lower priced, but still branded Superga sneakers (33.3%). The women with the weakest social ties to fashion indicated that they were most likely to buy the Superga sneakers or none (both 33.3%). See table 5.14 below for additional results:

**Table 5.14: Purchasing Preferences by degree of social ties towards shopping:**

	Purchasing Preferences	Consumer Orientation	Social Aspects				Total	Chi-Square (x <sup>2</sup> )	P Value
			High	Moderate	Moderate	Low			
	Workout Attire	American Eagle	0.0%	11.6%	11.1%	22.2%	11.6%		
		Athleta	0.0%	8.1%	8.3%	0.0%	750.0%		
		Lululemon	66.7%	43.0%	22.2%	33.3%	34.7%		
		None	16.7%	12.8%	20.8%	22.2%	16.8%		
		Other	16.7%	24.4%	37.5%	22.2%	29.5%		
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	14.045	0.298
	Jeans	H&M	33.3%	22.1%	25.0%	44.4%	24.9%		
		J Brand	33.3%	14.0%	5.6%	0.0%	10.4%		
		Joe's	0.0%	12.8%	8.3%	11.1%	10.4%		
		True Religion	16.7%	12.8%	8.3%	22.2%	11.6%		
		None	0.0%	8.1%	18.1%	0.0%	11.6%		
		Other	16.7%	30.2%	34.7%	22.2%	31.2%		
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	17.824	0.272
	Tank-Top	C&C	66.7%	30.2%	11.1%	11.1%	22.5%		
		\$5	33.3%	50.0%	59.7%	66.7%	54.3%		
		None	0.0%	15.1%	22.2%	11.1%	17.3%		
		Other	0.0%	4.7%	6.9%	11.1%	5.8%		
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	17.179	0.046
	Black Sweater	\$34	16.7%	55.8%	61.1%	33.3%	55.5%		
		\$128	66.7%	24.4%	8.3%	33.3%	19.7%		
		\$242	16.7%	3.5%	4.2%	0.0%	4.0%		
		None	0.0%	15.1%	20.8%	22.2%	17.3%		
		Other	0.0%	1.2%	5.6%	11.1%	3.5%		
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	24.788	0.016
	Athletic Headband	Cotton	0.0%	29.1%	31.9%	44.4%	30.1%		
		Lululemon	50.0%	36.0%	12.5%	11.1%	25.4%		
		Under Armour	33.3%	20.9%	20.8%	11.1%	20.8%		
		None	16.7%	14.0%	31.9%	22.2%	22.0%		
		Other	0.0%	0.0%	2.8%	11.1%	1.7%		
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	26.555	0.009
	Heels	Knock-offs	50.0%	50.0%	51.4%	22.2%	29.1%		
		Rag & Bone	50.0%	34.9%	25.0%	33.3%	31.2%		
		None	0.0%	15.1%	20.8%	33.3%	17.9%		
		Other	0.0%	0.0%	2.8%	11.1%	1.7%		
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	12.966	0.164
	Scarf	\$38	66.7%	76.7%	70.8%	55.6%	72.8%		
		\$215	16.7%	7.0%	4.2%	0.0%	5.8%		
		None	16.7%	12.8%	22.2%	33.3%	17.9%		
		Other	0.0%	3.5%	2.8%	11.1%	3.5%		
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	7.936	0.541
	Sweatpants	\$80 Jperse	83.3%	40.7%	26.4%	22.2%	35.3%		
		\$148 FreeCity	0.0%	8.1%	4.2%	0.0%	5.8%		
		None	16.7%	47.7%	62.5%	66.7%	53.8%		
		Other	0.0%	3.5%	6.9%	11.1%	5.2%		
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	13.966	0.124
	Romper	\$18	33.3%	44.2%	43.1%	11.1%	41.6%		
		\$198	50.0%	14.0%	1.4%	11.1%	9.8%		
		None	16.7%	40.7%	52.8%	66.7%	46.2%		
		Other	0.0%	1.2%	2.8%	11.1%	2.3%		
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	25.755	0.002
	Beanie Hat	\$22	66.7%	74.4%	65.3%	55.6%	69.4%		
		\$225	33.3%	4.7%	5.6%	11.1%	6.4%		
		None	0.0%	19.8%	23.6%	22.2%	20.8%		
		Other	0.0%	1.2%	5.6%	11.1%	3.5%		
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	13.917	0.125
	Sneakers	Superga	33.3%	51.2%	43.1%	33.3%	46.2%		
		Vince	50.0%	11.6%	8.3%	22.2%	12.1%		
		None	16.7%	37.2%	44.4%	33.3%	39.3%		
		Other	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	11.1%	2.3%		
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	17.521	0.041

### *Quality Consciousness*

The next series of relationships observed were between how quality conscious the women were (consumption orientation) and their actual consumption patterns (which brand they would buy when given the option).

The first statistically significant relationship was between the degree to which the women are quality conscious and where they were most likely to buy workout attire from. The women with high quality consciousness said they would buy workout attire from Lululemon (81.8%). This leads to the assumption that women think quality comes from the high-end brands. Especially since the women who ranked low on the quality conscious scale said they would either buy none of the listed brands, or buy from somewhere else. This same trend was true for where women would buy jeans from (although not statistically significant) high quality consciousness women said they would buy jeans from J-Brand and low quality conscious women said they would buy jeans from H&M.

The next statistically significant relationship is between the women's degree of quality consciousness and which white tank top they would buy. The most quality conscious women again would buy the C&C branded tank top (72.7%) over the 27.3% of women who would buy the \$5 tank top. As the degree of quality consciousness decreases, women become more likely to buy the \$5 tank-top and less likely to buy the C&C tank top.

The relationship between the degree of quality conscious the women compared to which athletic headband they would buy shoes that again, the more quality conscious they are, the more likely they are to buy branded items over non-branded items. For instance: 63.6% of highly quality conscious women said they would buy Lululemon headbands and 0% said they would

buy cotton headbands. The least quality conscious people tended to buy either the cotton headband or none of the headbands given.

The scarf is one of the exceptions to the trend seen between quality conscious and purchasing preferences. The highly quality conscious women said they were most likely to buy the \$38 scarf over the \$215 scarf. However, out of all the levels of quality consciousness, the highest level had the largest percent of women who would buy the \$215 scarf— 18.2%. As the degree of quality consciousness became moderate, women still indicated that they would buy the \$38 scarf and when the degree of quality consciousness was low, women were most likely to say that they would buy neither of the scarves.

The final statistically significant relationship between the degree of quality consciousness and purchasing preferences came from which romper women would buy. The most quality conscious women said they would either buy the \$198 romper, or neither romper (both 45.5%). The moderately quality conscious people indicated that they would buy neither romper or the \$18 romper and the least quality conscious people said they would buy neither romper (75%). See table 5.15 below for additional results:

**Table 5.15: Purchasing preferences by degree of quality consciousness**

Purchasing Preferences	Consumer Orientation	Quality Consciousness					Total	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	P Value
		High	Moderate	Low					
Workout Attire	American Eagle	0.0%	13.9%	14.7%	6.5%	25.0%	11.6%		
	Athleta	9.1%	8.3%	8.0%	6.5%	0.0%	7.6%		
	Lululemon	81.8%	38.9%	36.0%	19.6%	0.0%	34.3%		
	None	0.0%	16.7%	16.0%	19.6%	50.0%	16.9%		
	Other	9.1%	22.2%	25.3%	47.8%	25.0%	29.7%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	28.495	0.028
Jeans	H&M	27.3%	19.4%	22.7%	28.3%	75.0%	25.0%		
	J Brand	36.4%	19.4%	6.7%	4.3%	0.0%	10.5%		
	Joe's	9.1%	19.4%	8.0%	8.7%	0.0%	10.5%		
	True Religion	9.1%	8.3%	14.7%	8.7%	25.0%	11.6%		
	None	9.1%	8.3%	10.7%	15.2%	0.0%	11.0%		
	Other	9.1%	25.0%	37.3%	34.8%	0.0%	31.4%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	29.413	0.080
Tank-Top	C&C	72.7%	25.0%	25.3%	4.3%	0.0%	22.1%		
	\$5	27.3%	55.6%	48.0%	69.6%	75.0%	54.7%		
	None	0.0%	19.4%	18.7%	17.4%	25.0%	17.4%		
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	8.0%	8.7%	0.0%	5.8%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	31.431	0.002
Black Sweater	\$34	27.3%	52.8%	53.3%	67.4%	50.0%	55.2%		
	\$128	54.5%	30.6%	18.7%	6.5%	0.0%	19.8%		
	\$242	9.1%	5.6%	4.0%	2.2%	0.0%	4.1%		
	None	9.1%	11.1%	18.7%	19.6%	50.0%	17.4%		
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	4.3%	0.0%	3.5%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	24.602	0.077
Athletic Headband	Cotton	0.0%	19.4%	38.7%	30.4%	50.0%	30.2%		
	Lululemon	63.6%	30.6%	26.7%	13.0%	0.0%	25.6%		
	Under Armour	27.3%	30.6%	18.7%	15.2%	0.0%	20.3%		
	None	9.1%	19.4%	13.3%	39.1%	50.0%	22.1%		
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	2.2%	0.0%	1.7%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	33.388	0.007
Heels	Knock-offs	63.6%	47.2%	44.0%	54.3%	50.0%	48.8%		
	Rag & Bone	36.4%	36.1%	32.0%	28.3%	0.0%	31.4%		
	None	0.0%	16.7%	21.3%	15.2%	50.0%	18.0%		
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	2.2%	0.0%	1.7%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	9.159	0.689
Scarf	\$38	72.7%	80.6%	74.7%	67.4%	25.0%	72.7%		
	\$215	18.2%	11.1%	4.0%	2.2%	0.0%	5.8%		
	None	9.1%	8.3%	18.7%	21.7%	75.0%	18.0%		
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	8.7%	0.0%	3.5%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	23.550	0.023
Sweatpants	\$80 Jperse	54.5%	50.0%	37.3%	19.6%	0.0%	35.5%		
	\$148 FreeCity	0.0%	8.3%	6.7%	4.3%	0.0%	5.8%		
	None	45.5%	41.7%	48.0%	69.6%	100.0%	53.5%		
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	8.0%	6.5%	0.0%	5.2%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	18.823	0.093
Romper	\$18	9.1%	50.0%	46.7%	34.8%	25.0%	41.3%		
	\$198	45.5%	16.7%	5.3%	4.3%	0.0%	9.9%		
	None	45.5%	30.6%	45.3%	58.7%	75.0%	46.5%		
	Other	0.0%	2.8%	2.7%	2.2%	0.0%	2.3%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	28.414	0.005
Beanie Hat	\$22	63.6%	75.0%	76.0%	56.5%	50.0%	69.2%		
	\$225	9.1%	8.3%	5.3%	6.5%	0.0%	6.4%		
	None	27.3%	16.7%	16.0%	28.3%	50.0%	20.9%		
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	8.7%	0.0%	3.5%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	12.424	0.412
Sneakers	Superga	54.5%	52.8%	52.0%	28.3%	50.0%	45.9%		
	Vince	18.2%	11.1%	13.3%	10.9%	0.0%	12.2%		
	None	27.3%	36.1%	32.0%	56.5%	50.0%	39.5%		
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	4.3%	0.0%	2.3%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	12.381	0.416

### *Price Consciousness*

The next series of relationships observed were between how price conscious the women were (the consumption orientation) and their actual consumption patterns (which brand they would buy when given the option).

The first statistically significant relationship is between the degree to which women are price conscious and where they are most likely to buy workout attire from. The women who were most price conscious bought workout attire from none of the brands listed, or from somewhere else. All of the women who fell under the least price conscious category indicated that they would buy workout attire from Lululemon. The people who were moderately price conscious said they would buy workout attire from Lululemon (63.6%) followed by Athleta (18.2%).

The next statistically significant relationship existed between how price conscious the women are and which tank top they were more likely to buy. The most price conscious women said they would buy the \$5 tank top as opposed to the branded tank top. The women who were moderately price conscious were split between the \$5 tank top and the branded more expensive tank top.

The next statistically significant relationship was between the degree of price consciousness and which black sweater women wanted to purchase. Sixty-two percent of the most price conscious women said they would buy the cheapest of the three tank tops- the \$34 one. The least price conscious people all said they would buy the \$128 black sweater. The women who were moderately price conscious said they would buy the \$128 sweater (50%) followed by the \$34 sweater (36.4%).

The relationship between price consciousness and which athletic headband women would purchase showed similar trends. The most price conscious women tended to prefer the least expensive cotton headband (42.4%) and the least price conscious women preferred the Lululemon headband. Women who were moderately price conscious fell somewhere in the middle on most of the headband options with a tilt towards the Lululemon option.

Women were asked which pair of heeled booties they would purchase in regards to price consciousness. The majority of the highly price conscious women chose to buy the knock-offs booties (even though there was no brand name/price on the photo) and the least price conscious women chose to buy the Rag & Bone Harrow booties which sell for \$550 full price. The moderately price conscious women were split between buying the Knock-off Rag & Bone booties and the genuine pair.

The relationship between which sweatpants women would buy in regards to how price conscious they are showed that 75.8% of women would buy neither the \$80 or \$148 pair of sweatpants (it is a lot for sweatpants, or an item of clothing that is less likely to be seen by the public). The less price conscious women are more likely say they wanted the \$80 James Perse sweatpants. Even the least price conscious women said they would prefer the \$80 sweatpants to the \$148 pair.

The next statistically significant relationship was between the degree of price consciousness by which romper women would buy. The most price conscious women said they would buy neither romper (60.6%) followed by the 36.4% who said they would buy the \$18 romper. Only 3% of women who were highly price conscious said they would buy the romper for \$198. The women who expressed a low degree of price consciousness were more likely to buy the \$198 romper. This is an article of clothing that the public would be more likely to see, as

opposed to the sweatpants, so even though there is a large gap in the price, women may be willing to spring for the \$198 romper because they know others will see it.

The relationship between the degree of price consciousness and which hat consumers would buy shows that the most price conscious women would buy the \$22 hat (75.8%) over the \$225 hat (0%). As the women became less price conscious they are more likely to buy the expensive hat and less likely to buy the cheaper of the two hats.

The last statistically significant relationship between price consciousness and purchasing preferences is with which pair of fashion sneakers women tend to buy based on how they respond to price. The most price conscious women tend to buy the Supergas (50%) followed by neither shoes (40.9%) and the least price conscious women tend to buy either none of the shoes or the more expensive Vince brand. As price consciousness decreases, the degree to which women will buy the Vince brand increases. See Table 5.16 below:



**Table 5.16: Purchasing preferences by degree of price consciousness**

Purchasing Preferences	Consumer Orientation	Price Consciousness					Total	Chi-Square (x <sup>2</sup> )	P Value
		High	Moderate	Low					
Workout Attire	American Eagle	15.2%	10.7%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%		
	Athleta	2.0%	9.3%	18.2%	0.0%	0.0%	7.6%		
	Lululemon	16.7%	37.3%	63.6%	66.7%	100.0%	34.5%		
	None	25.8%	14.7%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	17.0%		
	Other	39.4%	28.0%	9.1%	33.3%	0.0%	29.8%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	37.143	0.002
Jeans	H&M	28.8%	18.7%	40.9%	0.0%	0.0%	24.6%		
	J Brand	6.1%	10.7%	22.7%	16.7%	0.0%	10.5%		
	Joe's	7.6%	13.3%	13.6%	0.0%	0.0%	10.5%		
	True Religion	6.1%	14.7%	9.1%	33.3%	50.0%	11.7%		
	None	13.6%	12.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	11.7%		
	Other	37.9%	30.7%	13.6%	16.7%	50.0%	31.0%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	29.444	0.079
Tank-Top	C&C	13.6%	20.0%	45.5%	83.3%	0.0%	22.8%		
	\$5	62.1%	52.0%	45.5%	0.0%	100.0%	53.8%		
	None	21.2%	18.7%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	17.5%		
	Other	3.0%	9.3%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	5.8%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	30.853
Black Sweater	\$34	62.1%	60.0%	36.4%	0.0%	0.0%	55.0%		
	\$128	9.1%	16.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%	19.9%		
	\$242	1.5%	2.7%	9.1%	33.3%	0.0%	4.1%		
	None	24.2%	17.3%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	17.5%		
	Other	3.0%	4.0%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	3.5%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	54.916
Athletic Headband	Cotton	42.4%	25.3%	13.6%	0.0%	50.0%	29.8%		
	Lululemon	13.6%	28.0%	40.9%	50.0%	50.0%	25.1%		
	Under Armour	18.2%	21.3%	31.8%	16.7%	0.0%	21.1%		
	None	25.8%	22.7%	13.6%	16.7%	0.0%	22.2%		
	Other	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	1.8%		
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	29.998	0.024
Heels	Knock-offs	59.1%	45.3%	40.9%	33.3%	0.0%	49.1%		
	Rag & Bone	19.7%	33.3%	45.5%	50.0%	100.0%	31.0%		
	None	21.2%	18.7%	13.6%	0.0%	0.0%	18.1%		
	Other	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	1.8%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	22.843
Scarf	\$38	69.7%	73.3%	77.3%	66.7%	100.0%	72.5%		
	\$215	1.5%	6.7%	13.6%	16.7%	0.0%	5.8%		
	None	25.8%	16.0%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	18.1%		
	Other	3.0%	4.0%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	3.5%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	14.834
Sweatpants	\$80 Jperse	21.2%	34.7%	59.1%	66.7%	100.0%	34.5%		
	\$148 FreeCity	0.0%	10.7%	4.5%	16.7%	0.0%	5.8%		
	None	75.8%	48.0%	31.8%	0.0%	0.0%	54.4%		
	Other	3.0%	6.7%	4.5%	16.7%	0.0%	5.3%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	34.771
Romper	\$18	36.4%	49.3%	36.4%	16.7%	0.0%	40.9%		
	\$198	3.0%	5.3%	31.8%	50.0%	50.0%	9.9%		
	None	60.6%	41.3%	31.8%	16.7%	50.0%	46.8%		
	Other	0.0%	4.0%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	2.3%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	45.348
Beanie Hat	\$22	75.8%	69.3%	59.1%	50.0%	0.0%	69.0%		
	\$225	0.0%	5.3%	22.7%	16.7%	50.0%	6.4%		
	None	21.2%	21.3%	18.2%	16.7%	50.0%	21.1%		
	Other	3.0%	4.0%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	3.5%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	27.628
Sneakers	Superga	50.0%	46.7%	45.5%	33.3%	0.0%	46.8%		
	Vince	9.1%	8.0%	18.2%	50.0%	50.0%	11.7%		
	None	40.9%	42.7%	36.4%	0.0%	50.0%	39.8%		
	Other	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	1.8%		
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	25.631

### ***Branding and Status***

The next series of relationships observed were between the women's perception of branded clothing indicating status or a higher-class position (the consumption orientation) and what their concrete consumption patterns were (which brand they would buy when given the option).

All of the results are in the table below. There was one statistically significant relationship. This existed between a high belief that class position indicates status, and which athletic headband women would buy. The high degree of class position indicating status indicated that women would either buy the cotton headband or the Under Armour headband (30.8%) The least degree of class position indicating style opinions said that they would buy "none" of the headband brands/options presented. See table 5.17 below for additional results:

**Table 5.17:** Purchasing preferences by opinion of whether branded clothing indicates status

	Purchasing Preferences	Consumer Orientation						Total	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	P Value
		Class Position								
	Workout Attire	High	Moderate	Low						
	American Eagle	15.4%	10.2%	10.9%	17.6%	0.0%	11.6%			
	Athleta	0.0%	11.9%	7.3%	5.9%	0.0%	7.5%			
	Lululemon	38.5%	39.0%	27.3%	35.3%	41.7%	34.7%			
	None	23.1%	15.3%	14.5%	11.8%	41.7%	16.8%			
	Other	23.1%	23.7%	40.0%	29.4%	16.7%	29.5%			
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	16.734	0.403
	Jeans									
	H&M	15.4%	22.0%	29.1%	20.6%	41.7%	24.9%			
	J Brand	7.7%	15.3%	5.5%	11.8%	8.3%	10.4%			
	Joe's	15.4%	11.9%	7.3%	8.8%	16.7%	10.4%			
	True Religion	7.7%	13.6%	7.3%	17.6%	8.3%	11.6%			
	None	15.4%	6.8%	18.2%	8.8%	8.3%	11.6%			
	Other	38.5%	30.5%	32.7%	32.4%	16.7%	31.2%			
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	14.268	0.817
	Tank-Top									
	C&C	15.4%	28.8%	18.2%	23.5%	16.7%	22.5%			
	\$5	53.8%	55.9%	54.5%	52.9%	50.0%	54.3%			
	None	23.1%	10.2%	23.6%	11.8%	33.3%	17.3%			
	Other	7.7%	5.1%	3.6%	11.8%	0.0%	5.8%			
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	11.072	0.523
	Black Sweater									
	\$34	61.5%	49.2%	60.0%	61.8%	41.7%	55.5%			
	\$128	15.4%	25.4%	16.4%	14.7%	25.0%	19.7%			
	\$242	0.0%	6.8%	3.6%	2.9%	0.0%	4.0%			
	None	23.1%	15.3%	16.4%	14.7%	33.3%	17.3%			
	Other	0.0%	3.4%	3.6%	5.9%	0.0%	3.5%			
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	9.391	0.896
	Athletic Headband									
	Cotton	30.8%	27.1%	34.5%	35.3%	8.3%	30.1%			
	Lululemon	15.4%	35.6%	21.8%	26.5%	0.0%	25.4%			
	Under Armour	30.8%	22.0%	23.6%	8.8%	25.0%	20.8%			
	None	23.1%	13.6%	20.0%	23.5%	66.7%	22.0%			
	Other	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	5.9%	0.0%	1.7%			
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	30.034	0.018
	Heels									
	Knock-offs	53.8%	52.5%	47.3%	47.1%	41.7%	49.1%			
	Rag & Bone	38.5%	27.1%	36.4%	29.4%	25.0%	31.2%			
	None	7.7%	18.6%	16.4%	17.6%	33.3%	17.9%			
	Other	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	5.9%	0.0%	1.7%			
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	8.794	0.720
	Scarf									
	\$38	69.2%	72.9%	69.1%	76.5%	83.3%	72.8%			
	\$215	7.7%	10.2%	1.8%	5.9%	0.0%	5.8%			
	None	23.1%	11.9%	27.3%	11.8%	16.7%	17.9%			
	Other	0.0%	5.1%	1.8%	5.9%	0.0%	3.5%			
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	11.738	0.467
	Sweatpants									
	\$80 Jperse	30.8%	49.2%	20.0%	35.3%	41.7%	35.3%			
	\$148 FreeCity	0.0%	8.5%	3.6%	5.9%	8.3%	5.8%			
	None	69.2%	40.7%	65.5%	52.9%	50.0%	53.8%			
	Other	0.0%	1.7%	10.9%	5.9%	0.0%	5.2%			
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	19.203	0.084
	Romper									
	\$18	30.8%	45.8%	43.6%	35.3%	41.7%	41.6%			
	\$198	7.7%	11.9%	7.3%	14.7%	0.0%	9.8%			
	None	61.5%	39.0%	49.1%	44.1%	58.3%	46.2%			
	Other	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%	5.9%	0.0%	2.3%			
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	9.529	0.657
	Beanie Hat									
	\$22	69.2%	62.7%	74.5%	73.5%	66.7%	69.4%			
	\$225	0.0%	11.9%	0.0%	8.8%	8.3%	6.4%			
	None	30.8%	20.3%	25.5%	8.8%	25.0%	20.8%			
	Other	0.0%	5.1%	0.0%	8.8%	0.0%	3.5%			
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	17.898	0.119
	Sneakers									
	Superga	38.5%	44.1%	47.3%	52.9%	41.7%	46.2%			
	Vince	15.4%	16.9%	7.3%	8.8%	16.7%	12.1%			
	None	46.2%	35.6%	45.5%	32.4%	41.7%	39.3%			
	Other	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%	5.9%	0.0%	2.3%			
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	8.795	0.720

## ***Chapter 5: Results/ Discussion***

As seen throughout this thesis, socioeconomic status and consumption habitus affect consumption patterns. This is an expansive topic that deserves further research and investigation. This thesis defines what a brand is to our society, particularly as it pertains to the fashion industry. Brands are not only used for functional needs, but also have effects on the social relationships between consumers. Consumers may change the way they interact with brands based on many societal factors and this thesis attempts to identify what these factors may be.

This analysis compared six 19<sup>th</sup>-century theorists and each of their theories of social class and how they relate to the consumption of branded and non-branded clothing. Theories of social comparison, symbolic interactionism, social closure, conspicuous consumption, distinction, and imitation have all been analyzed thoroughly by Leon Festinger (1954), George Herbert Mead (1930), Frank Parkin (1974), Thorstein Veblen (1899), Pierre Bourdieu (1979), and Georg Simmel (1957). Each of the theories was then further investigated through a quantitative survey, administered to the females of Union College in order to learn more about the social factors that influence economic behaviors and consumption patterns regarding fashion.

The analysis also sought to distinguish between economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital and how having varied types and levels of these forms of capital affect consumption habits. An interpretation of the empirical results presented in chapters three and four is now analyzed through the theoretical lens that was developed in chapter one.

Consumers seem to be influenced by a number of different factors when deciding whether to buy or not to buy branded clothing. According to Han et al. (2010), consumers are influenced by their own group, or social class, those they aspire to be like, and those with whom they want to avoid being associated with (18). These outcomes are palpable throughout the results of the analysis. Research into the phenomenon has revealed a recognizable truth— some

consumers do utilize products in an effort to display social status. (Weatherford 2012: 27). The different level of consumer involvement in this effort is contingent on socioeconomic status, however, the results have shown that both the upper class and middle class do seek to define public perception of themselves through the products they own (Weatherford 2012: 27). There is one main difference across the two class groups who indicated that they wore branded clothing: The wealthy are trying to *project* their image through the product, while the middle class is trying to *create* this image through these same products (Weatherford 2012).

The results of this thesis were divided into three categories of class strata. The upper class, which consisted of women with an annual family income of \$150,000 and above, the middle class— women with an annual family income of \$80,000-\$149,000 and the lowest class strata which was made up of women who reported an annual income of \$10,000-\$79,000. It is important to note that these income categories are high compared to the actual annual incomes of the United States population. According to the Current Population Report of 2013, the real median household income was \$51,939 (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor 2014). In the case of this thesis, the median income of the actual population was actually located in the ‘lower class’ category. Therefore we must remember that the lowest class in this thesis actually makes up approximately 66% of the U.S. population, the middle class in this thesis makes up about 24% of the U.S. population and the high class in this thesis makes up only about 10% of the U.S. population (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor 2014).

The results showed a number of different trends. The overarching themes were that taste is a function of social orientation and trends in consumption patterns correlate with a woman’s ‘fit’ within society. For example, out of the lower-class group of women, 52.6% said they did not wear branded clothing, but 63.5% of middle class women said they wear branded clothing and

69.7% of upper class women said they wear branded clothing. Also, an individual's likes and dislikes when it comes to consumption patterns parallel their class positions. More specifically, preferences of certain brands and fashions are conditional on the perception of one's place in society. For instance, the survey asked women to choose between 8 brands and stores of places to buy jeans. There were three premium denim/ fashion companies: J Brand, Lucky Brand Jeans and Rag & Bone; two retail stores which sell jeans for moderate prices; Top Shop and Forever 21; and three stores which have the cheapest prices of all three, American Eagle (branded company), H & M, and Uniqlo. The women's consumption patterns did indeed parallel their class positions. The upper class women preferred jeans from J Brand and Lucky Brand Jeans. The middle class preferred jeans from American Eagle, H & M and a smaller portion would buy Lucky Brand Jeans. The lower classes reported that they would buy jeans from American Eagle. In these cases, and more that will be discussed, taste depends on which social class a woman belongs to. There are certain theories for this that may explain the phenomenon.

Pierre Bourdieu says that class distinctions can be found within commonplace practices— such as shopping. This was evident within the results of this analysis. The clothing women want to buy is related to their socioeconomic background. The results of these analyses show that a woman's lifestyle, values, dispositions and expectations of her own social group and perception of other social groups cause her to embody certain social structures and then reproduce them through tastes, preferences and consumption patterns when it comes to buying or not buying branded clothing.

### ***Summary of the Survey's Responses***

A large part of this study examined the ways in which women's consumption orientations affect their consumption patterns and how class position correlates. I analyzed the degree to which women were brand conscious, price conscious, and quality conscious, and also asked them

how strongly class position and social ties affected their opinions of branded clothing. These consumption orientations were analyzed based on their social class and their shopping habits. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus is applicable to the findings. Bourdieu discusses habitus when he talks about cultural capital. Habitus is described as "socialized norms or tendencies that guide behavior and thinking... Habitus is the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them" (Wacquant 2005: 316). Habitus is formed by the class a woman belongs to, and it can exert influence on her consumption orientations. For example, the upper class was the most brand conscious and the lower class was the least brand conscious while the middle class fell somewhere in the middle. This may mean that the upper class, due to their economic capital, has acquired the cultural capital through habitus and being able to recognize high-end fashion brands that the other classes have not, due to a number of different factors in their life based on where they fall in the class hierarchy of society.

All three classes leaned towards having strong social ties when it came to brands. The upper class indicated the strongest social ties and the lower class had the weakest ties. According to the symbolic interaction theory, a term coined by Mead, objects get their meanings from social actors (Aksan et al. 2009: 902). Since the social aspects of consumption orientation were based on questions such as: "clothes are one of the ways I can express my personality" and "I set the pace when it comes to new styles, trying new brands and labels all the time that I have never heard of" and "My friends think of me as a good source of advice regarding fashion", along with the fact that the upper class had the strongest opinions about these questions, we can infer that there is some sort of symbolic value attached to the clothes rich women want to buy.

The degree of price consciousness of the women fell where I expected it. The lower class women are price conscious because they don't have the financial capital to be spending nonsensical amounts of money on clothes they could ultimately buy for cheaper prices. The middle class was less price conscious than the lower class but not as low on the scale as the upper class was. This is a direct result of the disposable available income the women have to spend on clothing and is not entirely surprising.

The last factor questioned women on the degree to which they thought branded clothing indicated status and the degree to which it is a good indicator of what class position someone is in. Simmel's theory of imitation is evident here. The middle class women agreed strongly with the class positions statements, much more so than the other two classes indicating that the higher classes ability (economically speaking) to buy and wear branded clothing may be dictating the lower classes perception of the 'fashionable person'. Especially since the women who are most likely to buy expensive branded clothing (the upper class) did not say it correlated as highly to what class position someone is in as the middle class did. The middle class could be buying branded clothing because their perception is that it will make up the cultural capital they want to acquire.

### ***Effects of Class Position on Consumption Patterns***

This section of the survey analyzed the effects of a woman's socioeconomic status on her consumption patterns. When asked what brand of workout attire women would buy we see the middle class attempting to emulate the upper class to a degree because they indicate that they would buy Lululemon. Lululemon is described as \$10 billion Yoga Empire and has been very successful since its launch in 1998. For women, it represents high-end fashionable yoga attire.



Yoga pants are yoga pants no matter where they are from, but the middle class women (and all other classes) prefer this brand with its very recognizable logo.

A similar trend is seen when asked which black sweater the women would buy. The options were all visually the same but differed in price. One was \$34, the second \$128 and the third \$242. The lower classes (60.5%) chose the cheapest sweater. Even though the middle class majority said they would buy the cheapest sweater too, they had the highest percent (6.3%) of all three classes for the desire to buy the \$242 sweater. Again, indicating that although they may not have the financial assets to buy such pricy clothing, it may be creating a sense of cultural capital for them.

There was one question in which neither the brand nor price was included; on two pictures of heeled booties, one from a very high-end shoe brand (Rag & Bone) and the other shoes were knock-offs of the real brand. These Rag & Bone shoes sell full-price for \$550. From what has been learned we could assume that the upper class would choose the Rag & Bone brand because they recognize the brand based on their habitus and the cultural and social capital they have. For the middle class, we could assume that they would make one of two decisions. Either they would buy the expensive pair of shoes because they have seen women in higher social classes than them wearing the Rag & Bone shoes, or they could choose the knock-off pair because they do not have the economic capital to buy the shoes. The upper class women (50%) chose the knock off pair of booties over the branded pair. This may indicate that they did not recognize the brand, therefore suggesting that it *is* the brand name and logo that draws them in (because for all of the other items the upper class chooses the branded item). The middle class women said they would either buy the Rag & Bone bootie or the knock-off, indicating that they didn't have a sense of which was branded and which was not. It is important to note that the

pictures of the shoes were not entirely identical, such that the women could have been picking the shoe that was the most visually appealing without any background information. A future study could create a question in which the two pairs of shoes are identical with varying prices or brands and obtain a more certain outcome.

### ***Effects of Consumption Orientation on Consumption Patterns***

The final section of the analysis sought to explain how consumption orientations affected consumption patterns. It is no surprise that the women who were brand conscious, bought branded clothing items for most of pictures given. The less brand conscious the women were, the more likely they were to buy the cheaper, non branded item or indicate that they would buy neither. One interesting relationship existed with the \$80 branded sweatpants and the \$148 branded sweatpants. Even the most brand conscious women said they would buy the \$80 pants over the more expensive \$148 pair. This could be a result of a lesser amount of the public seeing the sweatpants a woman wears because they are worn within your own home and for much less casual events. Contrarily, when women were asked which romper they would buy given the choice between an \$18 one and a \$198 one, the most brand conscious women chose the more expensive. The difference is that this romper was white, laced, and fancy and something a woman would wear to an event where she is under the public eye and around other people.

The stronger the social ties women indicated, the more likely they were to buy branded clothing. The women with the lowest social ties to branded clothing bought the more inexpensive and non-branded clothing.

The quality conscious women were most likely to buy the branded, expensive items over the cheaper non-branded items. However even the most quality conscious women chose the \$80

sweatpants over the \$148 sweatpants. The same was true for the most quality conscious women choosing the \$22 beanie hat over the \$225 beanie hat.

The relationship between price consciousness and consumption patterns showed that the women who were the most price conscious, bought the inexpensive non-branded clothing, or said they would buy none of the options given.

### ***Discussion: Middle versus Upper Class Perception***

The upper class women have economic capital, meaning they have the funds to afford branded clothing if they want to. While it is obvious that economic capital defines socioeconomic status, Bourdieu argues the dominance of cultural capital when he claims that differences in cultural capital mark the differences between the classes. Results from this study indicate that the upper class women may have a willingness to pay a higher price for a functionally equivalent good and middle class women emulate this pattern to some degree.

According to Veblen, the upper classes' consumption of brands could be described as invidious comparisons (Veblen 1899). This is defined as the situations in which a member of a high class consumes conspicuously to distinguish himself from members of a lower class (Bagwell & Bernheim 1996: 350). The results indicate that the upper classes purchasing decisions are more likely to be influenced by a brand/logo name than any of the other classes. This could be because they are trying to distinguish themselves, or simply because they have the money to do so. However, it is interesting that 30% of the middle class indicated that the brand/logo name influences their decisions on purchasing clothes as well, which could mean that the middle classes perception of the branded clothing, and clothing with certain logos on it, will endow her with attributes which imply status (Weatherford 2012: 29).

The middle class women often times had results similar to those of the upper class. More specifically, they seemed to have a thirst for cultural capital and may be striving for a sense of perceived status that they think comes with purchasing branded clothes. This may stem from the notion that, “we are a comparative society, striving to compete with one another in so many different areas” (Weatherford 2012: 37). Weatherford goes on to say that, “people have a somewhat innate need for social acceptance. If consumers feel their real self is not sufficient they will look for product extensions to attach attributes to themselves to compensate in those areas where they feel insufficient (29). So, if middle class women are experiencing insufficiencies, these may have the propensity to stimulate said consumers to build their self image through material items in hopes for social acceptance and status recognition (Weatherford 2012: 28). Veblen would define this phenomenon as pecuniary emulation. Which is when “a member of a lower class consumes conspicuously so that he will be thought of as a member of a higher class” (Bagwell & Bernheim 1996: 350).

Simmel would argue that the middle class women are imitators, and therefore the passive individuals who adapt themselves to existing elements of social similarity. Contrarily, the upper class is described as teleological individuals who are always experimenting with new brands and trends and relying on their own personal confidence. Bourdieu’s theory of the different types of capital may be applied to these results. Cultural capital is the non-financial social assets that are able to advance social mobility beyond economic means. Because the middle class does not have the extent of economic capital that the upper class women have, they may in fact be using branded clothing to signal cultural capital through fashion. Also, research has shown that the “consumption of status products, and the related enhancement of social standing that comes with conspicuous habits, can cause consumers to sacrifice their financial standing (spending money

on branded clothing) in order to achieve a certain level of social standing” (Weatherford 2012: 36). Essentially, the middle class may try to mimic the upper classes consumption habits if it means gaining cultural capital.

### ***The Lower Class***

The lower classes displayed some measures of conspicuous consumption. Conspicuous consumption is a term coined by Thorstein Veblen and is defined as the spending money on and acquiring luxury goods (branded clothing in this case) to publicly display economic power as a means of either attaining or maintaining a higher social status. Certain displays of conspicuous consumption were seen throughout the results of the survey in regards to “socially visible” goods rather than goods consumed in private. When the lower class women were asked how many branded articles of clothing they owned, 34.2% said that *most* of their clothing was branded items, which fell in the middle of the 22.2% of middle class women who said most of their clothing was branded items and the 48.5% of upper class women who said most of their clothing consisted of branded items. The results here indicate that although the lower class women reported an annual income of \$10,000-\$79,000, they still spend a good deal of money on branded items since for some of them, close to all of their clothing has a brand name on it when the women could buy non-branded clothing. Even though a smaller fraction—13%— of lower class women indicated that they owned no branded clothing, most of them indicated that most of their clothing is in fact branded. Thus, since they don’t have as much economic capital as the other classes, they could be attempting to conspicuously consume the more expensive clothing with the hopefulness that they are thought of as being in a higher-class position than they truly are. The women who do not buy or own branded clothing may be classified by one of Festinger’s nine hypotheses. Festinger says that the tendency to compare oneself to another decreases as they

become more divergent. Because the two social classes have such dissimilar incomes, they may not have the same opinions or abilities to buy branded clothing in the first place.

The theory of social closure, a term coined by Frank Parkin discusses the established boundaries of different kinds, in this case social classes, which produce specific identities and cause certain groups to trigger certain reactions. The concepts of exclusionary and usurpationary, closure—discussed in chapter one— are seen in the results of this thesis. The upper class women are secured in a privileged position, while the two lower groups are subordinate to them when it comes to the world of brands— what Parkin calls “power downwards”. The middle class is more prone to usurpationary closure or “power upwards” meaning their aim is to acquire a greater share of resources, “threatening to bite into the privileges of superiors” when it comes to consuming branded clothing (Scase & Smith 1974).

According to the social comparison theory, comparing ourselves to others is a motivating force in human behavior. We self-evaluate, self compare, and attempt to self improve based on our social surroundings and the comparisons we make. Also, when luxury products are branded and at first consumed by the target market (the upper class) awareness of the brand slowly moves down the social ladder. This awareness is increased through media and communication channels (Weatherford 2012: 37). Therefore, the intended market does purchase these goods, and eventually so will secondary and tertiary markets (Weatherford 2012: 38).

From the results in the study, the social comparison theory was seen most from the middle class. When asked where women were most likely to find out about new trends, the middle class was most likely to say that it was through friends and peers rather than celebrities, magazines, or styles they see in stores. This could mean they are either using a process of self-evaluation (comparing to someone who is similar to themselves in their mind) or making upward

and downward comparisons in order to self-enhance or build self-esteem. However, based on the detail that middle class women are just as likely to buy branded clothing as upper class women, even while having lower economic capital, I would assume that the women are looking at friends and peers who are wearing branded clothing, and self-evaluating with an attempt to emulate what they see from people they believe to be of a higher social class than themselves.

The upper class women on the other hand are technically at the top of the totem poll when it comes to making upward comparisons. The results here indicate that the upper class women reported that they were more likely than the other two classes to look at celebrities when finding out about new trends, or at styles they see in stores. I analyzed the women who indicated that their annual family income was \$700,000+, who also indicated that they perceived themselves as rich or very rich. None of the women in this category said they found out about what to wear from friends or peers. They claimed they found out about new trends from celebrities, styles they see in stores, and magazines. This would mean that upper class women make their own decisions based on what they believe to be the trendiest items and not look at other people for social comparisons. The upper class percentage for looking at friends and peers for new trends could explain the downward comparisons (self-esteem builders) they are making towards the lower classes or simply self-evaluating.

Finally, according to Simmel “imitation gives the individual that satisfaction of not standing alone in his actions... the individual is freed from the worry of choosing and appears simply as a creature of the group” (Simmel 1957: 549). The middle class could be deciding which brands and trends to buy based on what they see their friends and peers wearing. Simmel goes on to discuss a “top-down” model in which the higher classes dictate the lower classes perception of the “fashionable person”. When women were asked about the influence of other

people wearing branded clothing and liking the way it looks, the lower and middle classes both indicated that they were either influenced or strongly influenced by this factor, another hint of the social comparison theory at work when it comes to making comparisons on what to buy and what not to buy.

Another study where the social comparison theory is seen is when women were asked to select their brand preference of athletic attire based on how influential this statement was: “You’ve seen other people wearing branded clothing and you like the way it looks”. The women who said the statement was strongly influential or influential were likely to buy the most expensive brands (Lululemon) and the women who said the statement was non-influential said they would buy workout attire from somewhere that wasn’t listed. This information shows that if a woman is influenced by what other women wear, she tends to buy more expensive brands.

### ***Future Marketing Implications***

This thesis has analyzed consumer attitudes, which determine the success of branding efforts because they are the ones who will choose to buy a product based on how it is presented (Weatherford 2012: 29). Conspicuous consumption gives fashion marketers in 2015 a huge opportunity to position clothing in the consumer consciousness as items of exclusivity, or something they need to buy. Weatherford says that the controllable factors that go into branding efforts are price, promotion, place, and product and that these are the tools marketers have to brand a product.

An individual's desire to buy clothes that will give her certain characteristics which imply status comes in part from the marketing function of branding. According to Weatherford, “branding is the process by which marketers attach human attributes to products in an effort to differentiate and add value to a product for consumers. The purpose behind branding is to lure



consumers to a product due to the intangible attributes that are associated with the product. Examples of these attributes are “quality, uniqueness, luxury and prestige” (Weatherford 2012: 29). Marketers may have the most difficulty positioning the product to higher social groups and classes. The results in this discussion have shown us that often times the middle class get their knowledge on what to wear from friends and peers that they consider to be of a higher social classes than themselves. On the other hand, the upper classes look more so towards styles in stores and not as much at friends and peers. Therefore, marketers must produce advertising campaigns to the upper class that display the goods as having “aesthetics, quality, and social impact.... Positioning requires proper endorsement, subtle flare, and a reception from the upper tier social classes acknowledging that this brand is indeed for them” (Weatherford 2012: 32). Weatherford goes on to say that marketing tactics must be adapted when working with conspicuous consumers (34). Lastly, Weatherford explains how marketing high-end brands to high-class consumers needs to be executed:

Advertising for a luxury item must portray the product with some sense of exclusivity, elegance, and class. This means there cannot be large discounts or a large amount of television advertisement because consumers’ impression of the product will shift. Luxury brand marketers do not want to deter individuals with the ability and desire to frequently purchase their goods because they may shy away from discounts and advertisements aimed at the mass market (Weatherford 2012: 34).

This thesis has shown that consumers desire clothing that displays their social standing, or clothing that can portray them as having a higher social standing than what they actually do.

Marketers need to take this and develop and promote products to help satisfy the need to demonstrate prestige and cultural capital through branded clothing.

## Appendix 1:

Click here to view the corresponding Survey for this thesis:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1je-tluEnM1XxE6yh0ker6clrPnNKfmafSPeOvwmqWxs/viewform?c=0&w=1&pli=1>

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