

DISSERTATION

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND
WOMEN'S ACQUISITION OF SECONDHAND CLOTHING

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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY JILL SKINNER CHARBONNEAU ENTITLED SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND WOMEN'S ACQUISITION OF SECONDHAND CLOTHING BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND WOMEN'S ACQUISITION OF SECONDHAND CLOTHING

The purpose of this study was to investigate women's motivations for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing. It specifically targets women as consumers of secondhand clothing either for themselves or their families. The goal was to discover whether women's acquisition of secondhand clothing is linked to social responsibility. Major research questions focused on motivations and factors for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing and what is done when clothing is no longer needed, wanted, or used.

This study followed the guidelines of phenomenology to understand and scrutinize the lived experiences of women. This was achieved by asking women to describe and share motivations for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to garner a sample of 23 women for three focus groups.

Experiences of acquiring or wearing secondhand clothing for themselves and their families were analyzed from a written survey and focus group transcripts to create a profile of the socially responsible clothing consumer. Women were motivated to acquire and wear secondhand clothing for quality and its uniqueness at bargain prices. These qualities added joy to the shopping experience and evoked pleasant childhood memories and conscientiousness for

the environment. Women influenced and informed others of the benefits of acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing. Bargain prices, thrill of the hunt, and finding clothing that fit well were influences for acquisition and use of secondhand clothing. Clothing disposal options were donating to thrift stores; giving to family and friends; repurposing, rejuvenating, or recycling; and selling at garage sales, consignment stores, flea markets, and e-Bay. Disposing into a dumpster was a last resort for clothing that cannot be worn, repurposed, or recycled--and truly at the end of its life cycle. These findings indicate socially responsible behavior.

Recommendations for academia are to integrate socially responsible practices into apparel and textile design and merchandising classes. Other suggestions are for thrift stores to organize clothing by size and color and have clean dressing rooms and programs with curbside pickup of clothing with other recyclables as newspapers, bottles, and cans.

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A friend is one to whom one may pour out all the contents of one's heart, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will take and sift it, keep what is worth keeping and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away.
- Arabian Proverb

This adventure has not been a lone project. Although my name is on the spine of this book there are a number of silent partners who deserve credit. I am grateful to you, my friends.

Support came from many who inspired, pushed, and nurtured me. First, my mother helped to keep me afloat financially and inspired me with articles and ideas for the dissertation. I am especially grateful that you came to Colorado for my graduation and long talks at night in bed. We are friends and family.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
<u>CHAPTER</u>	
I	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem	5
Purpose Statement	7
Significance of the Study	8
Researcher’s Perspective	10
Definition of Terms.....	12
II	
REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	14
Definitions of Socially Responsible Consumer.....	15
Social Responsibility and Women’s Apparel Consumption.....	17
Environmental Impact.....	22
Textiles’ Role in the Environment.....	26
Life Cycle of a T-Shirt.....	28
Clothing Consumption Process	31
Consumer Behavior	34
Voluntary Simplicity	38
The Socially Responsible Consumer	42
Efficacy of Recycling	43
Down Side of Recycling	47
Secondhand Clothing.....	48
Image	49
Self-Expression	51
Vintage Clothing	52
Unique Characteristics	53
Status.....	54
Thrift Shopping	54
Summary	57

III	METHODOLOGY	62
	Research Design and Rationale	62
	Phenomenology.....	64
	Research Questions	65
	Focus Groups	66
	Participants.....	67
	Participant Characteristics.....	68
	Recruitment	68
	Sites	69
	Pilot Study	70
	Data Collection	71
	Women’s Secondhand Clothing Survey	76
	Data Analysis.....	78
	Validation of Findings	81
IV	FINDINGS.....	85
	Descriptive Data from the Survey	86
	Findings Related to Research Questions.....	92
	Motivation for Secondhand Clothing.....	92
	Early Experiences	93
	Memories and Feelings.....	94
	Retail Clothing.....	95
	Utilitarian Needs.....	96
	Recycling and the Environment.....	96
	Acquiring Secondhand Clothing Initially	99
	The Treasure Hunt.....	99
	Early Experiences	100
	Acquiring Secondhand Clothing Currently.....	100
	Variety, Quality, Fit.....	100
	Best Value for the Dollar	101
	Time Savings	102
	Negative Experiences	102
	Influencing Others.....	103
	Wearing Secondhand Clothing Initially	104
	Early Experiences	104
	Wearing Secondhand Clothing Currently	105
	Influencing Others.....	107
	Disposition of Clothing.....	108
	Thrift Stores.....	108
	Handing Down to Others for Additional Use.....	109
	Repurpose and Rejuvenate.....	109
	Recycle	111
	Sell at Garage Sales, Consignment, e-Bay, and Flea Markets	111

Dumpster	112
Alternatives	113
Males and Secondhand Clothing.....	114
Social Responsibility.....	115
Survey Items and Socially Responsible Practices.....	116
Summary	118

V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS	121
Discussion	122
Motivations for Acquiring and Wearing Secondhand Clothing	122
Factors for Acquiring Secondhand Clothing.....	123
Factors for Wearing Secondhand Clothing.....	125
Disposition of Clothing.....	127
Currently Practiced Socially Responsible Behaviors	128
Limitations.....	138
Implications.....	138
Recommendations for Further Study	142
Conclusion	143
REFERENCES.....	145
APPENDIXES	156
A. Human Subjects Approval	157
B. Focus Groups Recruitment Script.....	159
C. Invitation Letter, Map, and Women’s Secondhand Clothing Survey	163
D. Informed Consent Form.....	170
E. Focus Group Question Guide.....	174
F. Codes and Coding.....	179

LIST OF TABLES

1.	Definitions for Recycled, Secondhand, and Vintage Clothing	4
2.	Respondents' Views of the Seriousness of Global Warming Reported by the Media.....	26
3.	Socially Responsible Consumers and Clothing Consumption.....	43
4.	Focus Group Data Collection	72
5.	Research Questions with Corresponding Focus Group Questions.....	75
6.	Participants' Responses (n=26) to Secondhand Clothing Survey, Part I	87
7.	Participants' Responses (n=26) to Secondhand Clothing Survey, Part II	91
8.	Socially Responsible Behaviors Practiced by Participants.....	130

LIST OF FIGURES

1.	Total U.S. Waste Generation by Weight Before Recycling, 2006.....	5
2.	U.S. Municipal Recycling Rates, 1960-2005	6
3.	Relationship Between Social Responsibility and Secondhand Clothing.....	14
4.	Disposition Decision Taxonomy by Jacoby, et al., (1977)	33
5.	U.S. Exports of Used Clothing by Weight, 1989-2003.....	41
6.	Data Analysis—Focus Groups Transcripts and Surveys.....	78

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As concern for the environment becomes an accepted part of lifestyle issues, sustainability challenges individuals to work together as socially responsible partners (Styx, 2006). No clear plan exists for making progress toward securing a sustainable, socially responsible future (Palmer et al., 2005); yet, some consumers in the United States are considering the impacts of shopping choices on the environment.

Although the term, *consumption*, has many meanings, McCracken (1988) believed it is the processes in which consumer goods and services are made, bought, used, and disposed. Campbell (1987) added that consumption includes the processes by which economic resources are used in satisfaction of human wants. Viewed as synonymous with human welfare, consumption has become the prime objective of modern societies (Ekins, 1998). In fact, it has become the goal of some consumers to live life to the fullest, negative consequences be damned (McGregor, 2002).

Patterns of over consumption have helped raise movements for social responsibility. Environmental, economic, political, labor, personal, societal, and spiritual impacts of excessive, over consumption have been voiced by the media and individuals. Consumerism has been called “a social and economic creed

that encourages people to aspire to consume more than their share of the world's resources, regardless of the consequences" (McGregor, 2002, p. 2).

As consumers, women are typically responsible for the purchase of clothing for their families and themselves (Grover, Hemmati, & Flenley, 1999). Today, thrift shops and charities offer opportunities for women to stylishly clothe themselves and their families. While it is valuable to understand the reasons women acquire secondhand clothing, it is also important to understand the perspectives of women as consumers and to interpret how they describe their experiences. Interpretation of meaning of women's reasons for acquisition of secondhand clothing is a contribution that this research may make to understanding the importance of social responsibility.

It is undeniable that humans have an impact on the planet. Now, more than ever, it is important to be responsible for the air we breathe, the water we drink, the choices we make as consumers of apparel and textiles, and the land we depend on for food. As exploiters of the planet, humans are also agents of change transforming surroundings and modifying behaviors in anticipation of needs for a sustainable life on this planet (Charbonneau, Madison, & Makela, 2005). Consumer choice drives efforts to reduce environmental impact of apparel consumption (Allwood, Laursen, de Rodriguez, & Bocken, 2006). To reduce environmental impact related to clothing the socially responsible consumer would:

- buy secondhand clothing, including vintage
- buy fewer, more durable garments

- lease clothing
- wash clothing less often, at room temperature, and avoid ironing
- hang clothes to dry, save electricity, and lessen carbon dioxide from use of clothes dryers (Lofholm, 2007)
- repair and reuse clothing, and
- dispose of clothing through recycling (Allwood et al., 2006).

Although recycling in U.S. municipal solid waste programs began in 1960, it was not until 1980 that the effort became more widespread. By 2005, the amount of recycled materials had climbed from 15 million tons (15.24 million tonnes metric) in 1980 to 79 million tons (80.27 million tonnes metric).

Annually, recycling removes 1.25 million tons (1.27 million tonnes metric) of textiles that would have gone into landfills amounting to an average of 10 pounds per person in the United States. Most textile waste can be recycled helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions that affect the global climate while generating income. Many discarded textiles are diverted from landfills and reused as clothing or reconstructed into other textile end uses (Hawley, 2000; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2003).

Potential value lies in garments that have been discarded. Thrift shops and charities such as the Salvation Army and the NARC sell secondhand clothing; and neighborhood recycling bins are a source of income for many cities. In the United States many thrift shops are operated by faith based organizations. Some raise funds through sales of secondhand items to support missionary activities in other countries (Auer, 2000; Reeger, 2005). Certain secondhand clothing items,

at least 25 years old and classified as vintage, can be sold for more money than other secondhand clothing as defined in Table 1. Vintage is distinguished from secondhand or recycled clothing by:

- its age; at least 25 years old
- irreplaceable and unusual fabric and styling
- the establishment in which it is sold, and
- the individuality and discriminating taste of the wearer (Agin, 2007a; DeLong, Heinemann, & Reiley, 2005).

Table 1.

Definitions for Recycled, Secondhand, and Vintage Clothing

Term	Definition
Recycled Clothing	Items of clothing that have been remade, sold, or given to someone else for a second use
Secondhand or Used Clothing	Items of clothing that have been previously owned by someone else
Vintage Clothing	Items of clothing that are distinguished from secondhand or recycled clothing by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •age, at least 25 years old •unusual and irreplaceable fabric and styling

Secondhand or used clothing has been purchased before, maybe a hand-me-down of any age. As a subcategory of secondhand, recycled clothing is distinguished by a second life; for example, when reconstructed into a costume or altered to fit a new owner.

Statement of the Problem

At present, there is little scholarly literature to explain what motivates women to acquire secondhand clothing, and if they consider social responsibility during acquisition (Elliott, 1995; Kim & Damhorst, 1998). There is even less literature pertaining to women, secondhand clothing, and the environment. In 2005, a growing U.S. population of nearly 300 million created waste composed of 7.3% textiles with the remaining 92.7% as paper (34%), yard trimmings (12.9%), food scraps (12.4%), plastics (11.7%), metals (7.6%), glass (5.3%), wood (5.5%) and other (3.3%) (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2006a) (Figure 1). Of textile waste, nearly 68 pounds are thrown away per person each year (Hawley, 2000) of which at least 95% is recyclable (Hawley, 2006a; Smart, 2003).

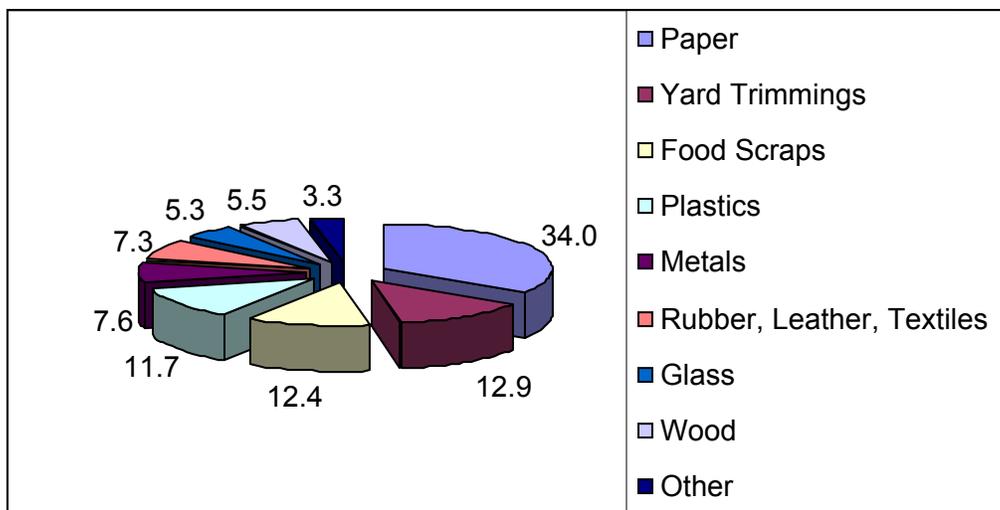


Figure 1. Total U.S. Waste Generation by Weight Before Recycling, 2006
(Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website)

From 1960 to 2005, recycling volume shows the greatest increase between 1990 and 2000 with less continued growth since (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2005a) (Figure 2). Annually, recycled textile waste accounted

for 1.25 million tons (1.27 million tonnes metric) diverted from landfills, but nearly 72.50 million tons (73.66 million tonnes metric) of recyclable clothing were sent to waste disposal (Hawley, 2000).

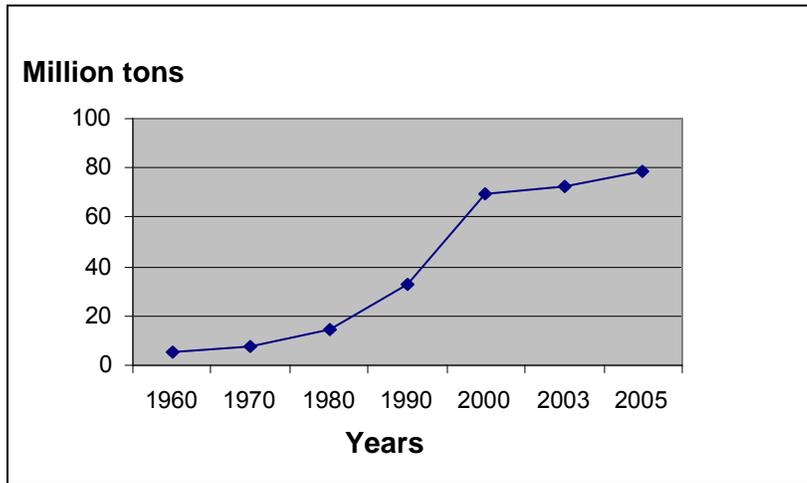


Figure 2. U.S. Municipal Recycling Rates, 1960-2005
(Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2005)

More ecologically sound than new clothing, secondhand does not consume the energy required to produce and ship new items and, therefore, does not produce the carbon dioxide emissions associated with production, transport, care, or disposal (Allwood et al., 2006). Perhaps the greatest impediment for women to acquire recycled, secondhand clothing is that it is out of style, needing repair, or deemed worthless by the last owner (Rivoli, 2005).

In contrast, there are growing indications that vintage is a unique and valuable classification of secondhand clothing (Matsumoto, 2000). Because clothing is usually mass produced, the allure of vintage for its unique qualities has begun to shift from subculture to mass culture being popularized by celebrities (Palmer et al., 2005). Modern, upscale thrift shops appeal to

consumers for opportunities to rebel against the confinement of prevailing styles, find bargains, and enjoy the thrill of the hunt to find “an unknown object of desire” (Bardhi, 2003, p. 375). A better understanding of the benefits of secondhand clothing and its influence on the environment warrants an investigation of social responsibility and women’s acquisition of secondhand clothing.

Purpose Statement

The research purpose frames decisions the researcher must make about the research project. It is critical because it affects choices about the types of individuals to be included in the study and the composition of the focus groups (Fern, 2001). The purpose of this study is to investigate women’s motivations for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing. It specifically targets women as consumers of secondhand clothing either for themselves or their families. Further, women’s reasons for acquiring secondhand clothing may bring to light the importance of social responsibility and securing a sustainable, socially responsible future.

Although global warming, waste disposal, sustainability, and the effects of pollution on the environment have received media attention, it is not known if women, as consumers, have been influenced by social responsibility when acquiring or wearing secondhand clothing. To guide the investigation, four major research questions were developed:

1. What motivates women to acquire and wear secondhand clothing?
2. What factors do women identify as important to acquire secondhand clothing?

- What factors are important for women to acquire secondhand clothing *initially*?
 - What factors are important for women to acquire secondhand clothing *currently*?
3. What factors do women identify as important to wear secondhand clothing?
- What factors are important for women to wear secondhand clothing *initially*?
 - What factors are important for women to wear secondhand clothing *currently*?
4. When clothing is no longer needed, wanted, or used, what do women do with it?

Significance of the Study

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report, *Climate Change 2007: The physical science basis*, asserts the importance of reducing carbon dioxide emissions for the sustainability of the planet. This report suggests that global atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide and other gasses have increased substantially as a result of human activities since mid-18th century, the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Reduction of carbon dioxide concentrations will be achieved, in part, by a reduction in fossil fuels used to produce, ship, display, care for, and dispose of clothing. (Alley et al., 2007; Houghton et al., 2001).

The significance of this study is:

- There is a need to investigate social responsibility in terms of the impact of apparel and textiles on the environment. “It is obvious that people cannot coexist with wanton disregard of their own [textiles]....We have moved speedily ahead without a lot of concern for the problems we have been creating....That attitude has led to dramatic strains on our landfills and air and water resources” (Elliott, 1995, p. 221).
- Researchers have looked at social responsibility but have not linked it to acquisition of secondhand clothing by women in the United States. Studies have focused on apparel and textile scholars defining social responsibility and labor practices and clothing trade with developing countries (Dickson & Eckman, 2006). Those focused on consumer aspects of social responsibility looked at women’s decisions to purchase from socially responsible apparel businesses (Dickson, 2000), attitudes as predictors of consumers’ intentions to purchase apparel (Kim, Littrell, & Paff Ogle, 1999), and the purchase of socks made in acceptable working conditions (Kimeldorf, 2006). Research suggests a connection, but only one popular magazine reported the relationship between vintage clothing and global warming (Masters, 2007). It seems logical, therefore, to understand how acquiring secondhand clothing relates to social responsibility actions and experiences of women.

Researcher's Perspective

In the fall of 2005, I was in William Timpson's ED628 course, Models of Teaching. One requirement for the course was to research and write on a topic of interest pertaining to sustainability and the environment. As an interdisciplinary student in the School of Education, my area of interest was Apparel and Textiles for which I had taken quite a few courses beginning in high school. I felt I had a strong background. Dr. Timpson had a great deal of interest in the writing of David Orr, an environmentalist, who had compiled many inspiring yet distressing facts about environmental degradation. I read two books by David Orr (2004; 2005), one which was used in this research. I learned that I know very little about the way in which global warming affects climate and that there is much more to taking care of the planet than recycling and picking up trash as I walk with my dog each day. There is much more to learn about the environment.

Together with Karyn Madison, another student in the apparel and textiles discipline, I researched, wrote, and put on a skit about the effects of clothing on the planet. We brought secondhand clothing from the NARC, our own glue guns, notions such as lace and buttons, and scissors for original class creations. One group of students made a skirt, top, and shoes using a large blue jean jacket, glue guns, and lace that was stunning on the model.

In the spring of 2006, Dr. Makela, my adviser, took me to lunch and had a great discussion of dissertation topic possibilities. I told her that Dr. Timpson's class had inspired me to take a real, serious look into secondhand clothing, for

which I had no prior interest whatsoever. Because it has been so easy for me to make clothing, why would I even consider wearing used clothing? Besides, the idea of handling used clothing was uncomfortable to me, even if it had been washed. It was still used clothing and I could easily sew any *new* clothing I needed. But going to the NARC with Karyn for our presentation to the ED628 class changed my thinking. There was a world of difference between my perceptions of used clothing and what I actually found. There were new items, never worn, as well as lightly used clothing, and the prices were irresistible, especially to a student on limited budget who loves clothing. Besides, I could hand wash clothing that I bought, alter it, and make it mine for very little money. At the NARC, I bought a pair of secondhand slacks with a wide waistband that I did not like. So I took off the waistband, moved the front zipper to the side, and added a waistband facing for a pair of comfortable, well fitted slacks.

At lunch, Dr. Makela's suggestion that I look into professional women's acquisition of secondhand clothing and the environment seemed like a perfect fit. The topic has since evolved into social responsibility and includes all women who acquire secondhand clothing, not just professionals. The topic is timely, too. There is new and fascinating research by some of my favorite authors, including Molly Eckman and William Timpson, members of my graduate committee; and Jane Workman, Jana Hawley, and David Orr.

Definition of Terms

Because this study brings together social responsibility and apparel that are not commonly associated, the following terms have been defined to aid understanding.

Apparel: all categories of clothing worn by women, men, and children

Climate Change: any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or human activity

Clothing: a garment or an article of apparel

Fashion: a current, prevailing custom or accepted style of dress expected to change over time; a dynamic process which expresses society's changing modernity

Garment: an article of clothing or apparel. Accessories such hats, purses, and jewelry will not be included in this study

Global Warming: an observed increase in the average temperature of the planet's atmosphere, especially a sustained increase sufficient to cause climatic change from rising carbon emissions

Image: to form a mental picture of the way clothing appears when worn; the way in which the wearer expresses herself when wearing clothing, or how the wearer is perceived in the eyes of a beholder

Recycling: a series of activities including collecting materials and items that would otherwise be considered waste and sorting and processing them into reusable materials

Social Responsibility: refers to moral beliefs extending beyond self-interest and satisfaction of personal needs to the ultimate impact of apparel choices on the global population and environment; seeing everything and everyone as connected and affecting the global reservoir of resources; a balance of personal ethics and concern for the ultimate impact of apparel choices on the environment

Sustainability: incorporates environmental balance, social responsibility, and economic vitality pertaining to the impact of textiles on the planet; a process or state that can be maintained indefinitely, is far seeing enough, flexible enough, and wise enough to maintain physical and social systems of support

Textiles: fabric or clothing made from yarns or threads of a fiber by knitting, weaving, felting, or another method holding them together, which are made into clothing and non apparel items such as rugs, rags, and towels.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature focuses on the relationship between social responsibility and women's acquisition of secondhand clothing (Figure 3). Areas covered include social responsibility and characteristics of environmental impact and consumer behavior; secondhand clothing and characteristics of image, self-expression, vintage, and thrift shopping.

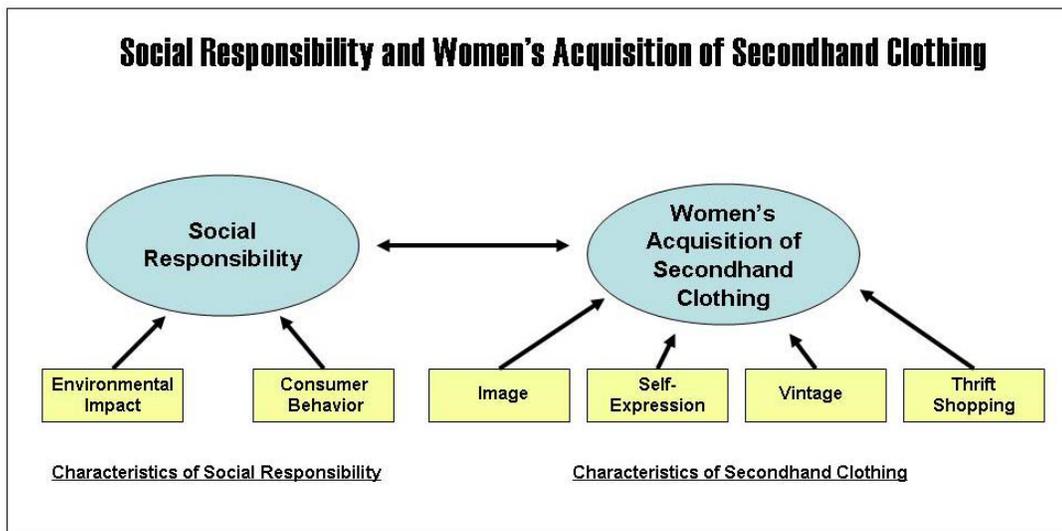


Figure 3. Relationship Between Social Responsibility and Secondhand Clothing

In the 1970s, research showed a growing concern for the environment and social change. But it was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s that researchers in the apparel and textiles discipline started to explore socially responsible consumption as a new phenomenon. At that time, a growing number

of consumers worldwide voiced concerns about the safety and long-term condition of the environment (Kim & Damhorst, 1998). With growing interest in social responsibility researchers asked textile and apparel scholars to define socially responsible consumption (Dickson & Eckman, 2006). Responses revealed concerns for the environment and people, a blend of ethics and morality with profit, and business actions relating to the environment and people. As a relatively new concept to the textile and apparel discipline, socially responsible consumption is an important phenomenon worldwide. Considerable diversity in consumer characteristics suggests that creation of a definition will be a complex, but important endeavor.

Definitions of Socially Responsible Consumer

For this study, five definitions have been compiled showing an evolution of thought since 1973.

Responsible consumption refers to rational and efficient use of resources with respect to the global human population. It is not possible to consider the consumption question exclusively from the standpoint of any single nation, because the consumption of depletable resources in one nation necessarily affects the reservoir of resources elsewhere (Fisk, 1973, p. 24).

The socially conscious consumer is one who 'takes into account the public consequences of his or her private consumption or who attempts to use his or her purchasing power to bring about social change' (Webster, 1975, p. 188).

Social responsibility extends 'beyond self-interest and the satisfaction of personal needs to incorporate decisions reflecting a concern for the environment or society' (Dickson, Rudd, & Lennon, 2006, p. 175).

Consumer social responsibility is ‘the conscious and deliberate choice to make certain consumption choices based on personal and moral beliefs. It includes two basic components: an ethical one relating to the underlying importance of the social aspects of a company’s products and business processes; and a consumerism component that implies that the preferences and desires of consumer segments are partially responsible for the increasing influence of ethical or social factors’ (Devinney, Auger, Eckhardt, & Birtchnell, 2006, p. 32).

The moral nature of consumption decisions is clear. If we enter into each transaction being conscious of the impact of the choice we make, we will be less likely to make immoral decisions. If we see everything as connected, we can no longer dismiss the potential negative impact of buying or not buying something. If we approach each buying situation knowing both our side and the others’ sides, then it is harder to ignore the insights we get from examining the consumer choice from a moral imperative. That is, we would be incapable of dispensing with the truth revealed when we bring our conscience to bear on the decisions and choices made as a consumer. We would have to engage the moral imperative as we decide what signifies quality, the common good or sustainability of a product or service (McGregor, 2006, p. 165).

Allowing for differences in wording, these definitions embody essentially the same idea--concern for humanity and the planet’s resources. However, by 2006, the term, *morality*, was added to emphasize the long-term impact of consumption on the planet. Consumers currently face the choice to consume consciously with a sense of connectedness and awareness that everyone and everything are linked together and to continuously rise above the personal sense of self, or not. Expanding the scope of the definition, McGregor (2006) refers to social responsibility as moral consciousness that applies to consumption and its impact on others’ lives. Finally, a collection of these five definitions might be:

Social responsibility refers to moral beliefs that extend beyond self-interest and satisfaction of personal needs to the ultimate impact of apparel choices on the global population and environment; sees everything and everyone as connected

and affecting the global reservoir of resources; balances personal ethics and concern for the ultimate impact of apparel choices on the environment.

Social Responsibility and Women's Apparel Consumption

Worldwide consumers spent about \$1 trillion for clothing in 2000. One-third of sales were in Western Europe, one-third in North America, and one-third in Asia. About 7% of the total exports were apparel and textiles. Research reveals that industrialized countries were important exporters of clothing and textiles, especially Germany and Italy for apparel, and the United States for textiles. The United States is the second largest producer, after China, and largest world exporter of cotton as 25,000 cotton farmers generate about one-quarter of all exported cotton. Developing countries account for half of the world textile exports and nearly three-quarters of clothing exports (Campbell, 2003; Cotton Counts, n.d.; Organic Consumers, n.d.).

As a relatively new concept to the apparel and textile disciplines, it is important to understand the relationship between apparel consumption and social responsibility. According to Winakor, apparel consumption describes activities related to acquisition, use, care, storage, and disposal of items of clothing (1969). Socially responsible behaviors related to apparel consumption are expressed as concerns for the environment and work place and living conditions for apparel workers (i.e., lessening personal consumption of apparel and recycling apparel). Social responsibility paired with apparel consumption can be linked to the interrelationship of choices on the environment.

In the United States consumer interest for socially responsible apparel consumption has grown during the last decade. A limited number of consumers are taking responsibility to change personal consumption habits in the hopes that individual efforts will have a favorable impact on the environment (Kim & Damhorst, 1998).

A study of 320 customers of an alternative trade catalog reported that socially responsible attitudes were important for influencing purchase behavior for apparel. Alternative trading organizations (ATOs) are dedicated to promotion of fair trade in less developed parts of the world. Combining functions of exporters and retailers, ATOs work directly with producer groups on product design, quality control, management, and shipping. Educating consumers about the social, political, and economic conditions surrounding the apparel workplace is central to the ATO mission (Kim et al., 1999). According to Spors, an ATO must accentuate the consumer benefit underlying fair trade by emphasizing fabrics of better quality and durability as artisans stitching them together are paid livable wages and care deeply about their work (2006).

Respondents in the study were concerned about the living conditions among artisans producing apparel in the slums of Bombay, India. Garments they make are available in mail-order catalogues that include pictures and stories about the artisan producers and their lives. Letters exchanged between artisans and consumers express concerns about children's education, community building, and individual empowerment (Kim et al., 1999).

Although primary consumer interest was in clothing to express individuality and satisfaction of needs, there was also concern for social responsibility and the impact of consumption on the environment. Findings showed that consumers who placed greater importance on global values, such as equality, social responsibility, and an educated society, were more likely to be concerned about challenging living conditions among people in India. Concern for the people of India was observed to have a strong direct influence on ATO support. From the findings it was suggested that marketers could benefit from application of moral marketing concepts appealing to socially responsible customers (Kim et al., 1999).

Consumers' protests on the basis of morality are perceived as a highly effective tool for change. In the last 25 years, concern with perceived threats to environmental quality, for humans and non humans alike, has prompted formation of groups to protest corporate actions. Since the Revolutionary War, boycotts have been used more than any other organizational technique to promote and protect the rights of the powerless and disenfranchised of society. Defined as "an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace" (Friedman, 1995, p. 198), boycotts have a long history. In the United States, roots of boycotts extend to American colonists' refusal to pay a British tax on mortgage and deed documents and law and liquor licenses in the Stamp Act of 1765 (Friedman, 1999; Glickman, 1998; Kimeldorf, 2006). Since the early 1980s, a movement for environmental protection has emerged as a major

boycott effort in the United States. Organizations like Earth Island Institute, Earth First, and the Rainforest Action Network constitute major players in consumer protest actions against perceived corporate abuses of the environment. Concerns of these organizations centered on destruction of the rainforest, biodegradability of consumer product packaging, recycling oil in the production of automobiles, and the destruction of wildlife in natural settings (e.g., dolphins). With animal rights, these two issues are associated with efforts to secure a sustainable future for life on earth (Friedman, 1999)

The loss of sales and negative publicity generated by boycotts can be devastating. The most effective boycotts have one or more organizations promoting them to multiply losses in revenue into the millions of dollars. In this way, socially responsible actions have promoted and protected the rights of the powerless and disenfranchised in society since the signing of the Constitution of the United States (Friedman, 1999).

A study reported growing consumer activism dealing with apparel consumption and working conditions for apparel workers. Based on an experiment in a well-known department store in southeast Michigan, identical pairs of Wigwam brand white socks were placed in two adjacent display racks in the men's and women's clothing sections of the store. Socks produced in sweat-free shops were priced 25% more than those made in sweatshops. The only visible difference between the two racks of socks was that one display had a conspicuous sign labeled "Buy GWC . . . Good Working Conditions," with an explanation that the socks were not produced using child labor, in unsafe working

environments, or sweatshops. In the first round of data collection from consumers at or below the national median income, delineation between the two white sock displays was not clear enough for consumers to make a definite choice between identical pairs of socks. The only difference was the sign on the display rack which some customers may not have seen or clearly understood (Kimeldorf, 2006).

In the second round of data collection, however, the socks were similar in quality, style, and price, but not identical. Made by Wigwam, socks in this round were white and closely matched athletic socks made by REAC. The research team also alternated the brand which displayed the GWC label to separate possible brand preferences. The result was 30% of customers bought the more expensive socks produced in shops with good working conditions (Kimeldorf, 2006).

In round three, in-store interviews were conducted to better understand customers' choices. Of 45 interviewees, 14 met all three criteria for conscientious consumption: the price difference between the two racks of socks, the GWS label, and understanding the meaning of the label. Eight of the 14, or 57%, purchased the more expensive GWC socks. For these consumers, avoiding goods made in sweatshops was important, citing the label as a valuable factor in their decision (Kimeldorf, 2006).

Although this small experiment offers a conservative estimate for the extent of social responsibility, on average 30% of customers bought more expensive GWC socks. The numbers, while small, may be suggestive of a growing interest

in, and market for, socially responsible products. These findings also suggest the market for social responsibility could extend to a majority of shoppers in the United States (H. Kimeldorf (personal communication, September 19, 2007)). Will socially responsible consumers become a powerful force for improving pay and workers' rights in the apparel sector where workers are typically paid less than 10% of the final selling price? (Kimeldorf, 2006).

Contrasting the Kimeldorf study in southeast Michigan, another showed that efforts at social responsibility in a different form were not successful. Product Red, an effort started in 2006 by major international consumer brands like Gap, Giorgio Armani, and American Express, to use a portion of donated profits to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis, was not supported by consumers. Research showed that failure was probably due to use of the standard reactive approach where corporations probe consumers' preferences for socially responsible goods and take them at face value to create products in anticipation of demand. Missing from campaigns for consumer social responsibility is the critical role played by the everyday consumer who buys the products. In a more proactive approach consumers and activists would define their preferences and then products and services would be created to anticipate demand. The proactive approach is believed to be a superior alternative (Devinney et al., 2006).

Environmental Impact

According to the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global warming impacts the environment in many ways,

including temperature, weather, or atmosphere over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity (Alley et al., 2007). The IPCC February 2007 report stated that planetary warming has been caused by human activities since 1750, the dawn of the industrial age, and the burning of fossil fuels. These activities manifest as soil erosion, species extinction, deforestation, ugliness, pollution, social decay, injustice, and economic inefficiencies (Orr, 2004).

The process of global warming begins with human made greenhouse gases (mostly carbon dioxide), which cause the atmosphere to be more opaque to infrared radiation, thus decreasing radiation of heat to space. As a result, the earth gains more heat than it loses. This planetary energy imbalance is sufficient to melt ice corresponding to three feet (one meter) of sea level rise per decade and the imbalance could double if emissions keep growing (Hansen, 2007).

Stabilizing carbon dioxide concentrations is an enormous undertaking. According to the research team of Pielke, Wigley, and Green, the IPCC has underestimated the size of the challenge toward decarbonization. To reduce greenhouse gases, the IPCC assumes no policy interventions are necessary; however, the research team shows that two-thirds or more of energy efficiency improvements required for stabilization are already built into the IPCC plan. The IPCC has implicitly assumed the bulk of reducing emissions will occur in the absence of climate policies. In *Dangerous Assumptions*, Pielke, Wigley, and Green explain that these assumptions are optimistic at best and unachievable at worst (2008).

The greenhouse effect makes the planet suitable for life. Just as a greenhouse is designed to retain heat, the atmosphere is designed to maintain moderate temperatures for life. The atmosphere contains trace gases, some which absorb solar heat in varying amounts. Carbon dioxide, water vapor, methane, ozone, and nitrous oxide are referred to as greenhouse gases because they hold heat like walls of a greenhouse. Some parts of the atmosphere act as an insulating blanket from the cold of space, trapping and absorbing solar heat to keep temperatures in a moderately pleasant range. A balance of these gases keeps solar heat from escaping into space and moderates temperatures (Hansen, 2007; Styx, 2006; Whole Earth System, 2006).

The type of surface that solar heat encounters is also an important factor in temperature moderation. Forests, grasslands, ocean surfaces, ice caps, deserts, and cities absorb, reflect, and radiate heat differently. Sunlight falling on a white glacier reflects back into space, resulting in minimal heating of the planet's surface. Dark, desert soil strongly absorbs sunlight, contributing significantly to heating the surface (Greenhouse Effect, 2006; Styx, 2006).

When the level of gases is too high from too many automobiles, coal-fired utilities, incinerating waste including clothing in landfills, and deforestation, a rise in temperatures occurs from heat trapped in the atmosphere (Hansen, 2007; National Public Radio, 2007; Styx, 2006). With this rise comes parallel climate changes in temperatures and ice at both poles, pervasive changes in precipitation, ocean salinity, and wind patterns; and weather extremes such as droughts, heavy precipitation, heat waves, and intense tropical cyclones (Alley et

al., 2007; National Public Radio, 2007). Wildfires, floods, crop failures, disappearance of species, unprecedented hurricanes, and heat waves are symptomatic of climate changes caused by increased levels of greenhouse gases trapping heat in the atmosphere. As levels rise, so does the temperature of the planet. Between 1995 and 2006, the planet experienced the 12 warmest years on record. Twenty-five percent of the increased levels of greenhouse gases came from the United States with less than 5% of the world's population (Alley et al., 2007; Greenhouse Effect, 2006; Kluger, 2007; Styx, 2006; Wynn & Doyle, 2007).

Americans are divided over the causes of global warming and what to do. In a 2007 report issued by the Pew Research Center, about 50% of the American population believed that human activity such as burning fossil fuels was responsible for rising temperatures and extreme weather phenomena (2007). A 2002 report by the Sustainability Institute found that 39% of Americans felt that global warming was a serious and pressing problem (Jones & Seville, 2002). In another poll, Gallup surveys taken between 1997 and 2006 evaluated the performance of the media in accurately conveying the seriousness of global warming. This poll showed that the public appeared split with about one-third believing that news coverage was "generally exaggerated," one-third believing that news coverage was "generally correct," and one-third believing that the media has "generally underestimated" the problem. Results also showed that the greatest proportion of Americans believed media reports have generally underestimated the problem of global warming from 27% in 1997 to 38% and

35% in 2006 and 2007. In addition, few Americans are confident that they fully grasp the complexities of the issue and believe that the problem of global warming is more serious than reported (Nisbet & Myers, 2007) (Table 2).

Table 2.

Respondents' Views of the Seriousness of Global Warming Reported by the Media

Global Warming	1997	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<i>N</i>	1003	1060	1006	1003	1005	1004	1000	1009
	(percent)							
Generally Exaggerated	31	30	31	33	38	31	30	33
Generally Correct	34	34	32	29	25	29	28	29
Generally Under-estimated	27	32	32	33	33	35	38	35
Don't Know/Refused	8	4	5	5	4	5	4	4

(Adapted from The Gallup Poll)

Textiles' Role in the Environment

During 2006, the population of the United States passed 300 million and was projected to grow by at least 70 million in the next 25 years. Eighty percent of all landfills will be at full capacity with less than one-quarter as many in operation as in 1988 (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2005b). Ninety-five

to 100% of clothing throwaways can be diverted from landfills and reused or reconstructed into other textile end uses, but about 72.5 million tons still go to landfills where they are incinerated or buried (Fast Fashion, 2007; Hawley, 2000). Eight-five percent of the 70 pounds of textiles the average U.S. citizen purchases each year ends up in landfills (Cheplick, 2008). Some fibers do not readily degrade and remain in landfills for years. However, as much as 750,000 tons are recycled yearly for reuse, resale, converted into wipes, or carded and mixed with other fibers and respun into yarn (Hawley, 2000; Smart, 2003).

National statistics show that textiles are 7.3% of the volume of waste to U.S. landfills (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2005b). Although research regarding the effects of textiles on the environment had largely been disregarded, recently researchers examined the topic related to global warming. Over time, disregarding the impact of textiles on the environment has helped put strains on landfills, air, and water resources (Domina & Koch, 1998; Elliott, 1995). In spite of current trends to divert textiles from landfills, the greatest portion of textile impact comes from production (Allwood et al., 2006).

Consumption in the United States is disproportionately higher than most other countries and patterns of over consumption are not being reduced. Over consumption means acquiring more clothing than a person can productively use or more than the environment can sustainably provide (Robin, 1994). Because the trend of fast fashion changes designs every few days, problems of disposal of packaging, apparel, and textile products are further compounded (Allwood et al., 2006; Foroohar, 2006; Hawley, 2006a). This trend specifically aims at a

culture of frequent purchase and disposal of clothing not made to last and produced with little care, using low quality fabrics (Fast Fashion, 2007). Additional carbon dioxide is produced during manufacturing, packaging, shipping, and disposing (Masters, 2007).

In addition, some consumers wear garments very little, and wash and dry them using considerable energy. Keeping and wearing clothes longer, washing at lower temperatures, eliminating tumble drying and ironing, and replacing older model washing machines with new models using less water and energy reduces environmental impact and saves money (Allwood et al., 2006). Sixty percent of energy associated with one piece of clothing, from production to disposal, is spent washing and drying. Over its lifetime a T-shirt can send up to nine pounds of carbon dioxide into the air from washing and drying. The solution is to wash in warm water instead of hot and launder fewer large loads rather than several smaller ones (Masters, 2007).

Life Cycle of a T-Shirt

Garments have a life cycle. For most apparel, the life cycle is short and priced for quick sale with markdowns at retailers such as Kohl's and Goody's, illustrating the trend of fast fashion (Amato-McCoy, 2006; Moore & Fairhurst, 2003). For example, the life cycle for a T-shirt made in China begins with cotton harvested in the southern United States (the Cotton Belt). Cotton matures in five to six months and must be harvested before weather or pests can damage quality or yield (Cotton Counts, n.d.; Organic Consumers, n.d.). Conventional cotton farming takes a toll on the air, water, soil, and people living in the growing

areas. In the production of a single cotton T-shirt, one-third pound of agricultural chemicals is used, accounting for a significant amount of world pesticide use (Organic Consumers, n.d.; Schor, 2003).

Cotton is highly prone to insect infestation requiring large quantities of the most acutely toxic insecticides. Just 2.4% of the world's arable land is planted in cotton; however, it accounts for 24% of the world's insecticide market, making it the most pesticide-intensive crop grown. In 2003, the United States harvested 88 billion pounds of cotton using 55.2 million pounds of pesticides equal to 159 pounds of pesticide per acre (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2007).

Pesticides not only kill cotton pests but also beneficial insects such as ladybugs. With their natural enemies eradicated, cotton pests require increasing amounts of pesticides to keep them in check, further contaminating land, polluting drinking water, and affecting lives of fish, birds, and other wildlife. Fourteen million people in the United States drink water contaminated with carcinogenic pesticides most of which cannot be removed by municipal water treatment facilities (Organic Consumers, n.d.).

Of the 7.6 million bales of U.S. cotton produced annually, more than half are shipped to and made into apparel in China (Allwood et al., 2006; Cotton Counts, n.d.; Organic Consumers, n.d.). Since China's accession into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, U.S. exports to China have grown by 66% (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2004). With the expiration of quotas on textile and apparel products, cotton imports to China increased as much as 1001% by 2005 (Nelson, 2005).

Once cotton is harvested, the fiber is removed from the seed and packaged into bales for sale. Spinning mills process the fiber into spun yarn so that a textile mill can process it into a woven or knit fabric. Finally, the fabric will be cut and sewn into the T-shirt (Organic Consumers, n.d.).

The process is often done in China or other countries with low labor costs where laborers mill, weave, cut, and assemble the material according to the fashion industry's specifications. Working in poor conditions, some Chinese laborers, mostly young women and children, earn as little as 86 cents per hour for an average of 12 hours per day, seven days a week. Currently, China is the largest exporter of fast fashion, accounting for 30% of world apparel exports (Allwood et al., 2006; Luz, 2007). Finished T-shirts from China are shipped to wholesalers, from which they are distributed to retailers (Allwood et al., 2006) and sold at prices so low that many consumers consider clothing disposable (i.e., fast fashion, the clothing equivalent of fast food) (Luz, 2007).

When the T-shirt is exported to the United States and purchased it is kept in a person's inventory until disposal. After wearing it may be washed and dried, discarded, sent to a secondhand store, or exported to another country for second use. If in good, clean condition, it could be shipped to Poland, the Ukraine, Russia, Philippines, Chile, or Guatemala. In the last part of its life cycle, a T-shirt that is torn, worn, or stained often becomes a wiping rag or shoddy. Shoddy is created when a machine shreds the shirt to be spun back into low-grade yarn. Constructed into cheap fabric for industrial uses, shoddy yields considerable

energy savings in the production phase with a reduction in waste while providing usable clothing (Allwood et al., 2006).

Creation of an eight-ounce cotton T-shirt entails purchasing 60 ounces (one-half gallon) of fossil fuel for generation of electricity during the use phase, adding 16 ounces of waste into a landfill for cleaning products and disposal, and emitting 141 ounces of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere during incineration at the end of the life cycle. Omitting tumble drying is most important for reduction of environmental impact especially for cotton garments as use phase energy is dominant (Allwood et al., 2006). Even though the life cycle of a T-shirt will probably be short the environmental toll is long lasting.

The life cycle of a T-shirt is illustrative of many other garments including those made from cotton, cotton blends, and other fibers. Garments may be made in India, Africa, Indonesia, or other developing countries with high labor hours and low labor wages. Low wages have made it possible to produce clothing at increasingly lower prices while leaving a pollution footprint with each step of the clothing life cycle (Allwood et al., 2006; Luz, 2007).

Clothing Consumption Process

Winakor proposed a model for the process of clothing consumption consisting of three main parts: acquisition, inventory, and discard (1969). Acquisition is taking possession of new or secondhand clothing whether by purchase, home construction, professional construction, hand-me-down, reconstruction, exchange for other clothing, gifts, inheritance, or as compensation. The process of acquisition occurs when an individual obtains

possession of a garment, either for inventory or for temporary use. Most acquisitions are new, ready-to-wear garments but some may be used, secondhand, or temporary, including rentals and leases, and those borrowed from friends and family. Permanent and temporary clothing may be new or used (Stephens, 1985; Winakor, 1969).

Inventory is the collection, or storage, and use of clothing that an individual possesses at a given time for more or less regular use. It may include temporarily stored garments to be worn for special occasions, seasonal weather, and/or fashion or weight changes. Items in need of care or maintenance (e.g., cleaning, restyling, or repairing) are part of inventory if the owner intends to wear them again. Garments kept in inventory but not to be worn are in inactive storage, a stage between inventory and discard (Winakor, 1969).

Discard includes donating, selling, abandoning, reconstructing, using as rags, throwing away, exchanging, and handing down. It is hard to determine the exact moment of disposition because garments may become inactive unexpectedly or without conscious decision by the owner (Stephens, 1985; Winakor, 1969). Similar to Winakor's model of clothing consumption, Jacoby developed a taxonomy for consumer disposition behavior offering three options: keep the product, permanently dispose of it, or temporarily dispose of it (Figure 4). If the product is kept in inventory it can be used for its original purpose, repurposed, or stored. When permanently disposed of, the product may be thrown away, abandoned, given away, traded, or sold. Or, if it is temporarily given away, it may be loaned or rented. The taxonomy can be articulated further.

For example, if the product is traded, sold, or given away, it could be used, resold, or recycled by the recipient. A product could also be sold directly to another consumer to or through a middleman (Jacoby, Berning, & Dietvorst, 1977; Stephens, 1985).

Winakor believed that discard occurred when garments were taken out of inventory for disposal or second use (1969) such as selling secondhand garments that have been recycled at a thrift shop (Hawley, 2000). A T-shirt in good condition removed from inventory and given to a thrift shop can be resold for another use and kept out of a landfill. But a T-shirt that is thrown away will not have another use and will probably add to a landfill (Figure 4).

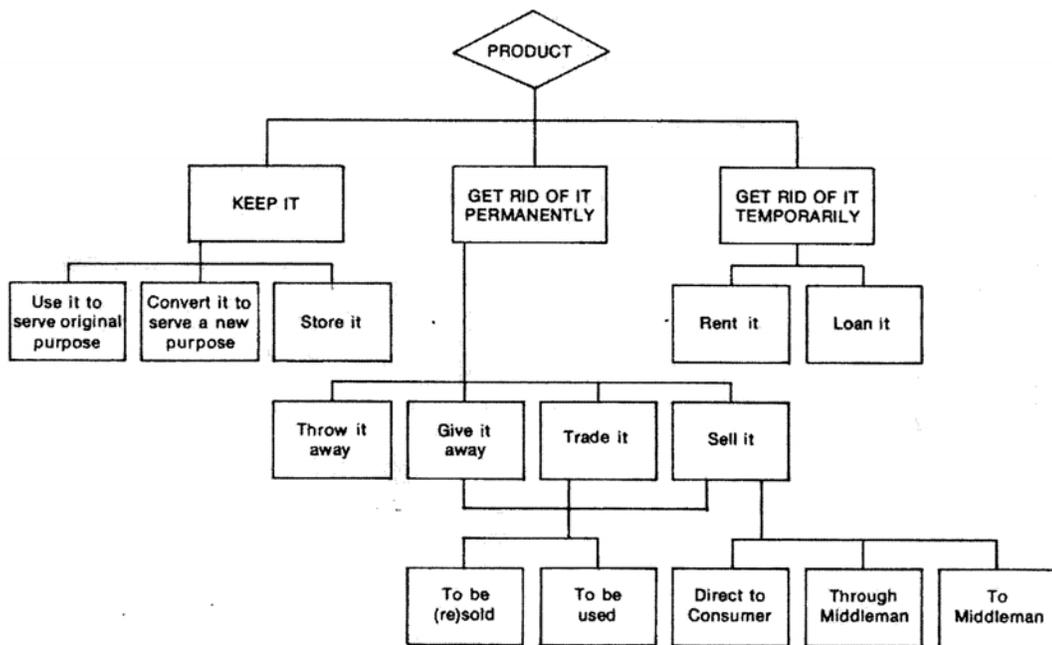


Figure 4. Disposition Decision Taxonomy by Jacoby, et al., (1977)

Current research shows the market for selling secondhand garments is changing with some of the least expensive goods commanding higher prices at online auctions than originally charged. Where consumers once sold secondhand

clothing for a fraction of the purchase price, they now sell to consumers willing to pay substantial premiums. For example, a Roland Mouret dress that sold for \$108 at the Gap in January 2007, recently resold for \$216. A Stella McCartney sweater dress sold in 2005 on e-Bay sold again January 2007 for more than six times its original price. When new garments from designer collections are sold for a limited time and only at a few stores, scarcity drives prices up on the secondary market (Agins, 2007b).

Secondhand clothing may be donated to charity organizations that send it to some of the world's poorest countries, including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Nigeria. Garments that are not sold or resold many times in the United States go to markets in African countries or other countries for resale or manufacture into other products (Wise, 2005). The remainder end life as waste in landfills.

Consumer Behavior

As noted by Winakor, a simplified definition for consumer behavior pertaining to apparel is the acquisition, inventory, and discard of clothing items. Acquisition is taking possession of clothing, inventory is the collection or storage and use of clothing, and disposal includes selling, abandoning, reconstructing, using as rags, throwing away, exchanging, and handing down clothing (1969).

Additionally, Schor contends that consumers in the United States have “the view that one should be able to buy what one likes, where one likes, and as much as one likes, with nary a glance from the government, neighbors, ministers, or political parties” (2003, p. 71). Such a view may be a clear example of consumer behavior that society takes to be wholly personal and outside of social

concern or policy. This ideology respects the consumer's ability to act in their own best interest in an unregulated market committed to liberty and general welfare. However, it leaves the consumer vulnerable to market failures and inefficiencies due to assumptions implying that no consumer policy is the best consumer policy (Schor, 2003).

A more conventional view of consumer behavior is that it is central to the organization of individual, family, and community lives. As such, consumers are socialized into daily consuming roles to meet needs and fulfill wants--at the expense of consumers themselves, those who made the goods and services, other species, and the environment (McGregor, 2007).

Plassmann and Norton's study, based on the assumption that consumers maximize utility under income and price constraints, found that consumers' demand for goods depended on product quality standards and price expectations (2003). Although there are other issues consumers consider in the process of acquisition, Lichtenstein, Ridgway, and Netemeyer (1993) found price to be one of the most important motivators in consumer behavior.

An important characteristic of consumer behavior is a growing, but limited, interest in social responsibility when acquiring clothing and other personal items. Socially responsible, or ethical consumers, are concerned with a sense of global citizenship through consumption (McGregor, 2008). With an obligation and commitment toward distant or absent others, they show greater self control and are aware that their actions can have global repercussions (McGregor, 2008)

In January 2006, an effort to link social responsibility with consumer shopping was unveiled at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland by the rock group, U2's lead singer, Bono. It was the Product Red which proposed a portion of profits be donated by major international brands like Gap, Giorgio Armani, and American Express from sales of Red-branded products, many of which were apparel, to the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. Although researchers did not find the effort successful, a question remains whether or not consumers were socially responsible when not buying (Devinney et al., 2006)

Although consumers often expressed desires to be socially responsible with apparel purchases, sales of socially responsible products at the Forum were not supported. Sales were "as flat as a pancake and the British public has not reacted in the manner that these companies, at least in private, would have hoped for" (Devinney et al., 2006, p. 32). Although consumers were given a way to express social desires and companies given ways to display social responsibilities, products available did not relate to consumer preferences. The critical role played by the everyday consumer who purchased the products had been overlooked. The products were lacking functionality which was of primary importance to consumers (Devinney et al., 2006).

. . . if those products don't look good, don't fit right, aren't durable or aren't priced competitively, then customers probably aren't going to buy them...Companies that lead with green and ecofriendliness are in very dangerous territory because they are often not competitive on fashion or function and ask the consumer to make a compromise (Bounds, 2007, p. B9)

Consumer opinions tend to differ from behavior as reported by a team of scholars in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (Devinney et al., 2006). Opinions related a positive picture of consumer involvement in environmental issues but behavior showed that socially responsible consumers were considerably different from those described by popular press. The most important characteristic of socially responsible consumers is their invisibility. Researchers found that it was nearly impossible to use demographic traits, such as gender, income, age, and education to determine who was more likely to possess social preferences. For example, contrary to thinking that social responsibility is the purview of wealthy, highly educated females in Western democracies, researchers discovered that it was a phenomenon embedded in the psyche of individuals regardless of country (Devinney et al., 2006).

Devinney's team also found willingness by some consumers to pay more for products with positive socially responsible attributes, but only when functional attributes needs were met first. When presented with two products at the same price, one with positive socially responsible attributes, but negative functional attributes and the second with negative socially responsible attributes but positive functional attributes, consumers nearly always chose apparel with negative social (i.e., no child labor) but positive functional (i.e., good fit) attributes (Devinney et al., 2006).

Research suggested socially responsible consumers exist but are not as prevalent as thought. Research in 1973 concerning consumer behavior supported the contention that consumers tended to have high levels of verbal

commitment but low levels of actual commitment. At that time, scientists believed that society appeared to have made the assumption that advances in technology would provide the answer to a growing world consumption problem with depleting resources. Scientists recognized that the problem did not allow for time-honored or time-consuming methods. ... “trends in land occupancy, ocean pollution, particulate air pollution, radioactive waste release, and mineral depletion, indicated that the ‘crunch’ will occur before the turn of the century—in less than 30 years” (Maloney & Ward, 1973, p. 583).

Voluntary Simplicity

As a counterculture of self-imposed moral and economic limits against mainstream American liberalism, voluntary simplicity is living in a way that is outwardly simple and inwardly rich, contrary to current trends to over consume. It embraces frugality of consumption, a strong sense of environmentalism, a desire to live and work with more satisfaction and less stress, and an intention to realize higher human potential—both psychological and spiritual (Buell, 2005; Gregg, 2003; Johnson, 2004).

Voluntary simplicity is not a new way of thinking. As a personal choice, it is driven by a sense of social responsibility for a less materialistic, more fulfilling lifestyle (Johnson, 2004). Recently, the movement has been driven by a sense of urgency derived from societal problems including shortage of resources and abundance of environmental contaminants (Buell, 2005; Elgin & Mitchell, 2003).

In 1936, Richard Gregg coined the name, *Voluntary Simplicity*, after travels to India in the 1920s where he studied Mohandas Ghandi’s teaching passive

resistance and simplicity. Gregg was influenced by Gandhi's belief that simplicity of living was necessary to keep honor before God and maintain permanent satisfaction with life (Gregg, 2003; Leonard-Barton, 1981). His essay on voluntary simplicity was written on the benefits of living more simply and influenced Martin Luther King, Jr. and civil rights theorist Bayard Rustin (Buell, 2005; Leonard-Barton, 1981). The movement also spawned ecological organizations such as Sierra Club, Greenpeace Society, the *Whole Planet Catalog*, and innovative energy-conserving legislation that started in California in the early 1970s. It was believed to be a foreshadowing of major transformation in the goals and values of the United States (Leonard-Barton, 1981).

From the movement Gregg started there remains five basic values or life principles underlying the foundation of the socially responsible lifestyle applicable to clothing today:

- Material simplicity - recycling, repairing, and reusing resources such as textiles and apparel
- Self-determination - assuming greater control over clothing consumption
- Environmental awareness – recognizing interdependence of people and limited resources
- Human scale – desiring smaller-scale institutions, technologies, textile and apparel manufacturers
- Personal growth - desiring to explore and develop an inner, spiritual life word (Elgin & Mitchell, 2003; Iverson, 2006; Leonard-Barton, 1981).

In contrast to living frugally, voluntary simplicity is a journey toward social responsibility by lessening desires for material goods and over consumption (Iwata, 2006). It is a conscious decision to use fewer resources and to greater appreciation of living with less each day (Voeltz, n.d.). Before buying another garment, whether new or secondhand, the socially responsible consumer would consider if:

- there was a genuine need for a garment and if alterations were necessary
- the garment was well made, made with the least energy and least toxic emissions
- the garment workers were paid a credible living wage, and
- the effects of care (i.e., chemicals used in dry cleaning, energy used in ironing)
- eventual disposal in landfills had a negative impact on the environment (Allwood et al., 2006).

Ideally, consumers would also consider leasing or buying fewer higher quality garments with the expectation of repairing them if needed to extend life. Although the idea of leasing may seem unattractive, it has been common for some clothing and textile products for short-term uses such as formal and evening wear, maternity clothes, school uniforms, sports clothing, linens for restaurants and hotels, uniforms for hotel employees and medical workers, and many others. Now market forces make leasing a more attractive option in high priced high fashion for a short time (Allwood et al., 2006).

Rather than disposing of used or torn clothing in the trash, the socially responsible consumer would extend its life by taking it to a store for resale, giving it away, using it for rags, or having it repaired. Between 1990 and 2003, (Figure 5) the United States exported nearly 7 billion pounds total, or about 20 pounds per person, of used clothing (Rivoli, 2005), which emphasizes the need for social responsibility and lessening patterns of over consumption. Although repair is not always economical, garments can be designed to facilitate repair with collars, cuffs, and sleeves designed for easy removal. Manufacturers, like the car industry, could supply spare parts to facilitate repair and gain higher profit margins on the spares, while reducing need for new materials (Allwood et al., 2006).



Figure 5. U.S. Exports of Used Clothing by Weight, 1989-2003
(Source: USITC Dataweb)

The Socially Responsible Consumer

From deliberate choices based on personal and moral beliefs, the socially responsible consumer considers ethical impacts of apparel acquisition and disposal. She consciously considers the social aspects of business products and practices and how purchasing power decisions may bring about social change. Social change implies that apparel consumption is in a state of modification or transformation.

Socially responsible consumers are taking an interest in sustainability as it pertains to the garments they acquire. They want to know the full story as to where a garment came from, how it was made, who made it, and what happens upon disposal (Lichtenstein et al., 1993) before buying. These concerns were brought out in the 1990s when the public was alerted to exploitative conditions of apparel factories in the United States, Latin America, and Asia. Well known firms, Guess©, Nike©, Kathie Lee Gifford©, Wal-Mart©, and Disney©, were perceived as neglecting impacts of business and production practices on people's lives, and called to task by consumer action groups and media coverage (Holstein, Palmer, Ur-Rehman, & Ito, 1996; McCormick & Levinson, 1993). Government and industry-led initiatives emerged, and socially responsible consumers led the drive demanding change (Kim et al., 1999).

Motivated by concerns for apparel consumption on the environment, the socially responsible consumer follows suggestions adapted from Jacoby and Allwood in Table 3.

Table 3.

Socially Responsible Consumers and Clothing Consumption

Activity	Behavior
Acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • buys fewer, more durable articles • buys secondhand including vintage and classics • buys new made with the least energy and least emissions • buys new made by workers paid livable wages with reasonable employment rights and conditions • leases for less expensive access to special clothing for a short time for overall smaller inventories • saves money acquiring secondhand
Inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses for original purpose • repurposes (for a new use) • keeps in inventory • repairs existing • washes less often, at room temperature, hangs to dry, and avoids ironing • uses environmentally friendly dry cleaners • uses environmentally friendly detergents
Disposal – keeps garment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rents temporarily • loans temporarily • renovates and reuses existing clothing in wardrobes
Disposal – permanent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disposes of clothing • gives away • trades • sells • recycles

Adapted from Allwood et al., 2006 and Jacoby, 1977

Efficacy of Recycling

Recycling clothing to extend its life for additional use is not new. More than 2,000 years ago, the Chinese shredded and carded clothing to make yarns for new fabrics and clothing. A shortage of wool during the Napoleonic and World Wars advanced the need to recycle used clothing for military uniforms (Hawley,

2006a). Prior to World War II, as a major importer of rags and rags and textile waste, the United States led in converting reclaimed textiles into manufactured materials. Yet, in the United States, textile recycling is one of the least used recycling industries.

A study by Domina and Koch (2002) indicated that access to curbside recycling significantly affects the amount and variety of materials households recycle. Provision of waste storage containers and waste collection points also influences participation in recycling programs (Nyamwange, 1996). However, for a textile recycling program to be successful, consumer education is highly emphasized for reduction of textiles as landfill waste. Prompting and informing consumers about a recycling program increases recycling behavior; but more importantly, public education programs that continuously provide information and incentives such as money or raffles encourage permanent recycling behavior (Nyamwange, 1996). Making the community aware of pro-environmental activities will increase public awareness.

Research showed that those owning homes are more likely to have convenient access to curbside recycling and higher rates of participation. Communities with curbside collection had an estimated 49% participation rate, where communities with only a local drop-off had a 25% participation rate. Provision of waste collection bins and easily accessible collection sites are important factors in increasing recycling participation. The importance of convenience and access are stressed as a means of facilitating recycling participation (Domina & Koch, 2002; Nyamwange, 1996).

It is obvious that people cannot coexist with wanton disregard of their own [textiles]. . . . We have moved speedily ahead without a lot of concern for the problems we have been creating. . . . That attitude has led to dramatic strains on our landfills and air and water resources (Elliott, 1995, p. 221).

Because of more recent over consumption patterns the flow has reversed with the United States as the biggest exporter of recycled textiles (Hawley, 2006a).

Now, dwindling landfill space and rising carbon dioxide levels shed light on the efficacy of recycling textile waste. Recycling keeps the environment clean and saves money. A good example of recycling using a non-textile product in a cooperative effort is Lee and Swift Textiles where 20% of denim comes from recycled PET soda bottles sparing use of landfill space. Changing focus from waste treatment to minimizing use and recycling for another use is a constructive approach to textile waste management (Elliott, 1995).

To reduce strains on landfills, a T-shirt slated for discard may instead be recycled at a thrift shop (Winakor, 1969). Recycling is a series of activities involving collection of materials such as textiles that would otherwise go into the trash, to be sorted, reused, or processed into reusable materials (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2006b).

When resources are held in common and are freely available to everyone, incentives that direct human behavior lead people to steadily increase exploitation until resources are inadequate to meet human needs (Hardin, 1968). Many political, economic, and social beliefs hinge on little or no restraint on the use of resources. Although intentions may not be to cause harm, exploiters are merely taking care of their own needs, or those of others in need, moving the

entire natural system to disaster. To reduce strains on landfills, Elliott and Lamm suggest slowing population growth and exploitation of resources (Elliott & Lamm, 2002) by recycling clothing.

Every item of clothing has an impact on the environment. Textiles made with petroleum products impact the environment differently than those, such as cotton, that require pesticides and large amounts of land in the growing process. Recycled clothing has a smaller impact than new because the energy required to make and ship new items is not needed for secondhand (Masters, 2007). Using clothes longer spares the demand for new clothes, reducing the rate of disposal on landfills, carbon emissions, and other associated processes (Allwood et al., 2006). A good example of recycling is the Cinderella Prom Project at Fort Collins High School in Colorado. Dresses are repaired, recycled, and resold at prices ranging from \$5 to \$20. Because of this successful recycling project, young women have an opportunity to attend proms and other special events while cutting costs and saving resources (Charbonneau & Makela, 2005; Ruff, 2003). Another example of a successful recycling program is Patagonia's collection of used fleece garments. Regardless of the brand, fleece made from Polartec® and Capilene® is melted and made into new fabric and clothing. The company estimates that making polyester fiber from recycled garments results in a 76% energy savings and 71% reduction in greenhouse gases compared with new polyester (Adams, 2007) .

Down side of recycling.

As consumers acquire more new clothes, many discarded items find their way into landfills (Chen & Lewis, 2005), thrift shops, or global markets. As a result, 40% of the world's used clothing comes from the United States, creating a global industry with supply exceeding demand. What is not resold or recycled in the United States goes to some of the world's poorest countries, including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Nigeria (Wise, 2005). Nearly 7 billion pounds of used clothing and textile products were exported from the United States between 1989 and 2003 (Rivoli, 2005).

Elimination of global apparel and textile quotas in 2005 created an influx of secondhand clothing from charity organizations such as the Salvation Army and Oxfam to African countries. Abolition of quotas created a profitable African market where secondhand items were resold, but jobs in local apparel manufacturing firms were lost. In 2003, there were 35 apparel firms in Kenya, employing over 36,000 people, exporting \$1.3 million worth of apparel. By 2005, manufacturing jobs were lost at a rate of 2,000 per month and five companies closed while others operated at 50% or less capacity (Allwood et al., 2006; Hawley, 2006b; Wise, 2005). Further, in Kenya, used clothing has decreased demand for traditional clothing of African print fabric contributing to a decline in cotton farming, weaving, and spinning. Most negative impacts on the African clothing industry are due to lower prices for American secondhand clothing than for new, traditional clothing (Wise, 2005).

Secondhand Clothing

Since the establishment of haute couture early in the 20th century, women have been strongly encouraged to follow the dictates of that industry. Designers created fashions they wanted women to wear. For most designers and manufacturers, these approaches were successful until the 1980s when female consumers made a strong statement about ready-to-wear apparel by refusing to buy. Designers did not understand that the attributes women sought were versatility and lower prices, not restrictive or formal clothing at extreme prices (Charbonneau, 1999; White & Steinhauer, 1996).

Although losses in revenue continued into the 1990s, the fashion industry still produced tight-fitting, expensive apparel designed for tall, thin models. A reversal of power began in the early 2000s with the phenomenon of fast fashion, growth in women's disposable income, and an upsurge in consumption (Days of Ever Cheaper Clothing Are Numbered, 2007; Slower Growth Is Forecast, 2005; White & Steinhauer, 1996).

Rather than purchase new, expensive clothing consumers may acquire secondhand clothing from friends or family, thrift/consignment shops, swap meets, flea markets, or the internet. Since 2005, New York University has hosted a huge clothing swap on Earth Day. Participants bring bags of clothing to swap with others. Volunteers alter garments and local designers apply skills to redesign T-shirts. The event culminates in a runway show of reclaimed and repurposed outfits (Ryzik, 2007).

Other clothes are taken to recycling centers to be sold or remanufactured to add value and sold as fashionable items. About 20% of dresses are new, with original tags and are priced anywhere from 35% to 75% off the original retail value (Branch, 2003). Beyond the monetary or economic benefits of secondhand clothing, consumers acquire it to:

- stand out, feel unique, and establish image or personal style
- seek nostalgia
- resist dominant fashion found in the marketplace
- fuel motivation for environmental concerns
- oppose consumerism, align with ethical concerns of voluntary simplicity and other behaviors against proliferation of consumer goods (Roux & Korchia, 2006)

Contemporary Western clothing offers numerous style options crossing traditional ideas of age appropriateness, race, class, and gender. Secondhand clothing has moved away from a run down image to a mainstream and highly popular alternative to wearing new clothing. Its allure includes wearing clothing that nobody else has, mixing secondhand with new or vintage clothing, and the thrill of the hunt for a unique bargain with which to create different persona (Palmer, 2005; Thurman, 2003).

Image

What people wear changes self-perceptions and the way they face the world. Choice of clothing synchronizes the image of the wearer with the garments being worn and at the same time, creates reactions from others. It

impacts the wearer, much like an actor wearing a costume for a play, with a feeling for the wearer of a new sense of self (Fine, 2007) and caring for the environment.

In *The Principles of Philosophy*, William James, psychologist and philosopher, believed that clothing conditioned physical behavior. He wrote that:

The old saying that the human person is composed of three parts—soul, body, and clothes—is more than a joke. We so appropriate our clothes and identify ourselves with them that there are few of us who, if asked to choose between having a beautiful body clad in raiment perpetually shabby and unclean, and having an ugly and blemished form always spotlessly attired, would not hesitate a moment before making a decisive reply (1890, p. 292).

Clothing provides one of the most easily recognizable means for presentation of image. Nearly everyone's style of dress is, in some way, representative of an image whether unique, symbolic, or rebellious. Wearing clothes of different fashion seasons creates a unique and individual image (Matsumoto, 2000). The symbolic function of clothing can satisfy needs for social acceptance, approval, and the need to belong (Sproles & Burns, 1994). When celebrities such as Renee Zellweger and Julia Roberts dressed in vintage clothing for the 2007 Oscars, fashion conscious consumers followed their lead (Goodyear, 2007).

The way we look involves not only how we perceive and discriminate clothing, but how we create a unique appearance through selecting and combining pieces of clothing, designing the body, and the reasoning that goes into that process (DeLong, 1998).

The search for clothing presents an identity and constructs an image that reveals and conceals private selves (DeLong, 1998). The distinctive character of

secondhand clothing cultivates courage to break away from current fast fashion trends in favor of social responsibility and a unique image (Matsumoto, 2000).

As the largest group of consumers shopping for clothing (Jones & Seville, 2002), women are concerned for the image and well being of their families. Social responsibility plays a role in women's consumption decisions based on available resources or income (Grover et al., 1999). Bargain pricing at thrift shops gives women opportunities for social responsibility, to care for the well being of their families, and to create an image through clothing.

Self-Expression

Self-expression occurs partly with others in mind. It is influenced by the way people want others to see them through selection of clothing, presentation of image, and for pursuit of social opportunities (Kaiser, 1998). As a clothing craftswoman the wearer typically brings skill, knowledge, judgment, concern for the ultimate impact of choices on the environment, and passion to dress motivated by desire for self-expression .

In *The Craft Consumer*, Campbell suggests postmodern philosophy has additionally fashioned the consumer as a self-conscious manipulator of symbolic meanings--someone who selects clothing with specific intentions for presentation of personality, social role, a given impression, identity, or lifestyle. The wearer exercises personal control over all processes involved in personal dress. She chooses the style of the dress and accessories, and puts them together as an investment of self, transforming individual pieces of clothing into personalized objects of self expression (Elliott, 1995).

Vintage Clothing

Traditionally vintage has been defined as clothing at least 25 years old, from fabled and expensive labels such as Chanel and Yves Saint Laurent, which cannot be replicated. It is also representative of valued unique prints and expensive and difficult to reproduce clothing (Palmer, 2005). Once not highly thought of, vintage has become a mainstream and fashion alternative to wearing only new, mass produced styles. Dressing today is about hundreds of styles and thousands of designers, in a blend of elegance and ease and a juxtaposition of the old with the new (Palmer, 2005).

Vintage clothing is distinguished from secondhand by the year or period produced or worn, the designer, styling, construction, fibers, and fabric (Matsumoto, 2000; Palmer, 2005). As a subcategory of secondhand, vintage clothing is attractive to consumers for many reasons:

- cost is usually less than new clothing
- styles and fabrics are rare, original, and one of a kind
- recycling of clothing is socially responsible for the environment

(Agins, 2007a).

Popularity for individualized wardrobes of styles from many fashion seasons has grown. Combining clothing from a personal wardrobe with vintage creates familiarity, comfort, and fun in a world that is increasingly impersonal. Interest in vintage is not only a means of authenticating the present, it is also an inspiration for future styles. Seeking authenticity in what is rare and cannot be duplicated,

modern vintage wearers position themselves in the fashion world as informed, avant-garde, socially responsible fashion connoisseurs (Palmer, 2005).

It's no longer about one style or one designer's signature; it's about hundreds of styles and thousands of designers. It's about a subtle blend of elegance and ease, a juxtaposition of the old with the new, a little tradition mixed in with the avant-garde...it's about vintage (Bardey, 2002, p. 8).

Vintage garments are prized by fashion designers and individual collectors for inspiration. According to Zac Posen, New York fashion designer, "fashion is often about having a conversation with the past" (Kang, 2007, p. 1) and a resurrection toward the future. Designers, willing to purchase vintage items at high prices, shop specialized retail stores for pieces that might influence their next collections as "directional" and relevant to today's fashions. Vintage clothing is found in estate sales, auction houses, flea markets, and house sales both in the United States and Europe and prized for unique qualities and investment potential (Goodyear, 2007).

Unique Characteristics

When clothing is unique, it may be considered in a class by itself and one-of-a kind (DeLong, 1998; DeLong et al., 2005). Vintage clothing is unique because of styling and fabric from at least 25 years ago. Wearing vintage as an alternative to mass produced clothing is a way to regain individuality through revaluing and reusing fashion and reconnect with another time, place, or person (DeLong et al., 2005).

Vintage not only cultivates uniqueness, it is a valuable resource for assembling an individual look. Unlike mass produced clothing, a vintage item is

most likely one-of-a-kind. Combining vintage with new clothing is a complex process to build an identity. Shopping for and wearing vintage are like being a designer, choosing and combining garments from a variety of eras including contemporary. Knowing how to create a unique look in a mass produced market is a way to build individuality through reusing and redefining clothing (DeLong et al., 2005).

Status

Wearing secondhand and vintage clothing has become a fashion statement about status and being a part of the avant-garde of the fashion world (DeLong et al., 2005). With a newly elevated image, vintage imparts “maximum snob appeal because others can’t replicate [the] look” (Agins, 2007a, p. D8) and some cannot afford the price. In the 1990s, actresses began to wear vintage publicly. Although they could afford contemporary fashions the message they conveyed was that vintage was about wearing what others could not. Vintage also signifies a change in status and a revaluing of the clothing beyond its original time period or setting (DeLong et al., 2005). It has become so important that e-Bay added vintage to the selection of clothes offered on their website (Goodyear, 2007).

Thrift Shopping

The word, *thrift*, is synonymous with frugality and wise management of money and resources. Thrift shopping—buying secondhand clothing or purchasing less clothing—provides shopping pleasure for consumers of all economic levels. It can be broadly defined as consumers shopping in a number

of alternative retail formats such as estate, garage, and yard sales; flea markets; swap meets; and thrift stores. Expert thrift shoppers, or thrift mavens, are either male or female, even though males in the United States are known to dislike shopping. Thrift shopping appeals to a large number of consumers with a wide range of household incomes (Christiansen & Snepenger, 2005). Rather than purchase new clothing, a frugal shopper purchases from a thrift shop with substantial savings.

“Resale is a multibillion dollar industry that has been growing at a rate of 5% per year for a number of years” (Reeger, 2005, p. 1) with an estimated 20,000 thrift shops throughout the United States. Consumer demand is rising and nearly 20% of U.S. shoppers buy at thrift shops each year (Reeger, 2005). A growing number do so out of concern for the ultimate impact of apparel shopping choices on the environment (Domina & Koch, 1998) while hunting for bargains. Consumers of all income brackets search for quality and designer label recycled clothing at about one-third the original price (Branch, 2003). Even wealthy consumers are shopping at thrift stores to save money on clothing purchases (Newly Frugal Rich, 2003).

Although pricing generally begins at one-third of retail, most shops reduce the price by 20% after one month and another 20 to 30% after 60 days. During January, February, July, and August, shops reduce starting prices up to 80%. Experienced shoppers seize the moment to buy clothing items immediately because inventory changes constantly. In addition to understanding how thrift shops determine prices, following are suggestions for thrift shopping.

- Set up a wish list with the shop, if possible; ask to be put on their mailing list for sales
- List prices of desired items at department stores for comparison with thrift shops
- Make sure clothing fits. Use dressing rooms to try items for size. Size tags may be missing or clothing altered. Sales are final (Hurley, 2001).

Thrift shopping poses two related problems for shoppers. The first is which shop has the product(s) the consumer is looking for. Thrift shops are generally not well organized and products from women's clothing to glassware may be displayed next to each other. In less structured markets such as flea markets or garage sales the mix of products is even more varied. When faced with a finite amount of time, a shopper may need to go to another shop. Second, because many operate locally, thrift stores advertise little or not at all and do not provide much product information. Consequently, thrift shopping bears the challenge for consumers of not knowing where to shop for the best selection of products as the assortment continually changes (Christiansen & Snepenger, 2005).

It is difficult to find accurate information regarding the size of the thrift shopping segment of the retail economy. In many communities, garage and yard sales are unregulated, estate sales are unmonitored by the government, and flea markets may be occasionally subject to oversight by tax collectors. However, thrift stores do provide information to the federal government. The U.S. 2002 Census of Retail Trade for used merchandise stores (NAICS 4533)

reported 18,000 stores, sales just below \$8 billion, 117,000 employees, and an annual payroll of nearly \$1.75 billion (Industry Statistics Sampler, 2002).

Summary

This chapter synthesizes the literature relevant for social responsibility and women's acquisition of secondhand clothing. It is important to understand the relationship between social responsibility and apparel consumption as a relatively new concept to the apparel and textile disciplines.

As defined for this study, social responsibility refers to moral beliefs that extend beyond self-interest and satisfaction of personal needs to the ultimate impact of apparel choices on the global population and environment. In the United States consumer interest for socially responsible apparel consumption has grown during the last decade. A limited number of consumers are taking responsibility to change personal consumption in the hopes that individual efforts will have a favorable impact on the environment (Kim & Damhorst, 1998) and people convincing apparel-related businesses to blend ethics and morality with profit.

According to the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global warming impacts the environment in many ways, including temperature, weather, or atmosphere over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity (Alley et al., 2007). The IPCC February 2007 report stated that planetary warming has been caused by human activities since 1750, the industrial age, and burning of fossil fuels. These activities

manifest as soil erosion, species extinction, deforestation, ugliness, pollution, social decay, injustice, and economic inefficiencies (Orr, 2004).

The process of global warming begins with human made greenhouse gases, which cause the atmosphere to be more opaque to infrared radiation, thus decreasing radiation of heat to space. As a result, the earth gains more heat than it loses. This planetary energy imbalance is sufficient to melt ice corresponding to three feet (one meter) of sea level rise per decade and the imbalance could double if emissions keep growing (Hansen, 2007).

When the level of gases is too high from too many auto combustion engines, coal-fired utilities, incinerating waste including clothing in landfills, and deforestation, a rise in temperatures occurs from heat trapped in the atmosphere (Hansen, 2007; National Public Radio, 2007; Styx, 2006). With this rise comes parallel climate changes in temperatures and ice at both poles, pervasive changes in precipitation, ocean salinity, and wind patterns; and weather extremes such as droughts, heavy precipitation, heat waves, and intense tropical cyclones (Alley et al., 2007; National Public Radio, 2007). Wildfires, floods, crop failures, disappearance of species, unprecedented hurricanes, and heat waves are symptomatic of climate changes caused by increased levels of greenhouse gases trapping heat in the atmosphere. As levels rise, so does the temperature of the planet. Between 1995 and 2006, the planet experienced the 12 warmest years on record. Twenty-five percent of the increased levels of greenhouse gases came from the United States with less than 5% of the world's population

(Alley et al., 2007; Greenhouse Effect, 2006; Kluger, 2007; Styx, 2006; Wynn & Doyle, 2007).

Ninety-five to 100% of clothing throwaways can be diverted from landfills and reused or reconstructed into other textile end uses, but about 72.5 million tons still go to landfills where they are incinerated or buried (Fast Fashion, 2007; Hawley, 2000). Although research regarding the effects of textiles on the environment had largely been disregarded, researchers have begun to examine the topic as it relates to global warming more recently. Over time, disregarding the impact of textiles on the environment has helped put strains on landfills, air, and water resources (Domina & Koch, 1998; Elliott, 1995).

As proposed by Winakor, a simplified definition for consumer behavior pertaining to apparel is the acquisition, inventory, and discard of clothing items. Acquisition is taking possession of clothing, inventory is the collection or storage and use of clothing, and disposal includes selling, abandoning, reconstructing, using as rags, throwing away, exchanging, and handing down clothing (1969). A more conventional view of consumer behavior is that it is central to the organization of individual, family, and community lives. As such, consumers are socialized into daily consuming roles to meet needs and fulfill wants--at the expense of consumers themselves, those who made the goods and services, other species, and the environment (McGregor, 2007). An important characteristic of consumer behavior is a growing, but limited interest in social responsibility when acquiring clothing and other personal items.

Secondhand clothing has moved away from a run down image to a mainstream and highly popular alternative to wearing new clothing. Its allure includes wearing something that nobody else has, mixing secondhand with new or vintage clothing, and the thrill of the hunt for a unique bargain with which to create different personae (Palmer, 2005). Bardhi added that the thrill of the hunt is “the endless search and longing for that particular ‘gem’ hidden somewhere that the expert shopper manages to buy for just 99 cents” (2003, p. 375). Rather than purchase new clothing, consumers may acquire secondhand clothing from friends or family, thrift/ consignment shops, swap meets, flea markets, or the internet.

Clothing provides one of the most easily recognizable means for presentation of image. Nearly everyone’s style of dress is, in some way, representative of an image whether unique, symbolic, or rebellious. The search for clothing presents an identity and constructs an image that reveals and conceals private selves (DeLong, 1998). The distinctive character of secondhand clothing cultivates courage to break away from current fast fashion trends in favor of social responsibility, self-expression, and a unique image (Matsumoto, 2000). Self-expression is influenced by the way people want others to see them through selection of clothing, presentation of image, and pursuit of social opportunities (Kaiser, 1998).

Traditionally vintage has been defined as clothing at least 25 years old, from fabled and expensive labels which cannot be replicated. It is also representative of valued unique prints and expensive and difficult to reproduce

clothing (Palmer, 2005). Once not highly thought of, vintage has become a mainstream and fashion alternative to wearing only new, mass produced styles. Dressing today is about hundreds of styles and thousands of designers, in a blend of elegance and ease, and a juxtaposition of the old with the new (Palmer, 2005).

The word, *thrift*, is synonymous with frugality and wise management of money and resources. Thrift shopping—buying secondhand clothing or purchasing less clothing—provides shopping pleasure for consumers of all economic levels. It can be broadly defined as shopping in a number of alternative retail formats such as estate, garage, and yard sales; flea markets; swap meets; and thrift stores (Christiansen & Snepenger, 2005). As consumers, women are typically responsible for the purchase of clothing for their families and themselves (Grover et al., 1999). Today, thrift shops and charities offer opportunities for women to stylishly clothe themselves and their families while spending less. While it is valuable to understand the reasons women acquire secondhand clothing, it is also important to understand the perspectives of women as consumers and to interpret how they describe their experiences.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate women's motivations for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing. A qualitative study provides the most appropriate framework to answer research questions. This chapter discusses the research design and rationale, research questions, participants and sites, data collection, focus groups, and data analysis.

Research Design and Rationale

Qualitative research is especially suited to understand the meaning of lived experiences as examined through detailed descriptions of people or something about people being studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). It is a planned empirical strategy for answering questions about people and the world in which they live. As a situational activity, it places the researcher in the world of the observed to make her world visible and to transform it into text for the reader. Through the researcher (or observer), the world is transformed into a series of representations, including field notes, surveys, recordings, and memos to the self (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

For this research, women's focus group discussions were studied. From these discussions, women's described motivations for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing. Focus group discussions gave the researcher a better

understanding of social responsibility as it relates to acquisition of secondhand clothing.

There can be many ways of conducting a social science study with its concern for human experiences. Merriam (2002) suggested five key characteristics of conducting qualitative research that are applicable and described in terms of this study. The researcher

- sought to comprehend how the women made sense of their unique experiences pertaining to social responsibility and secondhand clothing.
- acted as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis with a carefully worded script and questions pertaining to four research questions. As the human instrument, the researcher recognized that she had biases that could impact and shape interpretation of the data gathered. Biases were monitored by the researcher's adherence to the prepared questions in the script during the women's discussions.
- attempted to understand the meaning of the phenomenon of social responsibility from women's discussions. The process was inductive, as the researcher gathered detailed data for formation of categories and themes (Creswell, 1994).
- used the words and descriptions of participants to explain what was learned from the women. Descriptions of the context, women, and settings were included. Data in the form of quotes, field notes, and discussions support findings and contributed to the descriptive nature of the study.

- gained meaning and understanding from the perspectives and interpretations of the lived experiences of the women (Creswell, 2003).

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is distinguished from other qualitative methods by understanding and scrutinizing the lived experiences of women that describe their motivations for acquiring, wearing, and disposing of secondhand clothing. The strategy was to involve participants through hour and a half engagements. The goal was to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Creswell, 1994).

The method of phenomenology allowed the researcher to:

- enter the field of perception of the women and ask them to share stories about their reasons for acquiring secondhand clothing.
- see how women experience, live, and display the phenomenon of secondhand clothing in collective interaction.
- observe interactive processes occurring among participants.
- gain deep understanding, develop themes, and gather large amounts of information from lived experiences shared in focus groups.
- guide the focus groups with questions based on the literature (Creswell, 2003; Madriz, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Research Questions

To gain understanding for the reasons women acquire secondhand clothing and address the purpose of the study, research questions have been carefully considered and are provided below.

1. What motivates women to acquire and wear secondhand clothing?
2. What factors do women identify as important to acquire secondhand clothing?
 - What factors were important for women to acquire secondhand clothing *initially*?
 - What factors are important for women to acquire secondhand clothing *currently*?
3. What factors do women identify as important to wear secondhand clothing?
 - What factors were important for women to wear secondhand clothing *initially*?
 - What factors are important for women to wear secondhand clothing *currently*?
4. When clothing is no longer needed, wanted, or used, what do women do with it?

Question 1 asked women to share their motivations for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing. Participants were asked to recall a first memory of or experience with secondhand clothing and motivation to continue acquiring or wearing it. They were also asked to detail ideas about their use of secondhand

clothing evolving over time. Question 2 asked what factors are important for them to *acquire* secondhand clothing. Participants were asked why they acquire secondhand clothing, what they liked and disliked about it, and if they have influenced others to acquire it. Question 3 asked what factors are important for women to *wear* secondhand clothing. Participants were asked why they wear secondhand clothing, what they liked and disliked about it, and if they have influenced others to wear it. The last question explored what women do with clothing when no longer needed, wanted, or used. Participants were asked how much secondhand clothing they dispose of and how they dispose of it, whether they renovate or dispose of it in the trash. Last, they were asked about the importance of not using landfills as the final resting place for unwanted clothing.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are used to draw out life experiences from participants so that the researcher can learn about them. They generate interaction among participants so that each considers her own viewpoint further. As the discussion progresses, responses become sharpened and refined, and move to deeper and more considered levels. They are synergistic in the sense that the group works together and are explicitly used to generate data and insights (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

A further feature of focus groups is spontaneity. Arising from a strong social context, each participant responds spontaneously to others, revealing more of her own frame of reference on the subject than in one-to-one interviews. Because some research participants find one-on-one interaction intimidating,

focus groups offer a safer environment in which to share (Madriz, 2000). In this sense, the group takes over some of the interviewing role so the researcher is more in the position of listener (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Participants in the three focus groups of this study came from diverse backgrounds and a wide age range. Data pertaining to specific participant characteristics was not collected.

Their diversity and experiences with secondhand clothing provided insights into their existences, feelings, attitudes, hopes, and dreams. Through their discussions, the researcher observed and gathered concentrated amounts of information pertaining to their collective interactions. However, the clear advantage was that the researcher observed the interactive, spontaneous responses that occurred among them. Spontaneity of responses eased members' involvement and participation into discussion and decreased interaction between researcher and participants.

Participants

Because women are the primary consumers of clothing and secondhand clothing for themselves and their families (Grover et al., 1999) they were the best choice for this study. They were important sources of information for experiences with acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing and for generation of qualitative data.

According to Creswell, the "participants in the study need to be carefully chosen to be individuals who have experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell, 1998, p. 55) and who will share insights synergistically. Sharing in this manner

promotes insights that might not otherwise come about. For this study, the researcher asked each woman about her experience with secondhand clothing. Those who had experiences were asked to participate in the focus groups.

Participant Characteristics

It was most important to form groups of women who felt comfortable interacting with each other and who freely expressed opinions and experiences (Arendt & Gregoire, 2006). Women in the focus groups had common experiences with secondhand clothing for themselves or their families.

Recruitment

As with most qualitative studies, participants were from purposive, rather than random, sampling. Upon Human Subjects Approval (Appendix A) participants were recruited for specific viewpoints concerning the study (Horowitz, 1981; Miles & Huberman, 1994). An initial sample of participants was garnered from women living in the apartment complex where the researcher lived. As acquaintances, the researcher knew that the women acquired and wore secondhand clothing. Additional participants came from the Red Hat Society, an organization of women in Fort Collins familiar with secondhand clothing. They were recruited via the snowball method. Names and phone numbers for participants familiar with secondhand clothing in the Denver focus group were gathered by a friend of the researcher. All participants met the following criteria; they were:

- female, and
- experienced in acquiring or wearing secondhand clothing for themselves or their families.

A list of participants was compiled until there were 25 to 30 names. A recruitment script was used to invite participants to the focus groups (Appendix B). Those interested were sent a Women's Secondhand Clothing Survey, invitation letter, map with directions (Appendix C), and Informed Consent Form (Appendix D). A return envelope with postage was provided for participants' convenience. Participants were asked to return the Informed Consent form by mail or e-mail or to the researcher the day of the focus group. The researcher spoke to each woman in person or by telephone to ask for participation in one of three focus groups scheduled to meet for approximately 90 minutes, on Sunday afternoon, March 30, Saturday morning, April 5, or Sunday morning, April 6. Six to eight women were invited to each group.

Sites

Selecting a research site involves identifying that which, by virtue of relationship with research questions, provides the most relevant, comprehensive, and rich information (Fern, 2001). It is the space in which the focus group is conducted and includes the ambient, human, and material aspects of the environment. Providing ambiance, the site affects how participants behave. A site may range from formal to informal or artificial to natural with each providing different ambient conditions.

For the convenience and comfort of participants, relaxed settings were used to stimulate conversation. Because the researcher recognized that her knowledge of secondhand clothing might cause biased responses, she set the stage for the discussion with an introduction and opening questions to encourage sharing among participants. Discussions were unstructured, open-ended, and tape recorded.

Two focus groups met at the clubhouse of the apartment complex. The site was chosen because of (a) comfortable ambience for the participants in a naturalistic setting, (b) close proximity to many of the participants' homes and free parking, and (c) a centralized location. Situated near Colorado State University on the bus route, the location provided tables, chairs, couches, and space for comfort of participants. The third group met in Denver at the home of a friend of the researcher. This site was chosen because the participants were friends and familiar with the home and location. Both settings provided ambience (informal and familiar to many participants) and adequate space, intimacy, and privacy.

Pilot Study

Both the written survey and the focus group question guide were piloted with a small group of women who use secondhand clothing. The women were chosen by the researcher because they used secondhand clothing and for their availability. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the procedures, specifically the written survey, focus group interview guide, and audio recording equipment.

A pilot study took place at the clubhouse of the apartment complex on Saturday morning, March 8, 2008. Both the survey and focus group question guide were piloted with a group of six women. Some were members of the Red Hat Society and others were residents of apartment complex and did not participate in the focus groups. The criteria for participants in the pilot group were consistent with the main data collection. All were acquainted with the researcher and asked to participate because of their experiences with secondhand clothing.

Participants who did not complete the survey prior to the pilot study gave their responses before beginning the discussion. Once pilot study participants completed the survey, they were asked to provide feedback on wording and content so that revisions could be made prior to the focus group discussions. After discussion with her adviser and assistant moderator, the researcher made refinements to both the survey and focus group question guide. Columns on the survey were reformatted for ease of reading and responding. Probes were added to the focus group question guide for the moderator to gain better depth from participant responses during focus group meetings.

Data Collection

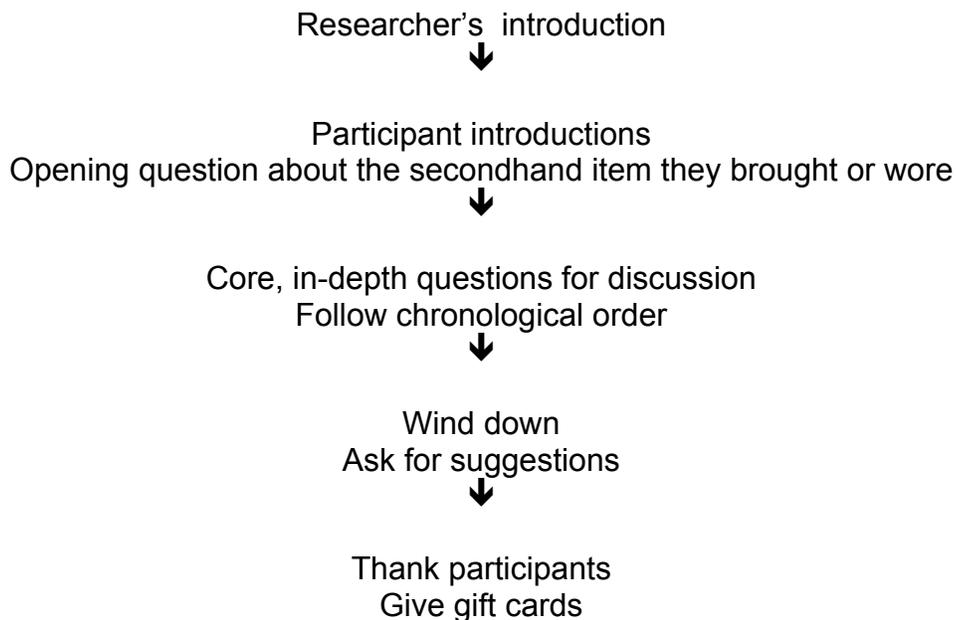
Several components comprise data collection for a phenomenological study. The process is eclectic with no “right way” to get a detailed, in-depth and complete picture of lived experiences of the participants. However, for a smoother, more natural discussion, it was helpful to give thought to the order in which questions were approached. This involved mentally picturing the group discussion and working in a natural way to structure an organized progression.

The order of discussion for the three focus groups followed in stages (Table 4).

Because of the relaxed nature of focus group conversations, the Focus Group Question Guide was developed to facilitate discussion (Appendix E). The guide provided flexible direction of questions in chronological order. As a tool to enhance consistency of data collection, it helped ensure that questions were covered systematically while maintaining flexibility.

Table 4.

Focus Group Data Collection



(Adapted from Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Each focus group was comprised of six to eight women who volunteered to participate. The size of the groups was important to give more opportunities for participants to speak in an intimate atmosphere. Studies showed that reticent group members are likely to hide in a crowd, withhold participation in discussion, and have fewer opportunities to speak than in smaller, more intimate groups. Smaller groups of heterogeneous individuals are more likely to share unique,

creative ideas than larger ones. Larger groups tend to think alike, sharing ideas they have in common rather than reveal creative ideas (Fern, 2001).

In the 90 minutes scheduled for each focus group, time was included for participants to check in and become acclimated to the room, gather refreshments, and converse with other participants and the researcher.

Introductions were made so they became familiar with each other before being seated. Name placards were placed around the table for identification.

After introductions, discussions lasted for approximately 80 minutes with the researcher guiding the line of questioning referring to focus group questions (Appendix E). Generally, the focus groups began with each participant giving a brief introduction and explanation of her experiences with secondhand clothing. Then questions were directed toward motivations for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing with the intent of involvement by all participants.

Two audio recorders ran simultaneously in the event one did not work properly. To help with data collection, an assistant moderator (a Ph.D. doctoral candidate) took notes to capture valuable information as to which participant spoke and to help with examination of transcription and identify each participant's response.

The Focus Group Question Guide was developed to facilitate discussion (Appendix E). The guide provided flexible order of questions. As a tool to enhance consistency of data collection, it ensures that questions were covered systematically while maintaining flexibility. It was a mechanism to steer discussions but not as an exact prescription of coverage. For the researcher, the

guide served as documentation of objectives and concepts that have developed during the course of the study (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Questions were adapted from focus group to focus group as information was gathered and data analyzed from prior groups. Research questions which form the structure of the focus group discussions are listed with corresponding focus group questions (Table 5).

The focus groups ended with discussion of what happened to clothing when no longer wanted or needed. Gift cards were given to the participants and the moderator thanked them for their contributions to research.

The moderator (researcher) facilitated conversation but was not a discussion participant (Fern, 2001). It was essential to blend in with participants, have good listening skills, and be someone participants accepted and they related to. Additionally, the moderator tried to be flexible, objective, and a good listener. If the group format presented problems, the moderator was aware that she needed to

- keep one person or a small number of persons from dominating the group
- encourage recalcitrant participants to share experiences
- obtain responses from the entire group to ensure the broadest coverage of experiences
- balance the moderator role with following the script of questions and be sensitive to the evolving patterns of group interaction (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Training was desirable although difficult to achieve outside of learning on the job (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Table 5.

Research Questions with Corresponding Focus Group Questions

Research Questions	Focus Group Questions
<p>1. What motivates women to acquire or wear secondhand clothing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was your first piece of secondhand clothing? • What is your first memory of secondhand clothing? For example, when you were a child, do you recall going to the secondhand store with your family for clothing? • How did your first experience with secondhand clothing motivate you to continue to wear or acquire it? • What got you started acquiring or wearing it? • In adult life, what got you to acquire or wear it? Give examples of secondhand clothing that you acquire- • Tell a story about wearing secondhand clothing as a child, a young adult, and as an adult • How have your ideas about secondhand clothing evolved over time?
<p>2. What factors do women identify as important to acquire secondhand clothing?</p> <p>What factors are important for women to acquire secondhand clothing <i>initially</i>?</p> <p>What factors are important for women to acquire secondhand clothing <i>currently</i>?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you use secondhand clothing? • Why do you <i>continue</i> to use it? • What do you like about secondhand clothing? • What do you dislike about using secondhand clothing? • Where do you get secondhand clothing you use? • Share at least one experience of how you have gotten someone, who had not been acquiring secondhand clothing, interested in secondhand clothing. How did this happen? Can you elaborate on that a bit? • Have you influenced children or men/husbands to use it?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>3. What factors do women identify as important to wear secondhand clothing?</p> <p>What factors are important for women to wear secondhand clothing <i>initially</i>?</p> <p>What factors are important for women to wear secondhand clothing <i>currently</i>?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why do you wear secondhand clothing?• Why do you <i>continue</i> to wear it?• What do you like about wearing secondhand clothing?• What do you dislike about wearing secondhand clothing?• Where do you get secondhand clothing you wear?• Share at least one experience of how you have gotten someone—who had not been wearing secondhand clothing—interested in secondhand clothing? How did this happen? Can you elaborate on that a bit?• Why do you continue to wear it? |
| <p>4. When clothing is no longer needed, wanted, or used, what do women do with it?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When you or your family's clothing is no longer needed, wanted, or used, what do you do with it?• How much do you dispose of in each way?• Do you rent it or loan it temporarily?• Do you renovate and reuse it?• Do you give it away?• Do you trade or sell it?• Do you hand it down to other family members?• Do you recycle?• Do you ever dispose of it in the trash?• Why is it important not to use landfills as the final resting place for clothes no longer wanted? |
-

Women's Secondhand Clothing Survey

To answer research questions, a Women's Secondhand Clothing Survey was developed based on other studies (Moore, 2006; Stephens, 1985) and

consultation with the methodologist (Appendix C). Using the survey as the instrument for this study:

- enabled the researcher to obtain the language and words of participants
- allowed accessibility to data at a time convenient to the researcher
- saved time and transcription expense (Creswell, 2003).

It was three pages with two content areas and used by the researcher to understand women's motivations for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing.

Part I consisted of six close ended questions, with three of which included an open ended response option. The questions regarded participants' behaviors pertaining to secondhand clothing such as "Where do you wear secondhand clothing most often?" Part II consisted of 21 Likert scale items regarding participants' feelings pertaining to secondhand clothing such as "Recycling clothing is a good idea" with response options of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The survey was included in this study to explore participants':

- motivations for wearing and acquiring secondhand/recycled clothing
- motivations for social responsibility
- behaviors and feelings when wearing and acquiring secondhand clothing.

The Women's Secondhand Clothing Survey was designed to take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete. Participants completed the survey and the Informed Consent Form and returned them prior to the focus group by mail or e-mail.

The researcher reviewed surveys prior to the focus group for general knowledge about the participants and their collective experience with

secondhand clothing. Information given on the survey remained confidential and was not referred to in the focus groups.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is about making sense of collected data. It requires a mix of creativity and systematic searching with a blend of inspiration and detection (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Creswell (2003) defined a six-step generic process that guided data analysis for this research (Figure 6). It involves preparing data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data.

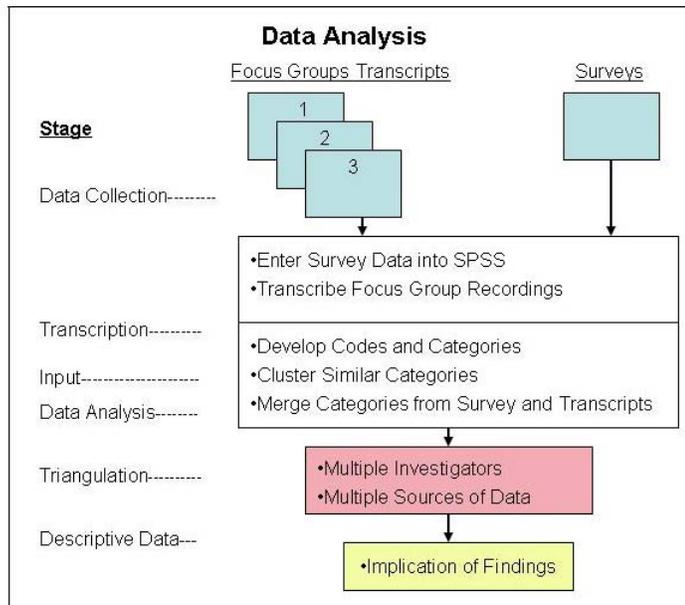


Figure 6. Data Analysis—Focus Groups Transcripts and Surveys

Step 1 Collected, organized, and prepared the data for analysis

- entered survey data into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for descriptive analysis of Part I about behaviors and scores for Part II about feelings toward secondhand clothing
- transcribed audio tapes and established list of pseudonyms for participants following each focus group
- typed field notes (moderator and assistant) from focus group experiences, used to elaborate and refine insights and hunches concerning focus group experiences
- horizontalized data to regard every horizon or statement relevant to the topic and questions as having equal value (Moustakas, 1994).
- prepared data for coding based on ideas suggested by data; included insights and any possible connections

Step 2 Transcriptions

- reviewed and coded focus group transcripts (Appendix F); developed strategies for naming categories and developing codes
- sorted and arranged data into significant participant statements; used to elaborate and refine insights and hunches concerning focus group experiences
- considered underlying meaning of data of each participant. Wrote additional thoughts in margins to build an audit trail
- reviewed audit trail of memos detailing accounts of methods, procedures, and decision points during the study. Memos were written in non-structured,

stream-of-consciousness format describing data and recorded basic codes and categories observed by the researcher

- described participants' experiences through close intensive reading, reflection, analysis, and use of notes woven together (T. Davies, personal communication, June 2005).
- read and reviewed all documents including transcripts, field notes and memos, and surveys for a general sense of the information and reflection on overall meaning; recorded general thoughts about data and wrote notes in document margins (Merriam, 1998).
- reviewed transcripts and surveys separately; continued to look for categories and codes

Step 3 Input

- let additional codes emerge from data; listed codes in codebook and reference to exact location for later grouping into categories during final analysis (Bazeley, 2007; Creswell, 1994)
- used line numbers text to identify categories suggested by data in Xcel file
- watched for emergence of new categories, and gave descriptive names in preparation for reduction of category list (Creswell, 1994)

Step 4 Data analysis

- clustered similar categories and arrayed as major core categories. Gave priority to categories with substantial, significant amounts of data
- generated a description of the categories for analysis

Step 5 Triangulation

- organized field notes from assistant moderator and researcher
- organized all data (i.e., transcripts, field notes, survey, and literature review) for methodologist review

Step 6 Findings

- used narrative passages to convey findings and multiple perspectives from participants' and their quotations
- gave detailed description of the women and their motivations for wearing and acquiring secondhand clothing
- used visuals or tables to elaborate on lived experiences of participants with secondhand clothing
- created tables of participant responses from survey
- made an interpretation or meaning of the data; compared interpretation to research questions for validation of findings
- suggested new questions raised by the data and analysis unforeseen earlier by the researcher (Creswell, 2003).

Validation of Findings

Validity and reliability were approached through attention to conceptualization of the study; the way in which the data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted; and the findings presented (Merriam, 1998). There were several strategies to enhance internal and external validity and reliability. Although qualitative writers use terms such as trustworthiness, transferability, or

generalization that refer ultimately to the same issue (Creswell, 1994), this study used *generalization* to describe (or generalize) the validity of findings.

Validity of findings or data refers to the generalizability of a research study. It is often described as a concept with two features: internal validity and external validity.

External validity refers to generalizability of findings from the study applicable to other groups within the population or other contexts or settings. The intent of this research was to form unique interpretations of experiences through rich, thick description from a relatively small group of participants. Such description enabled readers to determine how closely their situations matched the situation of the focus group participants and whether findings could be transferred (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Generalization was linked to:

- whether findings could be held equally true of the population from which the sample was drawn
- whether findings could be generalized to other settings or contexts beyond the sampled one (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Internal validity refers to the match between research findings and reality (Merriam, 2002). Reality in qualitative inquiry assumes there are multiple, changing realities and that individuals have their own unique constructions of them. Understanding these realities was the researcher's interpretation of participants' understandings of the phenomenon of interest. In this study, findings and reality were matched fairly close. Most items of social responsibility, (i.e., buys fewer more durable articles of clothing) were discussed in focus groups as

practiced by participants. It was important to understand the perspectives of those involved, uncover the complexity of human behavior in context, and present a holistic interpretation of what happened (Creswell, 1994).

During the process of data collection and analysis there were a number of strategies employed for internal validity for accuracy of the information and whether it matches reality (Creswell, 1994). The researcher used strategies such as triangulation of data and peer examination for determination of accuracy of findings.

For this study triangulation was used

- by multiple researchers. Bias inherent in a single investigator was neutralized with participation of other investigators (Creswell, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam, 2002). The moderator, an assistant moderator (a doctoral candidate in the School of Education), and a methodologist provided judgment of several investigators. Peer examination referred to reviewing and discussing focus group transcripts with two or more people independently analyzing the same qualitative data and then comparing the data. Validation processes such as these were strengths of this qualitative study that determined accuracy of findings from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants, and the readers (Creswell, 2003).
- with multiple sources of data. A combined method used several sources of data to neutralize bias (Creswell, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam, 2002) such as focus group transcripts and field notes, Women's Secondhand Clothing Survey, and literature review.

Reliability referred to the sustainability of findings or the extent to which they can be replicated. This is of particular concern in the context of generalization where the ability to transfer findings to other contexts is restricted by soundness of evidence (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Questions surrounding appropriate design and conduct of this study were addressed throughout the research process.

Replication of a qualitative study will not yield the same findings and are not discredited because there can be numerous interpretations of the same findings. More importantly, the qualitative researcher may question whether findings are consistent with the data collected. In this sense, reliability lies in others concurring that given the data collected, the findings make sense and that they are consistent and dependable (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

For this study, Winakor's theory of apparel consumption describing acquisition, inventory, and disposal of clothing was compared and contrasted to the findings (1969). This process:

- validated findings from participant's experiences
- answered each research question with examples of participant responses
- confirmed awareness for social responsibility pertaining to secondhand clothing.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate motivations for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing, specifically targeting women as consumers of secondhand clothing either for themselves or their families. Using qualitative methods, the researcher followed the guidelines of phenomenological methodological design by scrutinizing the lived experiences of women. The goal was to develop patterns and relationships of meaning on the topic (Creswell, 1994). Female participants were asked to describe and share motivations for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing.

Four research questions were designed to discover motivations and factors important for women to acquire and wear secondhand clothing. Questions were also designed to explore what women do with clothing upon disposal. Participants were asked to complete a written survey and attend a focus group on behaviors and feelings pertaining to experiences with secondhand clothing.

The constant comparative method was used for data analysis. By comparing the stories of the participants, the researcher generated tentative categories. Through constantly comparing participant's experiences and comparing their experiences with emerging conceptual categories, similar responses were reduced into a smaller number of highly conceptual categories.

An overall framework was developed (Merriam, 2002) with guidance from the researcher's adviser and methodologist. Once saturation was achieved, data from focus groups were coded through a process of axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The central or core category represents the main theme of the research and "consists of all the products of analysis condensed into a few words that seem to explain what 'this research is all about'" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 146).

For this study, participant discussions were used to identify codes for the foundation of the core category, women's acquisition of secondhand clothing. The discussion that follows is the presentation of that data. Some participants' quotes were used more than once because they fit into more than one theme.

Descriptive Data from the Survey

Twenty-six participants responded to the Women's Secondhand Clothing Survey. Table 6 is a summary of participant responses about their behaviors regarding secondhand clothing. Survey items are listed in descending order with the highest frequency of responses starting at the top of the column; however, some items lacked responses. Table 6 represents participant behaviors regarding acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing with corresponding participant responses. For example, eight participants checked that they wore secondhand clothing most often at home, while six participants checked that they wore secondhand clothing most often at social/recreational gatherings. This table shows that women

- recycled, sold, or gave more than 75% of clothing to charity, family, and friends (17), 51-75% (5), 0-25% (3), and 26-50% (1)
- became interested in secondhand clothing for thrift/bargains (26), fun (16), quality (11), for the environment (10), special needs (9), and other (8).
- acquired secondhand clothing for themselves (26), family (16), and others (12)
- acquired secondhand clothing from friends (24), thrift/consignment shops (24), yard/garage sales (19), family (17), estate sales (10), parties/swaps (2), and other (4)
- acquired secondhand clothing from family or friends most often (16), often (5), and never (5)
- wore secondhand clothing most often at home (8), social/recreational (6), on the job (5), special occasions (2), and other (5).

Table 6.

Participants' Responses (n = 26) to Secondhand Clothing Survey, Part I

Behavior	Frequencies
----------	-------------

Participants' Behaviors Regarding Secondhand Clothing

■ Family clothing that is recycled, sold, or given to charity, friends or family	
Over 75%	17
51-75%	5
0-25%	3
26-50%	1

Participants' Responses (n = 26) to Secondhand Clothing Survey, Part I (cont'd)

Behavior	Frequencies
■ Participants became interested in secondhand clothing for (Multiple responses)	
Thrift/bargains	26
Fun	16
Quality	11
For the environment	10
Special needs	9
Other (as indicated by participants)	8
• Unique items which have more of an intrinsic value than if purchased from a chain/large company (3)	
• Some use for dresser-tops-leather items for hinges, fabric for frames, throw pillows, bags, etc.	
• Ease of shopping	
• When you shop retail you are looking for something and you often don't find it. When you shop at a second- hand store you are not always looking for something specific so you are surprised and feel lucky	
• Wouldn't call it "interested"	
• Vintage collection	
■ Acquired secondhand clothing for (multiple responses)	
Selves	26
Family	16
Others	12
■ Acquired secondhand clothing from (multiple responses)	
Friends	24
Thrift/consignment shops	24
Yard/garage sale	19
Family	17
Estate sales	10
Parties/swaps	2
Other (as identified by participants)	4
• e-Bay	
• Trade/Swap/Share	
• Some dumpster diving	
• Any option that comes up	
■ Secondhand clothing acquired from family or friends	
Sometimes	16
Often	5
Never	5

Participants' Responses (n = 26) to Secondhand Clothing Survey, Part I (cont'd)

Behavior	Frequencies
■ Wear secondhand clothing most often	
At home	8
Social/recreational	6
On the job	5
Special occasions	2
Other	5
• I can't honestly check just one because I wear 2 nd hand clothing nearly all the time (3)	
• I wear it to all of the above (2)	

Thirteen women wrote individual comments in the *Other* sections in Part I of the survey (Table 6). Individual responses provided a broader range of answers to 1.) *Participant Behaviors Regarding Secondhand Clothing*, 4.) *Participants' interest in secondhand clothing for*, and 5.) *Acquired secondhand clothing from*. For example, *Participants acquired secondhand clothing from: e-Bay, Trade/Swap/Share, Some dumpster diving, and Any option that comes up* were individual responses for Question 5.

Qualitative analysis was conducted to generate a list of descriptive data from Part I and Part II (Tables 6 and 7). Surveys provided triangulation of findings with rich textural descriptions of the women's experiences from focus group transcripts and

- complimented and verified focus group findings
- reported findings in numerical format to condense data for easy reading and comprehension

- provided new information not found in focus group discussions such as the comment on item number 5 concerning dumpster diving
- supported reliability of group dynamics (Fern, 2001).

Part II of the survey summarizes participant feelings regarding secondhand clothing (Table 7). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement by placing a check on the appropriate blank. In the table, survey items were listed in descending order from the highest to the lowest frequency as to participants' strongly agreeing with that item. Columns are a tally for the number of participants (frequencies) selecting each agree option response item.

These survey items need to be considered in terms of their responses and whether disagreeing or agreeing with an item reflected favorably or unfavorably. For example, there was a definitive break in the *Strongly Agree* column following the item for *Urge friends not to use products that harm the environment*. The break indicated that women were more concerned for the impact of clothing on the environment than for keeping up with fashion. A break occurred between items *I am not bothered to be out of style* and *I would not obtain more used clothing* indicated that women were less concerned about being out of style than obtaining more used clothing. This break reflected a change from agreeing to disagreeing to cast a favorable response. As a result, the Disagree and Strongly Disagree columns indicated more responses.

Table 7.

Participants' Responses (n = 26) to Secondhand Clothing Survey, Part II

<u>Survey Items</u>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Dis- agree	Strongly Disagree
	----- F r e q u e n c i e s -----				
• Recycling clothing is a good idea	22	3	1	0	0
• I purchase clothing at secondhand clothing stores	19	6	0	1	0
• I encourage people to recycle	15	9	2	0	0
• Clothing is a wasted resource	14	9	3	0	0
• People buy too much clothing	14	10	1	0	0
• Urge friends not to use products that harm the environment	9	7	10	0	0
• Keeping up with fashion is impractical	4	8	8	5	1
• I spend time and/or money to recycle clothing	3	11	7	4	0
• I don't care what others wear	2	9	9	5	1
• I am very fashion conscious	2	5	10	5	4
• I am not bothered to be out of style	2	8	8	6	2
• I would not obtain more used clothing	2	5	3	9	6
• Not much relationship between conservation and consumption	1	1	3	12	8
• Recycling is too much trouble	1	0	3	12	10
• Shopping yard sales is embarrassing	0	3	5	5	13
• Shopping for secondhand clothing is inconvenient	0	1	1	12	12

Participants' Responses (n = 26) to Secondhand Clothing Survey, Part II (cont'd.)

<u>Survey Items</u>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Dis- agree	Strongly Disagree
	----- F r e q u e n c i e s -----				
• I cannot judge secondhand clothing quality	0	1	0	14	11
• Secondhand clothing is dirty and unsanitary	0	0	4	13	9
• Pollution is not a big problem	0	1	1	6	18
• Should not have to conserve so much	0	0	3	9	14
• Will pay more for new fashions	0	5	4	8	9

Findings Related to Research Questions

Motivation for Secondhand Clothing

1.) What motivates women to acquire and wear secondhand clothing?

Question 1 asked women to share their motivations for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing. Participants were asked to recall a first (or early) memory of or experience with secondhand clothing and their motivation to continue to acquire or wear it. Themes that emerged from the data were Early Experiences, Memories and Feelings, Retail Clothing, Utilitarian Needs, and Recycling and the Environment. Direct quotes from participants are noted in parentheses at the end of quotes. For example, "...back to recycling (3, 274-291) refers to focus group 3, lines 274-291 of the transcript, and provides an audit trail to the participant (Appendix F).

Early Experiences

For most participants, early experiences with clothing were instrumental for them to use secondhand clothing. Most shared that experiences wearing retail clothing had persuaded them to acquire and wear secondhand while they were young. One participant noted current motivation for secondhand clothing from an early experience buying a retail sweater.

But you know what's strange about it, when you're a kid you don't want hand-me-downs. You want something new. You want something that is yours. But when you get to the years when you have money to buy the clothes you find out they're not as great as you thought they were (from retail stores). I remember a huge department store and I thought 'I'm going to go get something there. I'm going to buy something there because it's the place to buy'. I bought a sweater and it fell apart...I think I spent \$25 and I was so proud of that thing but that quality doesn't come with money when you're buying it (new). . . You think you buy it because it's a great store and the quality isn't necessarily there. So it's back to the hand-me-downs, back to the sharing, back to the recycling (3, 274-291).

Another participant said that her current motivation for secondhand clothing was based on positive experiences with secondhand clothing as a child. She said

As a really young child, elementary school was a treat because hand-me-downs were from girls I admired who had better clothes...So it was never a stigma or something yukky. And I think the first time I went to a secondhand store on my own I was probably in college. . . So that's when I found out, 'Oh boy, in Denver, I can live off of other people's hand-me-downs, whether it's dishes or furniture or clothing or shoes or whatever', and so I've just been doing it ever since then (3, 564-588).

Memories and Feelings

For some women, clothing was associated with memories and feelings that motivated them to continue to acquire and wear it. These were memories of their mothers and feelings of attachment to clothing. They commented

I wish I had my mother's wedding dress that I could have used a piece of it, you know, in my dress, or in my daughter's dress when she's of age. The meaning that we have, it's not just some dress you bought at David's Bridal, but it has a little appliqué from your mom's or grandma's dress and how meaningful that would be (1, 1301-1319).

My first piece. . . was a pink Angora three-quarter (length) sleeve sweater that had a double round collar. It was from the 50s and I loved sweaters and at the time I was wearing a lot of heavy wool sweaters...It was so soft and wonderful. So, every time I wore it, I loved the way it felt...It was fun because it was a bright color. And I think as I remember it, I got lots of compliments on it. Just over the years I've continued wearing it and just learned to love it the older it got (2, 259-281).

For some participants acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing was a part of everyday family life. Recycling clothing was a lifestyle from childhood as noted in the previous quote that continued into adult life and was natural, simple, and elemental. Responses on Table 7 to *Recycling clothing is a good idea* further reflected the value of recycling with Strongly Agreeing (22) and Agreeing (3) for the statement. The women shared

Now, there were times that I remember a few truly bitter struggles where things came into the house--that bag of clothes--you know, from Aunt Dorothy, that were hideous, just absolutely terrible. And it was like, 'Well, you have to take these'. And I said, 'No, I'm not wearing those'. And there were scuffles over that (clothing), but at the same time as a child my wishes were respected and I was told 'If you don't like it, you don't have to wear it. So we'll recycle it on to the next person'...It was never a forced situation, and so, the idea of using something to me that is usable comes naturally. It's simple.

It's elemental. You take care of it, take it to its grave, or you do something else with it. It is not a struggle (3, 875-893).

Our lifestyle is recycling. . . I've always just thought that clothing was a useful item and therefore needed to have as long a life as possible. But that goes with a mentality about how things should be used (3, 1484-1497).

Retail Clothing

Because of the perceived poor quality of much retail clothing most participants said their preference was to acquire and wear secondhand clothing instead. Responses (Table 7) to *Will pay more for new fashions* reflected that women would *not* pay more for new (retail) clothing with 17 Disagreeing and Strongly Disagreeing. This is two-thirds of the women unwilling to pay more for new fashions. Experiences with retail clothing were illustrated with disappointment

...I want myself to buy a new piece of clothing from a regular store but I go in and everything is cheaply made. It all looks like everybody else... like trendy, and poor quality and it's all polyester and expensive and I just feel very disappointed. So I always leave and I go to the thrift store (1, 323-332).

Undoubtedly, there are women who do not have knowledge and skills to judge the quality of secondhand clothing. The survey item, *I cannot judge secondhand clothing quality* pointed out that not having knowledge and skills to judge it could be a deterrent to acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing.

Although most participants were motivated by quality and cost to acquire and wear secondhand clothing, one participant specifically shopped thrift stores to find trendy clothing without the cost of retail clothing.

I think Repeat Boutique is good for trends where you don't want to pay full price. You know it's not going to be around long, but you know it might be fun to have something that everybody is wearing this year or this month or whatever (1, 638-643).

However, the survey item, *Keeping up with fashion is impractical*, (Table 7) reflected that women strongly agreed (12) or were neutral (8) toward fashion trends. This could mean that fashion trends change quickly, because of the price of new clothing or keeping current with trends is impractical. Their responses could also indicate disinterest in fashion and fashion trends. Their interest could be in having a clothing style rather than fashion. In addition, six women disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement indicating the opposite.

Utilitarian Needs

Another participant's use of secondhand clothing originated from more utilitarian needs than others in the group, (i.e., "simply clothing the frame") as she sought durability and ease of care in her clothing. She said

I had the parochial school experience, having to wear uniforms, you know, for eight years of my life. And you don't develop a fashion sense (wearing uniforms). You are simply clothing the frame. You are putting rags on the statue as it were or whatever the case...But I want something that's durable, something that is going to be multi-purpose, something that looks nice, and launders well. Somehow I should be able to satisfy that with secondhand clothing (3, 368-378).

Recycling and the Environment

One-quarter of the women spoke of concern for the environment, and preferred to recycle as motivation to acquire and wear secondhand clothing.

They believed that textiles were so easy to recycle that there was no reason to dispose of them into the trash.

Based on my experience...textiles are one of the easiest things to recycle. There's just no reason to fill up a landfill with a bunch of clothes when there's always someone, if not someone that's a friend or relative...There's no reason to really throw that in the trash...Someone could make a quilt out of it or use it to pack a package or ...actually wear it. It's the easiest thing to recycle. You don't have to crush it like a can or make it into pellets (1, 1222-1243).

I think it can become more of an intelligence issue rather than a price issue. . . It's simply more intelligent to protect the environment, to buy from thrift stores to save your own money for nicer things (2, 1550-1555).

A number of survey items (Table 7) reflected concern for the environment with high frequency counts favoring recycling clothing. *I encourage people to recycle* (24), *Clothing is a wasted resource* (23), and *Recycling is too much trouble* (22 disagreed and strongly disagreed) showed that women encourage others to recycle clothing out of concern for the environment. Some participants expressed a desire to influence others to acquire and wear recycled clothing that might otherwise be disposed in a landfill.

I think that's part of the problem (recycling is a women's issue). Like we say to ourselves it's our responsibility (as women) but it's their responsibility (as men) too, you know, for the environment. It's a lifestyle (2, 1502-1504).

One definition of over consumption is that it is an economic and social creed encouraging us to consume more than our share of resources, regardless of the consequences (McGregor, 2003). A number of participants expressed concern for the impact of overconsumption on the environment and the need to live a simpler lifestyle. Most women (24) Strongly Agreed and Agreed with

People buy too much clothing. In contrast, similar numbers Strongly Disagreed or Disagreed with *Pollution is not a big problem* and *Should not have to conserve so much* indicating that women are concerned about the impact of clothing on the environment.

We have way too much to choose from. You go into a store sometimes and you say, 'I want a box of crackers' and the aisle is *all* crackers. It's overwhelming and that's kind of how it is with clothes...You know there is a store in New York with five floors of shoes? And we're just overwhelmed. It is just too much. (3, 1856-1872).

I also will never forget the piece I heard on National Public Radio a few years back from a war torn and very poor region of Africa... three women who owned one dress between them. And they were pleased to have worked out a system so that two could sleep while the third could wear the dress and they could alternate who wore the dress...I think about our spiraling consumption in America a lot and I think that the people at this table here have shared a commitment to a little more, just a little bit more of living simply so that others may simply live (1, 1375-1393).

In summary, participants had a variety of motivations for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing. Their experiences showed that secondhand clothing was

- better quality and less costly than new clothing
- associated with childhood experiences, family lifestyles, and memories
- a natural, elemental part of their lives
- a way to preserve the environment, influence others, and live a simpler lifestyle.

Acquiring Secondhand Clothing Initially

2.) What factors do women identify as important to *acquire* secondhand clothing?

Research question 2 probed for factors important to women when acquiring secondhand clothing initially and currently. Women were asked why they acquired secondhand clothing, what they liked and disliked about it, and if they influenced others to acquire it. What they shared became themes for Treasure Hunting and Early Experiences.

The Treasure Hunt

Some participants said that acquiring secondhand clothing was similar to searching for treasure or going on a treasure hunt. While the treasure hunt attracted them to continue acquiring secondhand clothing, most participants agreed that the hunt was an important factor that attracted them initially.

When I was a teenager, I went to a bazaar at the temple and I picked up for \$2 a seal jacket. This is before (when I was younger) when I would have worn it. And I wouldn't now but this jacket, it was old, it was really funky. I had never seen anything like it. My mother said I came screaming into the house. I was so like shrieking she looked at it like a piece of junk. But yeah, it had pockets in just the right place and it was the warmest thing I had ever had and I absolutely felt like I had found treasure (1, 156-166).

...There is the fun of the treasure hunt. It is absolutely treasure hunting. It's not like I go looking for a specific thing. I have in my mind what I might be missing in my wardrobe, something that's wearing out that I might have to replace, but it's the joy of going through a bunch of junk to find the few nice things (3, 386-392).

When you shop retail you are looking for something and you often don't find it. When you shop at a secondhand store you are not always looking for something specific so you are surprised and feel lucky (Response on Secondhand Clothing Survey, Part I).

Early Experiences

In a discussion regarding her first piece of secondhand clothing, one participant spoke of delight when given nice clothing from her aunt. For this participant, receiving nice clothing was an important factor that attracted her to secondhand clothing initially.

My first recycled piece of clothing was given to me by an aunt who gave it when I was in high school. She bought a dress at Fredrick's (of Hollywood) and back then they were nice clothing, decent clothing, and I was in high school, and she gave me the dress. I was just delighted. It was just a nice looking cotton dress but we lived on a farm so we did not have a lot of nice clothes at the time and I was just absolutely delighted. I think I wore it all the time (1, 194-203).

Acquiring Secondhand Clothing Currently

Although they were attracted initially by certain factors as the treasure hunt for and early experiences, participants continued to acquire secondhand clothing for additional reasons. Themes that emerged from data were Variety, Quality, and Fit; Best Value for the Dollar (thrift); Time Savings; Negative Experiences; and Influencing Others.

Variety, Quality, and Fit

Although positive initial experiences with secondhand clothing were common among participants, appreciation for the variety and quality of items as well as savings enticed most to continue acquisition. Moreover, 25 participants

Strongly Agreed (19) or Agreed (6) to the item, *I purchase clothing at secondhand stores*. For some participants, the thrift store provided ample variety to find clothing that fit and was of good quality.

The main attraction to thrift stores for many women was the variety of items they found on any given day. In particular, this participant was attracted for a variety of items, including clothes that fit well and were well made.

I go there (thrift store) for a variety of things. Last time I went there I came home with a pair of jeans and a 10-foot long Chinese dragon....But I like to buy my clothes there and one of the reasons is because I don't have to alter them. I'm short and...I can find things that are already altered and the quality is often really good (3, 110-119).

For many others thrift stores provided ways to dress well, save money, and time.

Best Value for the Dollar

Several participants said that their primary interest in secondhand clothing was to get the best value for the dollar, dress well, and dress comfortably. One participant explained, "I think the reason is the best bang for the buck. The best value for the dollar is a big reason. . . and it must be comfortable and it must be something I love" (3, 901-915). Another participant felt so strongly about acquiring secondhand clothing for under a dollar that she would only shop on specials days at the thrift store.

I go to Savers all the time. I got these slacks and I got this sweater for \$1 each. I'm a Monday shopper because that's 99 cent day. I got this purse for \$1. I got this coat, and I got this new purple dress because all the tags are still hanging on it, and I got a coat like this (holding up the coat). I never pay more than \$1 because I only go on Mondays. . . (2, 34-43).

Time Savings

Saving time was expressed as an important factor to acquire secondhand clothing. Participants shared that experiences in thrift stores were quick and easy and saved time over shopping at retail stores.

The time. It's a matter of time. Your time is worth more...So exactly, it's easier and quicker and cheaper to go to the thrift store (2, 1250-1254).

Negative Experiences

Although most women discussed current experiences positively, a few shared negative experiences when acquiring secondhand clothing. One noted problems at thrift stores with dressing rooms and clothing, having to wait in lines to try on clothing, crowded stores, and rude shoppers.

I think the thing that I dislike about going to the stores trying on the clothes is when you walk into the dressing room it's usually piled high with stuff and there's lines of people. And that's the thing that I don't like (1, 829-840).

An item reflecting possible negative experiences from the survey, *Secondhand clothing is dirty and unsanitary*, showed that women Disagreed (13), Strongly Disagreed (9), and 4 were Neutral. Twenty-two participants did not believe that secondhand clothing was dirty and unsanitary. Two participants expressed their feelings about acquiring secondhand clothing at a thrift shop.

I've had experience where I've walked in and I've just felt dirty, you know. I'm going through clothes and I will come upon a piece that just should not be on the rack...and then you look up and you see someone who's very not clean and you're wondering what's falling off their hair into the clothes...I've just left and like with my hands, I have to rush and wash them (1, 878-893).

I don't like to go there on the weekend...But I mean they're way too crowded now. The people are nasty, fanatical. That's the one thing I don't like, is they get nasty—'It's a shirt for goodness sakes, not gold!'...(3, 1083-1108).

These participants found shopping at thrift stores negative because of crowds, unclean dressing rooms, and rude customers. The survey item, *Shopping for secondhand clothing is inconvenient* reflected Disagreement (12) and Strong Disagreement (12), indicating that overall shopping for secondhand clothing was not perceived as inconvenient.

Influencing Others

Participants shared shopping experiences with others who had not previously acquired secondhand clothing. In a discussion regarding shopping with her daughter-in-law, one participant shared:

I needed a piece of clothing one day and I was with my daughter-in-law... I said, 'let's go to the thrift stores'...She said 'I've never been in a thrift store'. I said, 'Well, we're going. I need a red blouse...'. She followed me and pretty soon I turned around and she is in all the racks and she says 'Wow, look at this!'...and she went and tried on several things (1, 927-939).

In addition, another participant believed that she influenced others to wear clothing from thrift shops because of compliments she received.

When you get a compliment and you tell them where you got it, I think that's one of the big influences. I know a couple of compliments I've received and told them, 'Well, I got it at ARC or I got it at Savers'. They say, 'Gee, I ought to go down and take a look' (2, 1063-1069).

In summary, there were a variety of factors important for women to acquire secondhand clothing. Their experiences showed that they

- saved money with the comfort and styling of secondhand clothing
- were attracted to the hunt for treasure and nice clothing
- searched for variety, quality, and fit
- were encouraged by early experiences
- saved time when shopping in thrift stores
- shopped with others and dressing well, and
- were not deterred by negative experiences.

Although there were drawbacks, all participants continued to acquire secondhand clothing. Positive experiences such as treasure hunting and saving money and time continued to attract women to acquire secondhand clothing.

Wearing Secondhand Clothing Initially

3.) What factors do women identify as important to *wear* secondhand clothing?

Participants were asked why they wear secondhand clothing, what they like about it, and if they have influenced others to wear it. From surveys and focus group discussions, the theme of Early Experiences emerged.

Early Experiences

The initial experience of wearing secondhand clothing was glamorous, sophisticated, and grown up for one woman. She described her feelings as she wore her first secondhand dress

I bought vintage things when I was in college. And the first thing I remember buying was a navy blue 50s style dress. So the top was lace and netting but navy blue and the lining was burgundy...and I remember wearing it to what I thought was a very grown up occasion--cocktail parties or whatever and just feeling very Ava Gardner--glamorous in my vintage dress, I thought it was, you

know. My figure then was very hour class. I was much tinier but I was able to fit into it (1, 173-191).

For another, her initial experience was delight. As a result, she wore the dress “all the time.”

My first recycled piece of clothing was given to me by an aunt who gave it when I was in high school. She bought a dress at Fredrick’s (of Hollywood) and back then they were nice clothing, decent clothing, and I was in high school, and she gave me the dress. I was just delighted. It was just a nice looking cotton dress but we lived on a farm so we did not have a lot of nice clothes at the time and I was just absolutely delighted. I think I wore it all the time (1, 194-203).

Wearing Secondhand Clothing Currently

For most women, fit and comfort were very important factors. One participant added that thrift store prices allowed her to afford different clothing sizes in her wardrobe. The value of timeless (or classic) styling and fit were important factors for continued use.

Survey responses showed that fashion consciousness was not as important to women as other factors. Two items related to wearing fashionable clothing and keeping up with current styles. They were *Keeping up with fashion is impractical* (12) Strongly Agreeing and Agreeing, and *I am not bothered to be out of style* (10) Strongly Agreeing and Agreeing. A third item, *I am very fashion conscious* had similar totals for Agreeing and Disagreeing columns with (7) Strongly Agreeing and Agreeing, and (8) Disagreeing and Strongly Disagreeing. An additional item, *Will pay more for new fashions* (17) Disagreeing and Strongly Disagreeing, reflected that women are not willing to pay for new, retail clothing.

These items illustrated that fashion, styles, and trends were not as important as other factors for the clothing they wore.

When discussing experiences of wearing secondhand clothing, participants agreed that comfort was one of the most important factors.

I think one of the wonderful things about secondhand thrift store clothing is the fact that it's already broken in. You don't have that stiff sizing, it's already comfortable and cozy, and you don't have to worry about you know, three weeks of sizing--so that's one of the things I really enjoy about buying it secondhand (1, 353-359).

I think we get to a time in our lives when we dress for comfort, when I don't really care what you think, I'm comfortable. And I don't feel like I look like imam on the runway (3, 784-794).

For weight loss or gain, another participant expressed her desire to save money while maintaining a wardrobe of different sizes.

Oh, I forgot (to mention). . . weight fluctuation. Why pay full price on something in one size when you're trying really hard to be another size? It doesn't matter if you know you paid seven bucks for it. Then when you get to the other size, it's okay. Instead of paying full price--and you've got three different sizes in your closet (1, 616-625).

For some women the desire for timeless (classic) clothing and good fit could only be found at thrift stores. A few of the participants viewed vintage (classic) clothing as part of history that they wanted to preserve and enjoy.

...a lot of times these are timeless clothing that you pick up in a thrift store, like a suit jacket. Every once in a while I'll take something home, change the buttons or add something else, you know like you do, and change it (1, 734-746).

I started finding vintage clothes and I realized that I love it because to me it's art and the fabrics are so phenomenal. But a lot of times we don't have those kinds of fabrics anymore--although designers are now going back and making those kinds of fabrics for the current fashion. So I would see these gorgeous pieces of clothing and I would just think, 'if I don't buy this, there's a good chance nobody else is going to and it's going to end up in the trash in the landfill' (2, 789-800).

...for me it's art and it's history. And so I feel like I want to save something--what I can afford. I can't afford the super, super expensive pieces that actresses wore and that kind of thing...but that's another reason--just to preserve our heritage, that has become a real interest of mine (2, 801-808).

Influencing Others

Participants enjoyed influencing others to wear secondhand clothing for fun, creativity, bargains, and quality clothing. These participants showed others the fun and creativity of wearing and embellishing secondhand clothing.

I have worn some fairly unique things that I have embellished...and people would say, "Oh, where did you get that"? and basically, I made it (from secondhand pieces). So people have gone and looked and then consulted with me on how to change that (1, 920-926).

I needed a piece of clothing one day and I was with my daughter-in-law... and I said, 'let's go to the thrift stores'...she said 'I've never been in a thrift store'. I said, 'Well, we're going, I need a red blouse'. She followed me and pretty soon I turned around and she is in all the racks. She says 'Wow, look at this!' She's yelling across the store and she went and tried on several things (1, 927-939).

I just don't ever shut up about it. I can't even count the number of people that I've gotten to not only shop in thrift stores but love shopping in thrift stores. I've spoken prevalently about it (secondhand clothing and the environment), I've written a book about it, I am a mouthpiece for it, very vocal (1, 940-945).

In summary, there were a variety of factors important for women to wear secondhand clothing. These factors were

- early experiences feeling glamorous, grown up, and delighted
- comfortable and well fitted clothing
- fluctuations in weight and saving money
- timeless, classic, vintage fabrics and clothes
- influencing others

Disposition of Clothing

4.) When clothing is no longer needed, wanted, or used, what do women do with it?

The last question explored what women do with clothing when no longer needed, wanted, or used. Participants were asked how much secondhand clothing they dispose of and how they dispose of it, whether they repurpose or dispose of it in the trash. And last, they were asked about the importance of not using landfills as the final resting place for unwanted clothing. Themes of disposal that emerged were Thrift Stores, Handing Down, Repurpose and Rejuvenate, Recycle, Sell, Dumpster, and Alternatives.

Thrift Stores

Rather than put clothing into the trash, many participants donated to thrift stores. Several women mentioned the need to choose the store to which they donate, such as Goodwill and the ARC, (non profit), rather than Savers, (for profit).

The other issue for me is that I would never throw out good clothes... It will go to Goodwill because I knew that Savers were the profit folks. Nothing goes to Savers (3, 817-822).

I separate usable items versus not usable items for a yard sale and then on to the Goodwill...What's usable goes to a yard sale and then if the yard sale doesn't get it I take it over to Goodwill. Underwear does *not* go in the rag bag (3, 1264-1285).

. . . After hearing myself talk about Savers today I get really disgusted with Savers and I don't think I'll donate there anymore. I think I'll donate to the pure non-profits (2, 1828-1831).

Handing Down to Others for Additional Use

Another idea for conserving clothes was to give them to others for additional use "like we used to." Although several women had worn hand-me-downs as children, this participant noted that she kept buckets of children's clothing to give to family members' children rather than donate to thrift stores.

For two or three years now all my stuff goes to the DAV. My husband doesn't throw anything away. He has shirts from high school and he wears and wears and wears them. The kids' stuff we usually don't give away because they hand them down like we used to. We don't give them away we just keep them. I have buckets in my shed by age range (3, 1443-1451).

I give it to a younger sister who has had kind of a tough time. So I whenever I go, I bring an extra piece of luggage which might be a problem in this day and age because you've been allowed two...But also I give freely to friends...(1, 1144-1153).

Repurpose and Rejuvenate

Participants wanted to get the most out of clothing. All participants agreed that they would not dispose of clothing into the trash unless it could not be used.

The survey item, *Clothing is a wasted resource* reflected this belief with Strongly Agree (14) and Agree (9). Further, they noted

I have trouble throwing anything away. If it's too bad to pass on because it's stained and what have you, I get out the scissors and cut out the fronts and they go for rags in the garage or cleaning rags in the house or wherever the fabric works the best (1, 1005-1010).

But I just try not to put anything in the clothing line like that in the trash. I take off buttons and save those, take out zippers and save those, and any embellishments that you can reuse. We try to use them up as rags and stuff before they absolutely go in the trash (1, 1013-1019).

But sometimes I'll take a piece (of clothing) and make something else out of it like a dresser scarf or doily or something like that. One of the things I got was a leather skirt. It got old and I made hinges out of that leather and a book cover. So, you know, there are lots of different uses but not necessarily as clothing (3, 1600-1606).

When they were done with it, the majority felt it important to pass clothing along to others or to repurpose or rejuvenate it. When clothing can no longer be worn, many women used it for cleaning and dusting rags. One participant used it in the garage for cleaning while the other used it for dusting or waxing. They noted

But my husband's T-shirts I cut into nice squares and I use them, he uses them...out in the garage or in his workshop. I mean they're great for that and it's a good reuse (1, 1075-1080).

I use the old socks for cleaning rags. They're great for dusting or if you're putting on wax or something, they're really great. I don't really throw away many things. . . (1, 1054-1066).

Other innovative ideas for utilizing clothing to full potential were described by participants. Repurposing was illustrated by a number of creative ideas.

When I was pregnant I went to a yard sale and I found this really cool yellow formal dress and I made my bassinet skirt out of it. I took off the skirt and just put elastic around it and then put that around the bassinet and that worked out very well, too. I had to add a little bit of nylon net underneath it to make it a little poofier but I wish I were still that creative (1, 1125-1136).

I use old sheets when I want to cut out new patterns for my clothing to make sure they fit before I cut them out of fabric (1, 1105-1108).

I also use it as wrapping paper. And that's a real fun conversational piece to give a gift or give a book to someone wrapped in cloth rather than paper. And I also use it for packaging to send things to people rather than to use Styrofoam which is not environmentally friendly...I'll use them for crafts. I'll take crimping scissors and cut out circles to put over and between the lid and the ring on jars when I'm giving gifts of food to people (1, 1020-1037).

That reminds me of another great use of sleeves--long sleeves--is when you're giving a gift of a wine bottle to somebody, is to put it in a nice sleeve from a shirt that you can't use. It would sit in there and the top would be more open and then you can crimp it and put a ribbon or a tie there, a shoestring, or an old sock (1,1093-1104).

Recycle

To determine if clothing can be reused, one woman carefully checked for stains and holes before recycling.

If they're in good shape, they go to Goodwill. You know, let's take what we mean by usable--does it have holes? No. No stains, no worn spots--not stained or worn, or whatever--those things can get recycled. . . I actually recycle almost, I would say, probably almost 100% of everything. Well, 95-100% of everything (3, 1418-1427).

Sell at Garage Sales, Consignment, e-Bay, and Flea Markets

To dispose of clothing women sometimes sold it at garage sales, consignment stores, on e-Bay, or at flea markets. Most participants

reported experiences that were not profitable or worth the effort. Of this, some commented

I tried to sell it at garage sales but I find that most people aren't looking for clothing at garage sales. And they're in such a hurry to look at your stuff and then move on to the next sale that they don't want to take the time to look at the clothes. So I rarely am successful there. I've tried to sell at a consignment shop but I'm giving up on them. You get so little. . . For instance, I took in a pair of designer pants. I forget what brand. It wasn't Pierre Cardin, it was something better than that, Evan Picone--I don't recall. And she sold them for \$10 and I got \$4 for them and they're like \$400 retail. So...the effort wasn't worth it (2, 1348-1404).

As I said, I haven't had a lot of luck, good luck selling things on e-Bay. I've sold a few things to consignment stores in town. The kids' things mainly because at certain ages the clothing is in better condition than others. . . (1, 1154-1192).

I remember 15 years ago when I lived down in Florida I was single but I was working with a lady who would go out and buy up homes after the estate sales...And I was in the flea market business down there. I had brand new clothing that I strung up from tree to tree, clothes and underwear and all brand new. . . And I got to the point where I said, 'here's a bag for a dollar.' They put everything in that bag ... (1, 1867-1891).

Dumpster

If clothing is in bad shape and cannot be worn, repurposed, or recycled then participants thought it should go to the dumpster and not be recycled. The time to put clothing into the dumpster was illustrated by two women.

They go in the dumpster--the really bad stuff does (3, 1404-1409).

We have a clothing drive at church and the only rule is if you wouldn't wear it, if it's in such poor condition that you wouldn't wear it, then we're not going to pass it on. It's going to the dumpster (3, 824-831).

Alternatives

Women were asked about the importance of not using landfills as the final resting place for unwanted clothing. They commented on the ease of recycling and made additional suggestions to the recycling industry for alternative disposal methods.

One thing cloth is good for is to be recycled to make paper. You make high quality paper out of cloth, clothing. And that would be wonderful because our use of paper is sky rocketing. . . instead of putting them in landfills (2, 1453-1466).

There's just no reason to fill up a landfill with a bunch of clothes when there's always someone that's a friend or relative (in need). There's always someone in the community you're in. Really at an arms length if you take the time to look, that could use that item. There's no reason to really throw that in the trash. You know, someone could make a quilt out of it, or use it to pack a package, or anything or actually wear it. It's the easiest thing to recycle. You don't have to crush it like a can or you know, make it into pellets. It's so easy, effortless really (1, 1222-1243).

We could just run around naked and eliminate all of this (problems with clothing in landfills). Somehow I think it's wasteful...going back to my Yankee beginnings...what a sin to take it (clothing) to the landfill (3, 1477-1480).

In summary, participants discussed a variety of alternatives for disposal of clothing. Alternatives ranged from repurposing (for another use) to recycling into paper or disposing into the trash when no longer usable. Their experiences revealed many options, most of which avoid landfills as the final resting place for clothing. Options for disposal as suggested by the women were

- donating to thrift stores
- handing down to family and friends
- repurposing (for another use) and rejuvenating

- recycling (for additional use)
- selling at garage sales, consignment stores, flea markets, and e-Bay
- using the dumpster only when clothing cannot be worn, repurposed, or recycled

Males and Secondhand Clothing

Although women still bear the primary responsibility for the purchase of clothing in the household, a study on families in the United States revealed that men have become more involved in household chores such as shopping since 1963 (Good News, 2008). Participants noted that men do shop for secondhand clothing.

He's (father) a hunter so he would buy everything--warm clothing for hunting. He got some very nice things, some suits, L.L. Bean shirts, just beautiful things (2, 1675-1679).

All of the guys that are up on the beams in construction, they use secondhand stores for clothes. But for good shoes they usually don't buy their shoes at the secondhand store (3, 1305-1308).

Another participant commented that she had seen men with families shopping together.

I've seen a lot of young families shopping together, the husband and the wife and young children. Well, and necessity is always a great motivator too, so the men, they go. I think on Saturdays young families shop together because they know they can't buy what they need if they pay retail for it (2, 1763-1766).

Zoe, who worked at Savers, suggested that the proportion of men to women shoppers is about 1:12, and that men shop mostly for furniture (2, 1698-1707).

And Priscilla, a veteran secondhand clothing shopper, said that responsibility for influencing children belongs to women.

You know the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. We can teach our sons to go and get their clothing, just raise them that way. But I know, I've heard from gals that work at Goodwill that doctors and lawyers and men who are making a lot of money go in and buy suits and jackets at thrift stores because they see no reason to spend the kind of money that it costs retail. So there are some men who do, but I think the influence that we have is on our children and our husbands, if we can (2, 1513-1524).

A summary of these comments may suggest that fewer men shop at secondhand stores for clothing than women. It may also suggest that fewer men shop at retail stores. Men appear to shop for heavy duty clothing for the outdoors and some suits and jackets. In addition, participants suggested that women have an opportunity and a responsibility to involve sons as well as daughters in shopping at thrift stores.

Social Responsibility

Socially responsible behaviors related to apparel consumption were expressed by women as concern for the environment, living conditions for apparel workers, lessening personal consumption of clothing, and recycling clothing. Social responsibility includes moral beliefs that extend beyond self-interest and satisfaction of personal needs to the ultimate impact of apparel choices on the global population and environment. It should encompass everything and everyone as connected and affecting the global reservoir of resources. During this study, one-quarter of participants expressed social responsibility for the impact of clothing on the environment as explained by Hanna.

The only things that can be seen from the moon are the Great Wall of China and the Long Island landfill. And there's one other thing... Landfills take up space. They pollute the environment. They seep into our aquifers. They're disgusting. They're bad, bad, bad (2, 1427-1433).

Another participant expressed responsibility for the environment as a lifestyle.

Like we say to ourselves it's our responsibility (as women) but it's their responsibility (men), too, you know, for the environment. It's a lifestyle (2, 1502-1504).

Living conditions for apparel workers in other countries were also a concern.

I wanted to mention the green aspect just to expand on that. I guess it would be called the ecological political aspect where there's these multi-national corporations that are in Indonesia, Malaysia, El Salvador, South America, who are paying their employees dirt poor wages under horrible conditions.

They're importing those clothes here and they're charging an exorbitant price and they're sitting real pretty but those people who are sitting in those factories aren't. And I'm not going to give them my money (1, 644-662).

Participants addressed the importance of decreasing personal consumption of resources on the environment. For example

We really are stewards of the earth's dwindling resources when we don't require new resources to be harvested in what we're purchasing (1, 554-558).

All women felt strongly about the efficacy of recycling resources. One participant commented that

There's just no reason to fill up a landfill with a bunch of clothes when there's always someone...in the community you're in, really at an arms length if you take the time to look that could use that item. There's no reason to really throw that in the trash. You know, someone could make a quilt out of it, or use it to pack a package, or anything or actually wear it. It's the easiest thing to recycle. You don't have to crush it like a can or make it into pellets, you know. It's so easy. Effortless, really (1,1222-1243).

Survey Items and Socially Responsible Practices

Most items pertaining to social responsibility and secondhand clothing on the survey were addressed by the women during focus group discussions. For example, when asked where she wears secondhand clothing most often, one participant said

...I wear 95% recycled or secondhand clothing. And I really think that where I work I've always been among the best dressed even though at the public schools and hospitals, I've been known for being fashion conscious (3, 334-338).

Regarding the percentage of clothing recycled, sold, or given to others, another participant shared that "I actually recycle almost, I would say probably almost 100% of everything, well, 95% to 100% of everything (3, 1424-1426).

Although many women acquired secondhand clothing from family and friends, no one addressed how often it was acquired from those sources.

Women's stories revealed why many of them became interested in secondhand clothing. For example,

It was a pink angora three-quarter (length) sleeve sweater that had a double round collar...It was so soft and wonderful. So every time I wore it, I loved the way it felt. And it was just fun because it was a bright color. And as I remember it, I got lots of compliments on it and just over the years I've continued wearing it and just learned to love it the older it got...And then when people compliment you for what you have on and you know you got it for such a steal, it's great positive reinforcement. So that set me on a path to continuing to appreciate those kinds of bargains (2, 259-280).

When asked where she acquires secondhand clothing, one woman commented, "I used to sew a lot but now I can find everything I might need at the

thrift store” (2, 1246-1247). Another woman said that acquiring clothing from friends was a blessing and that it made her feel good.

I was working and we had some friends who were much more well-to-do than we. And she was about the same size and she gave me some gorgeous clothing. And it was just a blessing for me and I felt so good in those. It just really made me feel good to wear nice clothing (1, 426-432).

Women most often acquired secondhand clothing for themselves. One woman was happy to find pants for interviews at bargain prices.

I think it's fantastic to be able to... find a really nice, well fitting pair of pants for \$3, especially for a job that you know you're only going to have for a really short time or for an interview. . . But it is a necessary thing and definitely fulfills a need in my life (1, 95-114).

Summary

This chapter presented findings on women's motivations for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing, either for themselves or their families. Reasons for acquiring secondhand clothing highlighted the importance of social responsibility and securing a sustainable, socially responsible future.

Women were motivated to acquire and wear secondhand clothing primarily for thrift or bargain hunting. Although their second highest motivation was for the fun of treasure hunting, participants' interest in secondhand clothing for thrift/bargains (26) was greater than their interest in fun (16). The break between the items of fun (16) and quality (11) also indicated that more women were more interested in fun than quality. These breaks showed that women were motivated to acquire and wear secondhand clothing for a) thrift, b) fun of treasure hunting,

and c) quality. Findings also indicated that women believed recycling clothing was a good idea and encouraged others to recycle.

Memories and positive experiences with secondhand clothing as children and young adults motivated the women. For many, childhood experiences led to a lifestyle that continued into adulthood. As adults, a few women noted that their awareness of clothing overconsumption in the United States had evolved into concern for impact on the environment. One participant expressed the need to live a simpler lifestyle with less clothing and less overall consumption.

Factors that women identified as important to acquire and wear secondhand clothing included obtaining from thrift/consignment shops, friends, and yard sales. These factors were important for savings (thrift), fit, and comfort. Additional sources were from family members and estate sales but provided less clothing than shops, friends, and yard sales. Positive memories of early or first acquisition and wearing of secondhand clothing were instrumental for continued use. In addition, many participants enjoyed influencing others to acquire and wear secondhand clothing.

Disposal of clothing related to socially responsible behaviors. When asked what they do with clothing when no longer needed, wanted, or used, most felt it was important to pass it to others for additional use or to repurpose for another use, if possible. No one disposed of clothing into the trash unless it could not be used. Experiences with secondhand clothing also revealed options for disposal which avoided landfills as the final resting place. Some options were cutting T-shirts into squares for cleaning, saving children's clothes in buckets by age range

for hand-me-downs to other family members such as grandchildren, and recycling into paper, quilts, packaging, and secondhand clothing.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate women's motivations for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing. Focused on women as consumers of secondhand clothing for either themselves or their families, this study looked at what was important to the women and secondhand clothing. Because global warming, waste disposal, sustainability, and the impact of pollution on the environment have received media attention, this research explored if women, as consumers, have been influenced by social responsibility when acquiring or wearing secondhand clothing.

This study followed the guidelines of a phenomenology research method. This means that a small number of women were asked to describe and share experiences of acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing. The aim was to understand and scrutinize the lived experiences of women which describe the meanings around the phenomenon of acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing. The goal was to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Creswell, 1994) through an inductive process to create a profile of the socially responsible consumer.

Discussion

As consumers, women are typically responsible for the purchase of clothing for their families and themselves (Grover et al., 1999). While it is valuable to understand the reasons women acquire and wear secondhand clothing, it is also important to understand the perspectives of women as consumers and to interpret how they describe their experiences.

Motivations for Acquiring and Wearing Secondhand Clothing

Findings indicated that women were primarily motivated to acquire and wear secondhand clothing for thrift and bargains; however, findings also suggested that women enjoyed the fun of hunting (the thrill of the hunt) for quality clothing at bargain prices. Branch recognized that consumers of all income brackets search for quality and designer label recycled clothing (2003). Even wealthy consumers shop to save money on clothing purchases (Newly Frugal Rich, 2003; Steinhauer, 1996). Plassmann and Norton's study, based on the assumption that consumers maximize utility under income and price constraints, found that consumers' demand for goods depended on product quality standards and price expectations (2003). Although there are other attributes consumers seek in the process of acquisition price was one of the most important motivators (Lichtenstein et al., 1993).

The thrill of the hunt was another major motivator for women to acquire and wear secondhand clothing. This activity incorporated seeking bargains as well as quality. Palmer reported that the allure of secondhand clothing includes the thrill of the hunt for a unique bargain and wearing clothing that no one else has

(Palmer, 2005; Thurman, 2003). Bardhi added that the hunt is the endless search and longing for that particular quality item hidden somewhere that the expert shopper manages to buy for just 99 cents (2003).

An additional motivator was acquiring quality clothing. Women looked for well made fabrics paired with quality construction and design of garments. They wanted unique items bearing intrinsic value not found in retail stores. But thrift store racks are not filled with quality clothing (Steinhauer, 1996). Instead, women “sort through the junk to find the treasures” (3, 611-618).

Conversely, not all women have the knowledge and skills to judge the quality of secondhand clothing. As pointed out in the survey item, *I cannot judge secondhand clothing quality*, not having knowledge and skills could be a deterrent to acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing.

Factors for Acquiring Secondhand Clothing

Findings from the survey indicated that women acquired secondhand clothing primarily for themselves from friends and thrift/consignment shops. Other sources were yard/garage sales, family, estate sales, and parties. There were a variety of factors important for women to acquire secondhand clothing. As with the motivations for acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing, women wanted to save money and enjoy the thrill of the hunt for a variety of quality clothing that fits well.

According to literature, the greatest impediment for women to acquire recycled, secondhand clothing is that it is out of style, needing repair, or deemed worthless by the last owner (Rivoli, 2005). However, findings contradict that out

of style clothing would be an impediment to acquisition by all women. Women checked the item, *Keeping up with fashion is impractical*, indicated Strongly Agreeing (4), Agreeing (8), and Neutral (8) indicating that they are not so concerned with style of clothing. An additional item, *I am very fashion conscious* indicated Strongly Disagreeing (4), Disagreeing (5), and Neutral (10). Both of these items reveal that women who acquire secondhand clothing are not as interested in current fashion trends as they are in fit and quality.

Secondhand clothing in need of repair for holes or stains, for example, may deter many women from acquisition, but not consistently. One participant said that when she noticed a hole or stain in thrift store clothing, she would not buy or mend it because she would prefer to find an intact garment. She described the feeling of finding a hole or stain in a previously desirable garment as “that sinking feeling” and she would not acquire it. However, another woman repaired a shawl that came from the Salvation Army. After carefully washing in lemon juice and water, hanging in the sun to dry, and then mending two holes, she framed and hung it on the wall as a piece of art.

Clothing deemed worthless by the last owner was not necessarily worthless to women in the study. They believed that clothing should be passed to others for additional use or to repurpose for another use. Clothing could be made into quilts, used to pack boxes or wrap packages, cleaning rags, or recycled at a thrift store. Only when unusable could clothing be disposed into the trash.

There are growing indications that vintage is a unique and valuable classification of secondhand clothing (Matsumoto, 2000). Findings confirmed

interest in collecting and wearing vintage for its unique qualities and popularization by celebrities (Palmer et al., 2005). On the survey and in discussion, three women said that they acquired vintage clothing because of styling, glamour, and timeless qualities. Modern, upscale thrift shops hold an appeal to women to find bargains, enjoy the thrill of the hunt for vintage (classic) clothing, and find “an unknown object of desire” (Bardhi, 2003, p. 375).

Factors for Wearing Secondhand Clothing

Since the establishment of haute couture early in the 20th century, women have been strongly encouraged to follow its dictates. Designers created fashions they wanted women to wear. For most designers and manufacturers, these approaches were successful until the 1980s when women made a strong statement about ready-to-wear apparel by refusing to buy. Designers did not understand that the attributes sought were comfort and lower prices, not restrictive or formal clothing at extreme prices (Charbonneau, 1999; White & Steinhauer, 1996).

Rather than select new, expensive clothing items, women wear secondhand clothing for a variety of factors. Having moved away from a poor image, secondhand clothing is now a mainstream and highly popular alternative to new clothing. Accordingly, factors for wearing secondhand clothing are fit and comfort, influencing others, and early experiences with secondhand clothing.

Wearing secondhand clothing initially was a glamorous, sophisticated, and grown up experience for one woman as a college student. She described wearing a 1950s vintage dress as “feeling very Ava Gardner.” In another early

experience as a high school student, she described wearing a nice cotton dress from her aunt as an “absolute delight.” Many of the women said that positive early experiences lead to wearing secondhand clothing currently. The researcher has been unable to find literature offering information on secondhand clothing and early experiences.

Women want clothing that is comfortable and fits right. For most women, fit and comfort were very important attributes as noted in addressing the first two research questions. One participant noted that thrift store prices allowed her to afford different clothing sizes in her wardrobe to accommodate weight fluctuations. Another preferred to wear secondhand clothing because it is already broken in, has no stiff sizing, and is comfortable and cozy.

Literature focusing on functional versus socially responsible attributes of clothing shows that functional attributes must be met first. When presented with two items of clothing at the same price, one with positive socially responsible attributes but negative functional attributes, and the second with negative socially responsible attributes but positive functional attributes, women nearly always choose apparel with negative social (i.e., no child labor) but positive functional (i.e., good fit) attributes (Devinney et al., 2006). Bounds added that “...if those products don’t look good, don’t fit right, aren’t durable or aren’t priced competitively, then customers [women] probably aren’t going to buy them...” (2007, p. B9).

Self-expression is influenced by the way women want others to see them through selection of clothing, presentation of image, and for pursuit of social

opportunities (Kaiser, 1998). As a clothing craftswoman the wearer typically brings skill, knowledge, judgment, concern for the ultimate impact of choices on the environment, and passion to dress motivated by desire for self-expression (Campbell, 2005). A variety of factors were important for women to wear secondhand clothing. Participants expressed delight with opportunities to influence others to wear secondhand clothing for thrift/savings, good fit, quality, and comfort. One-quarter of the women wanted to influence others on behalf of the environment. One participant went so far as to say “I just don’t ever shut up about it. I can’t even count the number of people that I’ve gotten to...shop at thrift stores” (1, 940-945). This is an example of word-of-mouth advertising.

Disposition of Clothing

Disposition of clothing includes donating, selling, abandoning, repurposing, using as rags, throwing away, exchanging, and handing down (Stephens, 1985; Winakor, 1969). Winakor believed that discard occurred when garments were taken out of inventory for disposal or second use (1969) such as selling secondhand garments that have been recycled at a thrift shop (Hawley, 2000). Jacoby added that when *permanently* disposed of, garments may be thrown away, abandoned, given away, traded, or sold. Or, if *temporarily* given away, they may be loaned or rented. If traded, sold, or given away, garments could be used, resold, or recycled (1977).

Women’s disposal options were donating to thrift stores; handing down to family and friends; repurposing, rejuvenating, or recycling; and selling at garage sales, consignment stores, flea markets, and e-Bay. Disposing into a dumpster

was a last resort for clothing that could not be worn, repurposed, or recycled—and truly at the end of its life cycle.

Ninety-five to 100% of clothing throwaways can be diverted from landfills and reused or reconstructed into other textile end uses, but about 72.5 million tons go to landfills where they are incinerated or buried (Fast Fashion, 2007; Hawley, 2000). Although research regarding the effects of textiles on the environment had largely been disregarded, researchers have begun to examine the topic as it relates to global warming more recently. Over time, disregarding the impact of textiles on the environment has helped put strains on landfills, air, and water resources (Domina & Koch, 1998; Elliott, 1995). However, most women (17) recycled, sold, or gave over 75% of clothing to charity, friends, or family; and one-quarter spoke of concern for the environment, and preferred to recycle rather than ever dispose into the trash. They believed that textiles were so easy to recycle that there was no reason to dispose of them into the trash.

Currently Practiced Socially Responsible Behaviors

The list of socially responsible behaviors for the clothing consumer in Table 3 of the Review of Literature is paired with women's identified practices in Table 9. Women's behaviors were taken from transcripts as examples of practiced socially responsible behaviors. Practices either not addressed during focus group discussions or not answered were not listed. For example, the behavior, *buys new clothing made with the least energy and least emissions* was not addressed during discussions and was not listed in Table 9. However, those behaviors most strongly supported with participant responses were:

- buys secondhand clothing including vintage and classics
- saves money acquiring secondhand clothing
- uses clothing for original purpose
- keeps clothing in inventory
- recycles clothing
- disposes of clothing

Eight items absent from Table 9 which reflect socially responsible consumers include

- buys new clothing made with the least energy and least emissions
- leases for less expensive access to special clothing for a short time for overall smaller inventories
- washes clothing less often, at room temperature, hangs to dry, and avoids ironing
- uses environmentally friendly dry cleaners
- uses environmentally friendly detergents
- rents clothing temporarily
- loans clothing temporarily, and
- trades clothing.

While these eight items relate to socially responsible clothing consumption, they were beyond focus of the study. Future studies might include participant diaries for more in depth data pertaining to socially responsible items especially those related to care and maintenance absent from Table 8. For example, diaries could include the care given to clothing such as hand washing and hanging to dry versus use of washers, dryers, irons, and specific laundry products.

Table 8.

Socially Responsible Behaviors Practiced by Participants

Acquisition

- buys fewer more durable articles of clothing

Participants' Responses

Even though a socially responsible consumer may purchase less, the women in this study were reusing resources rather than using more new. The quantity was not reduced and they did not have less clothing in their closets. They wanted durable, well constructed clothing so that they could live simpler lifestyles...

I want something that's durable, something that is going to be multi-purpose, something that looks nice, launders well. Somehow I should be able to satisfy that with secondhand clothes. I recently had an experience where I went to a regular store... to look at clothes and I was absolutely disillusioned that everything was polyester. I would look at the seams and the hems and obviously they were falling out and I'm not happy about that at all. (3, 374-384).

So I met some people who profoundly affected my life. They lived very, very simply and not only lived simply but had a beatific joy in their living about them. And I remember very clearly looking at them and saying, 'I want this' (lifestyle) (1, 952-957).

I think about our spiraling consumption in America a lot and I think that the people at this table here have shared a commitment to a little more, just a little bit more of living simply so that others may simply live (1, 1390-1394).

- buys secondhand clothing including vintage and classics

Women buy secondhand (including vintage) as collectors of heritage clothing and because it fits well...

...Or a lot of times these are timeless clothing that you pick up in a thrift store, like a suit jacket...Every once in awhile I'll take something home, change the buttons or add something else...and change it. But I think you're right there when it comes to style: what fits you and what looks good on you is going to make you look good no matter where you go (1, 734-746).

Socially Responsible Behaviors Practiced by Participants, cont'd.

Acquisition

- buys secondhand clothing including vintage and classics

Participant Responses

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...Or a lot of times these are timeless clothing that you pick up in a thrift store, like a suit jacket...Every once in awhile I'll take something home, change the buttons or add something else...and change it. But I think you're right there when it comes to style: what fits you and what looks good on you is going to make you look good no matter where you go (1, 734-746).

I feel like I want to save something (vintage), what I can afford. I can't afford the super, super expensive pieces that actresses wore and that kind of thing. And we're not in California so I don't have the option of going to those (estate) auctions but that's another reason just to preserve our heritage has become a real interest of mine (2, 788-808).

- buys new clothing made by workers paid livable wages with reasonable employment rights and conditions

Participants expressed concern for the well being of apparel laborers...

I guess it would be called the ecological political aspect where there's these multi-national corporations that are in Indonesia, Malaysia, El Salvador, South America, who are paying their employees dirt poor wages under horrible conditions. They're importing those clothes here and they're charging an exorbitant price and they're sitting real pretty. But those people who are sitting in those factories aren't. And I'm not going to give them my money. Screw them. You know, I'm not going to give you my hard earned money for something that's so over priced and it's just trendy. I'm going to go find it secondhand because it's time for that stuff to change. And that's a big problem that's becoming worse with outsourcing and just that jobs in the U.S. are going overseas (1, 644-662).

Acquisition

- saves money acquiring secondhand clothing

Participants' Responses

One of the primary reasons women shop at thrift stores is to save money to wear better quality clothing...

...you're tired of all the choices, things that cost you an arm and a leg and your first born. So why not go to a secondhand store? (3, 1882-1887).

I go to Savers all the time. I got these slacks and I got this sweater for \$1 each. I'm a Monday shopper because that's 99 cent day. I got this purse for \$1. I got this coat, and I got this new purple dress because all the tags are still hanging on it and I got a coat like this (holds up the coat). I never pay more than \$1 because I only go on Mondays because I don't need anything. So I go for the bargains I can find (2, 34-43).

can get much higher-end clothing secondhand than I could if I were buying (new), so I wear 95% recycled or secondhand clothing. And I can also have more clothes and clothing is...it's like playing dress up still. So I have way more clothes than I need or than I would ever have if I had to buy them new. But if I'm only paying \$8 for a new winter coat or \$5 for a new skirt, I'll do it...I can afford to and I can afford to buy better brands (3, 333-347).

Inventory

- uses clothing for original purpose

Participants' Responses

Women acquire and wear secondhand clothing from thrift stores...

I got this sweater at a secondhand store. It's a really cool material. I don't remember where I bought this because I actually got it in the 90s--it's that old...I wear all the time and with jeans (3, 36-46).

. . . and everything I have on is thrift, which is not unusual. I brought this great coat that I found the other day...it is a full length, silk raincoat. . . . and I love the color (steel blue). And it's Nordstrom's... it's a trench style coat and it's in great shape...for \$2 (2, 1-20).

Inventory

- repurposes clothing (for a new use)

Participants' Responses

Women repurpose clothing for additional uses such as scarves, book covers, and slippers...

But sometimes I'll take a piece (of clothing) and make something else out of it. Like a dresser scarf or doily or something like that. And one of the things I got was a leather skirt. It got old and I made hinges out of that leather and a book cover. So, there are lots of different uses but not necessarily as clothing. (3, 1600-1606).

The most unusual thing that I've renovated and reused-- last year I was making bridesmaids dresses for a granddaughter and I saw parts of a wedding dress that she had used parts of it and didn't want the rest. And so I used all the satin underlining as a slip for a new skirt that I was making. So you can use all kinds of things and you wouldn't think of using a wedding dress for that but she had bought the wedding dress and she knew she just wanted particular parts of it, at a thrift shop I think. And she used the parts she wanted and then said, 'here Grandma, you can use the rest.' And I did. I still have some pieces of it, and I don't know what I'll do with it but it's good material, it's good fabric, I can reuse it. (1, 1109-1124).

- keeps clothing in inventory

Clothing is sometimes kept in inventory for sentimental reasons or for repurposing...

I have a closet full of blouses and T-shirts that will be turned into quilts. (3, 701-702).

There are some pieces that you don't want to get rid of. I've still got a couple of pieces in the bottom drawer that I really loved at the time and I just can't part with them yet for whatever reason (1, 1368-1373).

Inventory

- repairs existing clothing

Participants' Responses

For continued use, clothing sometimes requires repairs. . .

I've done reweaving on suits that I liked and that got a hole. Take a little bit of fabric out of the inside to reweave them. It is kind of fun actually (3, 1648-1641).

I have used glue--fabric glue--and repaired clothing with that . . . to repair holes, tears or what-have-you, using that glue (3, 1657-1660).

Disposition

- renovates and reuses existing clothing in wardrobes

Participants' Responses

Renovating and reusing existing clothing is demonstrated in two ways. . .

There is a Yankee saying that is "use it up, wear it out, and when it's finished, do without." It is an old Yankee saying—when it's finished, do without. So my clothes never get as far as being recycled clothes. They go to rags, old clothes, then wash the rags and you have quilts. (3, 694-699).

I use old sheets when I want to cut out new patterns for my clothing to make sure they fit before I cut them out of fabric (1, 1105-1108).

- disposes of clothing

To dispose of usable items of clothing, it is put into bags and take to the thrift store. . .

I separate usable items versus not usable items for a yard sale and then on to the Goodwill. Separate it. . . because if it's truly junk. . .and I'm sorry this is a me thing--if it's underwear it doesn't go (to Goodwill or yard sale). Usually if it's underwear it's in pretty bad shape anyway. What's usable goes to a yard sale and then if the yard sale doesn't get it, I take it over to Goodwill. It's the stuff I put into the rag bag. Underwear does NOT go in the rag bag. (3, 1264-1285).

Socially Responsible Behaviors Practiced by Participants, cont'd.

Disposition

- disposes of clothing

Participants' Responses

I typically bag it up and take it to ARC. . . I typically will just every few months take a bag of stuff, and that includes toys and clothes. Whatever has accumulated—because I fell like if stuff comes in (to my house) stuff's got to go out. The house isn't getting bigger and the number of items keeps increasing (1, 965-968).

- gives clothing away

When no longer used, all women gave their clothing away for another use. . .

And when I find that it's gone to the back of the closet and it's not getting worn anymore, I take it out and see if it's usable. And if it is usable, off it goes to find another home (3, 859-863).

I give it to a younger sister who has had kind of a tough time. And so whenever I go, I bring an extra piece of luggage. . . I also give freely to friends and then I guess my favorite place is Savers to take what's left over (1, 1145-1153).

- sells clothing

To generate income, some of the women sold clothing at garage sales and consignment stores. . .

I tried to sell it at garage sales but I find that most people aren't looking for clothing at garage sales. And they're in such a hurry to look at your stuff and then move on to the next sale that they don't want to take the time to look at the clothes. So I rarely am successful there. I've tried to sell at Repeat Boutique, but I'm giving up on them. You get so little for what she (Repeat Boutique) sells, but there is a new consignment place starting up in town, so I don't know if that will be good or bad. (2, 1348-1358).

Disposition

- sells clothing

Participants' Responses

I took in a pair of designer pants (to consignment store). I forget what brand. It wasn't Pierre Cardin. It was something better than that--Evan Picone . . . And she sold them for \$10 and I got \$4 for them and they're like \$400 retail. So the effort wasn't worth it. Of course, I didn't pay that but I'd like to get a little of the value, too. So it's very frustrating if you try to buy clothing as an investment or as a way of making money yourself... There is a place in Denver that sells high end stuff for much more (2, 1360-1373).

- recycles clothing

Women recycle almost all of their clothing. They give it to charities, family, friends, and neighbors. . .

If they're in good shape they go to Goodwill. . . Let's take what we mean by usable. Does it have holes? No. No stains? No worn spots, not stained or worn, or whatever--those things can get recycled off to Goodwill or ARC, or whatever the case happens to be. I actually recycle almost, I would say probably almost 100% of everything. Well, 95% to 100% of everything (3, 1417-1428).

And we also recycle because every Christmas, a group of us gets together and we bring clothes, kids' clothes, and take them to Catholic Charities. And we trade kids' clothes because everybody has so many kids. We're just trading clothes back and forth, and it's really cool because the kids love to open those bags and find all these things in there. And they're so excited to pick whatever they want and it doesn't cost anything and it's just tons of clothes in the middle of the floor (3, 86-108).

. . . One of the fun things about living in communities is that everybody gives away their clothes. . . Every now and then I buy something and it just isn't right for me and I usually will not send that to a Savers or Goodwill but try and find somebody that I know that I think it will be nice for. But I really like that whole clothes thing in the community, like in a meeting somebody would say, 'Hey, I've got a whole bunch of stuff that I don't use anymore,' and like all the girls would descend on her. That's just really fun. . . (1, 1196-1207).

There are shared experiences among the women in this study. Most are motivated by a) thrift/bargains, b) fun of the treasure hunt, and c) quality secondhand clothing. They believed that recycling clothing was a good idea and encouraged others to do so. Positive experiences and memories with secondhand clothing as children and young adults motivated women for a lifestyle that continued into adulthood. One participant expressed the need to live a simpler lifestyle with less clothing and less overall consumption.

Factors identified as important to acquire and wear secondhand clothing included obtaining from thrift/consignment shops, friends, and yard sales. These factors were important for savings (thrift), fit, and comfort. Additional sources of secondhand clothing were family members and estate sales but they provided less clothing than shops, friends, and yard sales. Positive memories of early or first acquisition and wearing of secondhand clothing were instrumental for continued use. Many participants also enjoyed influencing others to acquire and wear secondhand clothing.

Clothing disposition related to socially responsible behaviors. When asked what they do with clothing when no longer needed, wanted, or used, most felt it was important to pass it to others for additional use or to repurpose for another use, if possible. If unusable, clothing could then be put into the trash. Experiences with secondhand clothing also revealed options for disposal which avoided landfills as the final resting place. Some options were cutting T-shirts into squares for cleaning, saving children's clothes in buckets by age range for

hand-me-downs to other family members such as grandchildren, and recycling into paper, quilts, packaging, and secondhand clothing.

Limitations

There were limitations in this study. As a methodology, some of the data collected relied on participants' long-term recall and their current perceptions of personal experiences. While it is possible that some women were unable to accurately recall initial influences, they may not have been consciously aware of factors enabling their continued use of secondhand clothing. Different people interpret events and situations differently; therefore, what is a difficulty or challenge for one may not be for another, for example. Further, the data is open to interpretation but my efforts at triangulation and trustworthiness would not be questioned. Finally, data collected were limited to what the participants wished to share. It is possible that all factors and motivations for acquisition of secondhand clothing were not shared by each participant.

Implications

This study provides contributions to the field of apparel and textile design and merchandising, and in particular, the secondhand clothing trade. It also provides contributions to academia and community recycling programs.

Many implications are for the secondhand clothing trade to provide the clothing women want, understand how they select thrift stores, what they look for in thrift stores (cleanliness, smaller crowds, types of clothing, and organization of clothing), and their feelings about for profit and non profit stores. Because some

thrift stores are non profit while others are for profit, most women are aware of the difference in prices. As the most important motivator to acquire and wear secondhand clothing, thrift is also an essential factor to women's hunt for clothing. Therefore, implementation of competitive pricing could result in higher sales for non profit thrift stores. Other suggestions are for thrift stores to incorporate focus group ideas such as organizing clothing by size and color, and keeping dressing rooms neat and tidy. There are also implications for women who acquire secondhand clothing and are opinion leaders. As such, they influence others to acquire and wear secondhand clothing.

Personal and social responsibility should be a major focus of college education (Dey and Associates, 2008). The field of apparel and textile design and merchandising needs to address issues of quality design, over consumption, and in particular, social responsibility and sustainability. Implementation of social responsibility to apparel and textile design and merchandising courses is an important issue impacting global warming. Sustainability easily can be integrated into apparel designs to make them sustainable by repurposing existing, secondhand clothing for another use. Sustainable apparel and textile design may also address issues of personal values, ethics, consumption, and global warming.

Students can learn to reconstruct recycled garments for durable, long lasting seam allowances capable of alteration. Additionally, students could go on thrift store field trips to experience the thrill of the hunt, challenge stereotypes toward secondhand clothing, and discover creative ways to put clothing

ensembles together. They can learn to transform recycled ties to make pillows, bustiers, vests, or skirts. Slacks and pants can be reconstructed into purses, vests, and shorts; and coats into jackets or skirts. Projects can culminate in fashion shows of transformed secondhand garments.

Courses such as globally sustainable apparel and textile design (well made fabrics and finely constructed apparel), apparel production, merchandising promotion (promoting quality design and construction), consumer behavior, and environmental studies could integrate social responsibility into coursework. Such courses will not only open avenues of creativity but they will give students opportunities to make creations into entrepreneurial ventures.

There are opportunities in community recycling programs to address recycling more textiles than at present. This is important because of the abundance of clothing disposed into the trash or sent to other countries. Implications are for small businesses to procure and repurpose a large portion of discarded textiles in the United States. Woven textiles can be repurposed and resold as quilts, pillows, shirts, belts, and purses. Yarn from knit clothing can be reused and repurposed to knit other garments. A few entrepreneurs are currently reconstructing and selling vintage clothing online. Another suggestion is recycling programs to focus on curbside pickup of clothing with other recyclables such as newspapers, bottles, and cans. Distributed to small businesses, clothing can be taken apart and reconstructed into purses, children's clothes, and hats.

Women may create inexpensive and no cost systems to recycle clothing. For example, <http://www.Freecycle.org> is a non profit website for free exchange

of goods within a community. Its goal is to reuse and recycle goods to keep them out of landfills. Building upon the freecycle model, a website for free exchange of clothing could be established to recycle and reuse clothing. Fashion swap parties are another method for recycling clothing in free exchange for items from others' closets. Findings showed that very few women (2) acquired secondhand clothing from free exchange; however, a great deal of interest was expressed at the idea of a free exchange of clothing. Ideas like these teach socially responsible behavior at school, in business, and at home, for integration into social and functional behavior.

Last, there are implications to inspire others' opinions about secondhand clothing. One of the biggest obstacles to acquiring and wearing secondhand clothing is the perception that it is out of style, dirty, or not good enough. Prior to beginning this study, those were my perceptions. Constructing a new, unique garment was so easy for me that there was no reason to sift through used clothes—especially if they were torn, unclean, or requiring alteration. From this study, I have experienced the thrill of the hunt for garments that are well constructed and require little or no alteration. I have also enjoyed bargain prices for designer label garments, high quality fabrics, and fine construction. Some are new with price tags attached. When they come home with me, I wash and dry them to make them my own. The time and money I save and the thrill of the hunt I enjoy have transformed me into an opinion leader, thrift maven, and eco shopper on behalf of secondhand clothing and the environment.

Recommendations for Further Study

Recommendations are offered to expand the current context of this research and examine additional groups to explore its relevance. Further research rooted in the qualitative paradigm is suggested to explore social responsibility and college students' acquisition of secondhand clothing. This might include data from early experiences of both genders with clothing, and experiences of men, women and families to facilitate better understanding of consumers and encourage more acquisition and recycling of secondhand clothing.

Research to address faculty and students could investigate apparel consumers' wants and needs for well made fabrics and apparel. Rather than designers creating fashions they want women to wear, students could interview women to find what they want and need. Interviews and focus groups could include those from other countries, such as Great Britain, to brainstorm for sustainable design practices and principles—and then apply them in classes. For example, apparel that requires little or no maintenance (such as ironing or using clothes dryers) addresses issues of sustainability and social responsibility. Studies could also examine the need for “green” jobs, the labor demand for skilled eco-designers, and moral implications for a new, green economy and environment.

Additional research is needed to investigate options for disposal of clothing as well as impacts on the environment. Present disposal methods include donating to thrift stores, handing down to family and friends, repurposing,

rejuvenating, and recycling; and selling. A focus on repurposing and rejuvenating could yield innovative ideas resulting in less clothing in landfills. In addition, more needs to be known about the impact of apparel and textiles on the environment.

Conclusion

Women's acquisition of secondhand clothing is a phenomenon involving a variety of motivations and factors. Although there is little scholarly literature to explain what motivates women to acquire secondhand clothing, there is even less pertaining to the triad of women, secondhand clothing, and the environment. From the profile of the socially responsible consumer, it can be concluded that women are socially responsible with the acquisition of secondhand clothing. Findings indicated that women were primarily motivated to acquire and wear secondhand clothing for thrift and bargains, for the thrill of the hunt, and for quality clothing.

Perhaps the most important motivator for women to acquire secondhand clothing was quality. Although thrift/bargains was a higher motivator on the survey, women were looking for quality during the hunt for treasure. They wanted well made fabrics with quality construction and design of garments—for bargain prices--unique items bearing intrinsic value not generally found in new items in retail stores.

Findings determined that women, as consumers of secondhand clothing, are socially responsible. However, more research is needed on social responsibility and sustainability pertaining to all aspects of the apparel and textile

industry. A better understanding of the impact of apparel and textiles on the environment is crucial to sustaining the health of the planet and its inhabitants.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Human Subjects Approval

APPENDIX B

Focus Groups Recruitment Script

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT (TELEPHONE OR IN PERSON) FOR FOCUS GROUPS:

Introduce myself:

My name is Jill Charbonneau and I am a graduate student at Colorado State University, studying women and secondhand clothing. I am calling because you were referred to me. Do you acquire or wear secondhand clothing?

For my study I have defined it as--

clothing items that:

- can be of any age, or
- have been recycled for a second use, or
- have been purchased before, or
- are hand-me-downs, or
- have been in someone's closet before or after yours

Would you be interested in being a part of a small group discussion of women to share about your experiences with secondhand clothing?

If no--

I hope to bring together about six to eight women who acquire or wear secondhand clothing to talk about their experiences. I would love for you to come and wear some of your secondhand clothing; but, I understand and do appreciate your time this morning. Thank you.

If yes—for Fort Collins

There will be two groups of women to share their experiences with secondhand clothing. Will Saturday, March 15 at 10:15 or Sunday, March 23 at 1:15 fit your schedule? The meeting will last for about 90 minutes. I would love for you to come to one of the focus groups. It will be held at the clubhouse at _____ Apartments in Fort Collins.

I have asked six to eight women to join us. I look forward to meeting you....and please wear at least one item of secondhand clothing—if you have some of your own—to the focus group. Refreshments will be served and you will receive your choice of a \$5 gift certificate to Starbucks, Target, or Savers Thrift Store for attending. Please let me know your choice now.

About two weeks prior to the focus group meeting, I will send you a reminder, a short survey, consent form, and return, postage paid envelope. Instructions will be included. Please return survey with your answers and signed consent form in the postage paid envelope according to instructions in the reminder letter. Do you have any questions?

If you do have questions later, please contact me at (970) 484-8699 or e-mail at jillchar@lamar.colostate.edu.

I look forward to you coming on _____, March _____, 2008, at _____.
Target gift card _____
Starbucks gift card _____
Savers gift card _____

And please remember to wear at least one item of secondhand clothing!

=====
=====

If yes—for Denver

One group of women will share their experiences with secondhand clothing at _____'s home. I would love for you to come to the focus group meeting on Sunday, March 30 at 1:15.

I have asked six to eight women to join us at this meeting. I look forward to meeting you....and please wear at least one item of secondhand clothing—if you have some of your own—to the focus group. There will be refreshments and you will receive your choice of a \$5 gift certificate to Starbucks, Target, or Savers Thrift Store.

About two weeks prior to the focus group meeting, I will send you a reminder, a short survey, consent form, and return, postage paid envelope. Instructions will be included. Please return survey with your answers and signed consent form in the postage paid envelope according to instructions in the reminder letter. Do you have any questions?

If you do have questions later, please contact me at (970) 484-8699 or e-mail at jillchar@lamar.colostate.edu.

I look forward to meeting with you on _____, March 30, 2008, at 1:15.

Gift certificate preference:

Target Gift Card _____

Starbucks Gift Card _____

Savers Thrift Store _____

And please remember to wear or bring at least one item of
secondhand clothing!

APPENDIX C

Invitation Letter, Map, and Women's Secondhand Clothing Survey

March 18, 2008

Participant--
Fort Collins, CO 80528

Dear _____:

When we last spoke, I invited you to participate in a small discussion group about the reasons you acquire secondhand clothing. The meeting will take place on Sunday, March 30, 2008, beginning promptly at 1:15 p.m. Please plan for the discussion to last approximately 90 minutes.

Because I need the opinions of women for my research, I am asking you to share personal experiences with secondhand clothing. You will be asked to share and converse with a group of about six to eight women. Please bring or wear an item or items of secondhand clothing.

This research represents the culmination of my study investigating women's use of secondhand clothing. Conversations will be recorded but your names will not be used. Transcriptions will reflect important information concerning the reasons you and other women acquire secondhand clothing.

The meeting will take place at the clubhouse of the _____ Apartments in Fort Collins, CO, located near the intersection of Prospect and South Shields Street, southwest of the CSU campus. The address is _____ South Shields. A map is enclosed.

Enclosed are a Women's Secondhand Clothing Survey and an Informed Consent Form which are vital to my research. Please return both completed forms prior to the meeting in the enclosed stamped envelope. Information on these forms will be kept completely confidential and not disclosed by the researcher.

March 18, 2008
Page Two

Your RSVP by phone or e-mail by Monday, March 24, 2008, will be greatly appreciated. My phone number and e-mail address are listed below. I will call or send a post card or an e-mail as a reminder two to three days prior to the meeting.

Sincerely,

Jill Charbonneau, Ph.D. candidate
e-mail: jillchar@lamar.colostate.edu
(970) 484-XXXX

Carole J. Makela, Ph.D.
(970) 491-5141

Women's Secondhand Clothing Survey
Carole J. Makela, Ph.D.
Colorado State University
227 EDUC, Mail Code 1588
Fort Collins, CO 80523-1588

enc.

Map to Apartment Clubhouse
Shields Street,
Fort Collins, CO 80526

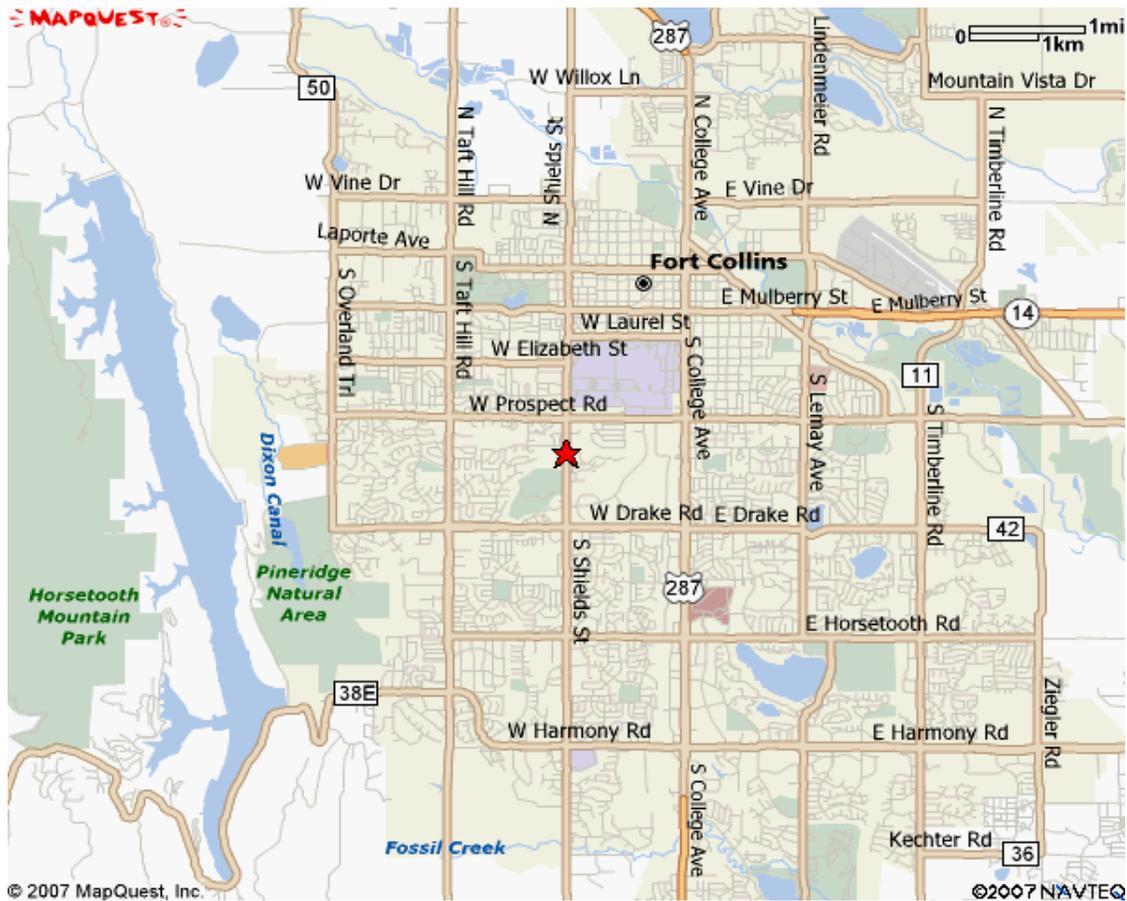
From I-25

From I-25, take Prospect Avenue exit (#268) west to Shields Avenue – 5.0 miles
Turn south (left) onto Shields – 0.3 miles
Turn west (right) on Spring Creek Lane – 0.1 miles

From College Avenue

From College Avenue, turn west on Prospect - travel 1.0 miles
At Prospect and Shields, turn south (left) - travel 0.3 miles
At Spring Creek Lane turn west (right)
At stop sign turn south (left) into the apartment complex
Apartment Clubhouse is on the southwest corner.
There will be a sign “Focus Group on Secondhand Clothing” and plenty of parking in front of (to the west of) the building.

Please contact me at (970) 484-XXXX for more specific directions



WOMEN'S SECONDHAND CLOTHING SURVEY

The primary purpose of this survey is to determine your feelings and behaviors with respect to clothing. There are no right or wrong answers. To keep your responses totally anonymous, please do **NOT** put your name on this survey.

PART I. Please indicate the response(s) that best describe your behavior in the situations given.

1. Where do you wear secondhand clothing **most** often-- (Check **ONE**)
 On the job
 At home
 Special occasion(s)
 Social/recreational event(s)
 Never
 Other. Please describe _____

2. When you **discard** clothing, how much do you recycle? That is, what portion is sold or given to charity, friends or family, so that it does not go into the trash? (Check **ONE**)
 0 – 25%
 26% - 50%
 51% - 75%
 Over 75%

3. How often do you get secondhand clothing **from** family or friends? (Check **ONE**)
 never
 sometimes
 often

4. Why did you become **interested** in secondhand clothing? (Check **ALL that apply**)
 Quality
 Thrift/bargains
 Special need (such as disabilities, maternity, costumes)
 Fun
 To lessen the burden on the environment
 Other. Please describe _____

5. **Where** do you acquire secondhand clothing? (Check **ALL that apply**)
From:
 Friends
 Family
 Thrift or consignment stores
 Parties/get togethers where clothing is swapped/traded for free
 Estate sales
 Yard/garage sales
 Other. Please describe _____

6. Who do you get secondhand clothing for? (Check ALL that apply)

- myself
- family
- others

PART II. In this section there is a list of statements about the way you feel about shopping and clothing. For each statement, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by placing a check on the appropriate blank line. Definitions are provided to help you complete the survey.

Secondhand or used clothing

Clothing previously owned by someone else.

Recycled clothing

Clothing reconstructed, sold, or given to someone else.

Classic clothing

Garments designed to remain in style indefinitely.

Secondhand clothing stores/outlets

Any store or market selling secondhand clothing including consignment shops, thrift shops, yard sales, or flea markets.

	<u>strongly disagree</u>	<u>disagree</u>	<u>neutral</u>	<u>agree</u>	<u>strongly agree</u>
1. Recycling clothing is a good idea	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Clothing is a resource that is often wasted	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Shopping for clothing at yard sales is embarrassing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. A person should urge friends not to use products that pollute or harm the environment	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. I purchase clothing from secondhand stores	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Shopping for secondhand clothing is too inconvenient	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Most people buy much more clothing than they need	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Secondhand clothing is generally dirty and unsanitary	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

	<u>strongly disagree</u>	<u>disagree</u>	<u>neutral</u>	<u>agree</u>	<u>strongly agree</u>
9. I spend time and/or money to recycle my clothing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. Air and water pollution are not as serious a problem as people think	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. Keeping up with fashion is impractical	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. Recycling used clothing is more trouble than it is worth	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. I am very fashion conscious	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
14. There isn't much of a relationship between conservation of resources and clothing consumption	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
15. It does not bother me to be out of style	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
16. When I select clothing, I don't care what others are wearing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
17. People should not be asked to conserve clothing because they are already expected to conserve in so many ways	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
18. I would not obtain more used clothing even if more shops were available	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
19. I am willing to pay more for fashionable new clothing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
20. People should be encouraged to recycle clothing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
21. I don't like to buy used clothing because I cannot judge its quality	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

**Please complete this survey and consent form
and return in the envelope provided on or before
March 22, 2008
Thank You!**

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

TITLE OF STUDY:

Social Responsibility and Women's Acquisition of Secondhand Clothing

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Carole J. Makela, Ph.D.
227 School of Education, Colorado State University
(970) 491-5141 makela@cahs.colostate.edu

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Jill Skinner Charbonneau
221 School of Education, Colorado State University
(970) 484-XXXX jillchar@lamar.colostate.edu

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are invited to join in this research as a woman who has an interest in and experiences with secondhand clothing.

WHO IS DOING THIS STUDY?

This study is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy for Jill Charbonneau through the School of Education at Colorado State University. The Principal Investigator is the adviser for the study.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

- ◆ to investigate your reasons for acquiring or wearing secondhand clothing.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

Components of the study include a written survey and participating in a focus group. The written survey has been sent (via e-mail or postal mail) to you with this Informed Consent Form two weeks before your scheduled focus group. You are asked to complete and return the written survey to the researcher prior to the focus group. The survey should take about 20-25 minutes to complete.

The focus group will be about 90 minutes in duration and held at the address below:

- Apartment Clubhouse
Shields Street, Fort Collins, CO

Page 1 of 3 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

- ◆ complete and return the survey and informed consent form prior to the focus group, and
- ◆ participate in a 90-minute discussion related to your experiences with secondhand clothing. The discussion will explore your interest in and experiences with secondhand clothing and will be tape recorded.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no known reasons why you should not participate if you have experience with secondhand clothing.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

There are no known risks to your participation in this study. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures but the researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential but unknown risks.

WILL I BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no direct benefits in participating but we hope you will gain more knowledge on your decisions to acquire and wear secondhand clothing.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs to your participation in this study. You are asked to provide your own means of travel to and from the focus group.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the combined information we have gathered we will share it with other researchers. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will not use your name or identification.

There may be some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court should you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

CAN MY TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

You may choose to leave the study at any time. However, if you leave the area during or prior to the focus group, you will be removed from the study (with the exception of bathroom breaks.)

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Yes, your choice of a \$5 gift certificate to Starbuck’s, Target, or Savers Thrift Store after participation in the focus group discussion.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH?

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University’s legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the co-investigator, Jill Charbonneau at (970) 484-XXXX. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator, at (970) 491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly signed this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, two copies—one to return with the survey in the enclosed stamped envelope or bring with you to the focus group and one to keep--of this document containing three (3) pages.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Name of person providing information to participant

Signature of Research Staff

APPENDIX E

Focus Group Question Guide

Activity

Script

1. **Set up** tape recorders and microphones. Test both. Check room, table, and chairs. Arrange around microphones. Set out refreshments, napkins, cups, and name placards.
 2. Put out extra consent forms & surveys and ask the women to fill out prior to the start of the meeting if not received previously--
If you have not filled out a consent form or survey, please do so now.
 3. Participants check in:
Collect surveys and consent forms if not received previously
 4. Encourage women to have refreshments and a seat at the table
 5. When all are seated, explain what will happen at the meeting
 6. **Introduction** (5-10 minutes)
 - Be sure assistant is taking notes as to who is speaking each time a new speaker begins, including a little of what she has said
 7. Hand out definitions page
6. Welcome and thanks for coming!
Introduce myself and others there to help
 7. Names will be replaced with pseudonyms. For example, your names may be changed to the names of flowers such as Hibiscus or Daisy as the typist transcribes our discussion. That list will be kept by my adviser until after transcription when it will be destroyed. Also, I want to caution you about protecting others' privacy—what you have

heard here today should remain here.

I want to share a little about my research. The information you share today will be a part of my study. My research focuses on ...

8. Guidelines for our discussion:

- We have 90 minutes today. For **each** of you to have time to share, keep in mind that you have just 2 to 3 minutes per question. I may ask you to add to the discussion if there is time.
- Please allow each person to finish before the next person takes her turn. After all have shared, if there is time, we will have an open discussion.
- Before speaking, it is necessary to identify yourself clearly by name
- Remember, the discussion will be recorded—if everyone is ready, let's begin.

9. **Opening Question** (15-18 mins)

9. **Opening Question** Will you briefly introduce yourselves and tell about the secondhand item you wore or brought with you today. Please keep your introduction to less than three minutes so that we have time for all to share. Start by giving your name, and maybe sharing about the clothing you wore or brought and where it came from.

First Question: (20-25 minutes)

Prompts for additional information:

What do you mean by that? Why is that?

How does that make you feel? What made you feel that way?

What gave you that impression?

What was it exactly that you liked or disliked about it?

Why do you think/say that? What do you mean by that?

Can you elaborate on that, say a little bit more?

Can you give me an example?

Can you say more about that?

Did anything else influence you?

- What was your first piece of secondhand clothing? Can you describe it? How did it feel or smell or look to you?
- What is your first memory of secondhand clothing? For example, when you were a child, do you recall going to the secondhand store with your family for clothing?
- How did your first experience with secondhand clothing motivate you to continue to acquire or wear it? And why do you continue now? What motivates you?
- What got you started acquiring or wearing it?
- In adult life, what got you to acquire or wear it? Give examples of secondhand clothing that you acquire— for yourself, your family or friends-- (Use probes to get them to tell about themselves and their stories--)
- Tell a story about wearing secondhand clothing as a child, a young adult, and as an adult
- How have your ideas about secondhand clothing evolved over time?

Second Question: (20-25 minutes)

- Why do you wear or use secondhand clothing?
- Why do you *continue* to wear or use it?
- What do you like about secondhand clothing?
- What do you dislike about wearing or using secondhand clothing?
- Where do you get secondhand clothing you wear or use?
- Share at least one experience of how you have gotten someone--who had not been wearing or using secondhand clothing--interested in secondhand clothing?
How did this happen?
Can you elaborate on that at bit?
- Have you influenced children or men/husbands/sons to wear or use it?

Third Question: (20-25 minutes)

- When your clothing or your family's clothing is no longer needed, wanted, or used, what do you do with it?
- How much do you dispose of in each way?
- Do you rent it or loan it temporarily?
- Do you renovate and reuse it?
- Do you give it away?
- Do you trade or sell it?
- Do you hand it down to other family members?
- Do you recycle?
- Do you dispose of it in the trash?
- Why is it important not to use landfills as the **final** resting place for no longer wanted clothes?

Winding Down: (10 minutes)

- And FINALLY, considering what we have been talking about today, do you have any further suggestions or contributions? Is there anything we have left out?
- What you share will be kept confidential and your names will not be used. Also, I want to caution you about protecting others' privacy—what you have heard here today should remain here.
- “Thank you for your time and opinions. You have made an important contribution to my research. I hope you have enjoyed the meeting. Again, thank you for coming.”
- **Give out gift cards.** Please accept this gift card in appreciation for your sharing today.

For Denver group:

Give \$20 gift card to Denver hostess

APPENDIX F
Codes and Open Coding

List of Codes

RQ1

Motivations for SHC - The Why

- Participant stories from childhood to the present; development from where they were (in doing and thinking) to where they are now--a continuum
- 1** they were (in doing and thinking) to where they are now--a continuum
- 2** Social responsibility (search term "responsibility") listed by context
- 4** The lifestyle of secondhand clothing
- 5** Feelings and emotions about wearing SHC - theirs and others'
- 5a** Identity and identity concerning SHC-- meanings
- 7** Memories of SHC & HMDs - theirs, others, or an event
- 12** Having No Fashion Sense to dress herself - part of 5a
- 14** Sewing - reusing clothing for clothing or another use
- 14a** Making clothing, patterns; the presence or absence of needed skills
- 19** The lost art of darning or mending to "keep it going"
- 20** Problems with new clothes - quality
- 21** Overconsumption - we have too much stuff

RQ2&3

Acquiring and wearing SHC - The How

- 6** Shopping experiences--feelings about shopping
- 8** Clothes Shopping for -- fit, size, quality, comfort, price
- 9** Clothes shopping to save money - could this also be in RQ1?
- 10** Enjoyment of SHC shopping, the treasure (souvenir) hunt, the challenge
- Qualities of the fabric, fiber, or clothing: valuable, ecology, classic, durable;
- 11** vintage
- 15** Dislikes, disadvantages, problems: Clothing
- 15a** Dislikes, disadvantages, problems: Stores
- 16** Dislikes, disadvantages, problems; shopping process
- 17** Influencing others to use SHC; being introduced to SHC
- Dislikes, problems: participants are aware of
- 18** Shopping for Special occasions (prom or Halloween costumes)
- 22** Secondhand items other than clothing (if talking about shopping)

RQ4

Disposal of Clothing

- 3** The impact of clothing on the environment
- Using to the max - restore to wholeness - recycle, reuse, rejuvenate,
- 13** repurpose
- 23** Where it goes when they're done with it; Selling and consigning

Open Coding

1 Participants' stories about what they brought or wore	
Everything you see on me, except my stockings, are secondhand. I got the	3, 3-32
I got this sweater at a secondhand store. It's a really cool material. I don't	3, 36-46
And this top is from secondhand—actually I think it is from Goodwill.	3, 49-50
If I shop those shops, secondhand stores, I basically am buying baby	3, 76-82
. . . and everything I have on is thrift, which is not unusual, but I brought this	2, 1-20
And what I'm wearing, I have a three piece outfit on that I got in Wyoming	2, 22-32
I go to Savers all the time. I got these slacks and I got this sweater for \$1	2, 34-43
I'm retired. I'm also a Red Hatter. Uh, the outfit, my favorite summer outfit I	2, 45-77
I've got this outfit, and I've lost weight, so it's a little big on me. But I wore	2, 79-91
Basically everything I have on is from secondhand stores or given to me.	2, 93-114
I work at Savers. My jeans and my sandals I got there.	2, 117-118
I just love this jean jacket. I wear it everywhere (taking it from the back of	1, 5-16
I brought a number of items with me that I have purchased. As you can see,	1, 18-31
Everything that I'm wearing today comes from a consignment store. This is	1, 40-48
The jacket I have on I got at Savers, the pants the same. I go for sort of	1, 49-60
What I have on, let's see, the vest and the T-shirt are from Saver's, I	1, 61-79
Everything I have on but my shoes--so the scarf, the sweater, the pants,	1, 81-94
I must have missed the thing (in the invitation letter) about wearing your	1, 95-115
Most of my thrift shopping is done for play rather than work. I found this	1, 116-137
My first recycled piece of clothing was given to me by an aunt who gave it	1, 194-203
I don't know if this was my first because I remember my mother got	1, 153-166
I bought vintage things when I was in college. And the first thing I remember	1, 173-187
2 Social responsibility	
I think that's part of the problem. Like we say to ourselves it's our	(2, 1502-1504)
In fact, I do have my degree in Environmental Technology and I know what	(2, 740-749)
The only things that can be seen from the moon are the Great Wall of China	(2, 1427-1433).
We really are stewards of the earth's dwindling resources when we don't	(1, 554-558)
I wanted to mention the green aspect just to expand on that. I guess it	(1, 644-662).
I wonder if actually the clothing in the landfill, if the cotton or the polyester or	(1, 1245-1253)