EXPLORATION OF PLUS SIZE WOMEN’S APPAREL SATISFACTION, NON-WEAR, AND DISCARD

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by

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A candidate for the degree of

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And hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Dr. Amanda Hinnant
To Duke, my family, and specifically my mom for believing in me without falter.
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ABSTRACT

This study explored the apparel satisfaction, non-wear and discard habits of plus size women in the United States. According to Renoux’s theory of retail satisfaction (1973), satisfaction with retail consists of three dimensions: shopping system satisfaction, buying system satisfaction, and consuming system satisfaction. This theory formed the apparel satisfaction portion of this study. This study took a qualitative approach and used semi-structured interviews with twenty plus size (women’s apparel size 14-32) women age eighteen and above from all over the United States. The findings of the study indicate that plus size women are unsatisfied in some way with each of the dimensions of retail satisfaction. It was discovered that apparel fit, lack of store selection, and the inaccessibility to retailers carrying plus size apparel led the women’s apparel dissatisfaction. The results indicate that plus size women discard a small amount of apparel in part due to a style scarcity mentality—style scarcity meaning there was a perceived lack of options available to replace apparel. Style scarcity was sometimes coupled with weight fluctuation and the need for various sizes in the women’s wardrobes, causing non-wear of some apparel. In addition, some women held onto typically smaller apparel in hopes it would fit again one day. Designers and retailers may want to use the information as a starting point for catering to a plus size customer.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Chapter I contains the following sections: (a) background of the study, (b) statement of the problem, (c) purpose of the study, and (d) significance of the study.

Background of the Study

Consumer satisfaction is a paramount factor in the consumption cycle of apparel. Apparel consumption describes the actions related to acquiring, storing, taking care of, using, and discarding apparel (Winakor, 1969). Henceforth, the term consumption will be used as Winakor (1969) defines it; the entire process of consuming apparel. A consumer’s satisfaction with apparel can help to dictate whether or not they purchase apparel, how much they pay for an article of clothing, and whether or not they keep it (Laitala, K. 2014; Renoux, 1973). While all consumers at times may be dissatisfied with an apparel item, studies indicate that, within the apparel-sizing spectrum, women plus size consumers are among the most dissatisfied with apparel in regard to the consumption process. In particular, it is evidenced that plus size women are dissatisfied with apparel fit, apparel style or aesthetics, and the amount of apparel options available. (Chowdhary & Beale, 1988; Oldham Kind & Hathcote, 2000). The women’s plus size apparel market is a growing segment of the United States apparel industry fueled in part by the increase in obesity rates of recent decades. (Fryar, Gu, & Ogden, 2012; “Shopping”; 2012).

Apparel satisfaction is part of a larger retail satisfaction system that takes into consideration the consumption process. Retail satisfaction can be broken down into a three-part system consisting of (1) shopping system satisfaction, (2) buying system
satisfaction, and (3) consumption system satisfaction (Renoux, 1973), of which full explanations will be made on page eight.

The outcomes of apparel non-satisfaction, also known as dissatisfaction, once a consumer has purchased an article of clothing, can be summarized into two larger categories: (1) apparel non-wear, and (2) apparel discard (Bye & McKinney 2007; Laitala, K. 2014). Apparel non-wear is a precursor to apparel discard in which physical or psychological reasons prevent the consumer from disposing of apparel and instead a garment becomes an inactive, or not worn, part of a consumer’s wardrobe (Bye & McKinney, 2007; Hertz, 2011). Apparel discard becomes the final step of the apparel consumption process for the consumer. Apparel may be discarded in sustainable or unsustainable ways. Sustainable ways of discarding an apparel item would be giving it to a friend, to a charity, or selling it at a consignment shop. The unsustainable way of discarding apparel is throwing it away in the trash where it will end up in a landfill (Laitala, 2014). Consumers discarding apparel in unsustainable ways by throwing it in the trash has contributed to increased waste in municipal landfills and now accounts for 5.7% of waste in all landfills (United States Environmental Protection Agency EPA, 2014).

Consumers’ apparel satisfaction and its effect on apparel non-wear and discard decisions are important to examine. From an environmental standpoint, it has an effect on the amount of apparel waste that ends up in landfills. Additionally, satisfaction has economic benefits to firms and has been shown by Sivadas and Baker-Prewitt (2000) to influence consumer repurchase, recommendation, and attitude towards a firm. Consumer satisfaction is an important concept intertwined with the apparel consumption process in
which the fulfillment of satisfaction benefits the consumer and environment, in addition to apparel firms.

**Statement of the Problem**

There is research examining plus size women’s dissatisfaction with the consumption processes of plus size apparel, however, there is little research on the relationship between plus size women’s dissatisfaction and the consequent non-wearing and discarding of apparel. Indeed, there is a lack of research in general on the apparel discard patterns of consumers (Laitala, 2014).

In addition, there is currently a gap in the literature on plus size women’s experiences with plus size clothing that is not in a formatted survey, questionnaire, or observation. While these forms of gathering data are valid, they miss out on the direct first person story of plus size women’s experiences with apparel.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to gain a holistic understanding of the retail satisfaction factors surrounding plus size women’s non-wear and discard of apparel. More specifically, this study aims to understand how (a) shopping system satisfaction, (b) buying system satisfaction, and (c) consuming system satisfaction influence plus size women’s decision to not wear or to discard apparel. This will be achieved by examining plus size women’s apparel satisfaction through the theoretical lens of Renoux’s theory of retail satisfaction to help inform the satisfaction causes that lead to the apparel non-wear and discard habits of plus size women.
Significance of the Study

Apparel disposal and non-wear literature is primarily focused on the outcomes of the apparel disposal process, particularly apparel recycling. Laitala (2014) synthesized apparel discard literature and revealed limited research has been conducted on the overall ‘why’ factors that contribute to apparel non-wear and discard. She further identified that little is known about the various reasons apparel is discarded and the condition it is in when discarded. Previous research primarily uses surveys as a method, and focuses on the demographics of young female consumers, particularly college students. Research is missing in which the stories of plus size women are told firsthand. This study aims to bridge the gap in the literature and provide information on plus size women’s apparel retail satisfaction leading to non-wear and discard by interviewing women with a broad range of ages. Exploring the apparel retail satisfaction and subsequent non-wear or discard habits of plus size women will have several benefits to both industry and academia.

First, the findings will yield a deeper understanding of the important retail satisfaction systems, as outlined by Renoux (1973), unique to plus size women and will provide insights into the factors that contribute to the apparel non-wear and discard of plus size women.

Second, by exploring plus size women’s apparel retail satisfaction, the findings of the study may help apparel firms and designers make changes to the retail cycle, retail environment, and apparel production for plus size women that increase their apparel retail satisfaction—satisfaction with shopping, buying, and consumption (Renoux, 1973).
Satisfied consumers can in turn increase customer loyalty and company revenue (Hallowel, 1996; Heskett, 1994; Carpenter & Fairhurst, 2005).

Third, an increase in understanding of plus size women’s apparel satisfaction may lead to a decrease in apparel discard, specifically apparel discarded in unsustainable ways. Waste facilities as well as the environment would benefit from less apparel being discarded as trash.

Finally, the study findings may contribute to the development of academic literature on a population found to be marginalized by Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) — plus size women. In addition, this study could contribute to general knowledge of apparel retail satisfaction and present a starting point for studying apparel non-wear and discard across various, ages, genders, and textile and apparel products.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter II contains the following sections: (a) theoretical frameworks, (b) plus size, and (c) research gap and questions.

Theoretical Frameworks

Apparel Satisfaction

The construct of consumer satisfaction is reviewed in depth by Giese and Cate (1999) and defined as follows: “satisfaction [is] comprised of three basic components, a response pertaining to a particular focus determined at a particular time” (pg 2). These three basic components can be given specific details:

(1) Response: this construct can be further broken down into type and intensity. A response type can be emotional or cognitive. The response intensity can be characterized in phrases a consumer uses such as “indifferent” or “love.”

(2) Focus: the focus of a response is the object receiving (or not receiving) a consumer’s satisfaction. The focus of consumer satisfaction can have singular or multiple foci. An example of multiple foci would be the store a product was acquired at, the salesperson at the store, and the product being purchased.

(3) Time: timing of a satisfaction response is typically characterized to a post-purchase period, but can actually occur after an accumulation of experiences, or after a product is consumed (Giese & Cote, 2000, pgs. 1-3; Carpenter & Fairhurst, 2005 pg. 258).

Consumer dissatisfaction is then typically characterized as the opposite of satisfaction. Giese and Cote (2000) aggregated satisfaction literature to define
dissatisfaction and proposed that, “the literature does not provide a clear conceptualization of dissatisfaction (2).” Instead, they turned to consumer perceptions of dissatisfaction and suggested that dissatisfaction is comprised of the three components of satisfaction and further propose that, “[c]onsumers [can] sometimes [be] satisfied with one aspect of the choice/consumption experience, but dissatisfied with another aspect.”

Various studies have been conducted on the apparel satisfaction of plus size women. One such study (Oldham and Hathcote, 2000) examined the specialty-size apparel satisfaction of college-aged women. Specialty-size apparel consumers are those consumers that are petite, tall, or plus size. A total of 358 specialty-size women participated in the study, with 9.8% of respondents categorized as “large” or plus sized. A questionnaire was administered in which women were asked to categorize their satisfaction with the three dimensions of Renoux’s (1973) theory of retail satisfaction (shopping system satisfaction, buying system satisfaction, and consuming system satisfaction) on a seven point Likert scale from 1 (very satisfied) to 7 (very dissatisfied). The results of this study indicated that plus size women had the highest overall apparel retail dissatisfaction. The highest levels of dissatisfaction were found in variables that included price ranges, style ranges, color ranges, general fit, and the number of stores that carried their sizing. The fit areas respondents were most dissatisfied with were; pant length, thigh, abdomen, bust, calf, and neckline.

Another study done by Otieno, Harrow, and Lea-Greenwood (2005) utilized a questionnaire for an exploratory study with 250 UK women wearing UK size 16 and above to determine fashion availability, fit and affordability in the United Kingdom. This
study also found that the overall apparel consumption process was negative, and that plus size women struggled to find apparel that was fashionable, a good fit, and affordable.

These studies verified a plus size questionnaire study done by Chowdhary and Beale (1988) in which they discovered that fit and sizing were the areas plus size women were most dissatisfied with in regards to apparel. Chowdhary and Beale (1988) used seven satisfaction factors in their study. These seven factors were comprised of: color, fabric, fashion, fit, selection, size, and style.

These previous studies have created a base level of knowledge on plus size women’s apparel satisfaction. However, all of the studies utilized questionnaires and surveys that focused on a set number of variables. Thus, there was little to no direct solicitation from plus size women of what they want in apparel to be satisfied, wear it, and or not discard of it. In contrast, this study aims to add more detail and first hand content from plus size women to apparel satisfaction, non-wear and discard research by utilizing the method of interviews.

**Renoux’s Theory of Retail Satisfaction**

Renoux (1973) developed a conceptual framework for investigating the satisfaction of consumers. His framework, known as the theory of retail satisfaction, proposes that retail satisfaction plays out on three dimensions: shopping system satisfaction, buying system satisfaction, and consuming system satisfaction.

Shopping system satisfaction includes an adequate number of stores available to the consumer, as well as the ease of accessibility to the stores. Shopping system satisfaction embodies the consumers’ ability to go to a retail destination to make a purchase. Buying system satisfaction is related to the sizes and variety available to the
consumer, such as color and style, as well as price ranges of a retail item. Buying system satisfaction encompasses the choices a consumer has once they are able to reach a shopping destination. If a consumer is able to get to a store, but cannot find the size and or color they are looking for in an apparel item, they may not be satisfied on the buying satisfaction dimension. If a consumer is able to make a buying decision with ease based on the options available to them in a retail setting, then they may experience buying system satisfaction. The final piece of the retail satisfaction dimensions lies on the consumer side. Consuming system satisfaction is based on how the product works for the consumer after they have purchased it and started consuming it. In apparel products this would include factors such as fit and aesthetics. Renoux acknowledges that while the details of what may be involved in the satisfaction dimensions may vary depending on industry, the various sectors of retail have the above dimensions.

**Apparel Non-Wear**

Apparel non-wear is an assigned classification of apparel in a consumer’s wardrobe meaning that the apparel is no longer part of the consumer’s active wardrobe. Reasons that an apparel items is not warn by a consumer may be physical and or psychological (Bye and McKinney, 2007; Brownie; 2013; Hertz, 2011). Fast fashion and the rate of fashion consumption have contributed to apparel non-wear and discard (Kline, 2012). Apparel non-wear occurs when an item is purchased and not worn or rarely worn. Many apparel consumers have articles of clothing in their closets that still have store hangtags on it, an obvious indication of non-wear. Apparel in a wardrobe can be classified as either active or inactive. Active apparel is clothing that is worn on a fairly regular basis and usually fits and is liked by the wearer. Inactive apparel is clothing that
is not worn by the wearer for various reasons, such as unappealing design and non-fit (Brownie, 2013; Bye and McKinney, 2007).

A study conducted by Bye and McKinney (2007) of women ages 36-65 years of age found that participants had four main reasons for not discarding apparel and keeping it even though it did not fit: (1) weight management, (2) investment value, (3) sentimental value, and (4) aesthetics. The concept that women hold onto apparel for weight management reasons was confirmed by Hertz (2011). She proposes women use clothing as a bathroom scale of sorts in which they can measure weight loss and weight gain through how it fits at various times. Bye and McKinney (2007) further discovered that most of their participants kept three different sizes of clothing in anticipation of weight fluctuations. Participants in the study did not discard their smaller, non-fitting apparel, as it would be a sign of weight loss defeat.

**Apparel Discard**

According to Winakor (1969) the apparel consumption process is a cycle of acquiring apparel, storing apparel (creating an apparel inventory), and then discarding apparel. The non-environmentally friendly acquiring habits of the modern fast fashion apparel consumer have created negative outcomes in the last stage of the clothing consumption process—apparel discard (Claudio, 2007; Council for Textile Recycling, 2015; Kline, 2012). Apparel is classified as discarded when it has reached the end of its lifecycle to the present consumer and is no longer in their possession (Laitala, 2014; Winakor, 1969). Apparel can be disposed of in various ways including: (1) selling at second hand and consignment shops, (2) donation to organizations such as Goodwill, (3)
handed down to other family members, (4) clothing exchanges, (5) using clothing for rags, and (6) throwing away apparel in the garbage (Laitala, 2014).

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (2014) estimates that 5.7% of all waste in landfills is from textiles. In 2012, 14.3 million tons of textile waste was generated, most of which the EPA acknowledged comes from clothing. This equates to each American throwing away about 65 pounds of textiles every year (Usagain, 2012). Furthermore, the Council for Textile Recycling (2015) puts recycling recovery figures (not including reuse) at a meager 15.7% in 2012 or roughly 2.3 million tons, while 95% of textiles of both synthetic and natural fiber makeup can be recycled.

Studies paint a positive picture of consumer’s apparel disposal habits, citing consumers prefer to reuse apparel (Ha-Brookshire and Hodges, 2009; Walters, 2008). However, a preference does not indicate action, and apparel that consumers would prefer to recycle may still be thrown away. The literature for the motivational factors for apparel discard focus primarily on the recycling of apparel and has been documented by Domina and Koch (2001, 2002), Ha-Brookshire and Hodges, (2009) and Morgan and Birtwistle (2009). Discard by way of recycling is primarily driven by convenience, recycling facilities availability, and consumer recycling knowledge (Stall-Meadows and Goudeau, 2012). Most clothing that is discarded through donation is sorted for reuse (Hawley 2006).

The way a consumer chooses to discard apparel depends on a few primary factors. Jacoby et al. (1977) developed a framework that suggests consumers discard apparel based on (1) psychological characteristics of the decision maker (personality and attitude etc.), (2) intrinsic product factors (condition, style etc.) and (3) extrinsic situational
product factors (storage space available, the consumer’s finances). Relative obsolescence is a term used to describe products that are still functional but discarded for various reasons. The reasons for apparel discard have been examined by way of survey, but the estimate for clothing disposed within each category is limited as respondents cited multiple categories as disposal reasons. A consumer determines a product’s obsolesce by way of four main categories:

(1) Functional: a product the consumer deems to have better utility is acquired to satisfy the need previously filled by the product being discarded.

(2) Quality: The product fails, is defective or is subject to wear.

(3) Psychological: referred to as symbolic obsolescence, this category includes ideals of desirability and fashion.

(4) Consumer need: there are new desires and needs of the consumer, which also includes changes in body shape and weight fluctuation (Albinsson and Perera, 2009; Björnman and Kaloper, 2012; Koukouvinos, 2012; Laitala, 2014).

Laitala summarizes that “[c]ommon [general consumer] disposal reasons for apparel were wear and tear, poor fit and fashion, and boredom in addition to lack of storage space” (pg 444, 2014). In summation, apparel dissatisfaction in a variety of areas can lead to apparel discard in both sustainable and non-sustainable ways.

The lack of feedback from plus size women to clothing companies has created a system in which plus size women are constantly disappointed and or unsatisfied with the clothing choices, fits, fabrics, and purchasing experiences available in the plus size apparel market (Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013). Apparel non-use and disposal then become side effects of this consumption system.
Apparel Design and Aesthetics

Apparel design and aesthetics have been shown to be factors in apparel discard and non-wear (Bye and McKinney, 2007; Hertz, 2011; Brownie, 2013). Apparel aesthetics have also proven to play a role in plus size women’s satisfaction of apparel (Otieno, Harrow, & Lea-Greenwood 2005). The behavioral aesthetic characteristics of apparel refer to the beauty and or aesthetic experiences brought about by wearing an article of apparel. These experiences can be at a) the sensory level b) the emotional level and c) cognitive level. The sensory level is concerned with such apparel details as fabric, cut, length, and color. For example, a sensory apparel experience is found in how fabric moves or changes position on the body when a person wears an apparel item (de Klerk & Tselepis, 2007, p 415; Bye and McKinney, 2007). The emotional level is concerned with the feelings a person has when wearing an article of clothing. This can be found in how a specific apparel item may make a wearer feel, including increased confidence, giving them pleasure, or perhaps it evokes feelings of power (the wearing of a suit for example). The cognitive level refers to the symbolic significance apparel may have for the wearer, and furthermore, that it gives status or helps the wearer fit into a larger social group and aid in the development of feelings of belonging (Fiore & Kimle, 1997, p. 4; de Klerk & Tselepis, 2007, p 415). The sensory, emotional and cognitive levels of aesthetics play a role in determining if a consumer wears apparel, keeps apparel, but does not wear it, or discards it (Laitala, 2014; Bye & McKinney, 2007; Hertz, 2011)
Apparel Fit

Apparel fit can be defined as the way a clothing item conforms to the curves and shapes of the body, either good or bad (Workman and Lentz, 2000). Ashdown and DeLong (1995) further proposed that fit is the relationship between an apparel item and a person’s body. Fabric, style, size, and ease of wear are all intrinsic factors of apparel that can affect a wearer’s evaluation of fit. In addition, the extrinsic apparel factors of peer group opinion, fashion, brand name, feeling good, feeling in control, and feelings of fitting in contribute to a wearer’s evaluation of fit (de Klerk & Tselepis, 2007; Gersak, 2002; Nort et al., 2003).

Fit is an overall indicator of apparel quality and thus, according to de Klerk & Tselepis (2007), we must be concerned with the functional and aesthetic aspects of fit. The physical features of apparel such as the cut, style, fabric and design may influence a wearer’s evaluation of apparel fit. These features are intertwined heavily with the aesthetics of apparel. The aesthetic level of fit is not only concerned with beauty and how the wearer looks, but how well aesthetic apparel elements combine to meet the needs of a wearer in a physical way (de Klerk and Tselepis, 2007). Apparel fit in general – i.e. on all the levels stated above, is an often-cited factor of apparel dissatisfaction in plus size women (Otieno, Harrow, & Lea-Greenwood, 2005; Chowdary. 1988; Oldham and Hathcote, 2000).
**Plus Size**

**Plus Size Defined**

Plus size (sometimes written plus-size) is the term assigned to women that wear apparel in women’s sizes 14W-32W as well as the apparel itself, generally available in Women’s sizes14W-32W (Alexander, Pisut, & Ivanescu, 2012; ASTM, 2004). The term plus size in the United States is traditionally applied to women’s apparel and encompasses women’s sizes 14W to 32W. Plus size is also referred to as “large-size” in studies of specialty size apparel (Chowdhary and Beale, 1988; Oldham and Hathcote; 2000). Furthermore, sizes can be broken down by misses’ women’s and plus size in which body proportions are taken into consideration for sizing (Alexander, Pisut, & Ivanescu, 2012; Ashdown, 1998). Alexander, Pisut and Ivanescu (2012) explain, “[w]ithin each size category, there are figure distinctions that change the proportions for each size. For women’s apparel, sizes 14-24 usually refer to a fuller figure with larger torso proportions than misses’ sizes 2-12, and plus-size refers to a larger figure correlating most commonly with misses’ sizes 14-32” (pg. 2). The letter “W”, indicating women’s sizing to differentiate between junior and misses sizing, may or may not be applied to an apparel size. (Alexander, Pisut, & Ivanescu, 2012; Ashdown, 1998; ASTM, 2004). The definition of plus size is not consistent as women’s apparel sizing is not standardized and many brands have their own definition of plus size (Alexander, Pisut, & Ivanescu, 2012). The modeling industry even sometimes considers a model wearing above a size 6 to be a plus size model (Lovett, 2012). It is interesting to note that the average woman in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention (CDC), is roughly five foot four with a waist circumference of 37.5 inches and a weight of 166.2 pounds. These measurements suggest that the average woman in the United States is most likely plus size (Beck, 2013; Fryar, Gu, & Ogden, 2012).

Some plus size women may refer to themselves as big, curvy, thick, or full-figured to denote that they are plus sized. A national survey conducted in 2013 by a sister company of Lane Bryant, Sonsi.com, of 1,000 women size 14 and above asked what term the women preferred when describing their size. The survey found that 28% of women preferred the term “curvy” followed by 25% who preferred the term “plus-size” and 25% who preferred the term “full-figured.” The remaining combined 22% suggested their size be referred to by such terms as “normal”, “average”, and “beautiful” (Plus-Size Women Prefer The Term 'Curvy,' Poll Finds, 2013). The terminology for men who wear larger sizing is “big and tall.” Some women who are particularly concerned with fashion and are “fat positive” (a term associated with the fat bodies acceptance movement and a person’s acceptance of a larger body) (Murray, 2005; Puhl & Brownell, 2001) refer to themselves as a “Fatshionista” and refer to plus size clothing as “Fatshion,” meaning a plus size women who likes fashion and wears fashionable clothing as well as fashion made for plus size women respectively (Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013).

Sizing still differs across apparel brands and retailers, as each apparel firm has their own apparel fit guides. In addition, clothing and fit guides for individual retailers typically rely on the measurements of one to two fit models and make assumptions about proportion to estimate other body measurements (Ashdown, 1998).
**Obesity**

Overweight and obese persons are typically classified as such based on the BMI (Body Mass Indicator). The BMI indicator is a measure of body fat and health based on a man or women’s height and weight ratio. A normal BMI is 18.5-24.9 while an overweight BMI is 25-29.9. A person is considered obese if their BMI is 30 or greater (National Institutes of Health, 2015). Obesity is classified as having excess body fat. Currently, 34.9%, or over one third of adult Americans are considered obese (Ogden et al., 2014). This percentage has more than doubled from 13.4% since the 1960s and the figure is projected to be on the rise (Ogden and Carroll, 2010).

While someone does not have to be overweight or obese to be considered plus size, the increasing number of people with higher weights indicates that the plus size apparel market will only grow as the size of people, particularly in the United States, continues to rise.

**Plus Size Apparel Market**

The United States apparel market is the largest in the world, accounting for just under a third of the market at 28% of the global total. The women’s apparel market in 2011 alone was estimated at 11.1 billion dollars (Trendex North America, 2011). With over a third of Americans considered to be obese, they potentially represent a significant segment of that market. Plus size shoppers are like all size shoppers with a few differences that give retailers lucrative opportunities in pursuing their business and satisfying their shopping needs (Alexander, Pisut, & Ivanescu). For example, plus size
women focus on full-price shopping, they buy more, and spend more on average when shopping in store (pg. 2).

In the United States, the estimated percentage of women wearing plus size apparel between sizes 14 and 34 ranges between 57% and 67% of the entire apparel market. (Maheshwari, 2012; Bogenrief, 2012; Huffington Post, 2013). The plus size market is large and growing. In the United States alone there are over 100 million plus size women who spent 17.5 billion dollars on plus size clothing during a one-year period ending in April 2014. (Thau, 2014; NPD Group, 2014; Dwyer, 2015; Bogenrief, 2012)

Currently, plus size shoppers skew older with the baby boomers ages 55-64 leading the dollar share of the plus size market (NPD Group, 2014).

**Plus Size Marginalization**

In capitalistic societies it is often assumed that consumers rarely face scarcity in the market, in particular a market as developed and competitive as the apparel market. This is not the case. Historically, socially stigmatized populations often perceive that their needs are not met in the marketplace. Plus size women are often marginalized in fashion due weight and body size (Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013).

Clothing for plus size women is often not carried in stores and thus has forced plus size women to shop online. An examination of popular American clothing brands such as Gap, H&M, J. Crew, and Old Navy, who do carry plus size apparel, found these retailers usually have their plus sizes available only online (Krupnick, 2013); or if they do have plus sizes available in store, they do not carry the full plus size range. Research done by online apparel retailer ModCloth during their plus size expansion, and elaborated
on by Krupick (pg.1), found that plus size women buy at least fifty percent more of their apparel online than women who are not plus size.

In addition, the models that model plus size apparel may not even be plus size. A new trend has emerged in which standard sized models use padding to increase their size all while creating the illusion of an hourglass figure and an idealized body shape not commonly found in the population, that of a plus size women with a smaller stomach and her extra weight concentrated in her bust and buttocks (Reininga, 2014). This can further confuse women shopping online when attempting to determine apparel fit properties.

Many plus size women are criticized and stigmatized as being unhealthy. According to the United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC) being obese has been proven to have adverse health effects, but not everyone who is obese because of an unhealthy lifestyle. Factors such as genes and underlying medical conditions can make a person who leads an active lifestyle obese (Other Factors in Weight Gain, 2011). Standard size models, who are anywhere from 10-30% underweight (radar programs, 2015) could also be considered unhealthy, but there is less stigmatization or discrimination regarding their size, whereas fat bodies are highly stigmatized (Bordo 1993; LeBesco 2005).

Many fashion brands and decision makers have openly expressed the undesirability of plus size women as a consumer of their brand, and have been open about saying so (Lutz, 2013). In an online news article titled “Lagerfeld's High Street Split” (2004) for British Vogue, Karl Lagerfeld, best known as head designer of Chanel and Fendi, expressed his disapproval that a line he produced for H&M was offered in plus
sizes. In the article he stated “What I designed was fashion for slender and slim people. That was the original idea” (n.p.).

It is cited in literature that retailers have proposed economic reasons as logic for why they do not make and sell apparel for plus size women. The economic reasons suggested by these retailers are increased costs for pattern drafting and for fabric costs to make plus size apparel. These reasons only explain that it may cost more per unit to produce plus size apparel (Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013; Clifford, 2010). These factors do not hold up in a broader economic sense considering that plus size women make up the majority market segment of apparel and would be considered a sizable missed opportunity for business revenue. These reasons also perpetuate the widely held view that plus size women do not have money, which is not the case (Clifford, 2010).

**Research Gap and Questions**

Although Renoux’s theory of retail satisfaction, and subsequent research, has helped improve our understanding of consumer satisfaction in terms of apparel, we still have little knowledge of the satisfaction or dissatisfaction factors that lead to apparel non-wear and discard, particularly for plus size women. To help fill this knowledge gap, this study is designed to gain a deeper understanding of what plus size women do with apparel they are not satisfied with, and what failures in the retail satisfaction system cause a plus size woman to not wear or to discard apparel. It is hoped to be of use to encourage current and future retailers to make apparel that plus size women deem satisfactory (and by doing so increase profits, and decrease apparel discard and non-wear), and to offer a better picture of plus size women’s apparel non-wear and discard.
More specifically, the objectives of this study are to gain an in-depth, holistic view of how and why plus size women do not wear or why they discard certain apparel. In addition, the purpose is to understand how the various factors in the retail satisfaction system, such as shopping system satisfaction, buying system satisfaction, and consumption system satisfaction, affect plus size women’s apparel discard and non-wear.

The actual reasons plus size women don’t wear or discard apparel are not known. Because of the research gap in apparel satisfaction, non-wear and discard habits detailed by plus size women, this study proposes the following research questions:

**Research Question 1:** In what ways are plus size women satisfied/dissatisfied with apparel?

**Research Question 2:** In what ways do plus size women’s apparel satisfaction/dissatisfaction contribute to apparel non-wear and apparel discard?

**Research Question 3:** What psychological factors contribute to apparel non-wear and apparel discard for plus size women?

**Research Questions 4:** How do the physical factors of consumer satisfaction outlined in Renoux’s theory of retail satisfaction contribute to apparel non-wear and apparel discard for plus size women?

**Research Question 5:** What are the ways that plus size women discard apparel?

**Research Question 6:** How much of plus size women’s apparel is discarded in sustainable or unsustainable ways?
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Chapter III contains the following sections: (a) qualitative interviews, (b) sample, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis, and (e) validation strategies.

Qualitative Interviews

The aim of this study was to gain detailed information on the apparel satisfaction, non-wear and discard of female plus size consumers age eighteen and above, and to understand the various retail satisfaction factors outlined by Renoux (1973) that contribute to clothing non-wear and discard by these women. Because no study exists that examines the reasons, from a first person perspective, why plus size women do not wear or discard apparel, a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis formed the methodology of this study. A qualitative approach to this study was appropriate because qualitative research is used to study research questions where little is known about the subject being studied (Creswell, 2005).

To achieve the objective, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted following the guidelines detailed by Grant McCracken in his book The Long Interview (1988). Semi structured interviews are unique in that they let the researcher have a guided conversation with a subject while allowing the subject to interject with pertinent details as necessary. Denzin and Lincoln (1994), while interviewing women about how they saw themselves in specific historical contexts, suggested that an interview that was too structured did not allow women to really dig into the emotion of an experience. Semi-structured interviews will allow women to share various parts of their story. Anderson and Jack (1994) also suggest “Oral interviews are particularly valuable for
uncovering women’s perspectives. Anthropologists have observed how the expression of women’s unique experience as women is often muted [...]” (p. 57).

McCracken’s (1988) long interview technique differs from other interview methods in that it is “designed to give the investigator a highly efficient, productive ‘stream-lined’ instrument of inquiry” (pg 7). Moreover, this interview process allows the researcher to step into the thoughts of another person and see the world through their lens (pg. 9). In addition, the process hopes to control two of the most prevalent impediments of qualitative research— (1) time scarcity, and (2) participants’ concern of privacy (pg. 11).

The long interview process follows four steps. The first step is “the review of analytical categories” (pg. 29-32), which consists of constructing a literature review. For this step, I constructed a literature review consisting of the main topics of this study: plus size women, retail satisfaction, apparel non-wear, and apparel discard. The purpose of the literature review is to aid in the topics and construction of the interview questions as well as form a domain that allows the researcher to recognize new data if or when it appears.

The second step is the “review of cultural categories” (pg. 32-34). This step requires that the researcher take a look at the self and discover his or her own feelings towards the topic; in this case, plus size apparel satisfaction, non-wear and discard. This step serves three purposes: (1) to prepare for constructing the questionnaire and identifying any cultural or relationship categories previous research may have missed, (2) to prepare for the “rummaging” (pg. 33) that will occur during data analysis and (3) to establish a critical distance from the study topic. My completion of this step is located in
Chapter IV under the subheading researcher’s reflection as a write-up of my associations and feelings with the topic of study.

Step three is the “discovery of cultural categories” (pg. 34). This step is further subdivided into the questionnaire construction, and the interview procedure. The questionnaire begins with a series of “grand-tour” (pgs. 34-35) questions that are categorized by prominent themes of the literature review. The interview ends with a series of biographical questions. These interviews differed a little bit from McCracken’s order of questioning in that biographical questions were asked after the interview was complete. His method starts off with biographical questions, but starting off with biographical questions may hinder dialogue and be off putting to the participant. If any part of the participant’s responses to interview questions needed clarification, “floating prompts” and “planned prompts” (pgs. 35-36) were used. McCracken defines floating prompts as a way to expand upon key terms an interview participant has used. Floating prompts can be performed by raising an eyebrow, or repeating a word a participant said in a questioning tone to have them further define it. Planned prompts come in four categories: contrast, category, special incident, and auto-driving. Planned prompts should be asked at the end of a series of grand-tour questions to have the respondent discuss topics that do not readily come to mind or speech. McCracken proposes that the most important planned prompt category is contrast.

The final and fourth step is the “discovery of analytical categories” (pgs.41-48). This last step is analysis of data from the interviews. Details of the interview data analysis process are presented in the section titled Data Analysis.
Sample

The sample of participants was chosen based on their gender (female), age (18 years and older), and their classification as plus size (they wear women’s clothing size 14-32). Participants above a typical college age (ages 18-22) were preferred as previous discard studies focus on young, college-aged females (Laitala, 2014).

The method of sampling used was homogenous purposive snowball sampling. Purposive sampling asks that the researcher think critically about the traits of the population they are studying and pick participants on this basis (Silverman, 2010). Homogenous sampling is a purposive sampling technique in which the researcher aims to find a homogenous sample, a sample that has the same characteristics, or belong to a specific sub culture (Patton, 2002). The specific variable in this case was women who wear plus size apparel. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which existing participants recruit or refer other participants. It has been used previously in textile and apparel related research, and particularly in apparel discard research (Bianchi, C. & Birtwistle, G., 2012).

A Facebook status shown in Appendix A was posted on Facebook by the researcher on four different days; May 7th, 2015 (four other people voluntarily shared the status), May 9th, 2015 (six other people voluntarily shared the status), May 12th, 2015 (one other person voluntarily shared the status), May 17th, 2015 (two other people voluntarily shared the status). The Facebook post asked for participants that fit the participant description of being a female plus size U.S. citizen age 18 and above. In the Facebook posting, participants were instructed to private message the researcher on Facebook if interested. The researcher then collected the e-mail of the participant and
sent an email outlining the study (Appendix B) with the study consent form attached (Appendix C). An ad was also placed on Craigslist (Appendix G) as well to give study access to potential participants that were not on Facebook.

Recruiting over Facebook limits the sample to people who have Internet and know how to use technology. To make the study open to more people, physical recruitment materials in the form of a flyer (Appendix F) were placed around five Columbia, Missouri bulletin boards at the following locations. Kaldi’s Coffee (1 flier), Main Squeeze (1 flier), The Peace Nook (1 flier), and the University of Missouri Memorial Union (2 fliers).

After the study approval of the University of Missouri’s Institutional Review Board, a total of twenty participants were recruited; fourteen were recruited through Facebook from the researcher’s Facebook status or through the status of others who shared the researcher’s status, four were referred by people who had participated, and two were recruited from physical fliers. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of participants. The participant population for this study is described as follows. The women ranged in age from 19-53 years old with the average age being 33. The women ranged in size from 14-30 with the average size being 18.1. All sizes were self-reported. The women were from all over the country and represented the North, South, East, West, and Midwest, of the United States. All of the women were citizens of the United States, however, three were not native born. In comparing the demographics of the participants to the U.S population there are some similarities and differences. In comparing the participants’ race to the U.S 2010-2014 Census Bureau report *Quick Facts Beta: United States* (United States Census Bureau 2014), the participants were more racially diverse.
The U.S. population is 77.7% Caucasian, 13.2% African American, 5.3% Asian, and 2.4% biracial. The participant population was 60% Caucasian, 15% African American, 5% Asian, 15% biracial, and 5% Middle Eastern. The participant population reflected the U.S. population in the African American and Asian race categories, but skewed higher in the biracial population, at 15%, than that of the U.S. biracial population of 2.4%. In terms of education level when comparing the participant population to the percentage of females who have finished a four-year degree or more, the participant population was more educated. The participant population is comprised of fifteen out of twenty women holding a degree of four years or more, a percentage of 75%, while the same statistic for females in the United States for 2014 was 32% (United States Census Bureau., 2014). The women in the sample population were more educated than the general U.S. female population.
Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Participant*</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Dress Size</th>
<th>Time Plus Size</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Since High School</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Camilla</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Since High School</td>
<td>Caucasian/Hispanic</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Business Administrator</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Salesperson</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15 Years</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>Performance Coach</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Caucasian/Asian</td>
<td>Masters Some College</td>
<td>Recruiter</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kathleen</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12 Years</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Cora**</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Since High School</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Masters Some College</td>
<td>Talent Agent Business Administrator</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Courtney</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Since High School</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Brittany</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6 Years</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Since High School</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>J.D.</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lacey**</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Since High School</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Associates</td>
<td>Business Administrator</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Since High School</td>
<td>Caucasian/Native American</td>
<td>Some Graduate</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Since High School</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Since High School</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Shannon</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21 Years</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Bachelors Some Graduate</td>
<td>Business Administrator</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Since High School</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Graduate Student</td>
<td>Business Strategist</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Carrie</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5 Years</td>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>M.D.</td>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6 Months</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>HR Intern</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *All names are pseudonyms
**Pregnant at time of interview
Data Collection

This study used in-depth semi-structured interviews as a data collection method. The interviews were conducted using McCracken’s method outlined in his book, *The Long Interview* (1988), as detailed in the above section titled Qualitative Interviews.

Prior to the interviews, consent forms, outlined in Appendix C, were sent via e-mail to participants to comply with University of Missouri Institutional Review Board standards. Interviews took place between May 7th, 2015 and May 30th, 2015. Interviews ranged in time from 25 minutes and 6 seconds, to 1 hour and 5 seconds. The total combined interview time of all the participants was 11 hours, 43 minutes and 7 seconds. The average interview time was 35 minutes and 16 seconds.

Participants were interviewed via the voice over Internet protocols (VOIPs) Skype, Google Hangouts, and FaceTime that allowed the interviewer to both see and hear the participant. The participants chose their preferred VOIP platform for the interview to take place over. Nine of the women were interviewed over FaceTime, eight over Skype, two over Google Hangouts, and one in person. At the start of the interview, it was confirmed that participants had read and agreed to the consent form sent to them via email. The University of Missouri IRB determined that due to the type of questions being asked, participants would not need to sign a consent form but only verbally agree to it. Participant interviews started off with an explanation of the study methodology and purpose followed up by an assurance of participant confidentiality that would result in the participant being assigned a pseudonym. Subsequently, participants were informed that that the interview would last approximately one hour.
As outlined in McCracken’s interview method, grand tour questions addressing the apparel satisfaction, non-wear and discard were asked and broken down by the categories identified in the literature review; being plus size, retail satisfaction, apparel non-wear, and apparel discard. The question order and full list of interview questions is available in Appendix E. The last few questions of the interview were comprised of opened ended questions asking the participant if they had anything else to share, as well as their ideas on the future of plus size apparel. The interview finished with demographic questions such as the participant’s age, occupation, education level, and clothing size.

**Pretest**

An interview pretest was conducted on May 5, 2015 prior to the start of the official interviews. The pretest was conducted with a female plus size family member of the researcher to work out any problems with the interview questions and structure. The pretest interview was conducted over Skype and lasted 47:28. The interview went smoothly, however, it was deemed that one question about apparel and design aesthetics was not clear and as such would not be asked in the real interviews. The question “what constitutes good clothing design?” was a deemed a question that required specialized knowledge about apparel design. In addition, the question asked prior, “what does good looking clothing mean to you?” addressed design and aesthetics in a way that people without specialized apparel design knowledge could still discuss the topic. Participants could still address apparel design and quality from this question if they had the knowledge of apparel design. Participants that did not have specific design knowledge could still speak to what they liked aesthetically about apparel without possessing specific apparel design knowledge.
Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed using the software InqScribe, which allowed the researcher to slowdown, speed up, and pause the interview recordings. The transcriptions were then made into Microsoft Word documents. After the transcription process was completed, the data were open coded and interpreted for emerging themes to learn more about the apparel satisfaction, non-wear and discard of the plus size women interviewed. Open coding allowed the researcher to document new and emerging themes.

Following the long interview method outlined by McCracken (1988) the data analysis moved from the detailed (an analysis of language and utterances) to the broad (a comparison of themes, patterns, and categories across all transcripts). Adherence to IRB standards and participant privacy guarantees resulted in participants being assigned pseudonyms for the data analysis findings.

Validation Strategies

The strategies used to ensure validation in this study were researcher’s reflexivity, researcher’s validity, participant feedback and thick, rich description. Reflexivity involves me as the researcher being aware of my role in the research, and the effect it can have on the research process and outcomes. Reflexity asks the researcher to examine his/her role as an interpreter and question the way their interpretations came about (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

In addition to the validity of the data, the validity of the researcher is important to conducting research (McCracken, 1988; Creswell & Miller, 2000). According to Creswell and Miller (2000, pgs. 127-128) “prolonged engagement in the field,” allows
the researchers to compare hunches and observations they have experienced with interview data. Prolonged engagement may also be known as the researcher’s immersion and experience with the information and data. As the primary investigator and data collector, I have worked in the field of retail for a number of years and have been plus size for most of my adult life. During the first year of my Master’s degree, I also conducted research on plus size women’s experiences with bras as an apparel item as well as the women’s bra shopping experiences. According to Johnson (1997), participant feedback is the most important strategy for achieving validity in qualitative research. Thus for further validation, participant feedback would provide external validation of the data and its interpretation. The researcher sent half the participants (selected at random) the interview theme interpretation as well as the summary of research analysis and findings. The participants were then asked to provide their reactions and feedback to the analysis and interpretation to the researcher.

Finally, thick, rich descriptions of the data collected are provided in the results chapter, Chapter IV. Such descriptions go above just facts and report on the detail and context surrounding the qualitative data. Providing thick, rich descriptions allows readers to determine for themselves the findings of the data. In addition, thick, rich description enables the reader to determine if the study findings can be applied to similar settings and other contexts (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Denzin, 2001).

Participant feedback would have helped the researcher to externally check the validity of the data. The theme interpretations and the study findings were submitted to half of the participants via email asking for feedback and evaluations of accuracy.
Because many of the women work and or have children they have busy schedules and did not submit their feedback to the researcher as of July 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2015.
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Chapter IV contains the following sections: (a) theme interpretation, and (b) researcher’s reflection.

Theme Interpretations

The interpretation of the study data was divided into plus size experience, plus size apparel satisfaction, and apparel non-wear and discard. The section about plus size apparel satisfaction followed Renoux’s theory of retail satisfaction and the three satisfaction systems of shopping, buying, and consuming—the questions in the interview instrument were developed with Renoux’s theory in mind and further developed to discover the apparel satisfaction of the women. Over the course of the theme interpretations, numbers are used to highlight how many of the women commented on a similar theme. These numbers cannot be made into generalizations about all plus size women, as they are only indicative of views from a small portion of the population. In addition, while it seems a majority of the women were accurately reporting their size, a few may have underreported it.

The first section, plus size experience, discovered the social, psychological, and physical experience of being plus size that the women described—this examined the women’s experiences overall independent of Renoux’s theory. The second section, plus size apparel satisfaction, examined the apparel satisfaction of plus size women and explored research question 1. The third section, apparel non-wear and discard, discovered why plus size women discard and do not wear specific apparel, and combined research questions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.
Plus Size Experience

First, it is important to understand the general experiences and ideas of the participants on what it means to be plus size women and to understand their journeys with apparel. These overarching experiences help to shape their apparel satisfaction, non-wear and discard. Eleven out of the twenty participants have been plus size since high school, or essentially their whole adult lives. Seven out of the eleven participants have been plus size 4 years or more. The remaining two participants have been plus size 1 year or less. Collectively, these women have an extended history of what it means to be plus size in the United States.

When asked what it meant to them to be plus size, women had varied responses with some overlapping categories. Six of the women stated in some form that being plus size meant being “larger than average.” Some of the women in this category discussed size 12 or 14 as the start of plus sizing and the parameters of what it meant to be larger than average. To reiterate, in the United States, plus size starts at a women’s size 14. Four of the women said being plus size to them meant having “limited clothing options.” Mary (size 20), Rebecca (size 20), and Lacey (size 18) thought that being plus size had to do with a journey of self-acceptance and “body positivity.”. Lacey further stated that being “plus size” is a state of being. The remaining women Susan (size 22), Brittany (size 16), Victoria (size 16), Lisa (size 14), Claire (size 14), Carrie (Size 14), and Stephanie (size 14) stated respectively that being plus size to them meant the fashion industry didn’t care, restriction, being built differently, the perception of not being healthy, larger clothes, being voluptuous, and feeling bad.
During the interviews at some point many of the women had the specific opinion that the fashion industry does not “give a damn” about plus size women. Half, ten of the women, felt in some way that they were purposely left out of fashion or “ignored” by designers. Susan (size 22), a 44-year-old professor, highlighted her frustration with the fashion industry:

Susan: [. . .] the fashion industry doesn’t give a damn about anything I wear. They think that I'm either... well...really they think I'm 80, and don't actually care what I look like...um...I really...I mean it's... I'm comfortable in my size...so there’s that...and I'm happy you know. I don't actually feel like “oh I must be thin to be happy!”, because I'm pretty damn happy in my own size.

Susan went on to describe the “judgment” she feels that comes from the fashion industry towards her size in that there is “this idea that women who are larger aren't stylish.” And that plus size women are “not interested in clothes.” Susan felt that the fashion industry not making “nice clothes” for her is a direct effect of the industry treating fat as a “moral issue”:

Susan: There are all of these assumptions that are put on larger women that they don't care about their appearance. Because of course if we cared about our appearance, we would do whatever it took to be "thin". And weight is infinitely more complicated. And anytime anybody says "oh it's calories in and calories out!", I just want to strangle them! Because you know my husband who is like barely a medium and I eat almost identical food. And yet you know, I'm my size, and he's his size and that's life. I just wish people would stop treating fat as a moral issue. Because there are people who are literally like, "You don't deserve nice clothes! If you want nice clothes you would lose weight!" It's sort of that acknowledgment that it's not an obesity crisis that's going to be fixed, it's just women of all sizes want nice clothes, and I just wish we would get to that place.

Claire (size 14), a 26-year-old recruiter, emphasized the same sentiment of being ignored in that it feels like the fashion industry has “forgotten” her:
Claire: It's almost like the fashion industry like has forgotten about plus sized women or chooses not to give plus sized women fashion options like they do for people who are under [size] fourteen.

Kathleen (size 20) had the same opinion and also remarked that she was being “ignored.”

Kathleen: There is a huge market considering that women in this country are getting bigger, but it’s like we’re being ignored…that they don’t want our money…and fashion of all things is just a business like any other. So I’m just, I don’t know if it’s because, I don’t know. There is something about it. You know America and fat is just like, there's something. There is something more… we just we don’t deal with making plus size clothing.

Cora (size 18), a 40-year-old freelance talent agent, thought that the industry is becoming more “realistic” about the “actual average size of the population.” She talked about designers in earlier years who “ignored plus sizes” and commended them for taking steps to not be “bougie” [Bourgeoisie] and “elitist” and for not sticking to previous mantras of “I don’t design for sizes past ten, my line ends at ten.” These sentiments of these women are side effects of a stigma of plus size women and larger bodies. While there was a range in how much some women felt ignored by the fashion industry, or how they felt ignored in particular, a stigma was still perceived whether specifically mentioned or not.

Restricting and Frustrating

Feelings of frustration and restriction emerged as another theme of the participants’ experiences as plus size women. Frustration in many aspects of consuming apparel was present in the statements of the participants. Eight out of the twenty women specifically used the word “frustrating” when describing what it meant to be plus size and the challenges that they face finding clothes for their “curvy” bodies. The other women did not specifically say they were frustrated when talking about their experiences.
The eight participants emphasized that their size was often “constricting,” and “limited” their options when buying clothes in addition to using the phrase “frustrating” to describe their experience shopping while plus size. When the women talked about their clothing options being restricted and their feelings of frustration it was visible that they were angry. Some had indignant looks on their faces, while others stated it as a matter of fact, but I could tell was still something with which they took issue. The anger of other women was visible by their use of cursing and tone of voice. Kathleen (size 20), a 38-year-old graduate student, describes the frustration she feels when she goes shopping for plus size apparel:

**Kathleen:** It’s a bit of hit or miss. I never go out there purposely to buy clothing. You know, I can’t do that because typically you’ll be very disappointed. You can’t say “today I am going to buy my interview outfit!” or whatever. You will be very frustrated. So typically saying I am going to buy a pair of shoes or let me stop by here or stop by there. Oh, maybe they should be having some good things, so I have noticed just because they are near shoe store. Yeah, I just never set out to go shopping for clothes. It’s just like a by the way, “I’m here, oh let me look” kind of thing, but it is usually typically disappointing, very disappointing.

Carrie also echoed the sentiment of Kathleen in terms of feeling frustration when shopping. One difference is that she felt shopping for apparel is “a little easier” compared to a few years ago.

**Carrie:** I think my experience with clothing hasn't always been a positive one. I love to shop. I didn't use to like shop. I love to shop now but I still find it very frustrating. I think it's become less frustrating in the past four or five years. There have been more options for plus size companies. So, it's made it a little easier to find clothes that you can actually try on in stores but at the same time, it still is very difficult to find things that I personally can see myself wearing.
While eight of the women mentioned being frustrated with some aspect of plus size apparel during their interviews, ten of the women stated at some point of their interviews that they thought that their experiences with apparel were “getting better”.

**Amanda:** I think that it is a lot better now than it was in the past and I think that the direction that we are going in is not plateauing, it is not tapering out, it is just going to keep getting better which is great for those of us of our age and women that are older, especially for the young girls who did not know how much it sucked 10, 15, 20 years ago, wherein you get the chance to be told, "You know what, you don’t have to wear these ugly clothes. Those cute clothes that are just the same as your friend, you can wear those too." Everyone is different, you are not the only different one," and that is something that has really taken off in the last 5+ years.

The ten women had the sentiment that their position and experiences with apparel were changing in a positive way. They believed that they now had more choices that were better on trend. The sentiments of the women and the plus size experience ranged from complete frustration to hopefulness for the future of plus size apparel.

**Plus Size Apparel Satisfaction**

In exploring what satisfaction meant to the plus size participants it was interesting to find that satisfaction with an apparel item was centered on fit and not on design or aesthetics. Thirteen out of the twenty women cited “fit” as responsible for their satisfaction with an apparel item. Eight of the participants cited price in their answer along with fit as a factor of satisfaction. Another seven stated that to be satisfied with an apparel item it made them “feel good” and or “happy” when they wore it, and they also “got a lot of wear” out of the apparel item. This was in addition to fit as an important apparel satisfaction factor. Melissa, a 27-year-old physician, gave all three factors discussed previously as factors that determine her apparel satisfaction:
Melissa: It’s something that I can get a lot of use out of, like I can wear more than once and doesn't just have one application. Something that fits me nicely that I feel comfortable and feel like it looks good on me. I really like bargains. Usually, for me it's also like, "Yeah, it didn't cost me an extravagant amount of money"…. which is a lot of criteria.

Another angle to fit as a satisfaction factor for the women was not having to “mess with” or “adjust” the apparel once it was on their bodies. The participants that cited fit as a satisfaction factor seemed to want to feel comfortable in what they were wearing in that they weren’t having to pull their shirt down or adjust an item of clothing to cover parts of their bodies. To constantly adjust an item of clothing to Lisa was to “manage” it:

Lisa: So to be satisfied with something means that I feel like I am not having to manage it when I am wearing it. So I am not having to adjust anything or not feeling self-conscious about this particular part of it or that part of it. You know maybe it fits me great here but it looks bad in another area. I just don’t have to think about it.

Susan further explained that she wants her clothes to fit in order to be satisfied with them. She wanted her clothes to “stay where they are supposed to” after she put them on.

Susan: Um it goes back to that question of fit. That it's, it's something that I'm comfortable in. Um that it makes me happy when I put it on. Um you know like I feel like I can go out and not worry about my clothes and that for me is...whether it's a dress at the symphony, or it's jeans or it's even yoga pants and a t-shirt. I just want to not have to worry about my clothes.

Five out of the twenty women also mentioned that for an apparel item to satisfy them they would have to wear the apparel item frequently. Carrie explained that she would want an apparel item to be multifunctional in order to consider herself satisfied with it:

Carrie: [To be satisfied] means that I will wear and love the crap out of it. It's a must have, something that I couldn’t live without like a nice shirt or a nice pants
or a nice skirt that I could wear at different times a day and dress it up or dress it down. I think that would be something that I would be very satisfied with.

While fit, “feeling good” in an apparel item and “price” of the apparel item were the main concerns for the participant when deciding if they were satisfied with an apparel item, there were other factors that played an overall part in the retail process that will be discussed in terms of the dimensions of Renoux’s theory of retail satisfaction; shopping system satisfaction, buying system satisfaction, and consuming system satisfaction.

**Shopping System Satisfaction**

To review, shopping system satisfaction as detailed by Renoux (1973) includes an adequate number of stores, ease of access to stores, and complete information available to the consumer. Shopping system satisfaction was something that was particularly lacking for the participants out of Renoux’s three-part theory of retail satisfaction. Sixteen out of the twenty participants said that they were not satisfied with the selection of stores that carried plus size apparel. Of the women who were satisfied, two said that they felt like that they had better apparel options than in previous years, with stores that were dedicated to plus size apparel, while the other two were thrift shoppers who felt like they could find what they needed at the thrift store—thrift shopping for those two women was simply a preference. When asked about her satisfaction regarding the number of stores that carry plus size apparel, Carrie (size 14) said her satisfaction was a “zero”:

**Carrie:** Zero, it's really sad how there are very, very few stores that carry plus size apparel and, then the odd to it is with a very poor selection, very poor selection. I know Dillard's and Macy's will have more but then they're of really poor quality.

Carrie went on to state that the lack of options is to blame for making it hard for plus size women to define their “style.” She said that plus size women have “been forced to fit in
to what's in the market.” Some women used phrases like “no,” “not at all,” and “absolutely not” to describe their satisfaction with the amount of stores that carry plus size apparel. Interestingly, Camilla (size 14) also used the word zero to describe her satisfaction with the number of stores that carry plus size apparel.

**Camilla:** Satisfaction level? Probably like a zero. It's like... I feel like I only go to the same places. Maybe that's my fault. Maybe I need to like branch out more and get to know other places but I don't know. I just feel it... Like the jeans that I bought at Buckle, I returned. I feel like the quality that they sell in stores at the mall... I feel like it's just terrible. It's like you wash it once and it's like goes to shit. Buying clothes online sucks just because you never know if it's going to fit. And even with plus size, like buying online for plus size, the models are terrible. Nobody looks like a plus size model.

While Camilla at size 14 may have more options than a woman higher up in plus sizing, she still was not satisfied with the plus size selection. Body proportion may perhaps have been a reason for her dissatisfaction because a plus size 14 is more readily available in non-plus size stores. Camilla further aired her frustrations about the models that are considered plus size that she thinks do not actually look plus size. Camilla’s frustrations and thoughts that shopping for clothes online “sucks” was echoed by five other participants who cited possible apparel fit problems and return costs as reasons that they don’t shop for plus size apparel online. Melissa explained her reasoning for not shopping online:

**Melissa:** I don't know if this happens to size 2 women as well, but like, I feel like I can buy 16 of this and it'll look great in the same kind of cut of one thing and then buy it from a different place and then it doesn't fit me at all. So shopping online is really hard even though I see cute things because it's not worth the shipping and the hassle, and all that. So I went out shopping in person, which is hard to find the time for.
It seems that the participants have intentions to go shopping, but that the shopping experiences of the majority of the women become negative in the first dimension of Renoux’s theory, shopping system satisfaction. There seemed to be a cloud of punishment over the women for being plus size when they spoke about not having enough choices for apparel shopping. If the women are frustrated and deterred by not being able to find a store to shop at, the rest of the satisfaction system may already be clouded by the frustration of finding a store.

**Buying System Satisfaction**

Buying system satisfaction has to do with the sizes and variety available to the consumer, such as color and style, as well as price ranges and the quality of stores. A common theme women talked about in regard to apparel options was that they were only easily able to find basics, and neutrals; basics meaning basic apparel such as a white t-shirt and neutrals being apparel in neutral colors such as black, white, and brown, and had a hard time finding apparel that was more interesting. Seven participants engaged in a scarcity mentality when finding apparel that they liked—often buying it in multiple colors and patterns because they didn’t know when they would “find” something like it again. It was understandable, as they did not know when they would be able to find something like the item they were buying again. It was not necessarily that the item was exactly what they wanted, but it was as close enough to what they wanted given the options available to them. An interesting theme mentioned by blogger Lesley Kinzel of *Two Whole Cakes* in Scaraboto and Fischer’s (2013) article on “Frustrated Fatshionistas” is “style scarcity.” Kinzel discussed the fear she feels when clothing is worn out because she does not know if she will find something like the item “ever again” (pg. 1). This style
scarcity meant that the participants would buy clothing they liked in “multiple” colors and patterns” because they didn’t know as Mary put it, “when they’re [the store] going to have it again.” Victoria expressed the same habit and stated: “If I find something that fits good and it's flattering, I'll buy it in every pattern that they have.” Seven out of the twenty participants echoed this sentiment and exhibited style scarcity habits. Susan explained that buying multiple color options when something fit has to do with the “struggle” of finding clothes:

Susan: [. . . ] I uh, you know, I have struggled finding clothes probably my whole life. Finding things that I was comfortable in. Um, you know when I have things that I like, I love them, and so will, you know... I'll buy it in three colors. And you know, buy it and save it.

It seemed that style scarcity could be influenced by fit. When the women finally found something that fit they purchased it in multiple colors. The same thing could occur with style, style meaning that the item was something a woman liked, or looked close enough to replace a worn out item in her wardrobe.

Another major theme that the participants discussed was apparel segregation. This was the feeling that plus size clothes were in a different location than non-plus size apparel and or displayed on the outskirts of a store. The stigma of what it means to be plus size and perhaps be overweight may be having an effect on plus size women’s treatment in stores that do stock plus size apparel. Besides the stigmas of being plus size and having to buy larger clothes, it seems plus size women face social stigmas for being plus size once inside stores, as they typically have to go to a different section of the store. This size segregation weighed on Melissa who typically likes to go shopping with her
friends but felt held back because her apparel size is in another section of a store or a separate store altogether:

**Melissa:** I think it’s hard because I like to shop socially. I have a lot of friends who I like to shop with who are not plus size. So it's like, "Excuse me while I go to a different department." We can't look at stuff together, or we'll go to... and I know this is weird because we'll go in the shops where they can fit things and I really probably can't. But I feel like it would be weird almost for me to be like, "Hey let's go to Lane Bryant even though nothing there is going to fit you!"

Melissa thought it would be weird to take her friends into Lane Bryant where they would most likely not be able to find clothes that fit them, yet it happens to her when shopping with friends. She later reiterated that she likes the “social aspect” of shopping but her being plus size “fucks with it quite a bit.” She stated she has to go shopping by herself and that “it’s kind of isolating.” While labeling the moving of plus size apparel to a separate or out-of-the-way section of a store as segregation, a word associated with a racial history of marginalization, a participant had an interesting word for the phenomenon. She described plus size apparel being located on the outer corners of the store, or separated from non-plus size apparel, as the “ghetto-ization” of plus size apparel.

Susan described her experience buying apparel:

**Susan:** With a few exceptions it's almost always been frustrating and negative. Part of the problem that I have is the sort of “ghetto-ization” of you know you're in the dusty corner in the poorly lit.... you know it's just I don't like the fact that sometimes that I have to go to this other section. It never is nice, never as much selection. It’s always a lot fewer items, a lot fewer choices. I actually had loyalty to a store for a long time specifically because their plus size clothes were on the same rack [as the non plus size clothing], and that made me feel valued as a customer. And so I shopped with them for about 4 or 5 years before they made the changes that made me go "yeah I don't want to shop here anymore." For me that's a big thing. The idea that I could go to any store and the clothes are where the other clothes are. As opposed to saying you must go into that corner because you're not a valued customer to us. And that's probably why I spend more money
at plus size stores because then I don't have to feel like I'm not allowed in the regular part of the store.

Susan felt like a “valued customer” when her sizing was on the same rack with the other sizes. A she stated, this also led her to “spend more money” in plus size stores because she feels valued and “allowed” in the store. Rebecca (size 20) also had thoughts on the plus size section typically being located in the back of stores:

Rebecca: It also frustrates me because like the Forever 21…they like hide the plus size section in the back of the store behind like three walls and there's like a secret passage way.

For Courtney, the social aspect of shopping while being plus size makes it “weird” to go shopping with a friend. Her clothing is often on a different side of the store then her friend’s:

Courtney: [. . .] like Target, and whatever, becoming like more integrated together but it still like, it’s like different sections of the store so, so it’s still awkward like yeah, “that’s your department, you go for there,” so when I go shopping with my friends, like we can’t go on the other, because it’s completely different ends of the store, so it’s still weird and the fact that you know, if you try to find the same dress for something or the something that matches, you still have different options on the other section of the store, so it’s still not the same, even though they're trying really hard to make similar there would still be differences, like they would just be merged together I’d guess it’s more… it would just be easier I guess.

The stigmas that retailers are projecting onto plus size women could be responsible for the women’s further dissatisfaction once inside the stores. The retailers may actually be hurting their profits by stigmatizing and segregating their plus size consumer.

Another theme that came out of buying satisfaction was that there were limited apparel styles available to the participants. Many participants expressed that they would be willing to spend more money on apparel if they could find what they need. As
discussed in the literature review, plus size people experience stigmas and discrimination even from businesses. Perhaps retailers are not offering plus size apparel because they don’t want to be known as a plus size or “fat” brand (Lutz, 2013). The stigma against plus size women may be so great that they are willing to give up profits by not catering to a plus size customer. Some women discussed how retailers were “leaving money on the table” by not providing sizes and styles for plus size women, or by providing plus size apparel that did not cater to plus size women. When talking about plus size retailers, Shannon wondered why there were not more:

**Shannon:** There is not enough of them [plus size retailers] especially for our society, we Americans are constantly being told, “you have an obesity problem!” You just wonder why is no one cashing in on those, like why aren’t there more? […]

Kathleen (size 20) stated that even though she has money to buy an apparel item she is looking for “there isn’t anything to buy.” She said that this was the most frustrating concept to her, that she had “money to spend, but you have nothing to spend it on.” Kathleen further speculated that perhaps apparel retailers do not want to be “known as catering to plus size women.” She explains why she doesn’t understand retailers not making plus size apparel:

**Kathleen:** I think there has to be some sort of mind shift in the society. It's interesting how over history, women's bodies are celebrated, different body types. I think there has to be mind shift because there is a connection with shame, being plus size. A definite connection is with shame. That you are lazy, you overeat, you are not worthy of being good or having good things come to you. A lot of brands have bought into this idea. They don’t want to be known as catering to plus size women. Yet there is a huge market out there. I mean, it's like over fifty percent of the population is now plus sized women. So where are they shopping? What is it that they are buying? I don’t know. I really feel like if somebody could tap into this market. It goes both ways. It's not just here. Also out there in Africa,
it's the same. It's not as extreme. People appreciate. They appreciate curves but there is still that thing about plus size and shame. Shaming that plus size person, whatever reason. If people could get over that, start changing them who are thinking, provide people with choices, I think it'll be a great thing.

Susan likened her experience with not being able to spend her money on clothes due to apparel availability to that of the movie *Pretty Woman*:

Susan: Again it's frustrating because sometimes I feel...as much as I hate this movie but that scene in...the hooker move with Julia Roberts. . .but she walks into the store with a handful of money and they won't wait on her. That's sometimes what I feel like. I have more money. . .like I have a lot of money I could be giving you and you're not taking it...there's that idea that like she has this money and they're like "Oh sorry we're not going to serve you!" That's what it feels like. I have more money than probably the other people who are shopping at the store, and I'm totally comfortable spending a lot of money on clothes. I just wish somebody would, you know, would actually serve...you know not treat me as an annoyance, but as a valued customer. And I'm really loyal to a store when they treat me as a valued customer.

Susan wanted to buy apparel but thinks that retailers are not treating her as a valued customer and providing her with options. Cora believed that retailers are starting to realize just how large the plus size market is and that they are missing out on money:

Cora: I guess that it's, I do feel like there's a moment now that manufacturers are realizing, you're ignoring, like look at the numbers, business is, it's all numbers, so go to your population, and look at the actual average size of our population, I think they're getting more realistic in saying we have to stop being so elitist and bougie about it that you know I don't design her sizes past ten, my line ends at ten, well then guess what, there's a big old slice of the pie that you're not going to get a part of, and there's a big chunk of the industry that you don't get to have, and that's your choice and whatever but I do think there's designers, like even Calvin Klein and some of the ones I would say probably in the '90s and early 2000s, ignored plus sizes, but now they're jumping on board because they're not stupid, they know where the money's at, and so I think that's a bit exciting that maybe the tide is going to turn a bit and that, you know I don't want to live in jogging pants, and I'm not just a fat lazy slob, like I care about presenting well and want to wear nice things and I'm larger, and I have money to spend.
The third theme that fell under buying satisfaction was price. Thirteen out of the twenty women thought plus size clothing was “too expensive” particularly when compared to non-plus size clothing. Some women stated that they knew it took more fabric to make plus size clothing, but felt they were still being charged unfairly for plus size clothing. Other participants seemed to be unbothered by retailers charging more for plus size apparel as long as the prices are “about the same” as the non-plus size apparel.

**Grace:** Okay. So like I said I like to shop and actually recently, and I’m not given any plug to Target, but recently I went to Target and I was so satisfied. I was satisfied with the prices and I went, I was looking, I was just shopping with a friend of mine. I found about 3 tops that I love, a pair of jeans that I love, that all fit really nicely. Then I went to the other size, of like the average size to compare the prices, and they were about the same. So I was really pleased with that and so I was very, very satisfied with that. I actually looked at Target in a whole different way after that. Truthfully.

When asked what she thought about the prices of plus size apparel, Lacey exclaimed, “it’s so expensive!” She further discussed that she understood that using more fabric may cost more but stated, “you can’t tell me you can’t make affordable plus size wear,” citing Forever 21 as an example of affordable plus size apparel. Amanda perceived the increased costs as retailers “taking advantage of” plus size women because the apparel options are more limited in her opinion. She explains that the pricing retailers have for plus size apparel is “scummy.” The pricing may not be an accurate perception, but does reflect a mentality that she was discriminated against:

**Amanda:** I understand the cost of material, I understand that if it is a bigger person you need more material, but it does not need to be double the price. That gets a little scummy. It is almost taking advantage of. “Look, there are not very many places for you to shop, we know you are going to come here anyways, so you have got to pay it. Where else are you going to go?” It does add drama. I do like the brand; I hate their full prices. Their sale price, that is fine, I do not mind, I
am not going to argue. But the full price, where like a basic, basic summer dress is $90. No, I am not going to do that.

Mary stated that she felt if she were shopping for non-plus size apparel that she could buy “twice the amount of things in normal sizes for the same price as one or two items in the plus size section.” She said that knowing this “dampens” her mood when she goes shopping. This perception may or may not be true depending on the store where a woman chooses to shops at.

Melissa was not sure if she perceived plus size clothing to cost more as she became plus size during the same time that she needed a professional wardrobe. She attributed the increased costs to professional clothing and figures and professional clothing is “certainly more expensive.”

**Melissa:** [. . .] So the way that I buy, I think the plus size clothes are perhaps similarly priced than non-plus. Although it's just really hard for me to say because I have gone through this whole, “I have to wear a professional clothes” thing the same time that I was becoming plus size. So I don’t know which that's attributable to. Because I know, I think, the professional clothes are certainly more expensive.

While it is not currently benchmarked whether plus size apparel is more expensive overall than non-plus size apparel, the plus size women may be forced into buying higher quality from specialty plus size retailers and as such paying a higher price for that quality. For example, apparel retailer Target has apparel that costs less than plus size specialty retailer Lane Bryant. Lane Bryant arguably has higher quality apparel than Target and as such is a higher price. If price is considered without examining apparel quality, this may account for a perception that plus size apparel costs more than non-plus size apparel. While it may be the case that plus size apparel costs more than non-plus size apparel, quality would need to be examined in conjunction with price. Perhaps more lower
quality apparel retailers with lower prices would have to carry plus size apparel to compare pricing.

In terms of buying system satisfaction the participants seemed to feel that their sizing was in secluded areas of the store, there were not enough style options, and that plus size clothing was more expensive than non-plus size clothing. The women that were not satisfied with the prices of plus size clothing thought that plus size clothing would cost more because it takes “more fabric,” but they still seemed unhappy with the pricing.

**Consuming System Satisfaction**

Consuming system satisfaction is based on how the product works for the consumer. In apparel products this would include factors such as fit and aesthetics. Fit was discussed in the beginning of the satisfaction section and was determined to be the main theme for women to be satisfied in general with an item of apparel.

In terms of consumption satisfaction, and specifically aesthetics, body proportion was a theme that the participants talked about. Eight out of the twenty women discussed their body ratios at some point in the interview and the fact that some of their body parts were “bigger” than others. The other twelve participants did not speak about body proportion. Of the women that discussed body proportion, the discussion was primarily focused on the hips and bust. Cora, who used to do some runway shows for plus size apparel, discussed how she, at five foot 7 and a half inches, could not share clothes with her taller and shorter friends of the same size. She talked about her runway days and the variation of plus size bodies:

**Cora:** The ladies [the people hiring me] would straight up tell me, I don't know if they knew it was kind of insulting or not, but “oh my God, you know how hard it is to find a plus size girl to do the runway for us because their shapes are all over
the place? At least, you are uniform.” which I guess that meant I had a proportionate bust, waist and hip. They were saying that a lot of the girls that would come in were either like too busty up top or they had the pear shape where it was too much hip and rear and leg. So anyway, I guess it’s sort of “if you're going to be a big girl, proportionate is best!” I don't know.

Brittany described her hips as being an area that isn’t “shaped the same way as everybody else who’s over a size fourteen.” She provided jeans as an example of an apparel item that was hard to fit to her hips and she further stated that “everybody carries weight differently [. . .].” Two of the women specifically mentioned maxi dresses as apparel items they are satisfied with because they fit their “body type” and they could buy them in non-plus sizes and they would still fit. In addition maxi dresses being “in style” helped the women to feel like they could participate in fashion and trends. Brittany later remarked:

Brittany: [. . .]all these Maxi styles are really great. You don't have to buy plus size. There are lots of options, even just because they're stretchy and long.

The women who talked about body proportion may find clothing in what is deemed their size, but their body proportions could affect the apparel fit particularly once it was worn, meaning the fit is distorted even though the size is correct. How the women carry their weight as well as the shape of their bodies seemed to change the fit of clothing that was in their size.

**Apparel Non-Wear and Discard**

*Physical Factors of Apparel Non-Wear and Discard*

It seemed that fit was the main theme that caused the participants to not wear clothing. Eleven out of the twenty women had apparel in their closet that they knew did
not currently fit them, and as such they could not comfortably wear. In addition, six participants talked about not getting rid of apparel from their wardrobe because their weight “fluctuates.” The women did not want to have to go out and “buy new clothes” every time they gained or lost weight.

The apparel discard framework of Jacoby et al. (1977) appeared to correspond to the categories of the reasons the participants discarded apparel as well as, in the case of the plus size participants, the reasons they did not discard apparel. Jacoby’s apparel discard framework proposed that people discard apparel for (1) psychological reasons, (2) intrinsic product factors, and (3) extrinsic situational product factors. In terms of psychological reasons for discarding apparel it seemed that some women did not discard apparel because they hoped that they would fit back into it. The participants appeared to discard apparel for intrinsic product factors particularly due to the condition of the clothing—the theme of apparel being worn out completely before being discarded by the participants was prevalent. The extrinsic dimension of Jacoby’s framework that also appeared to be a major influencer of apparel discard were the extrinsic situational product factors. Extrinsically speaking, the majority of women were not satisfied with the number of apparel stores that carried plus size apparel, as discussed in relation to Renoux’s (1973) theory of retail satisfaction. As such it may be that plus size women are not discarding apparel because they are not sure when or how they can replace it, especially with the participants perceived limited store options. This again may have ties to the style scarcity previously discussed. It appeared that the participants were discarding apparel because of its obsolescence in terms of quality, the apparel being worn out, and not because the products were still functional but did not appeal to their tastes.
This is a very different approach to apparel discard that is stimulated by a want versus need dichotomy. Most people buy new clothes because they want to, perhaps causing an increase of apparel discard as they buy new clothes on a whim. In contrast, Plus size women have a need for more apparel selection. This need goes unfulfilled and perhaps contributes to a lack of apparel discard (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010; Kline, 2012).

Weight fluctuation had to do with more than just diet, exercise and lifestyle. Victoria has a medical condition that makes her weight fluctuate. Having Crohn’s Disease renders some of her wardrobe unwearable during one month and then able to fit the next. She has multiple sizes in her wardrobe and does not get rid of much clothing because her weight fluctuates so rapidly and she could have use for various sizes:

**Victoria:** My weight fluctuates quite a bit like I'm consistently up and down, ten or fifteen pounds. I know a lot of it is because of my Crohn’s. Like I'm consistently taking steroids which makes me gain weight and it's frustrating. [. . .] Then, I'll lose weight. Then, something will happen to get me back on steroids and I'll gain it all back and it just goes up and down, up and down, up and down.

Half of the participants discussed wearing apparel until it was “worn out.” This may stem from the style scarcity experienced by the participants of not being able to find apparel they are looking for when they are looking for it. This was interesting particularly because the participants, in general, did not discard apparel when they felt it was no longer their style or in style. Instead, they discarded apparel items because they were beyond repair or didn’t fit—fit meaning the size was too big or too small as compared to their current size. In a culture that embraces fast fashion and accelerated trend cycles, wearing clothing until it can no longer be worn does not appear to be common (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010; Kline, 2012). When referring to her pants being worn out particularly
on the inside of her upper thighs Rebecca, size 20, stated that “Chub rub is the devil!” She further indicated that her pants get worn out and hard to wear even though she still liked them and wanted to wear them. Michelle explains why she doesn’t tend to get rid of bottoms:

Michelle: I don't tend to get rid of pants or bottom wear very much because when I find something that I like, I keep it until it's worn out.

If the women did get rid of apparel, they donated it. Most, fifteen out of the twenty women, cited clothing donation as the most common way they discarded apparel. Two women had clothing exchange circles where they discarded clothing to a friend who would wear it, two others sold their clothes at places like “Plato’s Closet,” and one said she didn’t discard apparel. When asked where they donated it, the responses of the fifteen women included Goodwill, the Salvation Army, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Deseret Industries (A Utah based thrift store run by the Mormon church). A couple participants mentioned swapping apparel with their friends. Brittany stated that she had a few friends with whom she would “just pass stuff around when we clean out our closets.” Camilla had a unique way of discarding apparel. Her father took her unwanted clothes to her family in Mexico. It is interesting to note that the amount of clothing that women discarded was between none and one garbage bag a year. It seems some women are keeping the clothes due to weight fluctuations, and or a hope they will fit into it again. In addition, based on previous satisfaction factors discussed in relation to Renoux’s (1973) theory, the women may not be purchasing enough clothes to amount to much apparel discard. It seemed that the majority of the participant’s clothing was discarded in a sustainable way—by donation or exchange. The women only talked about throwing
away apparel when it was worn out or after they had used the worn out apparel in some other way such as a cleaning rag.

**Psychological Factors of Apparel Non-Wear And Discard**

The psychological theme of apparel non-wear and discard, previously discussed as fitting into Jacoby et. al.’s framework, involved participants being idealistic about their weight. When asked why they had clothes in their closet that did not fit, many of the participants seemed to be embarrassed by the question and ashamed that they had clothing in their closet that they did not wear. It many be for reasons of weight and body image that the women held onto apparel that did not currently fit them, although some women did have apparel saved that was too big. Seven of the participants mentioned that they held on to clothes for when they lost weight and “fit back into them.” When asked why she didn’t discard apparel items that didn’t fit and she couldn’t wear, Mary stated, “It’s like I kind of forget about the things are there and maybe it’s just like I hope that one day, I would still fit back in them. I don't know.” Melissa echoed this same sentiment of why she does not discard apparel that does not fit her:

**Melissa:** Just hoping like, "Oh I'm going to lose some weight! These will fit me and they're so cute! So I'm not going to throw them away! Or donate them." I never throw them away. I’m not going to donate them. I’m not ready to part with them.

Carrie had the same feelings and shared that she had multiple sizes in her closet:

**Carrie:** I think, yes I do have several sizes in my closet and the reason why I haven't taken them out is because I'm an eternal optimist that at one day, I'm going to lose a little bit of weight and fit back into it.
It seems that the participants held onto clothing in general because it would be hard to replace items in a current size. The participants’ apparel appeared to be worn out before it was taken out of their wardrobes. Overall it seemed that these plus size women wore clothing until it was worn out, got rid of less clothing, and did so in more sustainable ways by donating and or swapping apparel with other plus size friends. The plus size women participants seemed to behave sustainably in the amount of apparel they discarded and how they discarded it. On the other hand, for the amount of apparel discarded, perhaps the women do not have a choice in whether or not they are sustainable. They may be forced to be sustainable as they have limited apparel options and keep apparel because they do not know when or how they will replace an apparel item if they discard of it.

**Summary of Results**

The main thing that the plus size women participants seemed to be most unsatisfied with was apparel fit. This led to behaviors such as style scarcity in which the women would buy an item in multiple colors and or patterns if they liked it and it fit. Most (80%) of the women were not satisfied with the number of stores that sold plus size apparel. The participants felt like it did not make economic sense to not sell plus size apparel because of how large the plus size market is. The women overall felt that retailers were leaving money on the table. Body proportions played a part in creating a negative experience when the women were consuming clothing. It was identified that the women did not want to have to adjust the clothing they decided to wear and that it should stay on the body and not have to be moved or pulled down. The participants noted that there were different body shapes within the plus sizes that have special requirements for
clothing fit. When participants didn’t wear apparel, it was because it did not fit. Many however did not discard it because their weight fluctuated and they assumed a possible future use for the clothing, or hoped to one day be able to fit back into the smaller size apparel. The lack of options for plus size women contributed to style scarcity and wearing apparel items until they were worn out. The participants seemed to get rid of less clothing than the general population and did so more sustainably by donating their apparel or exchanging it with friends.

**Researcher’s Reflection**

I have been plus size for most of my life. I started to gain weight when my parents moved from Phoenix, Arizona to Corvallis, Oregon when I was about the age of five. I was almost the largest student in my first grade class when my mom stopped homeschooling me and put me into public school. We wouldn’t find out until around fifth grade, when I had missed two and a half months of school total through the year due to sickness, that I had severe food and plant allergies. My allergies caused my body to treat food as poison, and my weight ballooned. I have since sought treatment for the allergies and while I do not have nearly as many food allergies, I still have problems with absorbing the nutrients of most food.

At my smallest, I was a size 10 or 12 my junior year of high school, when I had a very controlled eating plan, and I swam with my swim team one or more hours a day, Monday through Friday. At my largest, I was a size 20, my weight having peaked after my first year of my Master’s degree as stress and lack of sleep hit me. It did not help that my thyroid, pancreas and gallbladder were not functioning correctly, something I would not find out until nearly a year later. My weight gain and loss and subsequent gain
caused me to wonder if any of the participants had a similar experience as mine and it appears a few did.

The time I spent with the participants during data collection was interesting and memorable. Although most were complete strangers, they were open to sharing their experiences as a plus size women and they freely allowed me to ask questions and clarify topics. When discussing apparel discard, some participants appeared to be ashamed that they didn’t get rid of any clothes and I could tell it was a touchy subject when I asked the participants if they had clothing in their closet that did not currently fit them. The data changed my perception of the shopping habits of plus size women, when some women mentioned that they went shopping alone. After seeing this theme emerge, I took a critical look at my shopping habits and realized I did the same. The couple weeks I collected data were somewhat exhausting as I was on high alert during the interviews, engaging active listening and paying attention to the women’s stories for things I would like the women to clarify. After conducting some of the interviews I was saddened as the women shared their stories of failed shopping trips, others opinions of their bodies and general themes of frustration and dissatisfaction.

I worked on keeping an objective perspective during data analysis, which was hard because as I mentioned, I am plus size myself, but after looking at the general themes of satisfaction, I was surprised to see how well they fit into Renoux’s theory of retail satisfaction. At the onset of the study I thought that the major satisfaction issues would lie in price and the amount of places available to the women to shop—the buying and shopping satisfaction dimensions of Renoux’s theory. However, it appeared that fit (in the buying dimension) was what women were most unsatisfied with followed by what
I thought would lead dissatisfaction, the amount of places available to the women to shop—the places available to shop meaning that finding a plus size retailer was not easily accessible and there was a lack of selection (the shopping dimension). It was interesting to see the style scarcity from the satisfaction portion of the study have an effect on apparel non-wear and discard. Most of the women did not discard apparel because they might not be able to find something to replace it (lack of shopping options). In addition I related to the women in that they had multiple sizes in their closet because they were idealistic about fitting into their smaller clothes one day and or their weight fluctuated so they might need smaller or larger apparel again.

This research became a personal experience as the women shared with me their stories of clothing struggles, body image, and loosing and gaining weight for a variety of reasons. I felt like I had walked in the shoes of some of the women in my own experiences being plus size. It felt like some of the women used the experience as a way to cleanse some of the negative experiences they had, centered on being plus size and wearing clothes. The women perceived that the industry was heading in the right direction, and that their choices are increasing. I am excited that I may play a small part in helping the industry to figure out what plus size women are satisfied with in terms of apparel and how it affects them not wearing and or discarding of apparel.
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

Chapter V contains the following sections: (a) summary of the study, (b) contributions, (c) implications, and (d) limitations and future research.

Summary of the Study

The aim of this study was to gain a holistic understanding of being plus size in relation to apparel and the retail satisfaction factors surrounding plus size women’s non-wear and discard of apparel. More specifically, this study aimed to understand how Renoux’s theory of retail satisfaction, (a) shopping system satisfaction, (b) buying system satisfaction, and (c) consuming system satisfaction influenced plus size women’s purchasing decisions, and their decisions about whether to keep or to discard apparel. The study data regarding satisfaction is examined through Renoux’s (1973) theory of retail satisfaction. The three different satisfaction dimensions were used to analyze the apparel non-wear and discard habits of plus size women.

In discovering the retail satisfaction factors that influence apparel discard and non-wear for plus size women, data analysis revealed that apparel fit, lack of apparel selection, and price impacted whether or not the women purchased, did not wear, and or discarded apparel. The women seemed to hold onto clothing because their weight fluctuated and or they could not find another apparel item to replace the one that was becoming worn out. Others held onto clothing in hopes that they would again one day be able to fit back into them.

It was interesting to note that fit was a main driving factor of apparel satisfaction overall and also made the women want to hold onto apparel items due to fit. In the retail
satisfaction dimension of shopping satisfaction, women not having enough locations to
purchase plus size apparel contributed to style scarcity in which the women bought
clothing in multiple colors if it fit, and or the women held onto apparel items longer.
This positively impacted apparel discard in that the plus size women were not getting rid
of that much apparel as they did not know when they would be able to replace the
clothing item.

In the buying satisfaction dimension, price negatively affected the apparel
consumption of the plus size women in that they felt plus size apparel was more costly
than non-plus size apparel. Some of the women were limited by price in the amount of
apparel items they could purchase. This behavior may have further decrease the amount
of apparel that the plus size women were discarding because they were simply not
purchasing as much.

The main factor that fell under consumption was the body proportion of the
women and the amount of “management” the women had to do with the clothing in terms
of moving it around on the body once they were wearing it. When they found apparel
that fit their body proportions it was kept for long period, thus further discouraging them
from discarding apparel.

**Contributions**

This study makes several contributions to the literature. First, the findings
support the retail satisfaction dimensions of retail satisfaction proposed by Renoux
(1973). The different satisfaction dimensions in Renoux’s theory; shopping, buying, and
consumption system satisfaction help in understanding and benchmarking the satisfaction
of the consumer. This study helped to understand the apparel satisfaction of plus size women, specifically to benchmark their satisfaction with apparel retail.

Second, the findings provide an understanding of how apparel satisfaction affects apparel non-wear and discard for plus size women. In addition, these findings may help the apparel industry at large to create apparel plus size women are satisfied with independent of the factor of discard.

Third, this study contributes to the knowledge development of textile and apparel students. The increased consumer knowledge from this study of a segment of the apparel market may aid in developing curriculum and skill sets that aid underserved markets in the apparel industry. The findings of this study may also be an important market trend guide for educators to teach students as new apparel products are developed for the plus size market.

Finally this study added to the growing body of literature on plus size women and apparel. The results may be useful to apparel firms who already create clothes for the plus size market as well as firms who are considering to enter the plus size apparel market. Apparel firms may use the findings of the study to highly satisfy their plus size consumers.

**Implications**

This study has implications for the apparel retail industry, plus size women, and academia. First, the findings of this study may help to inform the creation of a quantitative study of which the results could help apparel designers and retailers to make apparel that plus size women will be satisfied with. In doing so, it is possible that apparel firms stand to make a larger profit.
Second the findings of this study, if adopted in the apparel industry, may help plus size women to feel satisfied and not “frustrated” by the apparel acquiring process. Increased satisfaction with the clothing they wear may increase the self-esteem and happiness of plus size women.

Finally, the findings of this study could greatly help the textile and apparel academic community. The findings may be helpful in aiding educators in preparing students to work in a diverse market with niche consumers and untapped markets. Textile and apparel departments may incorporate the findings of this study into coursework to highlight the needs of different textile and apparel consumers.

**Limitations and Future Research**

This research had some limitations and as such opportunity for further research. First, this study focused on plus size women in the United States from size 14-32. Future research could examine plus size women in other countries as well as plus size women above a size 32. In addition, all of the participants in this study self-reported their apparel size. While it seems a majority of the women were accurately reporting their size, a few may have underreported it.

Second, most of the interviews took place over voice over Internet protocols, VOIP’s, and as such sometimes, depending on Internet connection, the participants connection cut out and they were inaudible. To mitigate this limitation, participants were sometimes asked to repeat themselves and may not have had the same response the second time asked. To hedge against this, more interviews could be conducted in person.

Third the population skewed to be more educated and more racially diverse than the general United States population. Therefore, future research should recruit
participants using tools like Amazon’s Mechanical Turk in which users more accurately represent the United States population. Because the number of participants in the study were limited, broad generalizations cannot be made.

Finally, as the approach of this study was qualitative and exploratory in nature, quantitative studies with a large sample should be conducted to verify the apparel satisfaction factors, discard, and non-wear habits of plus size women.
REFERENCES


Hello Everyone,

I am a Master’s student studying Textile and Apparel Management at the University of Missouri. I am doing my thesis on American plus size women’s satisfaction with plus size apparel as well as their apparel non-wear and discard habits. I am looking for participants who identify as female, are women’s clothing size 14-32 (plus size) and are 18 years of age or older. Participants will be interviewed about their experiences with plus size apparel over Skype, Google Hangouts, or in person at a time convenient to them. The interview will take roughly one hour, and participants will be compensated with a $10.00 Target gift card for their time.

If you are interested in participating, or know someone who may be interested in participating, direct message me on Facebook, and I will send participant information back to you via email and schedule a time for the interview.

Thanks!

Hali
APPENDIX B
Email Sent to Participants

Dear *Participant’s Name*,

Thank you for expressing interest in participating in research exploring plus size women’s apparel satisfaction, non-wear and discard. Please see the attached consent form with the details of the research project.

If you would like to be a participant in this research by being interviewed, please read, sign, scan, and send back to me the attached consent form. Once I receive the consent form from you, I will schedule your Skype or Google Hangout interview at your convenience.

Thank you for your time and interest in this research!

Halimat “Hali” Ipaye
Principal Investigator
Master’s Student
University of Missouri Textile and Apparel Management
208-559-0312
hirz9@mail.missouri.edu
APPENDIX C
Study Consent Form

**Project Title:** Exploration of Plus Size Women’s Apparel Satisfaction, Non-Wear and Discard

**Principal Investigator:** Halimat Ipaye

**IRB Number:** 2002495

**DESCRIPTION AND EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES:**

The primary goal of this research is to gain detailed information on the apparel satisfaction, non-wear and discard of female plus size consumers. To address this objective, I would like to interview you over Skype or Google Hangouts, which should take approximately 60 minutes.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you agree to be part of this study, an audio recording will be conducted of the interview. Participant’s names and identities will **not** be linked audio interview recordings to ensure privacy.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Data will be saved and kept strictly confidential. Any electronic files will be saved with numeric codes, with no personal identifiers. Throughout the procedures, if you feel uncomfortable with any questions or experiences, you may stop participation at any time. Finally, only the researcher will have access to the data and the aggregated data will be analyzed and shared for publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym protect your confidentiality. The data will be kept for seven years after the study has been completed.

**COMPENSATION:**

You will be compensated with a ten-dollar (USD) Target gift card.

You are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw your consent to participate in this research at any time without penalty or prejudice; your participation is entirely voluntary. Your privacy will be protected because you will not be identified by name as a participant in this project. All interviews will be kept strictly confidential. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board at 573-882-9585. If you have any questions regarding the research itself, you may contact me, Halimat, at 208 559-0312 or by e-mail at hirz9@mail.missouri.edu.

Thank you in advance for your assistance and time.
APPENDIX D
Interview Instrument
“Grand Tour” Questions

Opening
Tell me about your experience with clothing.

Plus Size
1. Plus size in the United States is defined as women’s size 14 and above. How long have you been plus size?
2. What does it mean to you to be plus size?
3. What is your opinion of plus size apparel?
4. In as much detail as you can, describe your experience with plus size apparel throughout your life.

Apparel Design and Aesthetics
1. What does good-looking clothing mean to you?
2. What constitutes good clothing design?

Apparel Fit
3. What does it mean to you to have clothing fit?
4. What areas are you primarily concerned with in terms of clothing fit?

Apparel Satisfaction
5. What does it mean for you to be satisfied with an item of clothing?
6. How does your satisfaction differ between tops, bottom, dresses, and undergarments?
7. Tell me about a time when you were satisfied with plus size apparel.
8. Tell me about a time when you were dissatisfied with plus size apparel.

a. Shopping System Satisfaction
i. Tell me about your experience with shopping for plus size apparel.
ii. How satisfied are you with the selection of stores that carry plus size apparel?
iii. Where do you usually shop for your clothes?
iv. Do you typically buy clothes online or in a physical store?

b. Buying System Satisfaction
i. Can you tell me about your satisfaction levels of clothing sizes, colors, and styles available for you to buy and what you think about them?
ii. Can you tell me about the prices for plus size clothing and what you think about them?
c. **Consumption System Satisfaction**
   i. Once you purchase clothes and wear them how is the fit?
   ii. How do you feel about the style of the clothing once you wear it?
   iii. Tell me about fabrics for your clothing—what do you like and not like?
   iv. What are you the most satisfied with, with plus size clothing?
   v. What are you least satisfied with, with plus size clothing?

**Apparel Non-Wear**

9. Do you have clothes in your closet that you don’t wear—are there tags still on any?
10. Why don’t you wear them?
11. Do you have multiple sizes in your closet? –Do they all fit? —Why haven’t you taken them out of your closet?

**Apparel Discard**

12. When or if you get rid of apparel from your wardrobe why do you do it?
13. How much clothing do you think you get rid of annually?
14. What do you do with clothing you don’t want anymore?
15. What is the most common way you get rid of clothing?

**Wrapping Up**

16. Is there anything else you would like me to know about being plus size, buying clothes, not wearing clothes, or getting rid of clothes? Any stories you would like to share?
17. What do you want the future of plus size apparel to look like?

**Biographical Questions**

1. Where are you from?
2. What is your occupation?
3. What clothing size are you?
4. What is your ethnicity?
5. What is your education level?
6. What is your birthdate?
7. Are you single, married or divorced?
8. What are some of your hobbies/ what do you like to do in your spare time?
9. How much of an interest do you have in fashion?
APPENDIX E

Revised Interview Instrument after Pilot Run

“Grand Tour” Questions

Opening
Tell me about your experience with clothing.

Plus Size
5. Plus size in the United States is defined as women’s size 14 and above. How long have you been plus size?
6. What does it mean to you to be plus size?
7. What is your opinion of plus size apparel?
8. In as much detail as you can, describe your experience with plus size apparel throughout your life.

Apparel Design and Aesthetics
18. What does good-looking clothing mean to you?

Apparel Fit
19. What does it mean to you to have clothing fit?
20. What areas are you primarily concerned with in terms of clothing fit?

Apparel Satisfaction
21. What does it mean for you to be satisfied with an item of clothing?
22. How does your satisfaction differ between tops, bottom, dresses, and undergarments?
23. Tell me about a time when you were satisfied with plus size apparel.
24. Tell me about a time when you were dissatisfied with plus size apparel.

a. Shopping System Satisfaction
   i. Tell me about your experience with shopping for plus size apparel.
   ii. How satisfied are you with the selection of stores that carry plus size apparel?
   iii. Where do you usually shop for your clothes?
   iv. Do you typically buy clothes online or in a physical store?

b. Buying System Satisfaction
   i. Can you tell me about your satisfaction levels of clothing sizes, colors, and styles available for you to buy and what you think about them?
   ii. Can you tell me about the prices for plus size clothing and what you think about them?

c. Consumption System Satisfaction
i. Once you purchase clothes and wear them how is the fit?
ii. How do you feel about the style of the clothing once you wear it?
iii. Tell me about fabrics for your clothing—what do you like and not like?
iv. What are you the most satisfied with, with plus size clothing?
v. What are you least satisfied with, with plus size clothing?

Apparel Non-Wear

25. Do you have clothes in your closet that you don’t wear—are there tags still on any?
26. Why don’t you wear them?
27. Do you have multiple sizes in your closet? —Do they all fit? —Why haven’t you taken them out of your closet?

Apparel Discard

28. When or if you get rid of apparel from your wardrobe why do you do it?
29. How much clothing do you think you get rid of annually?
30. What do you do with clothing you don’t want anymore?
31. What is the most common way you get rid of clothing?

Wrapping Up

32. Is there anything else you would like me to know about being plus size, buying clothes, not wearing clothes, or getting rid of clothes? Any stories you would like to share?
33. What do you want the future of plus size apparel to look like?

Biographical Questions

10. Where are you from?
11. What is your occupation?
12. What clothing size are you?
13. What is your ethnicity?
14. What is your education level?
15. What is your birthdate?
16. Are you single, married or divorced?
17. What are some of your hobbies/ what do you like to do in your spare time?
18. How much of an interest do you have in fashion?
APPENDIX F

Physical Recruitment Flyer

I AM A PLUS SIZE RESEARCHER

LOOKING FOR PLUS SIZE PARTICIPANTS

ABOUT
I am a female Master’s student at the University of Missouri in the Department of Textile and Apparel Management. I am conducting research on plus size women’s experiences with shopping and clothing.

I am recruiting a diverse population of plus size female participants to be interviewed for roughly one hour over Skype or Google Hangouts, or in person about clothing.

PARTICIPATION ELIGIBILITY
- Must be at least 18 years old
- Must be women’s dress size 14-32
- Must be a U.S. citizen
- Must self-identify as female

To learn more and or to sign up to participate contact Hall at hirz9@mail.missouri.edu or at (208)559-0312

COMPENSATION
Participants will be given a $10.00 Target gift card

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APPENDIX G

Craigslist Ad Post

WE WILL COMPENSATE YOU WITH A $10.00 TARGET GIFT CARD FOR APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR OF YOUR TIME

Plus Size Women Needed for a Study About Clothing Done By Plus Size Researcher

We will pay plus size women to participate in a clothing study. The study is being done by a Master’s student at the University of Missouri in the Department of Textile and Apparel Management.

Each plus size woman who participates will be paid with a $10.00 Target gift card for approximately one hour of her time for an interview conducted in person on the University of Missouri campus, or over Skype, or over Google Hangouts. There is only one interview where you will be asked about your clothing—There are no other obligations after the interview is complete.

**No special training, education, or experience is needed and you may choose the time you would like your interview to take place**

REQUIREMENTS

Must be at least 18 years of age

Must be plus size (wear clothing between women’s sizes 14-32)

Must be a U.S. citizen

Must self-identify as female

To find out more information and or to participate in the study contact the principal investigator, Hali, at hirz9(at)mail.missouri.edu or call her at (208) five-five-nine 0312
APPENDIX H

University of Missouri Institutional Review Board Approval

May 7, 2015

Principal Investigator: Halimat Iris Ipaye
Department: Textile and Apparel Mgmt

Your IRB Application to project entitled EXPLORATION OF PLUS SIZE WOMEN'S APPAREL SATISFACTION, NON-WEAR, AND DISCARD was reviewed and approved by the MU Institutional Review Board according to the terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number: 2002495
IRB Review Number: 204486
Initial Application Approval Date: May 07, 2015
IRB Expiration Date: May 07, 2016
Level of Review: Exempt
Project Status: Active - Open to Enrollment
Exempt Categories: 45 CFR 46.101b(2)
Internal Funding: Personal funds

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.
2. All unanticipated problems, adverse events, and deviations must be reported to the IRB within 5 days.
3. All changes must be IRB approved prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce immediate risk.
4. All recruitment materials and methods must be approved by the IRB prior to being used.
5. The Continuing Review Report (CRR) must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date. If the study is complete, the Completion/Withdrawal Form may be submitted in lieu of the CRR.
6. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.
7. Utilize the IRB stamped consent documents and other approved research documents located within the document storage section of eCompliance. These documents are highlighted green.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB at 573-882-3181 or irb@missouri.edu.

Thank you.