

# INVESTIGATION INTO MALE APPAREL DISPOSAL

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By

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**INVESTIGATION INTO MALE APPAREL DISPOSAL**

Presented by Jenna M. Bubna, a candidate for the degree of Master of Science, and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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*To my family and friends who put up with my many shenanigans.*

*Thank you.*

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	ii
List of Figures.....	v
Abstract.....	vi
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
Background.....	1
Chapter II: Literature Review.....	5
Overview of Apparel Consumption.....	5
Apparel Disposal.....	6
Reason or Prompts.....	7
Influences on Modes.....	9
Modes of Disposal.....	12
Gender.....	14
Chapter III: Review of Models.....	18
Clothing Consumption Process.....	18
Consumer Household Logistics System.....	19
Clothing Inventory Management Model.....	20
Paradigm of Consumer Product Disposition.....	22
Chapter IV: Research Methodology.....	24
Approach.....	24
Reflexivity.....	24
Selection of Participants.....	25

Data Collection .....	26
Validation Strategies.....	30
Chapter V: Findings.....	32
Male Apparel Consumption.....	32
Apparel Disposal.....	37
Disposal Modes: What Was Said and Done .....	54
Proposed Model of Disposal.....	57
Chapter VI: Discussion.....	60
Summary of Findings.....	60
Implications.....	61
Contributions .....	62
Limitations and Future Research .....	62
Reference List .....	64
Appendix.....	72
Interview Questions .....	72
Demographic Information.....	74
Apparel Disposal Log.....	75
Condensed Site Questions.....	76
IRB Approval.....	77
IRB Approval – Amendment.....	78

## List of Figures

Figure 1 Clothing Consumption Process Winakor (1969).....	19
Figure 2 Consumer Household Logistics System Boyd and McConocha (1996) .....	20
Figure 3 Clothing Inventory Management Model Cluver (2008).....	21
Figure 4 Paradigm of Consumer Product Disposition Processes Hanson (1980).....	23
Figure 5 Consumer Product Disposition Process Edited .....	59

## Abstract

Textile and apparel disposal in U.S. landfills has grown over time creating environmental concerns. In an effort to reduce textile waste ending up in landfills, this research addresses how consumers currently dispose of unwanted apparel. Understanding attitudes and perceptions associated with disposal of textiles may provide insight on how to raise awareness regarding other options available. This study intends to provide insight into the disposal process by linking all stages of apparel consumption, acquisition, inventory and disposal.

Utilizing a qualitative approach, men between the ages of 30-45 were interviewed. Observations were also utilized at a Goodwill donation site as well as a consignment store. Ten semi-structured interviews were arranged to take place at the participant's home, with most occurring in their bedrooms next to their closets. Prior to the interview, they were asked to select their ten newest acquisitions, and ten that had not been worn in at least two years.

Results of this study focused on prompts regarding apparel disposal, identifying influences for selection of modes of disposal, and the modes of disposal used for six months after the interview. This study contributes to our understanding of current apparel disposal patterns and builds on previous disposal research. Future research could explore how to alter consumers' perceptions regarding the value of worn clothing. Limitations included only interviewing ten men, and could be expanded by including a broader age and demographic range.

## Chapter I: Introduction

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

### **Background**

Disposal of textile and apparel in U.S. landfills is an ongoing environmental concern. Between 1999 and 2009 the volume of Post Consumer Textile Waste (PCTW) in the United States increased by 40% (Council for Textile Recycling, 2016). With 12.4 million tons of textile waste generated in 2013 alone (Environmental Protection Agency, 2016), 70 pounds of textile waste per person ends up in U.S. landfills (Council for Textile Recycling, 2016), that is 21 billion pounds of PCTW per year. Textile waste represents approximately 4.9% of all landfill waste (EPA, 2016). This demonstrates a lack of awareness that textiles are nearly 100% recyclable (Hawley, 2006). How consumers dispose of apparel is receiving increasing attention from government agencies (e.g. US EPA, UK DEFRA), media (e.g. Bowen, 2016; Van, 2016), as well as academic research. Within the last five years almost 25 articles have been published on the topic of apparel disposal, which exceeds the total number of publications on this same topic from the past three decades (Laitala, 2014).

Three main areas of apparel disposal research have been previously explored, 1) reasons or prompts for disposal of clothing, 2) influences on selection of disposal modes and 3) the specific types of apparel disposal modes utilized. Disposal reasons or prompts can be defined as focusing on why clothing is disposed of in the first place. Influences on

disposal modes focus on the how and why of the disposal mode selected while apparel disposal modes are the final destinations selected. Previous research has utilized differing terminology. The following terms will be used in this study: prompt for apparel disposal, influences on disposal modes and modes.

Relatively few studies have investigated the reasons or prompts for apparel disposal (e.g. Domina and Koch, 1999; Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009; Lang, Armstrong and Brannon, 2013). Reasons or prompts for disposal include wear and tear, fit or sizing, fashionable, and boredom. Influences on selection of disposal modes have varied in options available and focus of the study. Disposal modes may be selected based on physical characteristics related to the apparel (e.g. Albinsson and Perera, 2009) as well as familiarity with the disposal mode (e.g. Koch and Domina, 1997). Other studies link influences on disposal modes to recycling and environmental behaviors (e.g Shim, 1995; Domina and Koch 2001, 2002; Ha-Brookshire and Hodges, 2009; Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009). Many of these studies suggest a lack of knowledge or awareness of apparel disposal modes available (e.g Fischer et al., 2008; Stall-Meadows and Goudeau, 2012; Lee et al., 2014). Donating apparel has been linked to minimizing useable apparel ending up as waste, helping those in need and to some degree environmental concern (e.g. Shim, 1995; Koch and Domina, 1997, 1999; Baker, 2011; Goldsmith, 2012). Apparel disposal modes tend to focus around positive disposal behaviors rather than trash (e.g. Klepp, 2001; Charbonneau, 2008; Ha-Brookshire and Hodges, 2009; Stall-Meadows and Goudeau, 2012). Donating and giving to friends or family are more frequently utilized disposal modes compared to selling apparel. Apparel is still thrown in the trash if

individuals feel items are of no use to others, damages or fashion changes (e.g Shim, 1995; Birtwistle and Moore, 2007; Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009).

Understanding the apparel disposal process may provide insight not only into how consumers navigate this process but also how they define apparel waste. Through this some insight may be gained on how to raise awareness regarding apparel disposal options available beyond trash (Hawley, 2009). Previous researchers interviewed participants at specific donation sites, (Ha-Brookshire & Hodges, 2009), but did not consider all disposal modes or the possibility of variations based on gender. In the Ha-Brookshire and Hodges (2009) study, only one male out of 15 participants was interviewed, a common characteristic of many studies on the disposal of textiles and apparel. There has also been an overwhelming emphasis on young college aged females as the focus of previous apparel disposal research (Shim, 1995; Koch and Domina, 1997; Birtwistle and Moore, 2007; Bianchi and Birtwistle, 2010; Koukouvinos, 2012; Joung and Park-Poaps, 2013; Lee et al, 2013; Laitala, 2014). Thus, there is a gap in the literature regarding the apparel disposal process.

This study investigated all three areas of apparel disposal (reasons/prompts, influences on modes and modes). Few studies have done so (e.g. Gordeau, 2007; Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009; Laitala, 2014). In addition, the study focused on male consumers specifically contributing to the gap in the literature on male apparel disposal that has yet to be filled. The purpose of this qualitative research is to explore the apparel disposal process among male consumers, who make up 49.2% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census, 2010). Insight gained will provide a deeper understanding into the prompts,

influences, and modes utilized. Results may also provide insight regarding steps that could be taken to reduce the negative impact of apparel disposal on the environment.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

Chapter II contains the following sections: (a) apparel consumption, (b) apparel disposal, (c) reasons or prompts, (d) influence on modes, (e) modes of disposal, and (f) gender.

### **Overview of Apparel Consumption**

In Winkor's (1969) seminal work "The Process of Clothing Consumption," she presents a simple descriptive model to represent the process of clothing consumption divided into three stages; acquisition, inventory and discard. These three stages are viewed from the consumers' perspective. Acquisition is defined as adding to inventory through purchase, home construction, handing down, making over, exchanging, and inheritance (Winakor, 1969). Inventory encompasses the maintenance, care and storage of apparel. Discard includes how consumers permanently remove apparel from their inventory. Many recent studies have attempted to reduce the negative impact that apparel production and consumption has on the environment. Laitala and Klepp (2011), for instance, investigated strategies to improve design and produce quality products that promote a more sustainable, or 'environmentally friendly' use. Participants, in this Norwegian study were asked about sustainable consumption, and the answers were related almost exclusively to the acquisition stage, such as buying only what you need or buying organic fibers. Kozlowski, Bardecki, and Searcy (2012) identified stakeholders in the fashion industry as well as their interests, responsibilities and accountability. Through this analysis the authors stated that, though many believe apparel production is the most harmful stage of the apparel industry, in reality some of the largest negative impacts of the garment life is during inventory and disposal stages. Studying consumers'

perspectives on sustainable clothing consumption, Goworek, Fischer, Cooper, Hiller (2012) discovered a gap between knowledge and action. Both male and female participants, from different regions of the United Kingdom, had a limited awareness of the sustainability impacts of their clothing consumption choices. Though some participants were aware of environmental impact, their purchasing behaviors did not necessarily reflect that knowledge. Thus there exists a gap between knowledge and action.

Apparel acquisition is influenced in large part by economic and personal factors, inventory, and not necessarily environmental awareness. The inventory or maintenance stage is where participants are most likely to display environmentally friendly behaviors. This would include washing apparel on lower temperatures, or line drying. Joung (2013) studied consumers considered 'materialistic,' finding they were more likely to hold apparel in inventory that they believed to hold value. Bye and McKinney (2007) investigated apparel inventory that is kept, but no long in circulation (or worn). Women in this study held onto these pieces as motivation for weight management, due to the investment, or for sentimental value. The authors suggested there is a decision process participants need to participate in before moving apparel onto the next stage, disposal.

### **Apparel Disposal**

Paden and Stell (2005) define disposition as "beginning when consumer decides to remove items from the home by throwing away, passing along, or selling their possessions" (pg. 111). De Coverly, McDonagh, O'Malley and Patterson (2008) in their analysis of the social avoidance of waste suggest that 'waste' is regarded as an inevitable consequence of the consumer society that we live in, we are encouraged to keep waste in

its place, out of sight, out of mind. Hetherington (2004) suggested that recognizing the role of disposal as an integral part of consumer activity allows room for ethical questions to be addressed. In order to create a meaningful change to apparel disposition we must first alter the perception of apparel as ‘waste’. Hetherington (2004) states, “getting rid of something is never simply an act of waste disposal” (pg. 159), rather issues of value, agency and meaning are also drawn into the object as well. Apparel is no exception; it is not simply a question of function but a process of evaluation.

Apparel items that are looked at as low quality are interpreted as disposable or as ‘throwaway clothes’ (Goworek et al, 2012). Though consumers may believe these garments are trash worthy, they may still be renewed and reused by, moving onto used clothing markets, converting into new products, turning into wiping and polishing cloths (Hawley 2006, 2009). Disposal is a critical step; past research has shown that consumers may make these disposal choices without awareness of the societal and environmental implications of these choices (Goworek et al, 2012; Shim, 1995). Though some studies have suggested socio-demographic characteristics such as household composition, education level, and employment status are factors to predict disposal modes (Lane, Horne, and Bicknell, 2009; Mitchel, Montgomery and Rauch, 2009). Previous research has focused on three main areas of apparel disposal: reasons or prompts, influences on modes selected and modes of disposal (Laitala, 2014). Each of these are explored in more detail below.

### **Reason or Prompts**

Specific reasons or prompts for apparel disposal has been the focus of previous research. Cluver (2008) listed factors which prompted disposal versus storage to include

call from charitable organization, garment specific observations, season change, need of storage space, sudden realization, life change, directions from their partner and identification of suitable recipient. Baker (2011) explored a yearly rummage sale regarding participant's donation and purchasing behaviors. Donors who were classified as emotional or 'feel good' participants accumulated items all year long for the rummage sale event. Utilitarian donators were prompted by events such as a new house, in which case items were donated elsewhere and not the rummage sale. Supporting this, Ha-Brookshire and Hodges (2009) found one of the most significant prompts for clothing donation to be 'to get rid of stuff' or a 'cleaning spree' creating space for new items. Seasonal change was a prompt, changing from spring to summer created a desire to clean house. Lang, Armstrong and Brannon (2013) suggested sensitivity to fashion trends prompts disposal and increase of apparel disposal. Participants who purchased more clothing were more likely to dispose more frequently, supporting a prompt of making room for new purchases (Lang et al. 2013).

Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) found in young consumers, "most kept items for as long as they were wearable and stopped wearing the cheaper clothing for three main reasons: lower quality, new fashion trend and clothes were bought for a one-off event" (pg. 195). This supported similar findings in the Birtwistle and Moore (2007) study. Albinsson and Perera (2009) found themes that emerged from the study on the meaning of voluntary disposition including a "need for purging/de-cluttering and doing something good" and role transitions (pg. 344). Purging and de-cluttering prompted the apparel disposal process driven by a need to make room for new items. One informant explained the struggle between conflicting identities, transitioning from more 'hip and fun' to

professional, this conflict may be a prompt to choose and dispose of the apparel associated with transitional identity.

### **Influences on Modes**

Attempting to answer what factors influence the disposal choices consumers make, Jacoby et al (1977) suggested three categories; psychological characteristics of the decision maker, factors intrinsic to the product, and situational factors extrinsic to the product. Supporting these broad categories Lee, Halter, Johnson and Jun (2013) investigated fashion clothing disposal motivations citing three similar broad categories of individual attributes, product attributes and situational attributes. Lee et al (2013) supports Jacoby et al (1977) general disposal framework, as does the majority of previous disposal research, though the terminology does not always reflect those same exact categories. It is key to note that these categories are “not meant to imply that they are discrete and non-overlapping, nor does it imply that there is an absence of interaction among them” (Jacoby et al, 1977, pg. 26), they are simply a framework to work within.

Ha-Brookshire and Hodges (2009) focused on the disposal mode of donation and found donation to be more “self-oriented and less society-oriented” (pg. 7) utilitarian function. Apparel donations were not perceived as ethical, environmentally or socially responsible, but as a necessary act for new acquisitions. Physical assessment of apparel was mentioned as the primary factor for choosing between apparel disposal modes. Sentimental value or individual attributes of the decision maker was the second most important factor found to influence disposal mode selection followed by situational factors (Ha-Brookshire and Hodges, 2009). Baker (2011) explored rummage sale donation and purchasing behaviors. While exploring motivations for donation Baker

(2011) segments participants into those who donate for hedonic ‘feel good’ emotional reasons or utilitarian or necessary behavior (also shown in Ha-Brookshire and Hodges, 2009). Participants who donated for hedonic reasons demonstrated concern for “individuals who were having financial difficulties at the present time rather than helping individuals who will live on the planet in the future” (Baker, 2011, pg. 85). For donors classified as utilitarian or methodical donors, emotions did not play a role in donation, instead less clutter and clean space concerns influenced their desire to dispose of apparel. Hedonic donors tended to be more attached to personal belongings creating difficulty when parting with items many used a trial period to decide on disposal (permanent) versus storage (temporary).

Albinsson and Perera’s (2009) investigation into voluntary disposition through clothing exchanges also examined influences on disposal decisions. Their study suggested categories of community, the individual, and the item of clothing itself influenced the apparel disposal mode utilized. Social networking and relationships created through clothing exchanges positively affected apparel disposal through this mode. Item characteristics such as sentimental value or attachment made disposal more difficult. Participants attending clothing exchange events had motivations that ranged from environmental concern, economically sensitive to altruistically inclined. Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) found feelings of guilt associated with disposal of expensive items only worn a few times resulted in donations to charity’s. Clothing that was cheaper and used for socializing were quickly discarded due to wear and tear and were simply discarded (i.e. trash) (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009). Donating apparel to charity shops made participants feel good, but was also influenced by convenience (findings of which

Domina and Koch, 2002, also support). Damaged due to wear and tear, personal significance or of 'no use' were cited in Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) as influencing participants to bin an item instead of donating. This was also supported by research done by Birtwistle and Moore (2007).

Bianchi and Birtwistle (2010) investigated apparel disposal modes selected by women in Scotland and Australia. Findings included a positive relationship between general recycling and donating to charities. Positive feelings were associated with donating to charities, and a feeling of guilt, when more expensive items needed to be disposed of, led to an attempt to sell. Throwing away apparel was associated with damaged items or items that would be of 'no use' to others. Attempting to find the effects of environmental attitude on textile recycle, Koch and Domina (1997) found a strong positive correlation between reuse and donation disposal modes and eco-active segment (participants identified as actively engaged in recycling efforts and environmentally aware). Environmental awareness was not correlated with the resell apparel disposal mode. Almost two-thirds (65%) utilized worn out or damaged apparel as rags as a mode of disposal. Almost half (48%) passed apparel on to family or friends if it no longer fit.

Joung and Park-Poaps (2013) investigated participation in clothing disposal modes, motivational factors, environmental attitudes as well as the subjective norms of family and friends. Economic concerns were found to predict both resale and reuse of apparel, while disposal through donation was related to charity concerns as well as environmental concerns. Discarding apparel through trash was found to be related to convenience. Shim (1995) developed eight possible disposal patterns: resale, donation, reuse, and discard (trash) with each being motivated by either economic or environmental

factors. Shim's (1995) study concluded that a positive environmental attitude had a positive impact on charity motivated donation, environmentally motivated donation and environmentally motivated reuse. Shim found environmental attitude is a more influential factor for apparel disposal through environmentally friendly ways (recycling) than current non-recycling behaviors. Joung (2013) found consumers' participation in general recycling is not related to environmental attitudes; this is inconsistent with previous research (Joung and Park-Poaps, 2013; Shim, 1995).

Investigating the relationship of secondhand apparel and how acquired items are disposed of, Charbonneau (2008) found participants emphasized the importance of extending the life of the garment. Disposal of apparel through trash was considered a last resort for items that were "truly at the end of its life cycle" (Charbonneau, 2008, pg. 128). Saunders (2010) explored disposition behavior of poor urban consumers. Two reasons for permanent disposal (trash) were uncovered, holding no value to the person disposing of the object or an apparent misconception of what items may or may not be recovered, reused, and recycled. This lack of consumer knowledge on environmentally friendly disposal modes is supported by several studies (Shim, 1995; Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009; Joung, 2013; Domina and Koch, 1999).

### **Modes of Disposal**

Winakor (1969) named "handing down, throwing away, selling, exchanging, using for rags, making over, or simply abandoning" all as forms of apparel disposal (pg. 631). While Jacoby et al. (1977) identified only four options for disposal modes: throw it away, give it away, trade it or sell it. Apparel disposal modes associated with textile recycling means extending the life of the garment and include: upcycling (adding value,

creating something new), downcycling (wash rags), selling, swapping, giving away to family or friends, or any other way to reuse or repurpose textiles (Goldsmith, 2012).

Previous studies have included both a focused mode of disposal or a wide range. Ha-Brookshire and Hodges (2009) focused exclusively on apparel donation by conducting interviews at a donation site. Albinsson and Perera (2009) included additional modes of disposal such as, sharing, exchanging, donating, recycling and ridding. Joung and Park-Poaps (2013) gave participants a choice between resale, donation, discarding and reuse. Bianchi and Birtwistle (2010) investigated apparel disposal modes selected by women in Scotland and Australia. Selling items through eBay or secondhand (consignment) shops, giving away to family or friend and donating to charities were analyzed. Participants in both countries stated donating to charities was the most common mode of apparel disposal utilized and very few reported selling as a mode of disposal. Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) found the majority of fast-fashion apparel items were reportedly discarded (trash), while 7.1% reported selling or consigning used fashion apparel. Non-fashion apparel was disposed of by donating to charity, while textile recycling bins, passing on to family and friends and reusing within the home were also mentioned (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009). Koch and Domina (1997) utilized three apparel disposal modes: resell, donate and reuse. When coordinating with disposal mode and reason for disposal, consignment, Goodwill or Salvation Army, Church organizations, garage sales, passed on to family or friends, used as rags, modified and returned to parents were available options. This clearly demonstrates the confusion of previous research that has not consistently utilized the same terminology when describing apparel disposal modes. For the purpose of this research five modes will be discussed.

They are 1) donate (charity or Goodwill/Salvation Army), 2) give to family or friends, 3) sell (consignment shop or online), 4) clothing exchanges/swaps, and 5) throwing in trash. Participants will be given the opportunity to mention any disposal mode utilized not previously mentioned.

## **Gender**

Product attachment as defined by Schifferstein and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim (2008) is the “strength of the emotional bond a consumer experiences with a durable product.”<sup>1</sup> There is an emotional connection between the person and the object. Mugg, Schifferstein, and Schormans’s (2010) on product attachment and satisfaction with both male and female participants suggested that gender had no effect on product attachment or satisfaction. This study assumes there is no difference in the level of product attachment between genders. In an attempt to understand materialism and conspicuous consumption related to gender, Sego and Podoshen (2012) found that men had higher scores in terms of materialism and conspicuous consumption. Blakewell and Mitchell (2006) investigated male versus female consumer decision-making findings indicated that male and female decision-making styles vary significantly. In O’Fallon and Butterfield’s (2005) review of ethical decision-making literature from 1996 through 2003, they found that there are fairly consistent findings to support no differences based on gender. When studies do suggest a difference, females are suggested to be more ethical than males.

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<sup>1</sup> Winakor (1969) tells us that clothing is neither durable, nor non-durable, for the purpose of this study we will accept the idea of apparel considered a durable good.

Previous research suggests a positive association between general recycling behaviors and environmental awareness in regards to apparel disposal modes. In a study on environmentally related family consumption, Grønhøj and Ölander (2007) analyzed three themes: organic consumption, energy consumption and waste disposal. Through waste disposal, the authors found male participants selected environmentally friendly options significantly more often than their partners. Grønhøj and Ölander (2007) concluded, “Put simply, it is possible to trace the remains of gender based inside-outside division of household responsibilities with regard to pro-environmental practices” (pg. 218). This indicates that there may be no real difference in eco-friendly options based on gender, but rather there are gender differences due to the division of responsibilities within the household.

Cox and Dittmar (1995) asked sixty male and female students why an item of clothing was important or held value for them. Through this study Cox and Dittmar found that, compared to women, men tend to stress the utilitarian functional, instrumental and activity related aspects of clothing. According to Cox and Dittmar (1995), their findings “support an interpretation of culturally constituted, socially mediated and consensually shared meaning systems that inform the processes of self-extension and identity construction through clothing in a gender-related way” (pg. 285). The authors go on to say that women place an emphasis on clothing as a way to communicate connectedness whereas men express individuality and value utilitarian use of clothing.

Laitala and Klepp (2011) indicated a majority of male and female participants were interested in the environment. With a majority of participants female Laitala and Klepp (2011) identify this as a weakness, “women might portray men as more

irresponsible, immature consumers than themselves” (pg. 15). Laitala and Klepp (2011) concluded that one of the most important findings of their study was the similarity in results for males and females with respect to clothing disposal. The main difference identified was the issue of fit and sizing that concerned females, and that males were more concerned with the functional aspect of clothing. Lang, et al (2013) suggested fashion trend sensitivity increases apparel disposal, and found females to be significantly more fashion sensitive.

Goldsmith (2012) conducted observations at a textile recycling collection site in New York City. During Goldsmith’s time at Wearable Collection an employee described noted archetypes of people who participated in donating. One such archetype was “husband and boyfriends whom he suspects to have been told by wives and girlfriends to get rid of old or worn out clothes” (Goldsmith, 2012, pg. 21). Through his observations Goldsmith noted several men who participated in donating apparel, and commented that men tended to leave their clothing with no apparent regret or care, whereas women tended to double-check their items. Shim (1995) had approximately 45% male participants who were primarily 20 to 24 years old. Shim (1995) concluded gender influenced disposal decisions; males were less likely to resell or donate apparel for environmental reasons, or reuse them for economic reasons. In general, the male students had a weaker environmental attitude than that of the females surveyed. In contrast, the results from the D’Souza et al. (2015) study on male eco-fashion in relation to environmentally related consumption, suggested that men are environmentally conscious, committed and concerned.

Although some previous research on apparel disposal has included male

participants, the majority of the studies have focused on females. The samples used by Domina and Koch (1999,2002) was 88% and 60% female, respectively. Ha-Brookshire and Hodges (2009) included 15 participants with one male (who donated 4 to 6 times a year). Birtwistle and Moore (2007) focused exclusively on females between the ages of 15 to 25. Laitala and Boks (2010) attempted to gain a representative sample through mail survey but it was still dominated (80%) by women between the ages of 25 and 39. Joung's (2013) sample included 79.3% female participants ages 19 to 22 years old. Joung and Park-Poaps's (2013) sample included 88% female participants and 92% were between 19 and 23 years of age. To the best of my knowledge there have been no apparel disposal studies that focus exclusively on males, or that have males as the dominant participants. Thus three specific research questions have surfaced, 1) What does the male apparel disposal process look like? 2) What factors influence the mode of disposal selected? and 3) What (if any) role does gender play in apparel disposal?

## Chapter III: Review of Models

Chapter III includes the following sections: (a) clothing consumption process, (b) consumer household logistics system, (c) clothing inventory management model, and (d) paradigm of consumer product disposition.

Reviewing literature reveals the complicated task of understanding apparel disposal, and numerous models have been developed regarding various aspects of the disposal process. This chapter presents and discusses several models and how they interact. A visual representation of the models is expected to help our understanding of a complex task. Models reflect different disciplinary approaches to the topic of consumption. In addition to presenting several models, a proposed integration of these models, to provide a comprehensive view of disposal will be presented. These models are a model of Clothing Consumption Process (Winakor, 1969), Consumer Household Logistics System (Boyd and McConocha, 1996), Clothing Inventory Management Model (Cluver, 2008), and Paradigm of Consumer Product Disposition Processes (Hanson, 1980).

### **Clothing Consumption Process**

Winakor (1969) presented a 'Model of the Clothing Consumption Process'. Model (See Figure 1) which illustrates consumption in three stages, acquisition, inventory, and discard. Inventory stage is demonstrated in more detail with active storage, use, care and inactive storage to show the complex ways in which we maintain our clothing. This model presented in 1969 is still cited today in apparel consumption research. Represented generally, this model depicts the interconnectedness of the stages of acquisition, inventory and discard, utilizing a 'bathtub model'; it demonstrates the flow

of garment. Details regarding the exact sources of acquisition for action of disposal are left ambiguous. Winakor (1969) gives us a starting point to understanding the movements of garments within our possession.

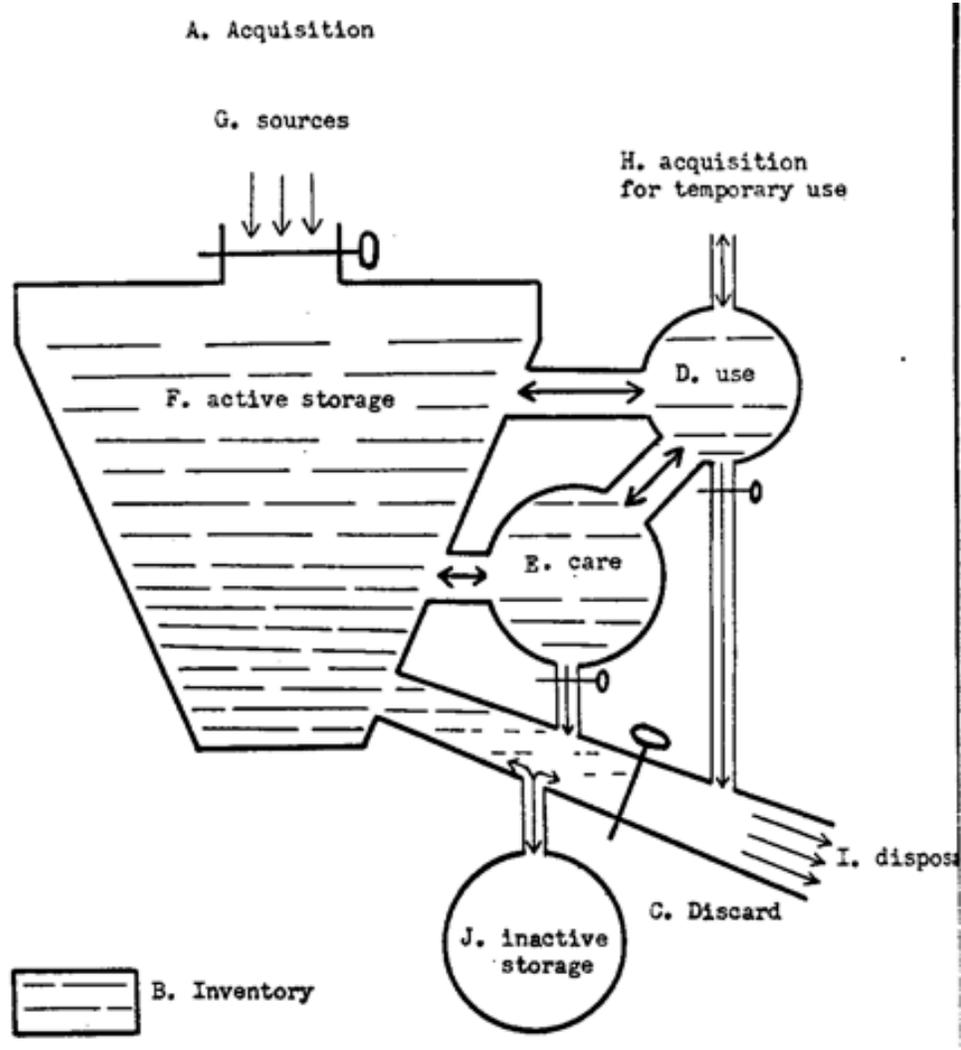


Figure 1 Clothing Consumption Process Winakor (1969)

### Consumer Household Logistics System

Though not significantly different, the ‘Consumer Household Logistics System’ presented by Boyd and McConcha (1996), extends the Winkaor model, though the authors do not cite Winakor. These researchers organized household goods through a proposed Consumer Household Logistics System (See Figure 2) for all physical goods

entering the home including clothing. Similar to Winakor’s model (1969), Boyd and McConcha (1996) include, pre-acquisition, acquisition, storage and use, and then disposal. This model is included as it is a clear representation of consumer consumption and tells us that clothing consumption is not a unique process but one that is done for all products entering the home.

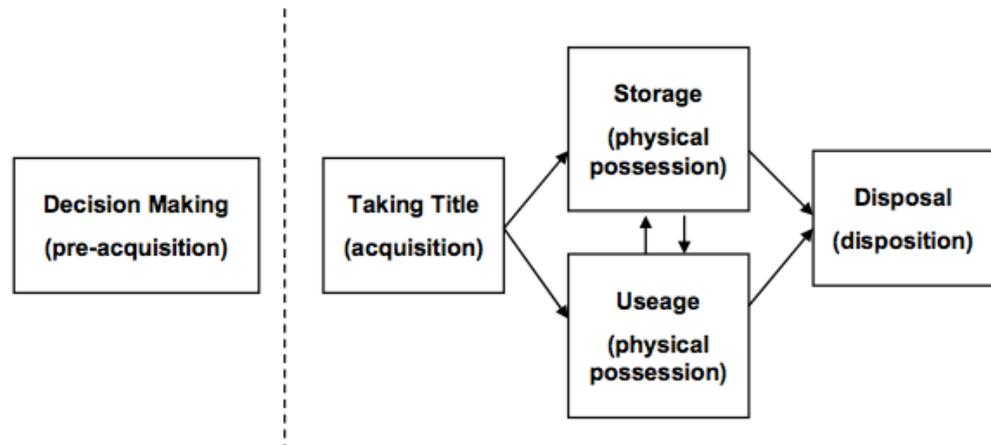


Figure 2 Consumer Household Logistics System Boyd and McConocha (1996)

### **Clothing Inventory Management Model**

Cluver’s (2008) dissertation utilized Boyd and McConocha (1996) model to investigate and build on consumers clothing inventory management. Research suggested the storage and usage stage is more complex than the Boyd and McConocha (1996) or Winakor (1969) model suggests. Cluver’s (2008) model (See Figure 3) includes five distinct inventory categories: active inventory, permanent inactive inventory, invisible inactive inventory, temporary inactive inventory and transitional inactive inventory.

Active inventory is fairly self-explanatory and can also be referred to as items that flow between use and storage. Permanent inactive inventory items are not anticipated to be worn or to be disposed of in the near future (i.e. wedding dress or formal wear). Invisible inactive inventory are items that the person is no longer aware of having

(possibly forgotten). Temporary inactive inventory are thought of as items not worn but may or may not be worn in the future and plan to dispose of. Finally, transitional inactive inventory are items that are anticipated to be disposed of, they have been removed from other inventories and placed in a specific area waiting for disposal. This model demonstrates how this more complex understanding of inventory fits into previous models above. This also builds on our understanding of apparel disposal as these differing stages of inventory reflect the process of disposal. Specifically the temporary inactive and transitional inactive inventories, according to Cluver's (2008) definitions, are on the brink of exiting the consumers clothing inventory and therefore will be disposed of in the near future.

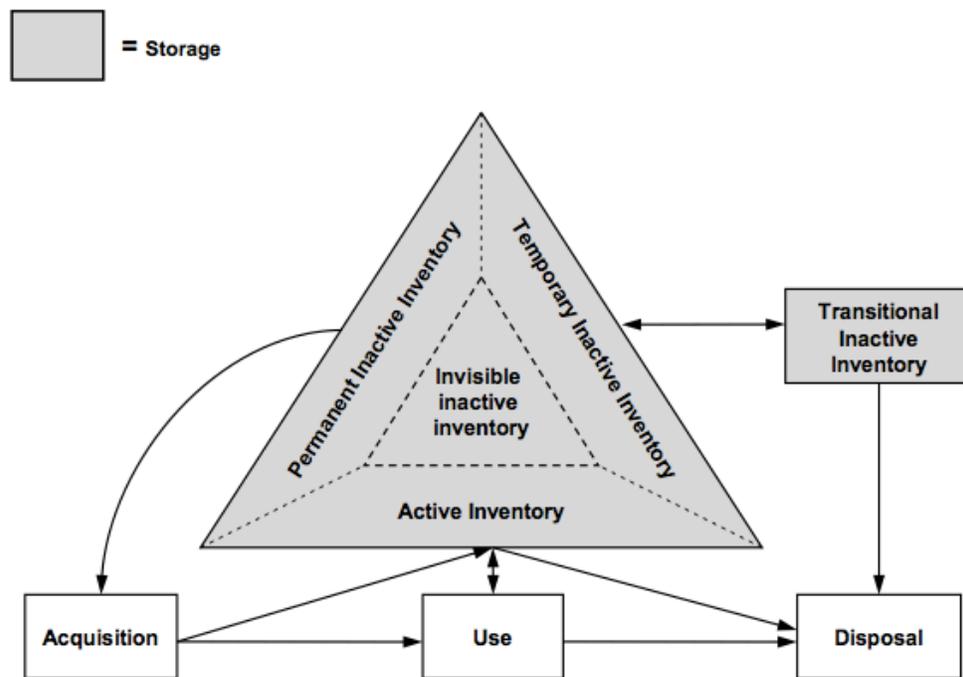


Figure 3 Clothing Inventory Management Model Cluver (2008)

## **Paradigm of Consumer Product Disposition**

Stepping closer to the disposal stage of apparel consumption, the next model suggests a more intricate examination of disposal. The disposal model proposed by Hanson (1980) ‘A Proposed Paradigm for Consumer Product Disposition Processes,’ provides a clearer understanding of the disposal process (See Figure 4). Based on the Jacoby, Berning and Dietvorst (1977) taxonomy of disposition, Hanson created a model that has four stages: problem recognition, search and evaluation, disposition decision and post-disposition outcomes. External stimuli are broken into the situation and object, the individual as well as the family influence the decision-maker and then the actual disposition process is influenced by all previous categories.

Hanson (1980) speculated that problem recognition could be triggered by “acquisition, consumption or disposition” (pg. 53). The examples provided by Hanson (1980) include initial purchase, damage and functional, psychological or style obsolescence. Search/evaluation stage reflected sources of information such as personal, commercial, public as well as past experiences. Finally, disposition decisions reflected disposition intention, social and situational factors. At the completion of this process reflection on actions taken may reinforce the same to be done again or change in the future. It is clear through Hanson’s conceptual model (1980) the disposal process is more complex than a final step of consumption. By thinking of disposal in this way, instead of as a piece of a linear process, one can start to comprehend the complexities. This paradigm is a conceptual framework proposed by Hanson for all consumer products and serves as a base for this study. Later stage of this model has been modified to reflect the findings in this study (See Findings Chapter).

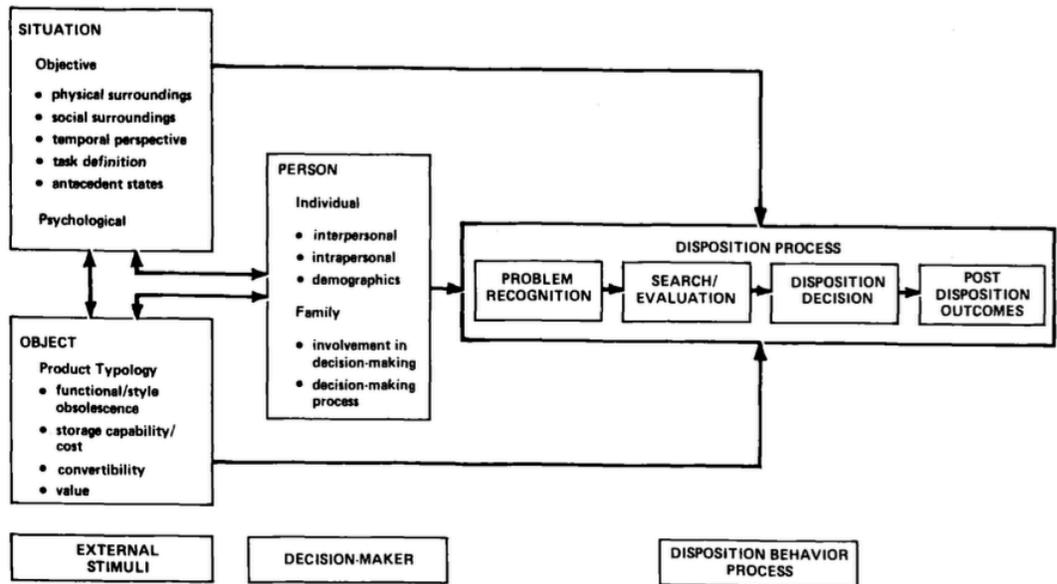


Figure 4 Paradigm of Consumer Product Disposition Processes Hanson (1980)

## Chapter IV: Research Methodology

Chapter IV includes the following sections: (a) approach, (b) reflexivity, (c) selection of participants, (d) data collection, (e) interviews, (f) field observation, and (g) validation strategies.

### **Approach**

The aim of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of men's apparel disposal, prompts for disposal, influences on selection of disposal modes and finally modes utilized. In order to obtain in-depth descriptions of participant experiences within a natural setting qualitative methods were utilized. In-depth interviews, and field observations were the primary methods of data collection. A self-reported apparel disposal log and demographic questionnaire were also implemented. These methods were selected in order to create a clear picture, enabling the researcher to get to the core of the questions posed (Mason, 2002). In-depth interviews invite participants to tell their story on their own terms, allowing conflicting and complex perspectives when reflecting on personal experiences (Perks, 1998). Interviews were audio recorded, enabling a preservation of living exchange that may be analyzed both in initially analysis and again when transcribing and coding (Perks, 1998).

### **Reflexivity**

Critical reflexivity means understanding one's own biases and person preferences and taking steps to minimize influence on the study. Every researcher has their own beliefs and lifestyles, and this researcher must be mindful not to allow their own positive experiences with extending the life of a garment skew the data presented. Being

conscience of past personal experiences and positive associations with apparel disposal modes (such as consignment and donation) this researcher kept personal feelings aside. By recognizing this, steps were taken to ensure the validity of findings. Steps include reviewing the study design and questions with thesis committee members as well as discussing coding responses and theories with expert outsiders. By considering many perspectives and differing view point's interpretation of data will be fully flushed out and analyzed.

### **Selection of Participants**

Previous research in apparel disposal has focused almost exclusively on young (college aged) females. To the best of this researchers knowledge, currently no study exists concentrated on males as primary participants in an apparel disposal study. Males between the ages of 30 to 45 have been selected as they represent approximately 11% of the total U.S. population (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014). In addition, males 30 to 45 are anticipated to have formed patterns that have been impacted by past experiences and are now set to some degree. Participants lived in the area for a minimum of two years, familiarity and established patterns are anticipated.

This study took place in a small Midwestern city, with a population of approximately 115,000 people. Approximately, 45,000 residents in the county are between 25-44 years old with a median age of 29 years old. Average income in the city is approximately fifty thousand dollars. The majority of residents (80%) are White, while 11% of residents identify as African American (City/County Factbook, 2015). Demographic information of interviewed participants is available in the appendix. Select participant information is provided below in Table 1.

Age		Income		Highest Level of Education Completed		Frequency of Donations per year	
30-34	3	15,000-50,999	3	Some College	1	Never	0
35-39	6	51,000-75,999	3	Bachelors Degree	4	1 to 2 times	4
40-45	1	101,000-150,999	3	Postgraduate Degree	5	2 to 3 times	4
		More than 150,000	1			3 to 4 times	2

**Table 1 Select Participant Demographic Information**

## **Data Collection**

### **Interviews**

In-depth, semi-structured interviews with ten men between the ages of 30 to 45 were utilized to gain an understanding of apparel disposal from the male perspective. Snowball sampling technique was used with participants initially contacted via email. Participants have a distant personal connection to the researcher through an acquaintance; this is important to setting participants at ease. Miller (2012) stated through his own anthropological research participants provided the truth of their actions versus what they think they should do or say. Miller states, “Surveys and focus groups are much better at telling you what people think they should feel than what they actually feel.” (pg. 87, 2012). By conducting interviews and placing participants in a comfortable setting they were more likely to answer truthfully rather than what may be expected.

Interviews were conducted between September and October of 2015 they lasted approximately 40 minutes to an hour with the longest lasting an hour and 40 minutes.

During the interview approval for audio recording and note taking was obtained. All ten interviews took place in the participant's homes to put participants at ease and within the comfort of familiar surroundings. Prior to the interview participants were asked to select their ten newest acquisitions, and ten apparel items they have not worn within the last year to two years. Apparel items as well as being near their closets acted as a trigger to bring complex emotions and thought processes to the surface (Bagnoli, 2009). Crewe in her study on the unexpected significance of discard supported this stating, "Our relations to our things are sensory, bodily, evocative, and profound. Things come to matter through our interactions with them, object and subject combined and entwined, inseparable in mind and memory" (2011, pg. 45). During discussion of disposal participants were prompted to discuss donation, giving to family or friends, selling (consignment or garage sales), clothing exchanges, and trash. Participants were then asked if there was any mode of disposal they used that had not already been discussed.

By focusing on the three stages of apparel consumption, acquisition, storage, and disposal (Winakor, 1969, Boyde and McConocha, 1996)) there was an opportunity to gain more descriptive discussion of their apparel consumption process. Although the focus of this study is on disposal, activities in one stage of the consumption process (e.g. running out of storage for inventory) can affect another (e.g. disposal). This has been supported in previous studies on material divestment and in geography (Hanson, 1989; Boyd and McConocha, 1996; Collins, 2014) to name a few. Furthermore, participants were asked directly about their past disposal behavior. Since clothing items will have been previously disposed of, items not worn in two years will be on hand to act as prompts during this part of the interview.

Questions were broken down under the three main stages of apparel consumption. Broad to narrow questions were asked with differing phrasing to probe for as much detailed information as possible. Discussion on the disposal stage focused on gaining in-depth responses, with examples of each disposal mode given while participants describe apparel they would dispose of in this way. For example: *Would you give me an example of an item you would donate to charity or goodwill?* (See Appendix for Interview Questions). By probing further into participant's disposal modes, information regarding reasons/ prompts for disposal, and motivation were revealed.

Participants were asked during the first few minutes of the interview to fill out a demographic questionnaire to collect age, ethnicity, income category, occupation and frequency donating (See Appendix for Demographic Information). All men interviewed lived with their significant other, seven of the ten had at least one child in the home and all had personally disposed of clothing (through donation) at least once within the year. All ten interviewed participants were asked to keep an apparel disposal log for six months after the interview. This apparel disposal log tracked apparel disposed of, modes utilized, reasons, prompts and who carried out this action (See Appendix for Apparel Disposal Log). By pairing the self-reported apparel disposal log with information gathered from the interviews the researcher gained a deeper understanding of what was reported in interview against actions taken during the following six months.

### **Field Observation**

Observations took place at two types of apparel disposal locations, a consignment store and a donation center. Apparel disposal locations were selected as they disposal options that are observable for distinctive behaviors and due to the volume of textile and

apparel processed on a regular bases. High volumes of apparel intake indicate the possibility of observing a wide spectrum of male disposal behaviors. Observations were implemented to inspect disposal behaviors in the setting in which they normally occur. This also provided the opportunity to engage in conversational interviews with those participating in apparel disposal. While observing at a location, the researcher approached participants to gain brief insight into prompts, reasons and other disposal modes utilized (See Appendix for Condensed Site Questions).

‘Sandy’s’ was the consignment store selected for observations during the month of October in 2015. Customers are encouraged to bring in new and gently used clothing, items are then looked over by ‘buyers’ once the evaluation process is over ‘cash on the spot’ is offered for those items (Sandy’s, 1998). Founded in 1998, Sandy’s has been growing over the years to more than 400 locations in North America (Sandy’s, 1998). Opening in 2009, the observation site located in a Midwestern community of approximately 120,000 regularly processes 100 to 150 ‘buys’ per day (Strain, 2015) making its quick turnover ideal for witnessing the disposal process. Twelve conversational interviews with male consigners occurred over the ten hours of observation. After completing observations an in-depth semi-structured interview with the store manager was conducted to confirm and clarify information.

Goodwill was the donation center selected for observations during the month of November in 2015. Located in the same Midwestern community as Sandy’s, this location is both a drive thru donation center as well as a retail store. Over ten hours of observation more than 180 drive thru donations occurred. While more difficult to obtain the researcher was able to conduct 14 brief conversational interviews during that time. Not

only does this location have a high volume of donations coming in, it was also the primary donation location mentioned by in-depth interviewed participants.

### **Validation Strategies**

Adcock and Collier (2001) stress the importance of different types of evidence for validity. They also encourage building relationships between these strategies and the evidence to avoid misleading data. Several strategies will be implemented to increase validity of this study. Transcribed field notes, interviews and questionnaire will be coded and interpreted thematically and holistically (Seale, 1999) to search for patterns of decision-making (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). As this is a qualitative study, there were thick description and extensive notes taken through all steps of the research process. Utilizing three sources of data (field observation, interviews and apparel disposal log) assist in data triangulation to provide as accurate a picture as possible. Employing the apparel disposal log as an extended self-reporting tool adds another step to observe if actions and words connect. It will be important to remember reality is socially constructed, and as we have already observed there is a knowledge-to-action gap to be aware of (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992; Gowerek et al, 2012).

This study contributes to our understanding of current male apparel disposal patterns, and it is a starting point to begin to understand and take action to minimize textile waste in landfills. Specifically, consumers could be made aware that items they want to throw in the trash may have value to other consumers or textile recyclers (Hawley, 2009). There are most certainly limitations and challenges faced through the execution of this study. The largest obstacle was obtaining male participants to discuss

their apparel disposal decisions. Steps have been implemented in the design of this study to assist in overcoming this obstacle such as sampling strategies.

## Chapter V: Findings

Chapter V contains the following sections: (a) male apparel consumption, (b) prompts for apparel disposal, (c) influences on modes of disposal, (d) disposal modes: what was said and done, and (e) proposed model of disposal.

“Clothes are intimate. We wear them and feel them and leave our bodily effects on and in them, trapped between the fibers. Our clothes become us. We inhabit them, and they tell stories about us: where we bought them; when, where, and with whom we wore them; the places we went; the stains from the party, the rip from the fall as marks of value not disdain. They touch us and reveal significance and memory-value. Clothing is an object in the space between self and surround, a second skin, porous, absorbent, soaked in memories and steeped in stories” (Crewe, 2011 pg. 39).

### **Male Apparel Consumption**

In-depth interviews on how participants acquire apparel, inventory not worn, and disposal revealed a revealed detailed information in all areas. Due to the sheer volume (over 500 minutes of audio, and more than 100 pages of notes) of information disclosed, this study focused on the findings related to the disposal process. Here we will briefly touch on the acquisition and inventory stages as they relate to apparel disposal for our participants.

#### **Acquisition**

Discussing apparel acquisition with male participants uncovered some interesting findings. One example of this was the reliance on their significant other for reinforcement and guidance when it came to clothing purchases. One participant stated,

“(Partner) does have veto powers on my clothes, which I welcome, I mean it probably sounds bad because I probably mentioned (partner) with every single clothing item that I mentioned, but I’m just helpless when it comes to this sort of

thing. I was making my own clothing decisions as a bachelor for many years and it did not work out.”

Though not all participants would classify themselves as “helpless” many echoed the sentiment that their female significant other had important influence on their clothing acquisition process. Participants spoke of how they “trusted her judgment” or “she knows me really well... I like what she gets” when discussing their new clothing, wives or significant others were expressly linked.

Another topic to surface through this portion of the interview was the participants desire for self-expression. Taking different forms for each participant; one man actively worked with a company to custom design t-shirts. These shirts varied in meaning some communicated political activism such as a shirt that carried the slogan “No More H8 in Our St8” created after Ferguson in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, while others just expressed support for a national sports teams. Another participant had his running shoes customized with his kid’s initials. This self-expression may also be viewed as an expression of identity. Thompson and Loveland (2015) proposed a model of Identity Investment Theory, which questions how identity influences consumption behaviors. They suggest, “consumers behave strategically in deciding which identities merit the investment of time and money” (2015, pg. 250). The examples above are where participants felt it was worth their time and money and thus communicates part of their identity.

Finally functionality of the item was another factor that participants mentioned when discussing their purchase habits. One participant stated,

“...I would never buy something that is just a single purpose item, just because I don't have a lot of money to spend on clothes or a lot a of room in my closet... everything has to be able to go with three or four other things.”

Functionality of a garment is supported in previous research as a major influence on male consumer behavior (Cox and Dittmar, 1995). This factor, therefore, is not surprising. This is just a brief overview of this study's participants' acquisition habits, to give the reader an understanding of who this analysis is based off of. For a deeper analysis see Otnes and McGrath (2001) 'Perceptions and realities of male shopping behavior'.

### **Clothing Not Worn**

Once discussion of the items most recently acquired came to an end, attention was then moved to not worn garments. Ten apparel items not worn within the past two years, this is what the participants were asked to discuss and typically four factors played into this conversation: style, physical condition, attachment and unknown possibility. Style is one that had varying degrees of emphasis for each participant. Some participants were more sensitive than others to the changes in seasons and trends. One participant in particular has been making an ongoing conscious effort to dress 'better' and no longer wear something he described, as something “A NASA scientist would wear.”

Old styles were buried in the pile of items no longer worn and when asked to describe why they were no longer in circulation participants had many (though similar) answers including, “fit is too big,” “arms are too short,” “wide neck,” and “too big, it looks like a mu mu.” This physical condition was enough for participants to no longer wear the item but that didn't mean they were getting rid of it. Many participants did

indicate the desire to dispose of these garments after the completion of the interview and results of this are reflected in the disposal modes section of this paper. This finding supports Smith (2013) suggestion that garment style and age is the main reason for disposal.

More complicated to discuss, emotional and guilt associations with garments also surfaced as a reason to hold on to an item. Attachment to an item can be viewed as positive or negative, when viewed negative guilt was associated with the garment. Specifically one participant indicated that items that were gifted to him made him feel guilty and almost impossible for him to dispose of the item. This was also an implication of Klein et al (1995) where even "...affiliative associations can make even a not-me possession more difficult to dispose of" (pg. 341). Even though this garment was not in rotation or any anticipation to be worn, the guilt made it stay in permanent inactive inventory (Cluver, 2008).

An interesting addition to this attachment was the associations participants held with garments from previous or current employers. Several participants had garments that they had no intention of wearing, but kept due to the logo or branding. One participant stated, "I feel like I don't have the right to get rid of it." These items are an interesting addition, as they seem to not hold positive associations, on the contrary they seemed to be negative memories attached to them. This suggests a possible attachment to the clothing item as a form of guilt or a previous identity that they no longer connect with (Thompson and Loveland, 2015). Positive feelings associated with the item held memories for participants and they held onto these items as mementos of these times. Examples of this include garments purchased while travelling abroad, school sweatshirts or ties and band t-

shirts. This also includes the suit the participant was married in (if they were indeed married).

Finally, there was holding on to the unknown possibility. This was verbalized as anywhere between two to five percent chance that the item would or could be worn in the future. One participant described a garment that he had no real intention of wearing,

“Not totally disgraceful, so I might end up wearing it at some point or wear it hunting or to a bonfire. It provides some warmth but I probably won’t roll up to a game in it.”

It becomes clear here that the basic functionality of the garment is still there and so the participant cannot bring himself to get rid of it. All participants mentioned this unknown possibility of usefulness. This idea of ‘keeping things just in case’ was also discussed and is supported by Collins (2014) in her investigation into young people’s divestment of material goods. Much of the information provided by participants regarding their unworn inventory supports the previous research by Cluver (2008), and the categories proposed in her model.

Items that fell into Cluver’s (2008) ‘Transitional Inactive Inventory’ category for participants had the possibility of going back into use or wear through mending or alterations. Only four participants utilized mending or alterations as a way to extend the life of their clothing. Items had to be ‘worth it,’ they needed to be in some way worthy of this additional effort. When asked about the last time a participant took clothing to be mended one participant told of his jean:

“They were my favorite pairs of jeans, I wear them almost everyday... So, I was really bummed out when they got holes in them and then I couldn’t find them

anywhere else... it was a long process, like three month process of searching for similar jeans and then I finally just gave in and paid a tailor \$20 to repair jeans I paid \$20 for.”

This example demonstrates the lengths participants were willing to go to in order to avoid mending or altering their clothing. Many participants felt the same way regarding their apparel. One participant’s partner stated,

“We don’t spend a ton of money on his clothes so its not like I am going to go out and spend money now to go fix it. I will just go out and buy a new one.”

Echoing the importance of the initial cost as a rationale for not spend additional money, the garment had to be worthy. Determining this worth or value consumers may take into consideration purchase value, as well as functional symbolic and aesthetic value (Laitala and Boks, 2012). Wedding suits were an example mentioned by participants. Nine participants acknowledged having little to no skills in mending clothing, but knew someone who could (mother, partner, mother-in-law). It would be interesting to see if there is a change in perceptions regarding mending if the participants had these skills. Discussing items that participants had not worn in two years or more yielded some interesting considerations. Instead of focusing on why these items had stayed buried within their closets participants tended to turn the conversation to why they were no longer worn.

## **Apparel Disposal**

### **Prompts**

Discussion of apparel disposal was tightly linked to inventory, as an item needs to be in inventory before it may be considered for disposal. Prompts to clean out the closet

were divided into three main categories, influence from partner, feeling of a need to clean, and limited closet space. Influence from partner was mentioned time and again by all participants, seven out of ten. Hanson (1980) suggested that family decision-making would be just as relevant for disposition decisions as it is for acquisition decisions and this finding supports that. One participant stated,

“About once or twice a year my partner and I will get a bag together for Goodwill and she will ask me if there is anything I want her to take to Goodwill and I will quickly find things that, yeah for sure I will not wear these anymore. Next time she makes a trip to Goodwill I will give them to her so someone can use it.”

This is an excellent example of the type of influence participants felt from their significant others. Literature on household decision-making is complex, though McLeod and Chaffee (1972, 1973) suggested there are two ways that families come to agreement through concept-orientation and socio-orientation. These may be used to understand the complex ways in which participants and their significant others navigated apparel disposal. Concept-orientation indicates family members share understanding regarding the object based on perceived attributes, properties, and characteristics (i.e. style, functionality). In this way both the participant and their significant other both come to an agreement on the item being evaluated. The second way, socio-orientation, agreement is reached through only one family member defining the objects meaning to them. An example of this would be when participants said they were not getting rid of something but their significant other desired disposal. Often participants indicated a combination of agreement methods was used. We must also acknowledge “collective systems of object

classification are rarely unanimously accepted and routinely break down or are challenged by individualized, personalized notions of value” (Crewe, 2011, pg. 28).

Participants would be reactive to the prompts given to them by their wives. When asked how much influence his partner has on his clothing disposal one participant stated, “I would say she has a little bit, like you know if I was moving some stuff around and I had a pile like this and she (his partner) said ‘You never wear these, you should get rid of them,’ I would probably be like, ‘Ah you’re right’ and that might push me over the edge. She definitely has some influence but I might veto some of that...”

Women in their lives may not (and in nine cases, did not) control their clothing disposal but operated as that small nudge just enough to act. A couple of participants noted the power their significant others did play one even stated,

“I don’t think there is anything that would prompt me to clean out unless my partner ordered me to, and she hasn't done that yet...”

Finding that the partner acted as a prompt for apparel disposal is a significant one. Previous research (which focused on females) did not suggest that males had any impact whatsoever on the females apparel disposal. One study, Cluver (2008), did indicate partner involvement in the husband’s disposal. Though this example differs as in Cluver’s (2008) study the male participants did not exercise control over their clothing disposal, which is not the case in the current study.

Though it is clear that the partner played a role in prompting apparel disposal it was clear from the interviews conducted that the feeling of a need to clean was a stronger prompt.

“Not events, but maybe just that spring cleaning feeling that I don’t even know if its attached to spring, its more just we are stuck in here on a snow day and we’re just like ‘Hey, you know what we need to clean up some stuff, get rid of some stuff.’”

The quote above demonstrates this elusive prompt to clean out the closet. One participant stated, “Nothing formalized, just a matter of realizing that stuff needs to be thrown...”

Though difficult to exactly pinpoint, all ten participants mentioned a need or urge to clean out.

“Part of it is usually a kind of gut reaction, its like whenever you say that ‘I don’t have any desire to wear that, and I never would wear it, why do I even have it?’ get rid of it. So sort of a gut reaction...”

There seems to be a tipping point for each participant, a moment when, as one said,

“...then I’ll have those days where I’m like, finally my desire to have a clean closet overwhelms... and I’m just like ‘screw it’ and I get rid of lots of stuff that day. I have to be in that mood of disposal.”

Previous research supports feeling a need to clean as a prompt for apparel disposal (Albinsson and Perera, 2009; Ha-Brookshire and Hodges, 2009). This finding is not unique, though it is notable that males do feel this need to organize. There may be some who believe that nothing would prompt a male to clean out his closet, this finding indicates that we may not recognize this process, that it may look different for each person. Or may be reflective of the “spatiality of disorder and the subsequent ordering acts that aim to correct disorder” (Hetherington, 2004, pg. 162). This hints at this need to clean prompt for disposal being related to correcting disorder, righting a wrong.

The level at which that “mood of disposal” takes hold may vary for each participant, but it does seem to be linked to space limitations. When asking one participant to describe his tipping point the following exchange occurred:

Researcher: “Is it literally like you have to shove to fit things? Or it just feels a little stuffy in here?”

Participant: “It’s more the second, you put stuff in the closet and like... things that you generally don’t wear in the closet get pushed to one side, so then like that corner is starting to get a little full, its probably time to go through and clean out...”

Realizing space limitations was brought up by all ten participants as a prompt to dispose of apparel. When asking one participant about prompts to clean out his closet he stated, “Space. I get a little OCD about organization, I have an urge to just go through and get rid of stuff...” This researcher finds that the primary prompt to dispose of apparel is the feeling of need to clean, it is suggested that this is closely linked to limited closet space as well as a nudge from partners. Detailed information from participants suggests that there is no single prompt, but one or two that come together to push participants from indecision to action. The following quote is an excellent example of this:

“If I acquire new things and needed room, then I would go through and get rid of things. Just because, like I said we have limited space, my partner is not into keeping things that we don't use, she would rather get rid of it. I’m with here, but she is just more conscientious about it than I am. She actively looks for those things where I am more passive and will just wait until I don't have any more room. If the closet is full then lets get rid of some stuff.”

Not only does this quote confirm the three prompt categories suggested by the research, it also suggests they may all need to come together for action to be taken.

### **Influences on Modes of Disposal**

Investigation into influences on what disposal modes are selected revealed situational factors, characteristics of the object as well as the person. Conversations were not limited to these four disposal modes but open to any disclosed by the participants. Discussion revolved around four specific modes: selling, giving away to friends or family, donation and trash. Each disposal mode uncovered themes specific to the mode of disposal discussed.

**Barriers to Selling.** When asking male participants about specific disposal modes they utilize, influences on those modes were revealed. Specifically, when discussing selling apparel the interview took a more negative turn. Participants, instead of discussing what they sell, and how they went about it, spoke of the many barriers they viewed that made this disposal mode an unlikely path for seven participants. All ten of the participants spoke of the alternative options to selling that they would rather do. One participant stated,

“If I’m buying new clothes I can afford to buy them, I would rather donate them and possibly help someone than go through the hassle to try and sell to a consignment shop for a little bit of money.”

This sentiment was echoed by five and seems to come from a place of convenience, altruism, and hints at possible class privileges. Another participant stated,

“I would rather give it to somebody... fortunately we don't need that kind of money... if I don't wear that I can give it to somebody to wear, I don't need somebody to pay me for that.”

There is an undertone of having the means to both purchase new clothing as well as no need for ‘that kind of money.’ This implies a negative association with selling clothing as a means of disposal. In fact Harrell and McConocha (1992) stated, “Negative attitudes toward other [disposal] options may indicate that donating may sometimes be chosen by default” (pg. 412) which is supported in this study's findings. Though not all participants felt this way, one participant used consignment as a mode of disposal on a regular basis, another sold to a local thrift store and a third participated in garage sales. These three demonstrated situational differences in this study as they had unique experiences with selling their apparel.

For participants who sold to the local thrift store, and participated in garage sales, some barriers to selling were removed for them. These two participants had convenience on their side, the thrift store employee came to the home to pick up items and the garage sale takes place in “basically the most notorious garage sales in the area.” Thus neither had to risk inconvenience or negative association with this disposal mode. The participant who consigned had a history of working retail, which resulted in new ‘on trend’ clothing acquired on a regular basis. This is not surprising as Lang et al. (2013) indicated that fashion sensitivity may increase apparel disposal, but also indicates they are more likely to resell (Weber, 2015). When speaking about consigning this participant said,

“If I have something that is newer and name brand I'll usually just sell it to like Plato's Closet or someplace like that. Usually for them to want it, it has to have

been bought within the last year or two, it has to be pretty new... it also has to be in good shape and has to be name brand.”

This awareness of what qualities are sought after at consignment stores is key as without this knowledge the chance of utilizing this mode of disposal greatly decreases. Lack of understanding what consignment stores are looking for as well as the preference for alternative options were the main reasons for this mode not to be used by participants.

In-depth interviews revealed barriers to consign but observations revealed a slightly different story. In order to understand what influences consignment as a disposal mode observations at a local consignment store took place. Observations at Sandy’s ten hours during the month of October 2015 allowed for 12 conversational interviews to take place. Observations at Sandy’s were done at two-hour intervals; typically twenty ‘buy’ were processed during that time period. Conversational interview participants were typically stopped after they had registered their items, while waiting for the ‘buy’ to be completed, or, as they were about to leave. This process was tricky as many men were in a hurry so timing when to stop and ask questions was important. The store manager was also interviewed. She believed financial incentive was the most important variable in the customer’s decision to bring their items to consign (Strain, 2015).

Items that were brought into consign were often described as “newest items” or that the process was a “win-win for everyone.” That “items not worn in a few years can get some value back.” When asked why items were brought to Sandy’s participants often stated that it was “better than throwing it away” or “someone can use it” even “it’s better than it collecting dust in my closet.” Many could not fully describe their apparel disposal process, or how they selected items to be brought. “Nice enough to sell” was a sentiment

echoed by all, but no more detail that this was obtained. It can be inferred from the details gathered that there were three categories of consigners: full closet cleanout, seasonal update and selective sellers.

Those who were conducting a full closet cleanout had very little to no evaluation process there was a clear 'I'm not going to wear this so it goes' thought process. Those who qualified for this category tended to have large plastic bins or laundry baskets (multiple even) full of apparel to consign. These tended to be people who used Sandy's as a way to evaluate their clothing "get some value back" then move on to the next disposal mode. Seasonal update consigners had fewer items than the previous group. These consigners had some evaluation process in place, selecting only the "newest items" or "not worn in the last six months" that are "like the styles sold here." The men who fit these criteria had a clear understanding of what items Sandy's was looking for and tried to keep within those guidelines.

Finally, the selective sellers regularly stopped by to consign items they knew Sandy's would buy. These consigners had very select items they bring in only a few at a time (such as only two pairs of pants). This final group was very conscious of the evaluation process, and was the least observed. Overall, the primary influence on consignment as the apparel disposal mode utilized was style and utilitarian functionality. When discussing the influence on the apparel disposal modes selected, the physical condition of the garment as well as the familiarity with the disposal mode were also key. This supports findings of Albinsson and Perera (2009) on clothing swaps and Koch and Domina (1997) research on convenience in apparel disposal. Many relied on Sandy's in evaluating the worth of their garment before moving onto the next apparel disposal mode.

By combining the information provided by both in-depth interview participants as well as conversational interviews we get a sense of the individuals who do and do not utilize selling as a mode of apparel disposal.

**Giving Away to Friends or Family.** Giving away to friends and family is a concept that may or may not come naturally to someone. Many participants were hesitant to discuss this topic as they had mixed experiences and thoughts on this disposal mode. By giving away to friends or family, the life of the garment is extended, and therefore, this is a more sustainable disposal mode (Hawley, 2009; Collins, 2014) but this is not how participants conceptualized this disposal option. Three main influences on the use of giving away to friends and family were connection, perceptions and quality. Connection was found to be the most significant factor on this disposal mode. One participant shared his unexpected experience with giving away clothing:

“... I had a bag to go to Goodwill, this was two months ago and I had it in the back of my car and my [co-worker] was there, cause we had to drive to another office and she asked me what they were and so I said it's a bunch of clothes and then I thought, ‘Oh she has older sons and a husband’ and I was like ‘do you want to have some of it?’ She looked through and was like, ‘This is awesome stuff’ and she took all of it.”

Two vital pieces of information can be gathered from this quote; first that this was not planned. His intention was to donate this clothing to Goodwill and not give them away to an acquaintance. Second, that he was not aware of her desire to take these items off his hands. When asked if he will continue to offer his clothing to her, he responded, “Yeah, now that I know she was super excited about it and she said her son is wearing a

lot of the shirts and stuff.” Knowing that someone is interested in once used clothing is key to the use of this disposal mode. This was suggested in other studies as well (i.e. Cluver, 2008), identification of suitable recipients extends the life of a garment for another to appreciate. When asking another participant why he does not give clothing away to friends or family he stated, “Well, we’ve been living up here for the past couple of years so its not like we have a lot of people to give stuff to.” This lack of connection to a willing recipient acted as a barrier to this apparel disposal mode.

No participant was opposed to giving clothing away to connections but perceptions did make participants question the accessibility of this option. One participant stated, “I don’t know, its like ‘Hey, I know you, you want this thing that I have? You can have it,’ I don’t know...” From these interviews there seemed to be a sense of appropriate behavior when it came to giving away clothing to people they know. One participant made this clear when he said, “I wouldn't probably do it with a lot of stuff because... you know, some people will be like ‘I don’t need your stuff,’ you know?” This is where it becomes apparent that the connection is key to this disposal mode being used. Participants needed to be aware first of the need or the desire of the other person before they felt they could offer their “junk” or “crap” as all participants referred to their clothing.

Though they tended to use such negative terms to describe their apparel, quality was also a notable component in giving away. Quality either acted as a barrier to passing along, “...what we do have we wear out.” Good quality, on the other hand, was felt by participants as appropriate to pass along as one participant stated,

“I usually try and give them stuff that’s nicer just because its weird to give clothes that are not in good shape, or are really old or something...”

Another participant when describing shoes he had given away in the past emphasized the newness of these items saying, “...so stuff I hadn’t worn for a lot of time, didn’t fit and so I gave a bunch of shoes to a friend of mine who had slightly smaller feet.” This action was only acceptable to him as he felt the shoes were still in a ‘like new’ condition that would be appropriate for a friend to have. From these interviews, it’s clear that knowing another person who would want their clothing allows the negative perception associated with this to be negated and that the quality must be appropriate for participants to feel comfortable proceeding with this apparel disposal mode.

**Donation and Throwing Away.** All participants mentioned donation, and for all ten it was the preferred apparel disposal mode. The distinction between what apparel items would end up being donated versus being thrown in the trash was a blurry one. When asking participants what items went to Goodwill, a comparison with what ended up in the trash was also brought up and vice versa. Due to the clearly connected nature of these two disposal modes, what influences disposal as donation or through the trash was grouped together. With this discussion three themes familiarity, convenience and the next user. These themes were also present in Mitchell et al (2009) study investigating factors influencing donation. It should be clear that when discussing apparel donation, Goodwill and Salvation Army were both mentioned as well as local donation options. Distinction between what was meant by apparel donation was up to the participant (such as bringing up religious organizations).

Familiarity was the primary influence on donation. Some participants held certain perceptions of these donation sites, which had both positive and negative influences. One participant stated, “I prefer Salvation Army over Goodwill... Goodwill’s corporate practices have been not the best, just in terms of their for profit nature...” Through this knowledge the participant was swayed to another donation option, though still utilized donation as a mode of apparel disposal. Another participant stated,

“I am only familiar with Goodwill... I’m not really familiar with Salvation Army because when we were kids and we were going to secondhand shops for donating or shopping it was always Goodwill so that’s just the one I’m more used to... I think that’s the only reason why.”

This makes clear that though location may change, this participant was still going to donate to the one he was most familiar with. By being familiar with the donation place as well as procedure participants were able to use this disposal mode. Convenience also plays a part in this. One participant made it clear ease and convenience is priority,

“It’s super easy, you just give it to them and they take it, you don’t have to fill anything out... I’d rather be out and about and drop it off at Goodwill in a bag and give it to somebody...”

Researcher, “Do you have a preference between Goodwill and any other donation option?”

“It depends on... it really depends on what part of town we’re in and what’s open.”

Though convenience is emphasized here, there should be no confusion that familiarity is still necessary for convenience. By knowing that these options take very little time, no

paperwork, and even a drive thru acknowledges the necessary information is already present.

Finally, the next user, this theme emerged through discussion of donation but also links to apparel items that end up in the trash. Many participants could not verbally describe a clear distinction between items to donate versus throw in the trash. The evaluation of the apparel is not surprising to the researcher, but the amount of thought given to the next user is. In fact there is a presumption that “once no longer wanted they are tossed, lobbed, or jettisoned in the direction of the waste stream without a second thought” (Gregson et al, 2007, pg.685) and this is just not the case. One participant stated,

“Honestly, if it’s something that looks like something someone might reasonably wear or take off the rack at Goodwill or whatever and then buy and then wear then I will... I will donate it...For example, running shoes, they get worn out and if I’m not wearing them, nobody else should be wearing them either...”

By placing himself in the role of shopper was a common evaluation technique the participants used. Another participant said,

“...Everything else that I feel is in good shape, then I give it away [donate], but if its not in good shape I won’t give it away... I prefer to give things that are good quality and that someone could take advantage of.”

Placing an emphasis on the next user means evaluating the quality of the garment, which is extremely subjective. Each participant has differing levels of expectations when it comes to what is ‘good quality’ as well as what other consumers are seeking when shopping at secondhand stores. Gregson et al (2007) addressed this stating that it is through disposal that we “reconstitute social orders, using what we do with and through

things – including how and where we place them – to constitute narratives of us, of others and our relations to them.” (pg. 198). One participant attempted to describe this line between donation and trash, he said,

“If it’s something that I think ‘Man, you know no one is going to want that because it is used so much,’ then I’ll trash it. It’s just kind of a line, if there’s something wrong with it, like wrong meaning a big rip or a big tear or something where I can’t see someone buying that in a little thrift store or shop, if its that worn out... then I will junk it.”

This is one man’s opinion, though again, we must stress how subjective this line. Another participant stated,

“So actually if clothes are really beat up I just throw them away, I’m not going to give them to Goodwill because I think that’s embarrassing, like it’s so crappy... If it’s like tattered... I would probably just throw it away and they’re not even that old but if something just doesn’t... something that looks super old and beat up then I wouldn’t give it away, that is something I would just throw away... I don’t have a very hard and fast line on defining it but it definitely occurs, I’ll just say ‘Oh that’s so crappy’ and I’ll just throw it away.”

Unpacking this statement lends some understanding to what line there is between donation and trash for apparel disposal. By evaluating the items as something that he himself would no longer wear, due to wear and tear, then they are ‘embarrassing’ to donate. There may also be undercurrents of social/economic class mixed in this statement. When asking one participant to describe items that would not be donated his partner chimed in stating, “No respectful person would wear it.” Though this was not

explored further it is interesting the amount of evaluation that takes place when participants were deciding what disposal modes were acceptable and under what conditions. As another participant described, “Items that are fairly inexpensive to replace as a general rule” end up in the trash. Goodwill encourages donation evaluation stating, “Step 1: Gather your stuff, Step 2: Give them a look over, Step 3: Go to Goodwill.” (goodwill.org). Evaluating garments and the line between donation and trash was taken seriously by participants during in-depth sit down interviews but is that always the case?

While conducting in-depth one on one interviews, observations were also taking place at Goodwill. Looking at the donation page Goodwill states,

“It’s simple. When you donate your stuff to Goodwill, you create opportunities for individuals in your community looking to find a job and build skills, including veterans and military families, single mothers and many others” (goodwill.org).

They also claim that over the past few years’ donations to Goodwill have kept “billions of pounds of clothing and household items out of landfills” (goodwill.org). During 10 hours of observation more than 180 donations occurred and 14 conversational interviews took place. Two themes became clear was the items being donated were in “good enough shape” or, “not really worn so someone else can use” and “better than throwing away.” Of those conversational interviews, though familiarity or convenience were not mentioned they were implicit in the actions taken. Those who spoke with me seemed to be using Goodwill as a catchall. When speaking with an employee regarding items that are received he stated, “the evaluation process is needed because we get a lot of garbage people just don’t know what to do with.” Throughout the observations small donations (just a couple of pieces of clothing) to whole households were unloaded at the donation

sites' drive thru. Though the ten men who were interviewed regarding their apparel disposal process, may have a concern for the next user, observations may suggest not all felt that obligation.

**Throwing Away.** The line between the apparel disposal modes of donation and throwing in the trash are blurred but guilt did not play a part here. This is a significant finding as previous research by Ha-Brookshire and Hodges (2009) suggested guilt as a primary influence on participants choosing between donation and throwing items in the trash. Influences on trash as a mode of disposal have been linked to familiarity, convenience and the next user. Below are descriptions of items that are thrown in the trash by participants as well as what steps are taken to reuse garments. When asking male participants about the items they throw in the trash many vague and subjective descriptions were given, for example, "ratty" or "crappy." When asked for more details were given one participant stated,

"More than one visible hole, like an obvious stain that won't come out... a stain that comes from some horrible source that you don't want to keep around. We have dogs and kids so you can imagine..."

Another participant said,

"Stuff that just gets worn out, underwear, socks, undershirts, stained items that you wouldn't give to someone else, I would just trash."

Damage was the primary source of apparel items being thrown in the trash, but it also was when garments were most likely to be reused. Discussing throwing clothes in the trash prompted seven participants to bring up reuse. This was a somewhat surprising connection that participants made but once linked it became clear how it was made. The

men who participated in this study connected stained damaged garments with those that were close enough to trash to be used as ‘house rags.’ As one participant stated,

“If its got a big hole I’d probably cut it up for rags or just discard it in the garbage... same with a stain.”

Apparel that was damaged would be first cut up to rags for the house or garage and then once they served this purpose they then moved to the trash. This connection between wear to reuse then disposal was not one even the participants had made. One participant was describing his clothing that goes in the trash when he made the connection:

“... if you have an undershirt or white shirt that you’ve worn a lot and it starts to get pit stains or something, I usually just turn those into... into rags in the garage and use them to clean my bikes, cars or whatever... it's a whole other type of disposal I didn't even think about...”

Though these apparel items seem to hold no value and are described as “crappy” or “ratty” these same participants then described their usefulness in reuse. This connection was not made by the participants when discussing their apparel, but thought of as a separate issue. Trash was thought of as a last resort, something that was reserved for items with no life left.

### **Disposal Modes: What Was Said and Done**

Six months after sitting down with participants, disposal logs were returned to the researcher. Ten of the ten original participants responded, one participant had a major life change and did not dispose of any clothing over the course of six months. This participant, already a husband and father, was expecting a second child which altered his normal routine. As noted by Harrell and McConocha (1992) disposal is a process or

routine that is subject to change, this is also considered by Hanson's (1980) model as situational external stimuli, which may alter the paradigm of disposition. Among the nine who have returned their disposal logs, two distinct disposal themes emerge, extending the life and destroyed. As noted in the previous section, donation and trash were the two most often cited disposal modes with influences ranging from familiarity, convenience, and next user. Condition was revealed in the disposal logs.

### **Extending the Life**

Garments that were donated were described as "did not use," "in good shape, but I never wear it," and "never wore". This list ranged from: 20 flannel shirts, 6 dress shirts, 10 dress slacks, "Blue smocking shirt, short sleeve," "Dark blue sweater, knit cotton," 5 t-shirts, 4 sweaters, to a single tie. Though not comprehensive, this provides an idea of the data retrieved from the apparel disposal logs. Consistent with their individual interviews, all participants claimed using donation for garments that were in a condition they believed would be 'appropriate' for future users. Though the items may be described as "Old, never wore, didn't fit right" it was still donated for someone who may benefit from it.

Data was collected on the person responsible for the action of disposal. One participant was responsible for all disposal actions. Another participant's partner performed the donation action; this was consistent with his interview as well. This participant had mentioned that his partner sometimes acted as a prompt prior to her own donation actions. Another participant and his partner utilized this disposal mode together, also consistent with his individual interview.

Of the nine disposal logs collected only one noted use of more disposal modes than donation and trash. Use of giving away to friends or family as well as reuse as “Rag in garage” demonstrate the different ways in which this individual extended the life of these garments. Though participants may not reflect on extending the life of the garment the actions taken by participants demonstrate an effort to pass along these items for future use.

### **Destroyed**

The thin blurred line between donation and trash is evident here in the disposal logs. Items thrown in the trash are described as, “worn out,” “unwearable,” “holes,” “clothing was ruined,” “Pit stains,” and “Holes AF” (As F\*\*\*). Physical condition here is the primary descriptor and the garments ranged from dress shirts, jackets, socks, under shirts, to boxer briefs. Executed almost exclusively by the participants themselves, items thrown away were essentially destroyed in the eyes of the participant. In an email exchange with one participant, he stated

“As discussed, our garage sale a few weeks before we met purged pretty much everything I had that wasn’t just throw-away undergarments.”

This is also consistent with the individual interviews, where the perception of what goes in the trash are items that are no longer suitable for wear by themselves or others. This subjective perception of what is ‘destroyed’ was reflected not only in words but also actions taken by participants.

It is interesting to note that of the disposal logs retrieved participants tended to include a comment of apology for lack of disposal activity. For example, “I probably

sound like a hoarder,” or “Not a lot of activity as I am apparently a hoarder.” These comments possibly indicate a social pressure or negative association with having excess.

### **Proposed Model of Disposal**

Utilizing previous research and building off of the proposed Paradigm for Consumer Product Disposition Processes (Hanson, 1980), this model demonstrates the findings of this research (See Figure 5). The disposition behavior process according to Hanson (1980) started with problem recognition, then search/evaluation and finally the disposition decision. Adjusting these names to those that have been used in previous research of Prompts, Influence on Modes and Disposal Modes we can start to see how each area has subcategories that align with the findings of this research.

Hanson (1980) suggested that prompts were related to the acquisition, consumption and disposition of items. This research supports this but adds further detail. Prompts to participants included partners, need to clean and closet space. Influence on modes referenced by Hanson (1980) were the broad categories of personal, commercial, public sources as well as past experiences. These are supported, and by digging deeper we find the specific influences or barriers to disposal modes. The disposition decision described by Hanson (1980) is the disposition intention, social and situational factors. Within the edited model we see this as the action executed by participants, namely donation or trash.

Moving backwards to the Decision-Maker, findings include demographics, family involvement in decision-making and the decision-making process. Demographics, in this study do not reflect significant impact on the disposal process. Information was collected from participants but no discernable pattern was found. Family involvement in decision-

making reflects the link between household dynamics, whether causing conflict or done in agreement. The decision-making process referenced by Hanson (1980) here is in reference to the execution of the task. As discussed previously, a partner may have a significant influence on the disposal process but that is not always the case.

Finally, the External Stimuli findings in this study are connected to the situation of physical and social surroundings, temporal perspective, task definition, antecedent states, as well as the objects' function/style, storage, convertibility and value. A simple way to link these findings is to think of the single participant who used garage sales as a disposal mode. His situation included a neighborhood (physical surroundings) well known for garage sales, meaning no negative implications for having them (social surroundings). These garage sales happen twice a year during seasonal change (temporal perspective) and knowledge of these events give the participant a specific task to complete. When these external stimuli align, the decision-maker must then process his or her own individual and family dynamics before jumping into the disposition behavior process. Examining the object as the external stimuli we find that the male participants stressed the functionality as well as the style of the clothing as priority for use.

Availability of storage, is to be viewed as a constant, as well as a prompt, since it will adjust with the acquisition of new apparel. Convertibility references the possibility of future use. Findings of value link strongly to functionality with male participants as well as monetary, social and sentimental attachment.

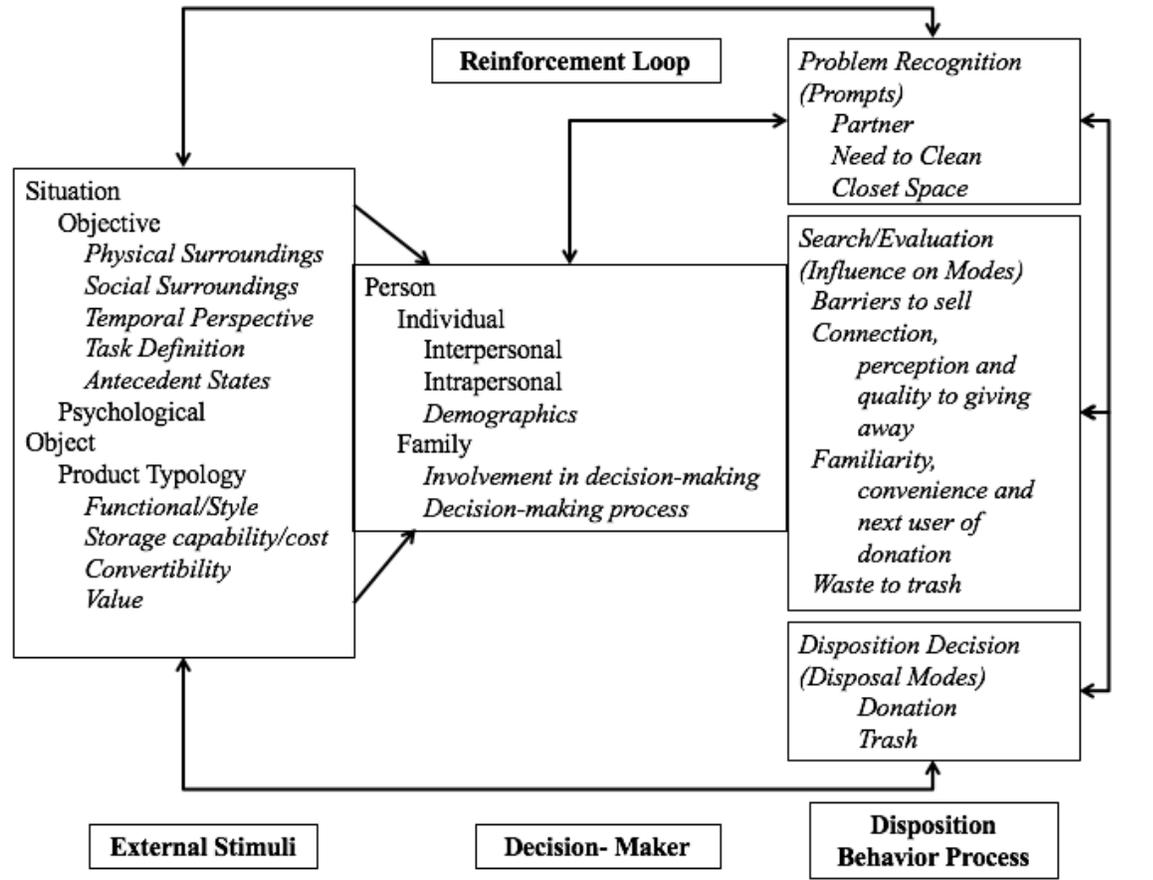


Figure 5 Consumer Product Disposition Process Edited

Built upon the conceptual framework put forth by Hanson (1980), this model attempts to shed some light on the connections between the apparel disposal process, external stimuli and the decision-maker. This is not a comprehensive model, but simply a step towards making a conceptual model applicable.

## Chapter VI: Discussion

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

### **Summary of Findings**

Exploring male apparel disposal revealed clues to prompts, influences on choosing between modes and the modes actually used. Prompts to clean out the closet were divided into three themes, influences from significant others, limited closet space and the feeling of a need to clean. These prompts needed to be combined in some way in order for the prompt to be strong enough to create action.

Influences on disposal modes were first separated into the modes with each having its own themes that swayed consideration. Selling apparel was the least used by males disposing due to barriers such as uncertainty regarding styles, and a preference for alternative options. If these were not in the way, selling was used as a disposal mode but only by three of the participants. Giving away to friends or family was a mode used by participants but certain criteria had to be met. In order to give away apparel a connection to the person was needed in order for participants to feel that this action was acceptable. The quality of the garment was also key, as well as the positive perceptions of the receiver so as not to offend.

Donation was tightly intertwined with trash as forms of disposal. In order for donation to occur participants needed to have a familiarity with the organization, and the location needed to be convenient. When evaluating whether the garment was to be donated or be thrown in the trash participants thought of the next user. For the garment to be donated the participants needed to be sure that it was worth the money to the next user,

if not it was thrown in the trash. Though the participants did not see any value in the items to be placed in the trash, they sometimes contradicted these words by re-using the garment as a cleaning rag.

Actions taken by participants indicate a desire to extend the life of the garment or destroy it. Donation and trash were the two most commonly utilized modes of apparel disposal. Participants described items donated as “not worn” while those thrown in the trash were “ruined” or “old and crappy.” Behaviors fell in line with participant interviews and suggest a desire to extend the life of a garment even if they are not fully cognizant of this. It is interesting to note that there seemed to be no clear influence on the disposal process based on demographic information collected.

### **Implications**

Results of this study suggest implications not only to the understanding of apparel disposal but to a wider body of research on consumption and waste. Waste “constitutes the self in the habits and embodied practices through which we decide what is connected to us and what isn’t” (Hawkins, 2006, pg.4). This study provides a glimpse into the male apparel disposal process and the findings offer a deeper understanding than what has previously been reported. How we conceptualize clothing that is thrown away may need to be shifted. This study suggests a deeper level of consideration for the next user, rather than an action taken for ease or convenience. Expanding on this understanding may assist entities that are attempting to reduce textile waste in landfills.

Findings also suggest men have a similar relationship with their clothing disposal that women have. Male participants ranged from fully engaged in fashion to having no concept of ‘fashion’ and yet all held associations, some more explicit than others, to

apparel. Connections drawn here indicate that men should not be left out of apparel studies. Finally, educating everyone, not just women, on ways to extend the life of a garment need to occur.

### **Contributions**

Exploring male apparel disposal contributes to a limited body of research on apparel disposal that focuses almost exclusively on females. Adding to general disposal research this study links acquisition, inventory and disposal beliefs to actions. This research expands on connections between previous research and models and builds onto those models in order to contribute to the disposal literature. Building upon Hanson's (1980) conceptual model of disposal adds to application of it in the future. Significant findings include a lack of connection between demographic background and disposal. Also findings of partner influence as a prompt for disposal has not been previously noted. Finally, by recognizing the influences on disposal modes used we may now be able to investigate to further understand why alternatives are underutilized.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Though this study adds to a growing body of literature there are limitations. Due to constraints only ten participants were interviewed within a specific age range. As previous research has suggested (Lane, Horne, and Bicknell, 2009; Mitchel, Montgomery and Rauch, 2009) age, is only one factor in disposal. To gain a better understanding more diverse socio-demographic factors should be included as well as a larger number of participants. Another limitation of this study is the timeframe, a longer time period of tracking apparel disposal and a follow up interview may shed light on changes over time.

Of the ten participants nine have submitted disposal logs, gaining insight into what was said versus done is key in understanding the knowledge to action gap, without these logs educated assumptions are made.

Building on this research, future studies have many avenues for exploration. Significance in the impact that a partner has on the disposal process suggests that family involvement in decision-making process needs to be investigated further. Understanding family influences may assist in enforcing or dispelling myths surrounding males and their (supposed lack of) attachment to apparel. Exploring the connection between past experiences and current actions would also add to our understanding of actions taken. Participants suggested behaviors in connection to past family patterns and this may be a stronger indicator if probed further. Though participants were unable to mend or alter their own clothing, exploring the impact of sewing knowledge on disposal practices may be beneficial. Further research may also seek to understand perceptions surrounding donation as it pertains to thinking of the next user. Selling was the least used by participants as a mode of disposal, seeking to understand the negative associations may shed light on changing those perceptions in the future to extend the life of a garment. These are just a few suggestions on where this growing research area may extend.

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# Appendix

## Interview Questions

Before starting the interview, ask the participant if audio recording is acceptable, as well as taking notes

### Acquisition

How often do you acquire apparel? (once a year, once a month, etc)

What are your main forms of acquisition? (buying new, buying used, given, etc)

When are you most likely to seek out new additions to your wardrobe? (events, life changes, weight, etc)

Where do you go to find these new additions?

### Inventory: (apparel items not worn in the last year)

Would you share with me why you haven't worn this time recently?

When was the last time you did wear it?

Is there a psychological/sentimental value attached to this item for you?

Do you know how to mend clothing (holes, stains, ect)?

If you were to dispose of this piece, how would you go about it?

Why would you select that disposal method?

### Disposal

What would you say typically prompts your apparel disposal?

Events (garage sales, clothing exchanges), Seasonal (change of seasons),

Unexpected

Can you tell me about reasons for disposal?

Holes, stains, fit, styling issues, closet space, etc

What modes of apparel disposal do you utilize?

Would you give me an example of items that would be disposed of in each way, and possible reasons for these modes?

Donate (charity/goodwill)

Give to family or friends

Sell (consignment shops, online)

Clothing exchanges

Throw in the trash

Any methods you use that were not mentioned?

Is there anything else regarding your apparel buying, wearing or disposal habits you would like to share?

## Demographic Information

**Age range:**

30-34     **3**  
 35-39     **6**  
 40-45     **1**

**Ethnicity:**

Caucasian                     **9**  
 African American  
 Hispanic American         **1**  
 Asian American  
 Other Ethnicity  
 Mixed Race

**Income Category:**

Less than 15,000  
 15,000 – 50,999             **3**  
 51,000 – 75,999             **3**  
 76,000 - 100,999  
 101,000- 150,999         **3**  
 More than 150,000         **1**

**Living Arrangement:**

Living alone  
 With significant other         **10**  
 With roommates (not relatives)  
 With relatives

**Children in the home?**

Yes : **7** No: **3**

**Relationship to interviewer:**

Friend                             **4**  
 Family friend  
 Personal friend  
 Work relationship             **1**  
 Church relationship  
 Other                                 **5**

Explain: Referred by friend

**Highest Level of Education Completed:**

Some High School  
 High School/GED  
 Technical/Trade School  
 Some College                     **1**  
 Bachelors Degree                 **4**  
 Postgraduate Degree             **5**

**Frequency of donations per year:**

Never donate  
 1 or 2 times                         **4**  
 2 to 3 times                         **4**  
 3 to 4 times                         **2**  
 4 to 6 times  
 6 or more times

**Occupation:**

Graduate Student  
 Business Analyst  
 Marketing Director  
 Photographer/Insurance  
 Assistant Professor  
 Teacher  
 Commercial Real Estate Appraiser  
 Urologist  
 Professor  
 Program Analyst

## Apparel Disposal Log

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	<b>Apparel Disposal Log</b>						Apparel Disposal Method						Prompt/Reasons
2	Date	Executed by:	Apparel Item:	Consignment Store	Secondhand Store (Goodwill, Salvation Army)	Give to Family or Friends	Clothing Exchange or Rummage Sale	Garage Sale	Donate to Charity	Reuse	Trash (see below)	Other	Reasons for disposal method selected
3													
4													
5													
6													
7													
8													
9													
10			Item Thrown in Trash	Physical Condition (Holes, Stains, etc)		Fit or Style (Weight flux, etc)		Situational (Closet Space)		Convenience		Other	
11													
12													
13													
14													
15													

## **Condensed Site Questions**

### **Reason/Prompt**

Reasons for clothing being disposed of in the first place?

Was there a specific prompt or event that sparked this?

### **Motivation (influence on modes)**

What influences how you decide where to dispose of apparel?

What issues come to mind when deciding upon disposal mode?

### **Destination/Modes of Disposal**

How often would you say you dispose of your apparel in this mode?

What other apparel disposal modes do you utilize?

Focus exclusively on apparel disposal modes utilized

Thank them for their time

# IRB Approval



**Institutional Review Board**  
University of Missouri-Columbia

190 Galena Hall; Dc074.00  
Columbia, MO 65212  
573-882-3181  
irb@missouri.edu

August 19, 2015

Principal Investigator: Jenna Marie Bubna  
Department: Textile and Apparel Mgmt

Your Exempt Application to project entitled Investigation into Men's Apparel Disposal was reviewed and approved by the MU Institutional Review Board according to terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	2003407
IRB Review Number	207435
Approval Date of this Review	August 19, 2015
IRB Expiration Date	August 19, 2016
Level of Review	Exempt
Project Status	Active - Open to Enrollment
Exempt Categories	45 CFR 46.101b(2)
Risk Level	Minimal Risk
Internal Funding	Departmental Funding

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 Annual Exempt Form 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 Annual Exempt Form
6. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.
7. Utilize all approved research documents located within the attached files 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.

# IRB Approval – Amendment



**Institutional Review Board**  
University of Missouri-Columbia

190 Galena Hall; Dc074.00  
Columbia, MO 65212  
573-882-3181  
irb@missouri.edu

November 3, 2015

Principal Investigator: Jenna Marie Bubna  
Department: Textile and Apparel Mgmt

Your Exempt Amendment Form to project entitled Investigation into Men's Apparel Disposal was reviewed and approved by the MU Institutional Review Board according to terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	2003407
IRB Review Number	209947
Initial Application Approval Date	August 19, 2015
Approval Date of this Review	November 03, 2015
IRB Expiration Date	August 19, 2016
Level of Review	Exempt
Project Status	Active - Open to Enrollment
Risk Level	Minimal Risk

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.
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6. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.
7. Utilize all approved research documents located within the attached files 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,  
MU Institutional Review Board