I FEEL LIKE MY LOVE RUNS TOO DEEP:

VINTAGE CONSUMERS, SHARED VALUES,

AND THE CLOTHING CONSUMPTION PROCESS

by

SAMANTHA MEACHAM

(Under the Direction of Laura McAndrews)

ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of vintage consumers' shared values that led to the decision to consume and wear vintage clothing. It also investigates how those values developed. My goal was to determine how vintage consumers go through a clothing consumption process and care process that may be different from past research, due to these different shared values. Using semi-structured in-depth interviews, it was discovered that the vintage consumer's values exist within the individual, the community, and the physical store and developed out of a need for individualism and authenticity. These values do influence the clothing consumption process of the vintage consumer, identified as a cyclical process that goes through the stages of Combat/Hunt, Discovery, Ownership, and New Life. Humanization and research acted as threads throughout value creation and the vintage clothing consumption process.

INDEX WORDS: Vintage Clothing, Fast Fashion, Shared Values, Clothing Consumption Process, Subculture

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BBA, Grand Valley State University, 2013

A Thesis Proposal Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2016

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December 2016

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 contains the following sections: (a) background of the study, (b) purpose of the study, and (c) significance of the study.

Background of the Study

Vintage apparel is, in the context of fashion history, a relatively new phenomenon (Fischer, 2015; Mackinney-Valentin, 2010). Generally understood as "clothing that is 20 years old or more, with a recognizable decades-old look" (Fischer, 2015, p. 48), vintage also includes aspects of a social practice and a lifestyle. This is due to the large role of hunting for items, the personal involvement with the apparel items that are found, and the vintage community contribute to the consumption of vintage (Cervellon, Carey, & Harms, 2012; Duffy, Hewer, & Wilson, 2012; Peters, 2014). A substantial amount of research has been done on vintage that considers the motivations why people choose to buy vintage clothing. The most significant of the motivations include value, uniqueness, nostalgia, eco-consciousness, and need for status (Baker, 2012; Cassidy & Bennett, 2012; DeLong, Heinemann, & Reiley, 2005; Duffy *et al*., 2012; McColl, Canning, McBride, Nobbs, & Shearer, 2013; Palmer, 2005; Peters, 2014; Reiley, 2008).

In comparison to vintage clothing, there is current mass produced clothing, today's prominent model for clothing production, which includes fast fashion, prêt-à-porter, and, occasionally, high fashion items (Gabrielli, Baghi, & Codeluppi, 2013). Garments made in this way tend to be designed weekly in some cases, so that the selection is constantly fresh, thus

leading to high turnover (Miller, 2013). The reasons people buy mass-produced clothing items are, of course, different than why they buy vintage items. These motivations include brand, trendiness, price, availability, and size and fit (Byun & Sternquist, 2012; Ghemawat & Nueno, 2006; Jacoby, Olson, & Haddock, 1971; Kasambala, Kempen, & Pandarum, 2015; Morganosky, 1990; Otieno, Harrow, & Lea-Greenwood, 2005; Watson & Yan, 2013).

In addition to these motivations, perceived quality plays a role in the consumer's decision to buy a product. Perceived quality is a well-researched area of consumer behavior for mass produced apparel. While the physical, objective quality of a garment is important, consumers use perceived quality to analyze, both the intrinsic, or physical, cues and the extrinsic cues, which are not part of the physical product (Forsythe, Presley, & Caton, 1996; Ophuis & Trijp, 1995; Swinker & Hines, 2006). In conjunction with quality cues are quality attributes which can only be determined post-purchase and after the item has been used (Ophius & Van Trijp, 1995). Together, quality cues and attributes help a consumer develop their perceived quality of an item throughout the entire life of the product. While previous vintage research has mentioned quality as a reason for purchasing vintage, the review of literature indicates it may play a role equal to the motivators of value, uniqueness, nostalgia, eco-consciousness, and need for status, hence its inclusion in this study.

Geitel Winakor (1969) developed the clothing consumption process model, the foundation for understanding what people do when they consume clothing. In this process, consumption goes through the three primary steps of "acquisition," "inventory," and "discard" as well as "use" in combination with the inventory stage (Winakor, 1969). Research indicates that fast fashion results in a shortened clothing consumption process; those who buy fast fashion acquire more, use less, and discard more quickly (Watson & Yan, 2015). Although little research

has been done to understand the clothing consumption process in relation to vintage, it can be inferred that vintage consumers are more in line with slow fashion consumers, those who consume for quality as opposed to quantity (Watson & Yan, 2015).

The vintage consumer, as an individual and group, have a certain set of values, described as motivators and determinants, that have led them to the decision of buying vintage. This process of their values leading into consumption choices reflects Carman's (1978) model of values, lifestyles, and consumption in which certain shared values lead to lifestyle choices and consumption habits that in turn strengthened the values and continued in a loop system. When this happens long enough, subcultures may develop. Like the vintage consumer, record enthusiasts hold certain values for an object that may be outdated due to technological advances (Yochim & Biddinger, 2008). This group of consumers, however, has been identified as a subculture because of their shared values, the authenticity they see in the object, and the relationship they have with the object (Yochim & Biddinger, 2008). Together, these studies may indicate that the vintage community is itself a subculture.

Vintage in Athens, Georgia.

This study was conducted within the city of Athens, Georgia. The Athens' vintage community is robust and thriving; there are nine stores that sell vintage clothing near and within the Downtown Athens area. These vintage stores include Atomic, Dynamite, Community, and Agora, all of which specialize in particular decades of vintage. In addition, numerous vintage sellers that have stores online and/or sell at local markets. In sum, the vintage community is active. Fashion shows are frequently put on by those involved in the vintage community, the vintage stores work with one another for fashion shoots and styling events, and those who buy vintage are well-known to one another.

Athens is known for being both an artistic center and a college town. As the home to bands like R.E.M. and the B-52s, Athens has become a city known for music and the arts, where creativity is encouraged and fostered. As a college town, home to the University of Georgia, Athens has a large population of young people, with the median age estimated at 26.2 years old as of the 2010 Census (Demographics, n.d.). The total population as of 2014 was estimated at 120,938 people and Spring 2016 enrollment for the university was 34,895 (Demographics, n.d.). While there is some divide between the large student population who does not live in Athens year around and those who are residents of the city, called "townies," those who do interact with each other tend to be within the creative scene. For example, of the participants in this study, only one is originally from the area. All the other participants came to Athens for various reasons, like school or work, and ended up staying because they fell in love with the unique scene and creative culture that Athens has.

The combination of a strong and active vintage scene, a creative culture, and a relatively young population makes Athens an ideal location to begin understanding the vintage community and its values on a deeper level.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of vintage consumers' shared values which lead to the decision to consume and wear vintage clothing. I have also studied how those values developed. The determinants outlined above – value, uniqueness, nostalgia, eco-consciousness, status, and quality – were used as starting points for defining shared values. In addition, the intention was to determine if vintage consumers go through a clothing consumption process and care process that is different from that of consumers of contemporary garments, due to these different shared values.

Significance of the Study

Understanding the shared values of vintage consumers and how those values affect their clothing consumption process has significance for society, the fashion industry, and academia. First, the participants in this study were asked to think deeply about why they buy vintage, the role vintage plays in their lives, and the process in which they care for their clothing. Through reflecting on their relationship with vintage, the participants may become more aware of the significance they have as a consumer going forward. In addition, they may share their experiences with others inside the vintage community, building connections and strengthening the community within Athens. Beyond the participants and vintage consumers, the specific way vintage consumers consume their clothing may act as an alternative, sustainable model of consumption for more modern-day consumers. By not feeding into the fast fashion model of clothing production and consumption and, instead, purchasing garments with certain intentions, could lead to changes in total consumption and potentially mean more sustainable consumers.

Second, within the fashion industry, due to the overwhelming prevalence of fast fashion, there is a high turnover in clothing among those consumers who care deeply about being on trend. The extreme opposite of fast fashion is slow fashion in which high quality and timeless classics are of key importance, leading to lower rates of consumption. This research may bring awareness to the industry of an alternative way of producing and marketing apparel that fits between fast and slow fashion. The industry may find there are consumers who are tired of fast fashion and want a better balance between buying higher quality garments and having fuller wardrobes. By focusing on building a lasting relationship with garments that represent higher quality, certain fashion companies may find a loyal consumer base.

Third, this research adds to the body of knowledge in academia in two areas: (a) vintage and its consumers, and (b) the clothing consumption process. Previous research on vintage has been more explorative in nature with little depth into how the vintage consumers' values developed and how they affect clothing consumption. This research fills that gap. The focus of research in apparel consumption is on mass produced clothes, thus resulting in very little on secondhand clothing that is defined as vintage. This research on vintage, a very specific type of secondhand, broadens our understanding of consumption habits overall.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 contains the following sections: (a) understanding vintage, (b) fast fashion: mass produced clothing, (c) perceived quality, and (d) clothing consumption process.

Understanding Vintage

Vintage as an Object

The term "vintage" as it relates to fashion is often understood to mean "clothing that is 20 years old or more, with a recognizable decades-old look" (Fischer, 2015, p.48) and usually originates from no later than the 1920s (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012). DeLong *et al.* (2005) state that vintage is differentiated from historical, antique, secondhand, consignment, reused, and resale clothing in that it involves a special type or model of dress and being able to know and appreciate such specifics as time or period when originally produced or worn. Mackinney-Valentin (2010) refers to vintage as secondhand clothes related to retro as a trend. However, vintage does not have to be secondhand and secondhand might not be vintage since vintage pieces are not necessarily pieces that have been previously used (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012).

McColl *et al.* (2012) found in their interviews with vintage fashion retailers that almost all agreed that vintage was secondhand but the most desirable pieces were those that had rarely or never been worn. By categorizing vintage as the physical revival of an item that has been excluded from the fashion system at some point (Mackinney-Valentin, 2010), both worn and unworn items of considerable age that represent the zeitgeist of a specific era fit into the understanding of vintage in terms of fashion.

Vintage as a Social Practice

Defining vintage as it relates to objects is difficult but the concept becomes even more complex since it is used both in relation to a practice and a lifestyle. In their research, Duffy *et al.* (2012) adopted a material culture approach to vintage consumption to understand it as a social practice. They found that vintage is a way of looking at objects, of interacting with others around these objects, and building relationships with others based on shared appreciation for knowledge and skill. Therefore, vintage is not only an inherent characteristic of an object but relies on these practices to give the objects their meaning (Duffy *et al.*, 2012).

Another type of practice that is important to the consumption of vintage. The idea of treasure hunting deals with the hedonic motives and recreational aspects of searching for and buying vintage goods while being selective and passionate in the acquiring of such items (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012). DeLong *et al.* (2005), in interviews with five distinctly different women, who were heavily involved in vintage consumption, found that the anticipation of discovering something unusual while out vintage shopping was an important motivation for doing the shopping in the first place. Vintage stores themselves cater to this active process of vintage by creating spaces that must be rummaged or sifted through in order to find that treasure or bargain (Duffy *et al.*, 2012; McColl *et al.*, 2012).

Vintage as a Lifestyle

The lifestyle aspect of vintage comes from its potential of creating a community of people involved with vintage garments or a subculture to form an authentic self. In the study by Peters (2014), the purpose was to look at vintage through the lens of performance studies, fashion studies, and cultural studies to suggest a new perspective of the concept. Through observations and interviews at the Brooklyn Flea, a flea market, she found that the groups

involved in the vintage market, which she defined as the consumers, the vendors, and the bloggers, made up the community that gave the vintage objects and the Flea their meaning (Peters, 2014). Without this community of those who truly lived a life centered around vintage beyond just the buying and selling of it, the vintage items would merely be secondhand (Peters, 2014). Communities like the one found at the Brooklyn Flea enhance the involvement of those individuals who partake in a vintage centered lifestyle, creating a way of life for them within said communities.

The subcultural aspect of vintage takes these communities one step further. Veenstra and Kuipers (2013) argue that vintage is neither mainstream nor subcultural because it deploys the "tools" of subcultural consumer culture regarding communication through consumption and identity performance without rebelling or explicitly subverting items. However, there are retro subcultures that use vintage styles as a stable dress practice to adhere to the lifestyle of a different decade as opposed to what is mainstream, such as the Rockabilly subculture of the late 20th century (Mackinney-Valentin, 2010).

Heike Jenß (2004) has done extensive research on the Sixties Scene in Germany, where those involved in the scene used their period style to generate a lifestyle that is completely dedicated to the 1960s. This lifestyle is their means of creating an authentic, individual identity as well as a way of integrating into a tribe of like-minded people with whom they communicate their shared interests all using history and time appropriated through secondhand dress and retro style, i.e. vintage (Jenß, 2004; 2005). Groups such as this, who have a subcultural group identity, may not be as prevalent as the casual vintage consumer but their existence is none the less important in the understanding of the use of vintage.

The Definition of Vintage

For this study, vintage is defined using a combination of the aspects laid out previously. Therefore, vintage is the material revival of dress, typically over twenty years old, that tends to represent a specific era, whose value and meaning is achieved through active practice, which includes acquiring knowledge, seeking out items, and being involved in a community of like-minded users.

Historic Overview

Historically, vintage is a relatively new term that has evolved out of the consumption of secondhand clothing. Fischer (2015) researched the evolution of the meaning of secondhand clothing from being associated with charity to gaining middle class acceptability as vintage style in the United States. Through an analysis of popular press to trace the emergence of vintage as a trend, Fischer (2015) began in the 1950s when secondhand clothes were only part of charity, thus undesirable. When the term "vintage" was used, it was done in a way similar to wine, i.e. a particular time period was central (Fischer, 2015). Having just endured the rations and restrictions of World War II, Americans entered an "age of gleeful consumerism," leaving secondhand clothes for those unfortunate enough to not be able to afford what was new (Morton, 2016, para. 4). Into the 1960s, a slight shift began with the rise of the mods and the hippies, who took the secondhand cast-offs and turned them into "vintage fashion," and the emergence of resale shops (Fischer, 2015; Morton, 2016, para. 5). This dress revolution began around 1965 in England and in 1967 a fashion editorial from the *New York Times* reported on how England's young were not only buying antique and Edwardian dress, but wearing them in public as well (Morton, 2016). Around 1967, this "fancy-dress craze" took off in the United States and Fischer

(2015) discovered that the meaning again shifted dressing in decades-old clothing as opposed to a specific time period (Morton, 2016).

The 1970s saw a rise in the popularity of vintage as anachronistic dressing that became a mainstream fashion trend (Fischer, 2015). The first part of the decade saw increased reportings on vintage shop locations in the United States and the individuals who shopped there. In 1975, the book *Cheap Chic,* a guide to money-conscious style, declared that it was "not only sensible but damned exciting to track down beautiful secondhand clothes" (Morton, 2016, para. 9). Even the *New York Times* agreed with this sentiment, stating that "clever women" had discovered that antiques clothes were made in a way and with such detail that were not "often found on clothes these days" (Morton, 2016, para. 10). Although the terms "used," "secondhand," and "antique" were still used in regards to this clothing, "vintage clothing" had also entered into the vocabulary in what Simon Reynolds, *Retromania* author, called a "rebranding coup" (Morton, 2016, para. 15). With places like Altman's, the New York City department store, opening a vintage boutique and the auction house Sotheby's, known for its fine art auctions, starting fashion auctions, it was clear that the perception and popularity of vintage clothing was changing, leading to problems of scarcity and higher prices (Fischer, 2015; Mackinney-Valentin, 2010; Morton, 2016). By the end of the 1970s, the vintage trend had reached the fashion press in the United States; however, there was still no consensus of how exactly to describe the new style of dressing in past styles, nor did the elite of the fashion world fully embraced the vintage trend (Fischer, 2015).

Through the 1980s and 1990s, vintage's popularity continued until it developed into an established and accepted fashion source. More and more publications reported on vintage clothing through the 1980s but this reporting became mundane, suggesting the readers already knew what it was but wanted more information on the where and what to buy (Fischer, 2015). At

this time, the meaning of "collectible" widened, and the understanding of what could be considered as vintage broadened (Mackinney-Valentin, 2010). In the 1990s, designers and celebrities took up the trend as inspiration, as seen in Marc Jacob's "nouveau vintage" look of the 90s or Kate Moss's wearing of vintage pieces. This led to a trickle down of vintage as fashion and an aesthetic shift that removed the stigma of wearing secondhand items (McColl *et al.*, 2013; Tolkein, 2000). What followed was a further differentiation between vintage and used clothing; vintage clothing was "aesthetic object, to be valued, understood, and worn in terms of, and as an appreciation of, their design, construction, and authenticity" (Gregson, Brooks, & Crewe, 2001, p. 8).

In the 21st century, the continuation of celebrity endorsement furthered vintage into the mainstream. The "watershed" moment for vintage was when Julia Roberts wore a vintage Valentino gown to the 2001 Oscars. It was such a huge fashion statement that it put vintage into vogue (Mackinney-Valentin, 2010). Vintage fashion was boosted with the growth of the internet and e-commerce (Mackinney-Valentin, 2010). The increased awareness and popularity of vintage and the wealth of available information on the Internet along with more accessible awareness of and public forums for purchasing vintage have all aided in the growth of vintage and its consumption (Cassidy & Bennett, 2012). Bloggers are another key player in the distribution of information on vintage clothing. Peters' (2014) discovered that bloggers were one of the three groups central in performing vintage. Bloggers, through their photographs of the street style they encountered and the commentary on it, promoted and disseminated vintage fashion (Peters, 2014). The blogger becomes a "cultural mediator," creating a cachet for vintage identity, and making the goods and vintage mood desirable to their audience (Peters, 2014).

It should be noted that during this growth of vintage fashion, there were changes happening in the production of new garments which may have led consumers to seek out more authentic options. From the late 1960s to 1980s, the garment industry in the United States became corporatized, which gradually led to a relative standardization of clothing styles, garment quality, and the shopping experience, taking a sense of spontaneity and discovery out of the shopping experience (Fischer, 2015). By the 1990s, fast fashion, which refers to the concept of shortening lead time and offering new products to the market as fast as possible, had become the norm for clothing production; this type of production meant more manufacturing was happening overseas where labor was cheap but also meant quality suffered more (Fischer, 2015; Sunhilde & Simona, 2014). This change contributed to the rise of vintage as a trend in the United States. As the changes in the clothing industry led to relative standardization, some consumers turned to vintage to find unique pieces, of better quality, and a more interesting shopping experience (Fischer, 2014).

Fast fashion only accelerated these tendencies, giving those who already bought vintage no reason to buy new and those who had not bought vintage a reason to consider buying it (Fischer, 2014). The ecological concerns related to the growth of fast fashion have only amplified the fashion industry's negative impact in terms of increased textile waste, production, and use and end-of-life management of textiles (Sunhilde & Simona, 2014). Secondhand clothing is a sustainable alternative to the new, with retro and vintage styles fitting into this category (Maynard, 2013).

Motivations for Buying Vintage

The field of research on vintage and the motivating factors that contribute to why an individual chooses to purchase a vintage item have been developed, and each factor was studied.

One prevalent concept in the study of motivations for buying vintage is value, both as a concept of value creation and the perceived value of vintage compared to the price that was paid (Baker, 2012; Duffy *et al*., 2012).

Other motivations that contribute to the purchase intention of vintage were found in the research by Cervellon, Carey, and Harms (2012). Their purpose was to discover what factors contribute to why women in Paris purchase vintage fashion versus secondhand fashion. They started by identifying six antecedents to purchasing vintage versus secondhand: (a) nostalgia, (b) fashion involvement, (c) need for uniqueness, (d) need for status, (e) frugality, and (f) eco-consciousness (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012). Based on their results, the main driver for vintage fashion purchasing was nostalgia followed by fashion involvement and the third was the need for uniqueness (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012). Although Cervellon et al.'s study found that ecological consciousness did not directly affect the choice of vintage consumption, it is still worth considering as a motivation because other research has been done which support eco-consciousness as a motivation of shopping for vintage clothing (Shen, Richards, & Liu, 2013; Sunhulde & Simona, 2014; Yan, Bae, & Xu, 2015).

Finally, need for status, though not found to be significantly related to vintage consumption in the research by Cervellon *et al.*, plays some role as a motivation due to vintage's parallel nature to luxury goods (Chan, To, & Chu, 2015). Exclusivity plays a large role in the vintage object's value, thus giving the user status (Baker, 2012; DeLong *et al.*, 2005; McColl *et al.*, 2013; Peters, 2005).

Vintage Determinants. Based on these findings from past research, this study will focus on the motivations of value (Baker, 2012; Duffy *et al*., 2012; Peters, 2014), uniqueness (Cassidy & Bennett, 2012; DeLong *et al.*, 2005; Palmer, 2005; Reiley, 2008), nostalgia (Duffy, Hewer, &

Wilson, 2012; Fischer, 2015; Goulding, 2002; Veenstra & Kuipers, 2013), eco-consciousness (Shen, Richards, & Liu, 2013; Sunhulde & Simona, 2014; Yan, Bae, & Xu, 2015) and need for status (Baker, 2012; DeLong *et al.*, 2005; McColl *et al.*, 2013; Peters, 2005) as the most important motivation factors in vintage consumption and will now be explored more in-depth.

Value. There are two different types of value in relation to buying vintage. The first is the process of value creation: revaluation of items that relies on the knowledge of past cultural associations of objects and styles as well as current fashion trends (Baker, 2012). It also involves the use of cultural, social, and aesthetic judgments to value the items as well as the context in which the of the item is used (Baker, 2012). In this process, vintage items gain monetary value and become desirable. Both the seller and the buyer need to be knowledgeable to understand the items' value, otherwise "vintage would merely be secondhand" (Peters, 2014, p. 235). Part of this knowledge comes from recognizing the exclusivity of a vintage item. This perception of exclusivity creates a higher value for those 'in the know' that allows for premium pricing and provides differentiation (McColl *et al.*, 2013).

The second type of value is the value compared to price paid. This was a common theme in the 1980s for vintage consumers because if one could not afford contemporary designers, vintage still offered high quality at affordable prices (Fischer, 2015). That reason is still applicable today. In the study by DeLong *et al.* (2005), a group of five women were interviewed in-depth about their motivations and vintage shopping habits. All the women interviewed mentioned the comparison of monetary value versus what they actually paid, giving the researchers the impression they paid less for the item as compared to how they valued it (DeLong *et al.*, 2005). A factor in this exchange value is condition, or how far an individual would go in repairing or remaking a vintage purchase (DeLong *et al.*, 2005). Condition in

relation to value is a unique characteristic of vintage since it is not a trait people consider when they buy new items (Byun & Sternquist, 2012; Gabrielli *et al.*, 2013; Miller, 2013; Watson & Yan, 2013).

Uniqueness. Uniqueness and a consumer's strive to attain it as a trait has been defined as "pursuing differentness relative to others through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one's social and self-image" (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter 2001, p. 52). Specifically, within the field of vintage, this can also be described as a need for individuality or a pursuit of an authentic vintage identity. Vintage has shifted into mass culture consumption primarily because fashion today is rarely exclusive (Palmer, 2005). The work by DeLong, Heinemann, and Reiley (2005) found that the role of a unique, individual identity played a part in their choice to shop vintage. Two of the women they interviewed stated that vintage was used as a way of breaking away from mainstream fashion and creating an individual identity (DeLong *et al.*, 2005). Compared to consumers who only buy new clothes, regular vintage wearers have a higher desire for uniqueness, they perceived their appearance to be more unique, and use a wider variety of sources to find one-of-a-kind items (Reiley, 2008). The importance of individuality was also supported by Cassidy and Bennet (2012) who, in an attempt to find the reasons why people purchase vintage, found that although changing attitudes and fashion trends played a role in vintage consumption, the personal elements or style, quality, and individuality were considered the main drivers by the vintage fashion consumer.

The desire for a unique look through vintage consumption is often paired with creating an authentic look. In the choice to buy vintage as opposed to new design, vintage items symbolize uniqueness and authenticity: a distinctive look that is worn by nobody else (Veenstra & Kuipers,

2013; DeLong *et al.*, 2005). Authenticity refers to "sincerity, truthfulness, originality, and the feeling and practices of being true to one's self or others" (Veenstra & Kuipers, 2013, p. 357). Jenß's (2004) research on the construction of authenticity in youth cultures through the use of historic style dress discovered that when using vintage to create an authentic identity a problem arises in the relationship between a contemporary body and retro dress. Modern bodies may clash with the materiality of historic garments and transform their original appearance; thus, they are no longer truly "authentic" (Jenß, 2004). Although this may be the case, Jenß (2004) argues that it does not make the wearers inauthentic; instead, authenticity needs to be viewed as a cultural construct. The performance of authenticity allows for the authenticity of the object to merge with the subject, in other words the originality and uniqueness of the garment literally rubs off on the wearer (Jenß, 2004).

Nostalgia. Nostalgia, in relation to vintage, is a re-appropriation and reinvention of consumer goods, necessary in communicating a longing for an actual past (Veenstra & Kuipers, 2013). It also refers to alienation to contemporary consumption (Veenstra & Kuipers, 2013). Building on this idea, Fischer (2015) states that the nostalgia associated with vintage clothing has a layered meaning that involves the idealization of the past and an appreciation of the quality of the item because of former production methods. This nostalgia allows the wearer to add value and distinction to their look (Fischer, 2015). Vintage can be described as a form of 'learned nostalgia'; it is an embodied practice that conveys preference for a time that has long passed but that is brought back into modern consumption through the renewed interest in past objects (Duffy, Hewer, & Wilson, 2012; Goulding, 2002).

Nostalgia has been found to be one of the more important motivating factors for vintage consumption. Per Cervellon, Carey, and Harms (2012), it was the principal driver to purchase

vintage fashion in comparison to secondhand and was not at all linked to the age of the respondents. This result, they determined, indicated a tribute to the material culture of the past (Cervellon, Carey, & Harms, 2012). The finding that the age of the consumer does not affect how prone they are to nostalgia has been supported by another study (Holbrook & Schindler, 1996). It has also been found by Holbrook (1993) that women were found to be slightly more prone to nostalgia than men.

Eco-consciousness. Research on the importance of eco-consciousness in relation to the intent to buy vintage has shown mixed results. Fast-fashion refers to the concept of shortening lead time and offering new products to the market as fast as possible. The consequence of this is that as production and consumption increase, so does the rate of discarding apparel because the item is no longer considered fashionable (Sunhulde & Simona, 2014). The research by Shen, Richards, and Liu (2013) sought to understand whether customers' knowledge of sustainable fashion played a role in their decision. The standard criteria for what makes fashion sustainable for Shen et al.'s investigation includes 'Recycle,' 'Organic,' 'Vintage,' 'Vegan,' 'Artisan,' 'Locally made,' 'Custom,' and 'Fair trade certified' (Shen *et al.*, 2013). Shen et al. found that consumers perceived 'Vintage' and 'Recycle' together as one factor of sustainable fashion (Shen *et al.*, 2013). However, other studies show that secondhand is more closely related to eco-consciousness and environmentally friendly clothing consumption than vintage or that neither are driven by it directly (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012; Yan, Bae, & Xu, 2015). This suggests that even though consumers acknowledge the importance of eco-friendly behavior, they are not buying vintage because of it (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012).

There are, however, cases where consumers state that they buy vintage because they consider it environmentally friendly. DeLong *et al.* (2005) found that each of the women they

interviewed mentioned recycling as a positive element in their choice to buy vintage. One woman in particular discussed the politics of buying recycled clothes and that she herself recycles pieces that she may not have worn in a year (DeLong *et al.*, 2005). Students in Reiley's (2008) study expressed an interest in used clothing to promote sustainability and redesign of already existing garments not because they did not want to buy new clothes but to preserve the environment. Cassidy and Bennet (2012) found that sustainable fashion ideals have emerged as a response to fast-fashion to reuse items as opposed to throwing away. One way of achieving this is through the consumption of vintage goods, since it is a form of recycling the higher quality of vintage apparel, makes it last longer, which Cassidy and Bennet (2012) found to be a consideration of one-third of their respondents.

Need for status. The need for status through consumption is defined as the "tendency to purchase goods and services for the status or social prestige value that they confer to the owner" (Eastman, Goldsmith, & Flynn, 1999, p. 41). Many studies that consider need for status tend to focus on the purchase of luxury goods and the motivations behind how those goods will enhance their status (Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010; Yang & Matilla, 2014). One of the most influential motivations for purchasing luxury goods as related to enhancing status is to avoid consuming products that are like those that people around them choose (Chan, To, & Chu, 2015). The need of uniqueness to demonstrate status makes vintage similar to luxury goods because both help the consumer stand out. The rise of fast fashion has led to a lack of individuality and exclusivity as more consumers are wearing the same garments so, in order to avoid this, more people are turning to vintage (Peters, 2005). Exclusivity of vintage allows for premium pricing and provides differentiation while individuality becomes a valuable signifier of status (Baker, 2012; McColl *et al.*, 2013). The vintage object itself has status through its new value (DeLong *et al.*, 2005).

Status can also be enhanced when those who are "in the know" recognize and appreciate the vintage item since they understand the value of the authentic item (Veensta & Kuipers, 2013). According to Palmer (2005), the transformation of old clothes into 'vintage' refutes the theory of conspicuous consumption and validates new and secondhand fashion by placing it within the status-giving arena of the art and decorative arts market.

Fast Fashion: Mass Produced Clothing

Defining Mass Produced Clothing

The production of ready-to-wear clothing has seen changes in recent years. Along with the traditional models of high fashion and prêt-à-porter (designer ready-to-wear clothing), fast fashion has become an important model of modern fashion production and consumption (Gabrielli *et al.*, 2013). Fast fashion brands meet their customer's needs of wanting to build an eclectic personal identity by combining many different elements that are temporary and at a low cost so that if mistakes are made there is little investment (Gabrielli *et al.*, 2013). Garments are designed weekly in some cases so that the selection is constantly fresh which leads to higher turnover (Miller, 2013). The growth of the fast fashion model has led to a convergence of fast fashion and fine fashion through the commoditization of the luxury brand industry and the "massclusivity" of fast fashion (Willems, Jenssens, Swinnen, Brengman, Streukens, & Vancauteren, 2011). This means that the gap between high-fashion brands and fast fashion brands is closing. In-vogue styles have also become more accessible to the masses (Willems *et al.*, 2011). For the purpose of this study, mass produced apparel will include fast fashion along with prêt-à-porter items.

Motivations for Buying Mass Produced Clothing

Like with vintage clothing, there are certain reasons that motivate a consumer to buy a specific item of mass produced clothing. Based on previous research, five significant motivations have been identified: 1) brand, 2) trendiness, 3) price, 4) availability, and 5) size and fit. Brand can include both the specific brand name and brand type, such as name brands or store brands, as well as brand origin (Jacoby *et al.*, 1971; Morganosky, 1990). Trendiness refers to how fashion-forward or on-trend a garment is, which is itself a large player in the growth of fast fashion (Watson & Yan, 2013). Price comes into play as a motivator in that a consumer of mass produced clothing wants to be able to purchase a large amount of clothing to build an interesting wardrobe but at an inexpensive cost (Watson & Yan, 2013). Availability, or at least the perceived limited availability, of mass produced fashion items plays a role in the urgency of purchase (Byun & Sternquist, 2012; Ghemawat & Nueno, 2006). Finally, fit and size determine if an item will be purchased in the first place for, if neither are right, it is unlikely a consumer will commit to making a purchase (Kasambala *et al.*, 2015; Otieno *et al.*, 2005).

Brand. Three different categories of branding have been researched in relation to clothing consumption: brand names, brand types, and brand origin. Brand name denotes a word, name, symbol, etc. that is used by a manufacturer or merchant to differentiate its product from others (Brand Name, n.d.). Beyond just a name or symbol, a brand also has a brand personality which represents more than just the functional benefits of the brand's products (Erdoğmuş & Bübeyri-Turan, 2012). Part of this brand personality may be a stylistic identity, which is the long-term stylistic code for a brand such as Chanel's simple yet elegant men's wear inspired style (Erdoğmuş & Bübeyri-Turan, 2012). Brand personality imparts symbolic associations onto the buyer and adds meaning to the consumer's life and personal identity (Erdoğmuş & Bübeyri-

Turan, 2012). Consumers look for brands whose personalities are in line with and emphasize their own as well as those that will add a new dimension to their self-perceptions (Erdoğmuş & Bübeyri-Turan, 2012). This concept holds true for both high-end brands and fast fashion brands (Erdoğmuş & Bübeyri-Turan, 2012).

One way fast fashion retailers develop and strengthen their brand personality is through co-branding, typically with luxury brand designers. Co-branding in the fashion industry is the pairing of two or more brands for making a joint effort in a new marketing venture and can attract consumers from both parent brands (Desai & Keller, 2002). One company well known for this is H&M, who has collaborated with Karl Lagerfeld, Viktor & Rolf, Versace, and Balmain, to name a few (Shen, Jung, Chow, & Wong, 2014). Another form of co-branding can come from a fashion retailer working with a celebrity, whether as an ambassador, endorser, or co-brand. This type of co-branding involves personality transfer (from the well-known individual to the brand) and has been found to have a substantial influence on purchase intentions of consumers, regardless if the brand is well-known or not (Ambroise, Pantin-Sohier, Valette-Florence, & Albert, 2014).

The other two categories of branding include brand type and brand origin. Brand type refers to name brands, those made by a well-known maker or manufacturer, or store brands (Morganosky, 1990). Research suggests that name brands motivate consumers to buy more than store brands based on the higher perceived quality of the apparel (Morganosky, 1990). Brand origin represents the country of origin which the consumers are likely to see a strong connection with the brand (Maden, Göztaş, & Topsümer, 2015). Maden, Göztaş, and Topsümer (2015) found that brand origin was a significant, positive contributor to some of the most important luxury consumption motivations, pleasure, status, and uniqueness seeking.

Trendiness. One of the biggest shifts in consumption that led to the development of fast fashion was the consumer's new want for more fashion forward clothes. Retailers adopt fast fashion strategies to quickly respond to emerging fashion trends and the consumer's demands for them (Sull & Turconi, 2008; Watson & Yan, 2013). Thus, it can be surmised that the trendier the mass produced clothing retailer is, the more motivated a consumer is to buy from them. Watson and Yan (2013) found this to be true for fast fashion consumers as compared to slow fashion consumers, the former looking for trendy pieces while the latter looks for versatile, timeless pieces.

Price. For consumers of mass produced clothing, being able to keep up with the latest trends is important and doing so at a low price is necessary. Low price allows customers to avoid buyers remorse, maximize utility by buying a higher amount of clothing, and feel enjoyment through buying a lot for a little (Watson & Yan, 2013). Consumers have stated that when they visit a mass produced apparel retailer, especially one considered fast fashion, they are very likely to buy something, even if they do not need it, because the products are so inexpensive (Watson & Yan, 2013).

Availability. The high frequency of new products in mass produced apparel retailers leads to high turnover in the store's inventory (Ghemawat & Nueno, 2006). The high rate of turnover creates a scarcity mentality in the consumer who feels the need to buy immediately or the item will not be available for purchase next time (Ghemawat & Nueno, 2006). The purpose of the research by Byun and Sternquist (2012) was to study the relationship between perceived limited availability, anticipated gains of buying versus losses of not buying, and how perceived limited availability and anticipated gains in turn effected in-store hoarding and purchase intentions. They found that under these limited availability conditions, the anticipated losses of

not buying expedited in-store hoarding, or the act of holding on to items that will potentially be purchased, which in turn accelerated purchasing (Byun & Sternquist, 2012). What their findings indicate is that consumers are more motivated by the anticipated loss that comes from not purchasing an item and possibly losing it due to perceived limited availability than the potential gains they would get from just purchasing the item in the first place (Byun & Sternquist, 2012).

Size and fit. The size and fit of a garment are considered important criteria in clothing. When a garment fits well, it satisfies that consumer's emotional and physiological needs (Kasambala *et al.*, 2015). However, studies have shown that, particularly for female consumers, it is difficult to find clothes that are comfortable and fit well (Otieno *et al.*, 2005). Issues also arise for female shoppers in that the sizing of mass produced garments is inconsistent, unreliable, and inaccurate, the fit being unsuitable for some body types and certain garment sizes being too limited (Kasambala *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, when size and fit requirements are met, consumers are satisfied with the garment and are motivated to purchase, even if other aspects of the garment like quality are not as good (Watson & Yan, 2013).

Perceived Quality

While quality has been mentioned as a motivation for buying vintage clothing, previous research has not included it as an additional primary motivator, especially in terms of choosing to buy vintage over other garments. This study included quality in the list of motivators, or values, for the vintage consumer. Research on the use of quality by consumers in relation to clothing has been a well-developed topic leading to the understanding that quality is multidimensional (Forsythe *et al.*, 1996; Ophuis & Trijp, 1995; Stone-Romero & Stone, 1997; Swinker & Hines, 2006; Szybillo & Jacoby, 1974). Within the general field of quality there exist two different types: the actual, objective quality and perceived quality (Forsythe *et al.*, 1996; Morgan &

Piercy, 1992; Ophuis & Trijp, 1995; Swinker & Hines, 2006). While the objective quality of a garment, which tends to focus on the physical aspects that can be measured tangibly, is likely to be used by the industry, consumers use perceived quality in their evaluation. This makes perceived quality be more important than the objective quality (Abraham, 1992; Jacoby & Olson, 1985; Olson, 1972).

Early in the research, perceived quality was defined to generally mean "fitness for use, given the needs of the consumer" (Steenkamp, 1990, p. 311). Steenkamp (1990) believed this definition was lacking both a theoretical rationale and a basis in rigorous examination of literature. The definition Steenkamp (1990) thus developed is as follows:

> Perceived product quality is an idiosyncratic value judgment with respect to the fitness for consumption which is based upon the conscious and/or unconscious processing of quality cues in relation to relevant quality attributes within the context of significant personal and situational variables. (p. 317)

From this definition, there are a few points to be highlighted. First, value becomes the core concept to understanding perceived quality and consists of three dimensions: 1) preference, 2) subject-object interaction, and 3) consumption experience (Steenkamp, 1990). Second, quality cues can be broken down into two general categories: intrinsic and extrinsic (Ophuis & Trijp, 1995; Steenkamp, 1990; Szybillo & Jacoby, 1974). Finally, quality attributes are only observable after the consumption experience thus coming directly from the use of the product (Steenkamp, 1990).

Quality, Vintage, and Fast Fashion

Developments in clothing production. Discussing the differences in quality perception between vintage and fast fashion, it is important to look at the changes in clothing production over the past decades and the effects it has had on garment quality. Fischer (2015) argues that although most vintage clothing was at one point produced in larger quantities, the shift toward

making garments quickly and in even greater numbers has affected the overall quality, actual and perceived. Since the 1960s, there has been a standardization in styles and lower garment quality offered to consumers (Fischer, 2015). The perceived higher quality that consumers of vintage clothing see in the garments, may come from actual differences in the production techniques, but it is also partly nostalgia (Pickering & Keightley, 2006). Here, an idealization of the processes used in the past comes into play, alongside a justifiable appreciation of earlier production methods (Pickering & Keightley, 2006). Never the less, there are intrinsic qualities about older consumer items that contemporary vintage consumers, who have the cultural capital and knowledge to identify, can recognize and value (Fischer, 2015).

Vintage and authenticity. Along with the perceived quality difference due to how the clothing was produced is the idea of authenticity in relation to the vintage object. The characteristics of vintage garments, such as quality and craftsmanship that vintage consumers seek, are invoked through a discourse of authenticity (Fischer, 2015). When something is easily reproduced, it begins to lose its authenticity; thus, those who seek authentic goods see themselves engaging in a market separate from standardization (Macdonald, 2013). The interviews done by DeLong *et al.* (2005) support this and found that one female vintage consumer was motivated to buy vintage because of the good quality and individuality. However, this boundary that is created between old clothing and mass produced apparel may be based on a false distinction because almost all clothing, whether home-sewn or factory-made, was and is produced by the hands of individuals (Fischer, 2015). The older techniques were more labor intensive and geared toward pleasing customers through construction and fit (Fischer, 2015). Today, vintage, in relation to current mass produced clothing, is viewed by some as “craft” and

"unique" since few exist, even if many were originally produced, thus creating a perception of authenticity and increased quality (Fischer, 2015).

Fast fashion and quality. Watson and Yan (2013) explored the differences between fast and slow fashion consumers. Slow fashions are defined as "those that are not produced under the ideals of a fast fashion business model," can be worn through several seasons, and their consumers want quality not quantity (Watson & Yan, 2013). Nevertheless, both types are part of the mass-produced fashion industry. Consumers' expectations of fast fashion apparel are rather low; they expect their clothing to fall apart after wear but are not dissatisfied with the purchase as long as the fit is good and the item is on trend (Watson & Yan, 2013). Slow fashion consumers, on the other hand, expect their clothing to be high quality and last for many seasons (Watson & Yan, 2013). The consumption practices of fast fashion consumers, who continue to buy the items even if the quality is low and is merely acceptable, could mean that they see these garments as a compromise between what they would like to buy and what they can afford; they give up quality to save money (Gabrielli *et al.*, 2013).

Clothing Consumption Process

Clothing Consumption Process Defined

The research by Geitel Winakor on the clothing consumption process was published in 1969 and since then has been the foundation for understanding what people do during the consumption of clothing. The model consists of three main parts: 1) acquisition, 2) inventory, and 3) discard. Acquisition is when the individual obtains possession of a garment, either to be stored of temporarily used, and the garment may be used or previously owned (Winakor, 1969). Inventory refers to the stock of garments that a person possesses and represents only those garments available for regular use (Winakor, 1969). Finally, discard occurs when the garment

leaves the possession of the individual, whether by handing down, throwing away, selling, exchanging, making over, or abandoning, and is not solely determined by the physical condition of the garment (Winakor, 1969).

Along with these three parts of the clothing consumption process is use. The use of garments can range from frequent to infrequent with it being placed back in inventory when not being used (Winakor, 1969). For apparel items, the usefulness of clothing may differ from various sources (Winakor, 1969). One example of this that Winakor (1969) points out is the usefulness of secondhand clothing which may have a shorter wearable life than clothing purchased new.

Modern Clothing Consumption Process

In the 21st century, the consumption process of mass produced clothing has shortened due to the prevalence of fast fashion. The post-consumption evaluation of fast versus slow fashion consumers indicates that individuals who purchase fast fashion are satisfied with the acquisition of the garments but not with the use (Watson & Yan, 2015). While fast fashion consumers use their garments less often, thus keeping them in inventory more, slow fashion consumers keep them in inventory less often for more use (Watson & Yan, 2015). Therefore, slow fashion consumers, with fewer apparel pieces, wear each item more often rather than leaving them in inventory more often. Fast fashion consumers use their garments infrequently because the style is no longer relevant, they do not like it anymore, or the garment is damaged, at which point it is discarded (Watson & Yan, 2015). Both fast and slow fashion consumers donate, resale, pass along, or reuse their clothing but fast fashion consumers are very likely to throw items away (Watson & Yan, 2015). However, this does not deter the fast fashion consumer from continuing

to buy and discard quickly, which is why fast fashion can be described as "throwaway fashion" (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2009; Watson & Yan, 2015).

Vintage Clothing Consumption Process

Very little research has been done considering how vintage consumers acquire, use, and then discard of their clothing. Winakor (1969) did suggest that secondhand clothing may not last as long as new clothing because it has been used previously. Vintage clothing, which can be a category of secondhand, may not fit this exact model because of the perceived quality and value vintage items have to the buyer. In some ways, vintage consumers may be more in line with the slow fashion consumers from Watson and Yan's (2015) study.

One factor that DeLong *et al.* (2005) discovered as important to the initial acquisition of a vintage item was condition. Although the women interviewed preferred garments that had limited repairs, they would still acquire pieces they considered "genuinely special discoveries" even if that meant extensive fixes (DeLong *et al.*, 2005). If vintage consumers are willing to buy an item that already shows signs of use and damage, that must, in some way, affect what they do with the garment once they use it themselves.

Vintage Culture

Based on previous research, vintage consumers not only have values that are shared among all members in terms of the garments they purchase but these values are different than that of the majority of society in which they exist. In addition, these different shared values may suggest the consumption process of the vintage consumer is quite different than what is considered the norm. If this is the case, then one can begin to see vintage consumers as a distinct lifestyle, possibly a subculture. Carman (1978) developed a model in which values, lifestyle, and consumption patterns act in a looped system that feeds into itself; the values, based on Rokeach's

(1973) value survey, of an individual or group lead to lifestyle choices which in turn leads to certain consumption choices, at which point those consumption choices strengthen the values and lifestyle and the process begins again. When this process happens long enough, the lifestyle, understood as activities, interests, and opinions that become reflected in terms of media and consumption patterns, may become a subculture (Carman, 1978). Unlike a lifestyle, a subculture has built up an institutional structure for endurance and perpetuation (Carman, 1978).

Although Carman's (1978) research is not recent, the model appears to still be relevant in the case of the vintage consumer and there is evidence that the vintage lifestyle follows Carman's (1978) model. It is unclear if vintage could be considered a subculture, however, as no research has been done to determine the existence of institutional subcultural structures, it may be on its way there.

One related example was research done on vinyl record enthusiasts who choose to purchase what may be seen as an outdated form of music consumption in a world where digital music is the norm (Yochim & Biddinger, 2008). The authors deemed this group of consumers to be a subculture, not only for their shared values but because they talked about "their focus (in this case, records) in terms of a sense of humanity that makes them seem authentic" (Yochim & Biddinger, 2008, p. 193). Compared to newer forms of music, which were described as disposable and sterile, the record enthusiast instills the object with meaning and ties a discursive history to it, making a seemingly normal mass-produced object become authentic (Yochim & Biddinger, 2008). The values these record consumers have, and that they place onto the record itself, feeds into their lifestyle and consumption habits, much like the loop model that Carman (1978) created. Like records, vintage garments are considered outdated by some, in terms of style and production methods, can be given a certain history by the buyer, and viewed as more

authentic while newly made garments may be seen as disposable. For these reasons, the findings from Yochim and Biddinger's (2008) study, in combination with Carman's (1978) model, provide evidence that the vintage consumer may be a distinct subculture.

The choice to wear vintage clothing, like any form of dress, may also be viewed through the lens of embodied experience. The dressed body is not a passive object upon which social forces are enacted but is actively produced (Entwistle, 2000; Merleau-Ponty, 1976). This means that every individual actively produces the dressed self through particular, routine, and mundane practices (Entwistle, 2000; Merleau-Ponty, 1976). Dress and identity are intertwined and the choice of wearing vintage clothing not only says something to society but also makes the wearer feel a specific way.

Research Gap and Questions

Through a review of literature, this study has defined vintage as the material revival of dress, typically more than twenty years old, that tends to represent a specific era, whose value and meaning is achieved through active practice, which includes acquiring knowledge, seeking out items, and being involved in a community of like-minded users. This definition demonstrates the complexity of what makes vintage "vintage," as opposed to other types of secondhand clothing. In particular, the active involvement of those who consume vintage may signify a closeness to or personal relationship with the garments. This also indicates a relationship between involvement and the determinants for buying vintage. Value, uniqueness, nostalgia, eco-consciousness, and need for status have been the most researched determinant motivations for buying vintage status (Baker, 2012; Cassidy & Bennett, 2012; DeLong, Heinemann, & Reiley, 2005; Duffy *et al*., 2012; McColl, Canning, McBride, Nobbs, & Shearer, 2013; Palmer, 2005;

Peters, 2014; Reiley, 2008). However, understanding the motivations/determinants, viewed as values, for buying vintage have not been explored beyond identification.

In addition, numerous studies have been done to understand the quality cues consumers use when selecting fast fashion garments and how those cues lead to an actual purchase. Although previous research has mentioned that some of those who buy vintage clothing use perceived quality in their buying decision, there has been very little research directly addressing if quality play a role as a determinant. The first part of this research sought to fill this gap: understand the values (motivations/determinant/quality) shared among vintage consumers, how those values developed, and if those values affect their choice to buy and their relationship with vintage.

The clothing consumption process, developed by Winakor (1969), states that the consumption of clothing goes through three main steps of acquisition, inventory, and discard along with the use of the item. This process primarily describes what happens to mass produced clothing, though there is some mention of secondhand clothing and how it fits into the process. With the differences between vintage from other forms of secondhand established as well as vintage's differences with fast fashion clothing, it can again be inferred that the clothing consumption process of vintage does not fit exactly with Winakor's theory.

To achieve these objectives, this study had three key research questions:

1) To discover if vintage consumers have shared values that lead to decision of consuming and wearing vintage and to understand how those values developed.
2) To determine if vintage consumers shop for and acquire their items differently than other types consumers. To identify the attributes that lead to acquisition and if

changes in those attributes affect the vintage consumers' expectations through acquisition, inventory, and discard.

3) To understand is vintage consumers care for and discard their clothing differently than other types of consumers.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Chapter 3 contains the following sections: (a) research design, (b) researcher's reflexivity (c) case selection, (d) data collection, (e) validation strategies, and (f) data analysis.

Research Design: In-Depth Interviews

The aim of this study was to gain an understanding of vintage consumers' shared values, how those values developed, and if those values affected their clothing consumption process (Winakor, 1969) including care for garments. To achieve this objective, semi-structured in-depth interviews were used. The advantage of conducting interviews in this way is that it permits the researcher to prepare a limited number of open-ended questions in advance on a specific topic while allowing room to change up the questions and ask follow-up questions to gain as much detailed information as possible (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

In terms of weaknesses and strengths of in-depth interviewing, one potential weakness is in how the participants respond to questions. Research demonstrates that people respond differently to the interviewer depending on how they perceive them and the nature of the topic (Descombe, 2007). For example, the age, sex, and ethnic origins of the interviewer can affect what the participant is willing to say (Descombe, 2007). Due to the low risk of this research and its topic, getting honest responses from participants was not an issue. With the researcher's knowledge and interest in the topic, a relaxed, non-threatening environment that encouraged honest answers was created.

The review of literature established that most previous research conducted on vintage consumption has been quantitative, with a few exceptions that utilized qualitative interviews. Quantitative methods are useful for identifying correlations between a cause and effect that can be generalized to a large population (Mahoney & Goertz, 2006). Since the determinants for purchasing vintage clothing and perceived quality indicators have already been well researched through quantitative research, the next step was to gain a richer understanding using qualitative research. What qualitative research does that quantitative cannot is create depth rather than breadth; it allows the researcher to gain a rich understanding of specific situations, individuals, groups, or moments in time that are important or revealing (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Along with gaining a richer understanding, qualitative interviews allow for some flexibility. Instead of being constrained to the predetermined questions of a questionnaire used in quantitative research, qualitative interviews are designed to provide the researcher with freedom to introduce materials that were not anticipated (Whyte, 1982).

For this specific topic, the interviews built on the generalized determinants of purchasing vintage and the importance of perceived quality that have been researched and developed. Knowing these generalized factors helped the researcher understand the framework to stay within and the information that was expected, what may be new, and the reasoning behind why said determinants are or are not important to the individual. The clothing consumption process has been thoroughly developed, but only in relation to new clothes. Instead of limiting the responses to, for example, a Likert scale with the likeliness of what an individual does with a garment in terms of care and repair, by asking them in person with in-depth interview the researchers can answer the “why” along with the “what.”

Table 1 (p. 42) describes the interview instrument that was utilized for the study. After some small conversation to break the ice and make the participant feel comfortable, the interview began with the participant stating who they were and their involvement in fashion, particularly with vintage. In addition to this, they were asked to explain their wardrobe, personal style, and give an estimate of the vintage to mass produced clothing ratio in their wardrobe. Moving into the main part of the interview, I began by asking the participants to tell me more about how their interest in vintage started, if anyone introduced them to vintage, where they buy their vintage clothing from and why, and what decades they are most drawn to and why.

Next, the interview transitioned to discussing the items they brought to the interview. Starting with the vintage item, I asked the participants to give the story of how they acquired it, why they purchased it, how they felt about the item once they brought it home, and if they noticed anything different once they got it there. As the interviewee explained the reasons for purchasing, I wrote down the qualities or descriptors mentioned as to keep track of what they said and for them to have a reference to go back to throughout the interview. Following the discussion on the vintage item, the same questions and process were followed for the mass-produced item.

The third part of the interview focused more generally on how and why they shop for apparel items at vintage stores versus fast fashion stores, the expectations they have before use, and if or how those expectations changed once they begin use. The participants were asked to elaborate on where they go to shop for their vintage items and why they chose those places as well as their likes and dislikes in terms of vintage shopping.

Finally, the last section of the interview concentrated on how the participant cares for their vintage items versus their mass-produced items and the way in which they discard items, in

the case that they do. The participants were questioned on their mending skills, likeliness to have items repaired, and under what circumstances do they throw pieces away. Upon completion of the planned interview questions, any follow-up questions that had not been asked during the interview were addressed and the participant was given time to make any further statements or ask questions of their own. It was at this time that I took photos of the items the interviewee brought along. This process is discussed further in the next section. Once this was done, the interviewee was thanked for their time and informed that they may contact me at any time concerning anything.

Interview Instrument

Table 1. Initial Interview Questions

Central concepts of perceived quality/clothing consumption process and research questions	Questions to address each concept
RQ1: To discover if vintage consumers have shared values that lead to the decision of consuming and wearing vintage and to understand how those values developed.	
How vintage consumption started	Tell me about when you started getting interested in vintage. Was there a particular reason you started buying? Was there someone who introduced you to vintage? Tell me about them. Do you buy only vintage? Why/why not? Tell me about where else you buy your clothes. Why do you buy them from there? Is there a certain era/decade that you buy most? Tell me about why you're drawn to that decade/those decades.
Garment Acquisition (specific, both vintage and fast fashion)	Tell me the story of how you acquired the item. Where/who did you get it from? What is it about the item that you like? Love? Why is the style/fit/quality/etc. important to you? How did you know to look for these characteristics? Why did you buy this item (if they did)? Tell me about how you felt when you found the item. Was price or condition an issue?
RQ2: To determine if vintage consumers shop for and acquire their items differently than other types of consumers. To identify the attributes that lead to acquisition and if changes in those attributes affect the vintage consumers' expectations through acquisition, inventory, and discard.	
Shopping process	Tell me about where you go to buy your vintage pieces. Is there one place in particular or many? Do you ever shop online? Why or why not? Tell me about why you like shopping for vintage items. What you dislike? Thinking of when you first walk into a store, tell me about what you are looking for in an item that will make you buy it. What are you expecting the item to have/be like when you first buy it?
Attributes of change	How do you feel about the vintage item once you get it home and start wearing it? Tell me about a time when you liked the item a lot more once you got it home and wore it. What about a time when you liked it a lot less? Was there one thing in particular that led to the change in how you felt about the item?
RQ3: To understand if vintage consumers care for and discard their clothing differently than other types of consumers.	
In-use	Tell me about how you care for vintage clothing. Tell me about times that you wear your vintage items. How do you usually store your vintage pieces?
Discard	Tell me about what you do with your vintage pieces if it gets damaged, like if it gets a hole or loses a button. What do you do with your vintage items if they get too big/small? If they give away: Talk to me about why you give items away. Who do you give the items to? Why do you give them the vintage items?

Artifact Elicitation

In conjunction with semi-structured, in-depth interviews, the researcher utilized artifact elicitation to stimulate the participants' thinking about reasons they purchase an item, either vintage or fast fashion, and what they value within certain garments.

Artifact elicitation is a participatory visual method that fits under the broad category of visual elicitation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012). Visual elicitation involves photographs, drawings, or diagrams in an interview to stimulate a response and is the most popular and common method in participatory visual research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012). The use of an artifact (i.e. an object) works in the same manner that a photograph does; it evokes as well as creates a personal memory and feelings that are associated to the object (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012).

There are no truly agreed upon protocols for participatory visual elicitation and even experienced researchers must think carefully before exploring the meaning of objects with a participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Harper, 2002). Most often, visual elicitation is used as an intermediary between the researcher and the participant to remove the pressure when talking about sensitive subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Since the topic of this research was not one of a highly personal or sensitive manner, the concerns that can arise with the use of visual elicitation were insignificant.

Participatory Observation

Due to the nature of qualitative research, the collection of data requires interaction with others and most of those interactions can be described, to some degree, as participatory (Biggs, 1989; Cornwall, 1996). This research, which involved the interaction between the researcher and participant in the form of an interview, could only happen with the participation of both parties.

During this time of participation, the researcher was not only collecting audio data through the use of interview questions but was also collecting observatory data.

The use of participatory observation enriched the audio data collected and provided new information. The way a participant handled the apparel item they are talking about, their attitude and body language throughout varying topics in the interview process, what they wore, and where they chose the interview to take place all added valuable information to the qualitative research. When the researcher was aware of what was happening, not just what was being said, they picked up on nuances not obvious in the participant's responses and led to follow-up questions to gain a deeper understanding of the research.

To collect this observed data, both photographs and jot notes were utilized. As explained in the previous section, pictures of the items the participant brings and of the participant themselves were taken. This was useful for description purposes and as evidence to answer the research questions. Jot notes were used during the interview to make a brief record of body language, how the interviewee handled items, attitude changes, and so on. The benefit of jot notes is that it allowed the interviewer to make note of what was happening without detracting from the interview process. Immediately following the interview, the researcher added detail to the notes taken during the interview that had only been noted in a word or short statement to get as much information down as possible.

Researcher's Reflexivity

According to Johnson (1997), an imperative part of qualitative research validation is the researcher's reflexivity, which requires a "critical self-reflection" by the researcher of their potential biases and predispositions. The significance of such a reflection is that these

inclinations of the researcher may affect the process and conclusions of the research (Johnson, 1997).

I, the researcher, have been involved in some capacity in vintage clothing for a long time. My connection to vintage began at a young age and started, in part, because of my parents. It was not unusual for garments that were once my grandparents or my parents, dating back to the 1950s through the early 1980s, to be kept and worn in my family. This was not done out of necessity but instead as a sign of family history, nostalgia, as a conscious style choice, and because the garments were still in good condition. Along with the keeping of old family garments, shopping at secondhand stores was a norm within my family. Although this was sometimes done for financial reasons, the rummaging through and discovery of items was a normal and enjoyable activity. This perspective continued as I began to live on my own and continued to visit secondhand stores.

My enjoyment of "thrifting" evolved into visiting more vintage stores in conjunction with the usual secondhand stores, such as Goodwill or local organizations. Eventually, I realized there were four key reasons why I chose to shop secondhand and look predominately for vintage items as opposed to shopping exclusively at fast fashion stores: 1) price, 2) unique pieces that fit my style, 3) fit of garments, and 4) better quality. It was this interest in vintage, and these four reasons, that spurred my research. What I discovered was that the quality aspect of vintage consumption had not been looked at, something I found to be strange since, for myself and for many other vintage buyers I know, quality is a large reason we purchase vintage apparel and accessories.

I recognize that my bias to believing vintage has a higher perceived quality compared to fast fashion items could be a negative in my research and would skew my interpretation of the

results. However, I consider this belief and my involvement in vintage gives me an advantage and insight to the vintage consumer. Along with my knowledge, I have become a member of the vintage community here in Athens, Georgia because of frequent store visits and past research I have done. Being a part of the community gave me access to potential participants for my study and allowed me to connect with these individuals on a more personal level. I was self-aware throughout the study to avoid coming to my own assumptions as well as to avoid my participants assuming I know what they were talking about.

Case Selection

For this study, maximum variation purposive sampling was the method used to select the participants. The sample of participants was chosen based on the fact that they purchased and wore vintage and newly made clothing as well as their differences in gender, age, ethnicity, and lifestyle. This method of sampling allows for the specific selection of individuals within the phenomenon being studied while also including those who cover the spectrum of positions and perspectives in relation to said phenomenon (Palys, 2008).

After the approval of the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), a total of eight participants were recruited through the vintage network of the researcher and through references from other participants. All participants lived in Athens, Georgia during the time of data collection, although only one was originally from the area. Participants' involvement in vintage consumption ranged from occasional consumer to vintage seller and involvement in consumption of newly made garments was done either on occasion due to necessity or only through secondhand source. All but one participant had been involved in vintage for more than ten years. The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 46 with six female and two male participants. Their occupations included college student, working for the University of Georgia, vintage seller or

store owner, and stylist. Table 2 illustrates demographic characteristics of the case study participants.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participant[1]	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Occupation	Originally from Athens?	Children?	Years in vintage
Kira	33	Female	Caucasian	Stylist, manager at local vintage store	No, been here for 13 years	No	Started in college
Frannie	32	Female	Asian American	Local vintage store owner	No, been here for 14 years	No	Since she was young
Freddy	20	Male	African American	Undergrad student, works at local vintage store	No, been here for 2 years but from GA	No	4 years
Grace	26	Female	Caucasian	Manager at used book and electronics store	No, been here for 1 year, from TX	No	Since she was young
Cyndi	34	Female	Cuban American	Vintage seller, has booth at local vintage store	No, been here for 9 years, from FL	Yes, 1	Since 11 (23 years)
Marilyn	40	Female	Caucasian	Communications Manager at the College of Education, UGA	No, been here for 10 years, originally from FL	Yes, 2	Started early on in life
James	46	Male	Caucasian	Vintage and antiques dealer	No, but from GA	Yes, 3	Whole life, father was an antique dealer
Vivian	27	Female	Caucasian	Vintage seller, sells online and at markets	Yes	No	Entire life

Note. [1] All participants' names are pseudonyms.

Data Collection

In order to strengthen the design of this study, data triangulation was used to study the phenomena at hand. The study entailed three steps for data collection: (a) in-depth interviews, (b) participatory observation, and (c) artifact elicitation. The researcher met with the participants in the location of their choice, at which time the interviews were conducted. Throughout the interview process, participatory observations were made and noted and pictures of the participants and their garments were taken.

Due to the requirements of the university's IRB, consent forms were created in order to make the participants fully aware of what the interview process would entail, to ensure them of their confidentiality, and to get approval from the participants to take picture of them and their garments. The word usage of these consent forms was in common English, both clear and concise, as to be understood by anyone. A sample of the consent form is provided in Appendix A.

In-depth Interviews.

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher began reaching out to her network of contacts within the Athens, Georgia vintage community. Those initial contacts were asked to partake in the study and to refer others that they know who may be interested in being participants. The referred individuals were contacted and asked to participate. The requests to participate included ensuring a wide range of demographics by asking each individual to describe themselves (age, gender, ethnicity, what they do for a living) and an estimate of their vintage-to-fast-fashion purchase ratio (Appendix B).

Once each participant agreed to partake in the interviews, the location of the interviews was determined. The participants were asked to select a location of their choice; seven of the participants were interviewed in local coffee shops while the eighth was interviewed in her home. The dates and times for the interviews were whenever was most convenient for each individual. The interviews took place on various days and times during the week between the months of July and September. The participants were also notified that they must bring one vintage and one fast fashion apparel item with them, of their choosing, to the interview. The interview duration ranged from 45 – 90 minutes.

The interviews began with the participant giving general background information about themselves such as their age, where they are from, what they do in Athens, how long they have been involved with vintage, etc. Since these were semi-structured interviews, each followed the same general format. First, the participants were asked to tell the story of how they initially became interested in vintage, why they started buying, and who, if anyone, influenced their choice. Next, the participants were asked to discuss the makeup of their wardrobe, how much of it is vintage, and what decades they are most drawn to and why.

The focus then turned to the two items the participants were asked to bring. At this point, artifact elicitation was utilized in order to initiate the conversation by evoking or creating certain memories and feelings associated with the garment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012). The questions focused on the story behind how they acquired the item, what characteristics or details drew them to the item in the first place, what qualities led them to make the final purchase, how they felt about the item once they got it home, and if their feelings on the item changed. Many times, this part of the interview, when the specific items were discussed, led to questions and responses pertaining to their vintage and/or newly made garments in broader terms.

Following the questions on the specific items, the interviews were moved towards more general questions about vintage and fast fashion stores separately. The participants were encouraged to reflect on the discussion previously had about the specific items they brought in order to have a starting point for their responses. The participants were asked to think about what they were looking for when they walked into a store, the qualities any item should have, their expectations of the item when they buy it and when they take it home, how they usually feel about the items when they get them home, and if those feelings change. For those participants who had vintage businesses, they were asked how they got started in the vintage business and if

owning a business affected the types of garments they purchased and if there are any differences in the way they shop for themselves versus the store.

The next set of questions focused on what happened with the garments once the participants got them home. The participants described what they did immediately upon returning home, how they take care of their pieces, if they do so in any special way, if there were differences in the way they care for their vintage versus newly made garments, and how they store their items at home. For those participants who owned vintage businesses, the participants were asked if this caring and storing process is any different for items to be sold.

The final part of the interview focused on what the participants do with garments that no longer meet their needs, be it due to fit, style, condition, etc. Asking the participants to think in general, they were questioned in-depth on what they do with garments like this, what repairs they may or may not make with the items, if they discard their pieces, why they do or do not get rid of items, and how they get rid of items when the time comes. At this point, if the researcher had any follow-up questions or wanted to revisit a topic, they did so. With the interview complete, the researcher took photos of the participant and their garments for record and further reference.

Validation Strategies

The validation strategies utilized to ensure validity in this study were (a) triangulation, (b) low inference descriptors, and (c) reflexivity.

The validity strategy of triangulation allows the researcher to search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). When the different sources lead to the same information and conclusion, then the researcher has corroboration among the findings (Johnson, 1997). For this study, data triangulation was used. The data sources included in-depth interviews, artifact

elicitation, and participatory observation. Interviews allowed the participant to give a verbal report, in their own words, on how and why they became vintage consumers, what values and expectations they have related to their garments, the differences that exist for why they buy vintage as compared to newly made garments, and their experience with the apparel items through their consumption. Artifact elicitation provoked thoughts and feelings during the interview process. Having the participants bring vintage and fast fashion items of their own that they purchased or received at some point in the past helped jolt their memories of why they had purchased or received them in the first place, the feelings those items evoked, and specific changes over time in relation to the item. Finally, participatory observation took place during the interviews and included the researcher's observations on what the participant was wearing, descriptions of the location of the interview, how the participant handled the garments they brought, and their body language throughout the interview process.

Next, low inference descriptors, along with thick, rich description, was used to establish validity. Low inference descriptors refer to the use of descriptions phrased very closely, or often verbatim, to the participants' accounts (Johnson, 1997). Using direct quotes from the participants allows for the reader to understand exactly what was said and in what context. In conjunction with this, thick, rich descriptions convey, for the readers, feelings that they have experienced or could experience the events being described (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Together, these descriptions create credibility for the readers who read a narrative account and helps them be transported into the setting described (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Finally, since the researcher was an active participant in the research, reflexivity was used as a consistent validation strategy throughout the research. Through reflexivity, the researcher's personal beliefs, values, and biases that may shape the inquiry are self-disclosed,

which allows the reader to understand the researcher's position and then suspend those researcher biases as the study proceeds (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Data Analysis

Once the first interview was complete, the transcription process started, continuing throughout the interview stage until all interviews were complete. The audio recording from the interviews was downloaded into the oTranscribe program and transcribed in Microsoft Word by the researcher. To adhere to the rules of the Institutional Review Board, all subjects and identity linkages were coded. All names were changed to pseudonyms. Throughout the initial listening of the audio-recordings, the researcher began noting reoccurring themes. These emergent themes were isolated through the transcripts and coded.

The transcripts were coded and interpreted by emerging themes with the aim to answer the three research questions initially developed. The interpretation process followed Johnson's (1997) four cycles of interpretation. In this cycle, the data goes through (a) an intratext cycle, (b) an intertext cycle, (c) interactive movements between the intratextual and intertextual interpretive cycles, and (d) a final holistic interpretation (Johnson, 1997). First, themes that emerged within each individual interview were identified. From there, similar themes that were present across participants were grouped together as commonalities. Next, this collection of themes was again compared and grouped into broader categories. Some of these broader categories were broken down again into sub-themes to find a deeper understanding of the overarching theme. Finally, the main theme categories were given one final interpretation. Each of these cycles was repeated separately for every question with each participant and within each participant, along with considering the researcher's observations. The process of pulling the data apart and then bringing it back together in a repeated cycle allowed for themes to emerge

naturally, beginning with larger, broad concepts that led to more specific. This cyclical process also ensured the reliability of the research, as each interpretation cycle and the data was reviewed several times.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Chapter 4 contains the following sections: (a) the vintage consumer and community, (b) the vintage consumption process, and (c) the vintage consumer/garment relationship.

The Vintage Consumer and Community

In this section, research question one is discussed: To discover if vintage consumers have shared values that lead to the decision of consuming and wearing vintage and to understand how those values developed. Through an interpretative analysis of participant data, the following three theme categories emerged, exemplified here with direct words from research participants: (1) the Individual as "Cooler than what everyone else was wearing," (2) the Community as "It's sort of like a secret club," (3) the Store as "Behind the curtain of vintage." Within the individual theme category, two smaller themes emerged, (a) "Kind of my way of living there, living that," (b) "I don't feel like ME in a wiggle dress." Within the community theme emerged two smaller themes, (a) "If anyone has an interest in it then they're already in it," (b) "It's great to know that we're all in this together."

The Individual as "Cooler Than What Everyone Else Was Wearing."

Within theme one, the vintage consumer, as an individual, values the idea of being just that: individual. Wearing clothing that no one else has and that would truly represent who they are was a big factor in why many of the participants started buying vintage. Whether it was an inherent need to be unique or something they saw the "cool" kids wearing, being true to

themselves influenced the pursuit of vintage items. For those vintage consumers that did not grow up in an environment where purchasing old or used clothes was a way of life, they initially either refused to wear or felt they could not wear vintage clothing.

However, one participant, Freddy, a 20-year-old college student, admitted to being completely averse to garments his mother purchased at the thrift store because they were used, and he believed everyone would somehow know that fact. However, he and others noticed that the "cool kids," seen on blogs, in movies, or around campus, were using these secondhand sources to put together interesting and one-of-a-kind outfits. What resulted was an aspiration to be like those people, to be part of what Marilyn, a 40-year-old mother who works at the University of Georgia, called a "culture." Kira, a 33-year-old stylist and manager at a local vintage store, explained how it was not until college that she felt like she was really allowed to wear vintage, claiming to not be "cool enough," and how much the discovery of vintage grew starting at that moment in her life.

> **Kira:** "I wasn't cool enough to go thrifting until I went to college in a college town like Athens called Columbia, Missouri where MU is… There was a cool vintage shop we'd go to. I think it was called 'Cool Stuff,' which is awesome [laughs]. I was like 'Oh my gosh, this stuff is cooler than what everyone else was wearing, it's cheaper, and I could put together really rad outfits' and so that started building into my interest for it."

Over time, as the vintage consumer got further involved in buying vintage clothing, the less likely they were to buy newly made pieces. Traditional retail stores that provide mass produced goods became less appealing because the vintage consumer valued individualism and getting good quality for the price. Wanting to embrace her individualism, Marilyn explained that one of the reasons she loves vintage is the "unique style" she can get, because she does not "want to go to Target and pick up a shirt that 40 other women are going to have." Being a part of that "cool kids" group or vintage "culture" required a degree of individuality. Freddy had a much

stronger fear of running into someone who owned the same pieces he did; however, his sentiments were shared across all participants.

> **Freddy:** "The idea that I could walk out and see someone wearing the same thing as me scares the shit out of me."

The vintage consumer's concern for price and quality is primarily viewed in terms of "getting a lot for [their] money." While places like thrift stores are inexpensive to begin with, being "cheap" is not necessarily the most important motivator. Modern fast fashion can be purchased at very low prices; however, many of the participants voiced that the low quality of mass produced clothing deterred them from purchasing those items, unless it was a basic that they knew would need to be replaced consistently. Even modern made clothes that are of a higher quality and made in lower quantities are not as unique as a vintage dress, as explained by Frannie, a 32-year-old vintage store owner, since "there's still a line of them." Vintage consumers value the garments for their age, construction, and history, characteristics that are not present in modern made clothes. To James, a 46-year-old father and vintage and antiques dealer, "retail is for suckers," not only because of price and quality, but also because whatever is in stores now will be in the thrift stores in a matter of months.

> **Marilyn:** "I feel like the quality is just, you know, if it's lasted 50 years, like, if you take good care of it, it's gonna last another 50 years. So I feel like I'm getting a lot for my money, getting a unique style, and it just has this timeless quality to it."

Throughout the consumer's involvement with vintage, their personal style and identity strengthened the more invested they became in vintage items. The value they place on being true to themselves helped shape the vintage items they bought and wore, and every participant could name at least one decade that they felt best reflected who they were stylistically. Freddy's experience with vintage shopping as a male required that he be more open to trying new things

because the selection of male vintage garments was rather limited. He explained recently that he had "drank the Kool-Aid" of gender neutral clothing, buying men's and women's garments, opening up his options and creating an even stronger personal style. In the end, the participants wore garments that made them feel positive and like themselves. For Frannie, who felt her most attractive in 1970s clothes, that meant explaining to her husband that the reason she wore those pieces was not for him, but for herself, because they made her "feel like a queen." Vivian, a 27-year-old vintage seller, described what it is that makes "real vintage people." One woman stood out to Vivian for her dedication to 1960s style.

> **Vivian:** "Real vintage people know exactly the item, when it came from, and what they're looking for. And they usually have an era that they're shopping for. And know all the, all the terms. There's a woman that shops all the Atlanta markets and she's strictly 60s and she comes up and she's got perfect hair and perfect makeup and she's pregnant right now. Oh and it's so interesting, I was talking to her about finding maternity clothes for that era, It's hard. but she's got all the like empire waisted dresses and it seems to be working out pretty well."

"Kind of my way of living there, living that." While the vintage consumer values creating a strong personal style through their clothing choices, the decades that they most associate with go beyond the look of certain vintage garments. Many of the participants explained that they felt a connection to the "energy" or the "vibe" of specific decades. It was not that they wanted to go back in time and live during the decade of the clothes they wore but, instead, do so vicariously through the garments. Whereas Grace, a 26-year-old manager at a used books and electronics store, and Cyndi, a 34-year-old mother and vintage seller, both explain that they would never want to live in the eras they loved, the 1950s and 1960s, respectively; Cyndi goes so far as to say she "could not even stomach" living in the 1960s. However, wearing the fashion of those decades was "almost like a nostalgia" for a time Cyndi was never in, allowing her to "connect with an era even though it's not [her] era." For Kira and Frannie, the 1970s

represented an adventurous, flamboyant, “I’m gonna wear what I want” attitude that Frannie feels is not present in “modern fashion.”

Freddy felt similarly about the 1970s through the 1980s. He explained that those times “felt more experimental,” and that wearing the crop tops and “tight booty shorts” of pre-1990s hip hop and the rise of hyper masculinity made him, as an African American male, feel his most masculine. Freddy still enjoyed 1990s fashion and combined it with his 70s through 80s pieces to create his personal aesthetic, living in the “energy” of those times that he could not.

> **Freddy:** “I didn’t get to live in the 90s, like actually enjoy the 90s, I was a baby so you know clothes like that from the 90s and 80s is kind of my way of living there, living that. So like the energy that’s, you know, with those clothes without, you know actually, living then.”

“I feel like I’m being a poser.” The connection the vintage consumer feels to the clothing of certain time periods goes beyond liking it for style; by aligning themselves to eras whose “energy” matches their identity, the clothing is a deeper outward expression of self. When the vintage wearer goes outside of the decade they most associate with, a discomfort results. While they may still have a deep appreciation for vintage clothes that are outside their decade of choice, wearing those pieces never feels right. For Freddy, his aesthetic is so strong that by going outside of how he wants to present himself, he ends up feeling “costumey.” Frannie aspires to wear a 1960s wiggle dress, and although she buys them every time she sees them, she never feels “quite like ME in a wiggle dress.” Many participants shared this sentiment. And yet, while these garments do not fit within their style or their identity, they still buy them. Kira explains that, while she might feel like a “poser,” sometimes a vintage piece just “speaks to you.”

> **Kira: “**When something speaks to you, it really does speak to you. I haven’t quite figured it out. And I think, and I’m, it’s probably something you can appreciate with vintage, yes, 70s is my style but I will come across that 40s or 50s and I'll really want to do it and I’ll do it but it doesn't feel as much quite like me. And then I can't tell if I feel

like I'm being a poser, do I look good in this, and then I just feel kind of awkward. But I hold onto it because I can appreciate that piece."

The Community as "It's a sort of secret club."

For theme two, the community of individuals who are involved in vintage, at least within Athens, GA, is relatively small but well connected. There were two main characteristics of this community that stood out: (a) easy acceptance with no need to prove yourself, (b) comradery. Most of the participants agreed that someone can be a part of the vintage community whether they dress strictly within a decade at all times or if they choose to mix and match vintage and new. What really connects them is their knowledge and appreciation for vintage clothes, not how strict they are to the vintage aesthetic. Vivian described it as "a sort of secret club," not as a result of the exclusivity to get in but because when the vintage wearers "walk down the street" they can identify when someone is wearing vintage clothing, feeling a connection to one another in that moment, when people outside of the vintage community are not able to.

> **Vivian:** "I mean, it's tiny, there's not a lot of… If you wear or sell vintage you're probably friends with everybody else who wears or sells vintage in this town. […] But yeah, it's been really supportive, fun. everybody's happy, everybody… It's like you walk down the street and it's a sort of secret club."

"If anyone has an interest in it then they're already in it." The first characteristic of the vintage community is easy acceptance. A major reason that acceptance into the vintage community is so easy is because there is no requirement to prove that you belong. By having an active interest in vintage, going to the stores in the community, and showing that you can appreciate and understand vintage garments, then "they're already in it," as Freddy stated.

Sometimes, Frannie encounters individuals who come into her store that she assumes do not love vintage; however, when they purchase a dress and "they love it," her assumption is

quickly changed. This lack of outward proof that they belong in the vintage community does not disqualify them from being a member; it all goes back to their love for the garments. In addition, there is not one set "look" that is required to be a part of the vintage community. The "I'm gonna wear what I want" mentality, as Frannie put it, is the only real "uniform" for those in the vintage community. It all goes back to wearing clothing that represents the wearer's personal identity. Frannie reflected on her first real introduction to vintage at the age of 18, shortly after moving to Athens. While in a vintage store, she found a pair of 1960s white ankle boots and argued with herself as to whether or not she would actually wear them, even though she loved them. What the store's owner told her demonstrates how much acceptance into the vintage community is reliant on being yourself.

> **Frannie:** "I was looking in the mirror and I was like 'When can I wear these? Am I gonna wear these?' Cuz you're 18 and you don't, you're still figuring out your personal style. [The owner] snuck up behind me and like 'You can wear those every day, you look awesome.' She's like 'I'm not bullshitting you' like 'if you like it, wear it.'"

"It's great to know that we're all in this together." The second characteristic of the vintage community is the comradery that exists, particularly between the vintage sellers. Each vintage store owner, seller, and dealer has a very different aesthetic which is reflected in the pieces they sell. As a result, although they are all selling vintage, each is different enough that competition is low, allowing the community element to be stronger. Competition is not necessarily non-existent; Vivian explains that there are individuals who are "really competitive" because of the "one-of-a-kind" nature of vintage clothing and they do not want to miss out on a good find. This is not, however, a majority of what she has run into. Frannie, the only participant who owns a brick and mortar vintage store, acknowledged that a large majority of the vintage sellers are women and they work to help one another out because they "all realize how hard it is

to be a woman who runs a business." The sellers cross-promote and send customers to other stores if what they're looking for is not available in the vintage owner's store, something Freddy explained as happening often:

> **Freddy:** "Everyone seems to be helping out with each other. For example, Atomic and Dynamite, we're like butt buddies, we love each other so much and if a customer can't find something at Dynamite we always suggest Atomic and vice versa. So that's really great, it's great to know that, you know, we're all in this together, kind of create this fashion hub that is Athens. So I say for the most part it's very strong and I'm overjoyed to be a part of it.

The Store as "Behind the curtain of vintage."

The third theme that developed from research question 1 is the physical vintage store. Not only does the vintage store act as a connector of people but it also demonstrates, in a physical space, the values the vintage consumer sees in vintage clothing. The vintage store is not a thrift store; they are two very different entities. While it is possible to find vintage "gems" at the thrift store, the process of doing so usually takes a lot of time and energy. The role of the vintage store is to be a more curated vintage shopping experience, allowing the shopper to put a little less effort into the search process. Marilyn considers the thrift store as "more of a hunting for something" in contrast to the "going out and expecting to find something" that the vintage store offers.

This curated nature of the vintage store results in prices being higher as compared to a thrift store. Vivian felt like some "people don't know what vintage means," often indicated by their reaction to the price of vintage pieces found in the store. This was a way of discovering the real vintage people. While selling vintage at various markets, Vivian encounters individuals who get really excited about pieces but "then they look at the prices and they get turned off super easy," an upsetting occurrence for her. Yet, there is always that one person that comes along, gets really excited about a piece, and buys it; a reaction that "makes it all worthwhile." What

goes on “behind the curtain of vintage,” as Frannie puts it, is something understood by those who are part of the community. As a result, the vintage store becomes a space for those with similar values to connect and find pieces they love while those who are outside of the community can be easily identified.

> **Frannie:** “And it sucks because people are like ‘Oh this dress is used, why is it 40 bucks?’ And I’m like ‘This is a this is a silk dress from the 50s, it actually should be priced more.’ […] But not everyone’s like that. A lot of people, like you, come in there, you see it, and you’re like “That's a great deal! Oh my god, it’s in like full mint conditions!” So you have both sides of it. I'm like used doesn’t mean terrible. A lot of times it doesn’t necessarily mean it was worn. And are you going to find this 50s silk dress for less? No. You know how many thrift store that person had to go through to find that one? I mean maybe if you're like a big treasure hunter but I feel like people that ask those kind of questions are not thrifters cuz they don't understand.”

The Vintage Consumption Process

The way researchers understand the clothing consumption process has changed very little since Winakor published her findings in 1969. This linear model of acquisition, inventory/use, and discard may still be relevant in terms of how the average user consumes their clothing through traditional outlets; however, the interviews with vintage consumers show a much different process. In this section, research questions 2 and 3 will be explored: 2) To determine if vintage consumers shop for and acquire their items differently than other types of consumers. To identify the attributes that lead to acquisition and if changes in these attributes affect the vintage consumers’ expectations through acquisition, inventory, and discard; and 3) To understand if vintage consumers care for and discard their clothing differently than other types of consumers.

Through an interpretative analysis of participant data, the following four theme categories emerged, exemplified here with direct words from research participants; (1) Shopping as “It’s sort of like combat,” (2) Purchasing as “I get a really good high off of that,” (3) Ownership as “Just staring at my clothes,” (4) New Life as “I want them to go to another good home.” Within

the shopping theme category, two smaller themes emerged, (a) “Feeds the beast” and (b) “It’s been yeeeears.” Within the ownership theme category, three smaller themes emerged (a) “I want people to be like ‘Daaamn,’” (b) “It’s more of a museum piece in my closet,” (c) “I’ll just put it in a little pile.” Within the new life theme category, three smaller themes developed, (a) “It’s either for me or it’s for the shop,” (b) “Keep this cycle going,” (c) “Don’t want to throw shit in the landfill.”

Shopping as “It’s Sort of Like Combat”

The act of shopping, as theme 1, particularly when going to non-curated vintage sources like thrift stores, is frequently a long process filled with little success. Most of the participants describe going to numerous locations, often multiple times a week, searching through an abundance of items in order to find those few worthy pieces. Full days are spent dedicated to shopping to the point where, as Kira states, they “come home so exhausted [they] can’t move enough to eat.” James, who has made a long-time career out of the buying and selling of vintage items, explains the act of shopping for vintage.

> **James:** It’s sort of like […] combat. You know, days and days of boredom followed by minutes of, you know, heart palpitations, you know [laughs] adrenaline overdrive.”

It appears that, although there can be long spans of time when no items are found, those few minutes of excitement keep the vintage buyer going back. When asked about why they love vintage shopping, several participants gave the search process as a top reason. James, later in his interview, stated it was not the “kill” but “the thrill of the chase.” Many of the vintage goers described the method of seeking pieces as “the hunt” or “treasure hunting.” The physical and emotional responses that happen when an item is discovered leads to a strong need of acquisition. In addition, those responses overshadow any perceived negatives that happen while

shopping for vintage. Kira states that the process is not easy, a lot of "blood, sweat, and tears" goes into finding items, and she sometimes has to dig through "smelly, smelly" things. But, at the end of the day, it's all about finding that "Rolex watch:"

> **Kira:** "It's like treasure hunting. It's spending an entire day digging in the sand until you come across that Rolex watch that someone lost at the beach…"

Frannie, a local vintage store owner, however, disagrees with this sentiment. Although at one point called the search for vintage "treasure hunting," Frannie believes it is not always like an actual treasure hunt; the process is not always a "magical" experience and, often times, she leaves places with nothing, even after she has "torn it up." To Frannie, it appears that the search which results in finding items is the true definition of "treasure hunting." Because the vintage shopper is not always successful in finding "treasure," the process is no longer a true treasure hunt.

> **Frannie:** "Yeah. And It's not like, it's not like a treasure hunt. People don't always realize it's not always magical. Finding it is but finding, finding... digging for it [shakes head no]."

In addition to a time consuming shopping process whose end goal is finding special items, most of the vintage individuals had very specific routes when going through a store. Certain categories of items, such as dresses or shoes, were top priority and always the first sections visited upon entering a store. If the store was less organized, a keen eye was used to spot specific pieces in the masses. When a store was visited regularly, not only were the certain sections given priority but the same path was taken around the store. Usually, this was memorized to the point that they could reiterate the route when asked.

> **Cyndi: "**So I have like a path for each thrift store. Like America's Thrift I go see the shoes first, and then the baby dresses, and then like the women's stuff and then I go all around the back wall and look at all the sheets, and then I hit the toys cuz [my daughter

> is] usually with me, and then all the other stuff like the knickknacks, pottery, glassware... So that's just my map for America's Thrift. But then Project Safe is a little different...."

Time played a factor in how long they "dug" through the racks and piles of items; if they had no time frame, the vintage shoppers would look at every piece in the racks so as to not miss anything. However, if time was limited, they learned how to glance through the racks, seeking out colors or prints, materials, and cuts that, simply by the "look," they could identify as vintage. For most participants, this was not an ideal strategy since it played into their fear of missing out on a find. In Kira's case, this went so far as a negative physical reaction:

> **Kira:** "…If I'm running out of time, if someone is hurrying me, something like that, I will walk down the aisles and, and I'll look, I won't touch, until somethings stands out and then I'll grab it. I hate doing that, I mean like I literally feel like itchy and uncomfortable when I leave if I haven't gotten to touch everything."

"Feeds the beast." As briefly explained, during the process of searching for vintage items, a main driver that keeps the vintage consumer going back is the moment of discovery. Finding an item pushes the vintage buyer to go more and more often because they believe that, if they do not, they will miss out on an amazing piece. Even if a visit to a non-curated vintage store proves fruitless, they would rather have gone, spent hours digging, and have found nothing as opposed to not going and worrying they missed out. There are certain items, as Frannie states, that "feed the beast," making her feel like she has to stop everywhere. The hunger for something new and exciting leaves her, and others, wanting more; even when those items are found, that appetite is never satisfied and the cycle continues. In conjunction with this "hunger," fear plays a role in perpetuating the hunting cycle. The stronger this sense of fear that they will miss out on a good find, the more likely that the buyer goes frequently and spends time searching.

> **Frannie:** "We just randomly drove by another goodwill and [my husband] was like 'Ohhhh, guess we should stop.' and I was like 'Noooooo! I'm being a baby and I want to

> go eat.' but I was like 'You're right.' and then I found this amazing like psychedelic 1970s dress."

"It's been yeeeears." In addition to finding items they were not intentionally searching for, the participants all had "holy grail" pieces. These were pieces they constantly kept a lookout for, they could be very specific items or a general category, and in some cases the search has lasted for years. The participants frequently used alternative sources beyond thrift and vintage stores to find these special pieces, such as eBay and Etsy, to hone in on them instead of leaving it up to chance that they come across the piece in a store.

For Frannie, her "holy grail" came in the form of "knee high, lace up, embroidered, floral embroidered boots" that she "trolls" the internet for, using eBay's "saved search" method to get notifications if the boots get posted for sale. Since her search has taken years, Frannie said she was willing to spend at least $200 on a pair when she finds them, indicating price is much less of a factor for these types of pieces. In the case of Kira, her "holy grail" items were things she saw in movies in her adolescence. The red cowboy boots that Lori in *Footloose* wears and the white fringe leather jacket worn by Sloan in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* stood out to Kira because the "cool girls" wore them and she aspired to be just like them. Even thirty years after the movies came out, Kira still aspires to be "the cool girl" she saw at a much younger age. Of the two items, she had recently acquired the white leather jacket and, though she does not wear it often, it "has a very special place in her closet" and "the fact that she found it" was good enough for her.

> **Kira:** "It was just like, I saw that this person was cool and my analytical 10-year-old brain or whatever was like 'Okay, why is this person cool? Well they're pretty, they're fun, they've got a good personality, and they look really cool with their fun jacket or shoes.' So it was kind of like 'Okay, alright, well, gotta find me some of those shoes.'"

Purchasing as "I Get a Really Good High Off That."

The next phase, and second theme, in the vintage consumption process is acquisition, the moment when the item goes from being "discovered" to being "owned." A key trait of this phase is the emotional and physical response that carries over from when they find the item to once they take it home. When asked to describe how finding a piece feels, all participants were not only able to describe in words their reactions but the act of just thinking about that moment brought on a visible emotional response. Big, giddy smiles, posture that was a little bit straighter, and what can be described as a sparkle in their eyes were all produced simply from thinking about the moment of unearthing. Words like "euphoria" and "a high" portray the intense positive response to vintage garments, one that was not experienced with newly made apparel. Frannie directly states that she feels more excited when she sees an amazing vintage dress whereas with new items her first thoughts are "I can find that [somewhere else]" or to have a seamstress friend make it for her. Some of the participants confessed to vocal outbursts in stores, even when alone with strangers around, because their enthusiasm could not be contained.

> **Frannie:** "If I find them, if I find them or like 60s, 50s, honestly any 50s, 60s swimsuits or like playsuits, I'm like what the -. That's when I'll like talk to myself and get really excited, which people have definitely busted me. I'm like 'Oh my god!' [laughs] And I'm like 'Oooo people are around me aaaaand I look like a crazy person.'"

In addition, there is a need to own the item, not only to feed this exhilaration but to ensure the garment belongs to them and only them. Vivian explains how the item becomes "your piece" and that no one else having it adds to the feelings of excitement. Going back to the idea of treasure hunting, when a vintage buyer comes across a piece that they want to own, they view it as being the one and only item of its kind in existence. Whether that is true or not, a sense of urgency sets in to buy the item then and there because they want to be the person to take it home.

> **Freddy:** "…When I see vintage items that I'm in love with, a little bit is like 'I want to buy this cuz I don't want anyone else to have it.' And um I get a really good high off that."

Putting the garment on, whether in the store or at home, perpetuates these positive feelings. Simply put, the vintage wearer wants to feel better when they wear the item. Instead of washing or adding new pieces to their closets right when they get home, vintage buyers frequently don their finds around the house because they love the way it makes them feel. The positive feelings were so strong that they spilled over from the shopping and discovery processes into the acquisition phase. Grace described how, when living at home, she would come back from a solitary day of shopping and show her entire family the dresses she found, wearing them around for a bit, even when her brothers did not care. In other cases, like that of Vivian, the intended purpose of the garment (i.e. a bathing suit) does not prevent them from sporting the garment all day. The bathing suit made Vivian feel like she was out of a movie and she had only just taken it off before the interview but had yet to go swimming in it.

> **Kira: "**I get it home and I get so excited that I don't even get it to the wash before I'm already putting outfits together, you know, and like I'd throw it on the bed, I'm accessorizing it, I'd be taking some pictures for myself to remember later."

"I'm buying vicariously." At some point over the span of time the participants had been shopping for vintage, they began to acquire items they could not or would not wear. Whether it was due to fit or style, some discovered pieces did not work for the participants; however, the positive emotional response to the items outweighed the fact they would never wear it. The excitement of finding *any* item meant a quicker and more frequent cycle of searching for, finding, and acquiring special pieces, thus leading to an even higher rate of acquisition. Although the participants purchased these items fully knowing they themselves would never wear them,

there was still a purpose for buying. Fashion shows, themed parties, repurposing, reselling, and giving to someone they knew were some of the reasons given for acquiring such items. Cyndi called it "buying vicariously," explaining that even though an item will not fit her, she knows "somebodys going to love them."

A level of appreciation comes into play as well since the vintage shopper understands some of the technical and historical aspects of the garment. The vintage buyer feels as though they can give the garment the love and care it needs, due to this sense of appreciation, while other would potential buyers would not. Freddy discussed this, stating that it has gotten to the point for him where even if it's not his size, he buys the item anyway because he appreciates it and wants to find someone else who will as well. Kira reiterated these feelings in terms of a garment that was not her style. She brought up a 1940s dress she owned, a decade that was not her style at all, but she could not bear to part with it.

> **Kira:** "It's funny how some pieces do that to you. It won't even be your style but it's so good that you buy it anyway and... probably is being wasted in your closet."

Ownership as "Just staring at my clothes…"

The next phase, and third theme, in the vintage consumption process is ownership, the period of time after they acquire the item in which it is in their possession. This phase can be broken down into three themes: (a) wearing as "I want people to be like 'Daaaamn'", (b) storing as "it is more a museum piece in my closet", and (c) mending as "I will put it in a little pile". There is no specific order to when a garment enters into these stages and it is possible for garments to go through all three while others may only remain in one during the entire period of Ownership. The amount of time a garment remains in the Ownership phase varies widely, but a

few participants discussed pieces that had been cycling through each part of Ownership for a decade or more. This section will review each of these parts in-depth.

"I want people to be like 'Daaamn.'" In the wearing phase, the garment plays an active role in the vintage consumer's wardrobe. For some vintage consumers, a large majority of their day-to-day wardrobe is vintage pieces, resulting in items that remain, for the most part, in the wearing phase. For Vivian, whose wardrobe was made up entirely of thrift and vintage pieces, if it was a "comfortable vintage piece" and did not "scream super vintage," she was more likely to wear those true vintage pieces often. In the case of some of the other participants who perhaps wore vintage items less often, this tended to be as a result of their lifestyle. Grace stopped wearing her vintage dresses to work because of the physical nature of her job. She had a particular problem with stepping on the back hem of her dresses whenever she knelt down, at one point her boss even had to help her staple it back together because she 'stood on it. Again." All the participants, whether they wore vintage items often or not, had pieces that they considered "special" and only wore those for certain occasions. These were items meant to make a statement; thus, with wearing them less often, the element of surprise played into their favor. Freddy best explained this:

> **Freddy:** "I have like vintage pieces that are like shorts and stuff that I just wear casually all the time. But like my outerwear, I got a, a designer like 80s pink like PVC material jacket and I like saved up for it and uh that was an amazing piece. Got that from Atomic. Yeah I feel like those pieces are more statement like I'm not gonna wear it all the time but when I do I want people to be like 'Daaamn!'"

"It's more of a museum piece in my closet." When an item is not actively being worn, it is likely being held in the storing phase of ownership. For the vintage consumer, this goes beyond putting an item in their closet and leaving it there until they wear it again. First, there is the way in which vintage items are stored. For some of the participants, there was a very specific

method of storage depending on the material and age of the garments. The participants understand that many of their vintage items, due to age, are delicate and require more care in terms of how they are stored, something James described as "preservation". They also do not want these pieces that they really love and view and one-of-a-kind to get damaged in any way. Frannie, who had "made a mistake years ago" by storing her garments incorrectly, only stores her vintage items in cool and dark places, but never the attic or basement due to risk of mold or bug damage. The house she lived in previously had a cedar closet, which Frannie used to store the few furs she owned. Cyndi, who did choose to use the attic as a storage space, went the extra step to ensure nothing could damage her vintage pieces.

> **Cyndi:** "When I store stuff in the attic, cuz I do have a couple of those like tub, bins of stuff that were mine when I was teen […] I have like a bunch of silica gel packets and moth balls and cedar balls that I throw in, too. So when it comes out, though comes out stinky but nothing ate it and I can deal with the smell. [...] Oh, and put tape! That's the other thing, I'll put tape around [the lid] so no animals, bugs or anything just like live in there."

The second, and most interesting, aspect of storage for vintage consumers is that there are some items so special that they are kept, admired, and sometimes displayed; as Marilyn put it, there are garments that are "more of a museum piece" in her closet. This sense that their closet is like a museum means that some pieces are kept simply to be owned, even if they are rarely or never worn. The high value placed upon these items because of uniqueness, age, beauty, or personal significance demonstrates the deep sense of attachment the participants have to their vintage pieces. There are particular vintage garments that are stored in plain view, purposefully on display. Grace mentioned buying dresses that were much too small for her just to display them on mannequins in her room. Kira explained that her vintage pieces "really are prized treasures" and she treats them as such, hanging the really good pieces up on the wall in her room

for a while, like a work of art. Although these pieces may not be "in use" in the sense of being worn, they are also not being stored with an "out of sight, out of mind" mentality. In some cases, it is not just one garment that is singled out for admiration but their entire closet, as Kira describes:

> **Kira:** "And then as soon as it's washed I hang it, you know, I have an out-outside closet so it's not in a closet, it's like racks in my room. And generally I hang it up with everything else and stare at it for a while. I mean, I have a chair positioned right in my outside closet just so I can sit there and stare and sometimes I'll just be sitting there in the chair and my boyfriend will walk in and be like 'What are you doing?' and I'll be like 'Just staring at my clothes…' [guilty laugh]."

"I'll put it in a little pile." The third theme of Ownership is mending. Unlike the storing theme, where items have the potential to immediately go into use, an item in mending needs to be fixed in some way before being worn. There is always intention on the part of the vintage consumer to repair, alter, or repurpose a piece when it is in the mending theme, but it is not always immediate. Many of the participants described "the pile" of items that they had at home which needed to be repaired but they had yet to get around to working on. Although the vintage items could not be worn, these are pieces that, as Frannie states, they just "can't get rid of yet."

Instead, Kira illustrates this process of "the pile," which would grow for "a few months," getting big enough to inspire the vintage consumer to mend all the items in one go. When the pieces do finally get fixed, Kira continues in describing how it feels like they have "refound" these garments. This indicates a renewed excitement, akin to how they felt upon first discovering a vintage piece. Instead of letting items in this "pile" fall to the wayside, there is still an active interest for the garments. Sometimes, the passing in and out of the "pile" is not as straightforward: the repair on the garment was done in a temporary manner so that it could be worn, after which point it goes back to the pile, in wait of a better fix.

> **Kira: "**And so I have been waiting to go back through with NOT dental floss and fix it and, and maybe try to do something different with it. But I keep pulling it out of the pile every couple of years or so, wearing it once or twice with the dental floss and thinking 'I mean it's real cute...', wear it a couple times and be like 'Something needs to be done, I'll put it in the pile.' And this is a cycle that's been going on since maybe 2004."

As far as who mends their vintage items, it depends on the extent of the repair and the skill level of the vintage consumer. All the participants stated that, at the very least, they could replace a button or hand-sew a small seam hole. Many voiced an interest in learning more sewing skills, such as using a sewing machine for repairs as well as for making their own garments. Time, money, and not knowing someone to teach them were all given as prohibitive reasons for moving forward with their sewing knowledge. If it was a repair they could not do themselves and the piece was either something they wore often or a special item, there was always at least one person they knew who could do the mend for them. The willingness of the participants to get items repaired, whether by themselves or others, demonstrates the level of care they have for their garments. Instead of getting rid of pieces which were damaged, their first instinct was to repair in order to keep and wear.

> **Frannie: "**I'm a hand sewer. I can't do the machines. I've tried. But you know like fixing buttons and minor seams or like I've altered things just by cutting them, which is terrible. Sara hates it. But, you know, like 'Oh, I don't like the sleeves or this or the lengths.' I don't know. I get crazy sometimes. I try not to because I respect vintage too much to like really get crazy. But I've done some minor cutting alterations."

"It's like leaving your fingerprint on your piece." Further in the mending theme, one participant, Freddy, had an interesting view of items that may need to be mended. Although there were certain pieces he owned that he would get altered or fixed, for the most part, Freddy explained how he "just kinda let [them] fall apart and become a new thing." These imperfections were not a nuisance nor did they diminish the value of the item; instead, they added to the

character of the garment. Freddy recognized that the piece had a history and the signs of wear apparent on the garment were indicators of its life before it came into his possession. By continuing to let the holes get bigger, he was adding to that garment's history, allowing it to become something new; if he ever gave pieces like that away, then someone else would recognize his personal history with the item.

> **Freddy:** "I think all clothes have a life and so you try to keep it going as long as possible. When it's ready to go, just kinda let it fall apart and become a new thing. I do that a lot with T shirts especially, if it's like a hole and like its big I'm like, 'Cool, let's make it happen.' Or like shorts that you know, pants eventually get holes in the knees or whatever you know. Just have, grows character, you know, put your own story into it, you know. If I ever gave those away someone else will see that and be like 'Something happened.' And I kinda like that because it's like leaving your fingerprint on your piece."

"Girl, you gotta get a steamer." Within the ownership theme, tools play a large role in ensuring that garments stay in the best wearable condition as possible. Many of the participants explained buying very specific items to ensure this was the case. The investment in these tools for the purpose of adequate garment care demonstrates the long-term thinking of the vintage consumer. Not only do they want the garments to look good now but they want them to continue to look good and remain in good condition for the foreseeable future. Steamers were brought up very often because they were easy to use and gentle on the vintage garments; at one point Frannie even professed her love for the steamer she owns. Kira, who is also a personal stylist, said that she tells her clients to get steamers and keep them in their closets to keep them close at hand for easy access. Hangers were another item specifically talked about. Depending on the garment, its material, its age, and how special it was to the owner determined the type of hanger it received.

> **Kira:** "I have all black velvet hangers, that's just what I try to get all my clients to do just cuz less space and looks good. But my favorite vintage pieces get those fancy foamy ones, so I'll usually throw it on one of those."

New Life as "I want them to go to another good home."

There comes a point in the vintage consumption process when the participants no longer keep their pieces. This is the New Life phase, theme 4. As opposed to simply discarding items without any thought, the participants all intended for these pieces to continue being used in some form by another person. For many of the participants, getting rid of items was not an easy decision as a result of their deep personal connection with the garments. As a result, the participants generally needed to know the item would end up in "another good home, [with] someone that will understand, appreciate the value" of that piece, as Frannie put it. There were three ways in which the participants found "new homes" for their unwanted garments: 1) reselling, 2) giving away, or 3) repurposing.

"It's either for me or it's for the shop." Out of the eight participants, half of them were vintage sellers in some capacity, from a small out-of-home business to the owner of their own store. Turning their love of vintage into a way of life was not intentional; for most of the participants that resold vintage, it was a natural progression. Over time, as they learned more about vintage clothes, their appreciation and love grew, resulting in higher and higher rates of acquisition and ownership. Instead of donating items they no longer wanted, they saw a profitable option in reselling the garments to people who appreciated them just as much. Kira claims that if she did not currently have an outlet to resell her items, she "would have 100% owned a vintage store already." The pieces that were resold were either previously owned by the vintage consumer and they no longer wanted to wear it or the item was initially purchased with the intention of reselling. As Vivian explains, all the items she purchases can always be resold:

> **Vivian:** "Whatever I see, it's either for me or, or it's for the shop. It's always for the shop. [laughs] Eventually it's always…"

James, who described himself as a “real life American Picker,” had the most passive relationship to reselling vintage items he came across as a result of spending three decades in the business. And although he could “fill up tractor trailers with the stuff that’s come and gone,” there were still pieces that surprised or excited him, an occurrence that happened less and less often. Even when those special items came about, James viewed the process of finding as more interesting than the moment of discovery, explaining that another amazing find will always come around again. James described that when he was out buying, the first criteria is “will this sell,” indicating that the purpose of reselling is at the forefront of the buying decision. Even if it’s something he hates, like “ugly Christmas sweaters,” he buys them anyway knowing he can “sell as many as he can find.” When asked if there was anything he would not sell, James joked:

> **James:** “Just family stuff. [...] But other than that, no. Anything legal. Probably never sell my body, or drugs, cocaine, anything like that. The risks are just too, too high."

In addition to buying items to sell to the general vintage market, many of the participants discussed buying items with people in mind. Usually, this was particular people, someone they knew personally, but it could also be an imagined person they might see wearing the item. For Vivian, any item she finds she has to ask herself first if she likes it and then she “picture[s] the person who would buy it.” Many pieces that were purchased this way did not fit into the vintage buyers own aesthetic or favorite decade. Kira knows there is a lot of things she will not wear but she “can still appreciate it” and still wants to buy the items. Having a vintage store as an outlet to resell, knowing someone will appreciate and wear the item, feeds into the purchase decision.

> **Frannie:** “I think if you're a regular in the store, I'm like, I'm gonna remember you and know you and know your style. So now when I shop I'm like ‘This is so her.’ This is like when I saw Regina, I was like ‘This is so Regina.’ Or ‘This is so Sam.’”

"Keep this cycle going." The second way in which the participants ensured their vintage pieces went to a good home was by giving. In contrast to selling their items, where the purpose of getting rid of an item was to make money, an item was given away with the intent of satisfaction that it went to a like-minded individual. Giving items came in the form of choosing someone they knew, clothing swaps, or donating.

The pieces that are given away to specific people likely come from the vintage consumer's personal wardrobe and are garments they themselves love and cherish. As a result of this deeper connection to these pieces, the vintage consumer needs to know the individual on a personal level to feel comfortable with them taking responsibility for it. Freddy, who does not usually resell items, explained that this is something he tends to do. He considers himself an impulse shopper, buying any items he loves when he sees it, and after a wear or two ends up deciding to be done with it, resulting in the choice to "give it to friends who will appreciate" the garment. This is Freddy's way of "keep the cycle going," passing along vintage pieces to new people who will, in turn, love and wear the items. Interestingly, Freddy stated that he never felt negatively about over buying because he "wouldn't have had those outfits;" the joy Freddy feels in putting new outfits together, even if they are items he wears once, as well as having people to give pieces to outweighs the fact that he probably did not need to spend money. Likewise, giving items away to people is something that Frannie enjoyed doing, even though she owns an entire vintage store. Again, because of how much she loves particular pieces, she feels better about sending them to a new home where they will be cared for as opposed to selling them to strangers.

> **Frannie:** I usually end up either giving them to friends because, and again, maybe my love does run too deep cuz I want them to go to another good home. Like, someone that will understand, appreciate the value of that vintage dress. I know that's crazy. And [my husband is] like stop doing that. Or I'll sell them to my friends, you know, for cheap like usually what I... if it's from like my personal closet. I just love everything too much. And

> I've given so many things to my friend Caty and like 'Just have it because I know you'll wear it and love it.' She's like a vintage purist."

Other reasons for giving items away were as gifts or garment condition. James and Grace explained that re-gifting vintage items was a common practice, even if it was not for a specific holiday or birthday. While James has a vintage business to resell items, if he liked the person he gave the piece to, if he had "no further need for them" or if he "[had] a lot of them," then that is when James would choose to gift certain items. Garment condition played a large role in Vivian's decision to give items away. For her, certain repairs were not worth the time or effort to fix. Occasionally, she would try to sell the item "as is," but typically Vivian simply gave the garment to someone who was willing to put in the extra work.

> **Vivian:** "If it's not too time consuming then I would try to fix it myself. I'm… Probably, I would give them away. There's definitely been times when I just give them away. I don't want to deal with it anymore. It was too much trouble to look at it."

As for the other ways the participants choose to give away their items, clothing swaps and donations did not use the same forethought that giving to a specific person did. Of the two, clothing swaps, where a group of people get together to trade clothing they no longer want, at least fed into the idea of knowing who the garments were going home with because they would see who picked out their items. Kira and Freddy mentioned clothing swaps as an option for purging items in larger quantities. Kira explained that "clothing swaps are amazing in this town" because of the fact that there is a significant enough group of people interested in vintage and, when they do not wear those pieces any longer, "they end up at the clothing swap." Donating was almost the last option in the giving decision; however, there was still some consideration to where the clothing would be donated. If an item was not selling, if the participants did not know who to give their pieces to, and they had had them for an extended period of time, only then did donating become an option. Frannie used colored tags in her store to help her keep track of how

long garments had been in the store. Sometimes, she comes across pieces that had "been [there] like two years," resulting in a donation. Local thrift stores, as opposed to larger corporations like Goodwill, were the primary choice in terms of where to donate. Giving to these smaller organizations meant the items usually stayed within the community and went to local individuals who were in need. Kira best explained this decision:

> **Kira:** "I, same thing with what I do with my business, any time I go through somebody's closet I donate it all to Project Safe. I generally, especially for my business, I'll go through and if it's something that I feel like is a professional business women type thing to wear, I'll put it in a separate bag because when you donate to Project Safe you can donate to the women themselves or the store itself and so I'll try to consider that. But a lot of times when it's some of the vintage pieces where I'm like 'Why did I get that?', that doesn't translate quite as well to the women of Project Safe so I'll just donate it to the store itself. But, um, and that too, chances are I found it outside of Athens and so at least it's new to Athens.

"Don't want to throw shit in the landfill." The third way the vintage consumer can give their garment a new life is through repurposing. There are times when the vintage piece is initially purchased with the intent of transforming it into something new while other times the condition of the garment requires extensive reworking. Instead of being quick to dispose of garments that are unwearable, there is a conscious effort not to let the material of the garment go to waste. The decision to repurpose indicates a certain level of sustainable thinking. Many times, Kira chooses to buy vintage items that may be too "exactly that era or decade" in order to make small changes, such as cutting sleeves off, to make it more wearable. Freddy does something very similar, choosing to buy an item he likes the silhouette of in order to take it apart and use the pattern to recreate his own piece. Although there was nothing structurally wrong with the item, Kira's and Freddy's choice to purchase and make wearable means the garment is no longer just sitting in a thrift store where, if left unpurchased, will likely end up being thrown out. As for Frannie, it is a conscious decision to not "throw shit in the landfill." While she may not be able

to do anything with a damaged piece, one of the vendors in her store can use the material to make a brand new garment.

> **Frannie:** "I'm always trying to keep it and repurpose it and make it into something. Like, I give everything to Sara. I give her so many dresses like "This has a weird stain I couldn't get out, this has a rip here, like just take it and make it into something else." A lot of her clothes from her fashion line were just dresses or fabrics that I gave to her that she cut up and used as fabric, not the silhouette but you know. I try to make sure, again with the sustainable fashion, don't want to throw shit in the landfill."

"I'll have to throw it away. Which breaks my heart." Throughout the eight interviews, only one participant discussed discarding apparel in terms of throwing pieces away. This seems to implicate that, for the vintage consumer, ending the consumption process by throwing the piece away is the very last resort. When it is impossible to use the garment or its material in any way, only then does throwing the item away become an option. Some participants brought up times when clothes were ruined in the washing process. Cyndi, for example, explained how it "breaks [her] heart" when the colors bleed from garments, an instance when some people may choose to dispose of the garment. However, Cyndi did not; instead, she would try to dye the garment again or use it in another way. Frannie, the only participant to state that she must occasionally discard of items, also said how it breaks her heart to do so. Not only is throwing an item out the last possible option, it also physically pains the vintage consumer to do so, even if the garment is deteriorating

> **Frannie:** "If it's like 'This is dry rotted and they're really falling apart.' I'll have to, you know, throw it away. Which breaks my heart.

The Vintage Versus New Shopping Process.

In order to understand if the participants went through a different consumption process with their vintage versus modern made, research questions 2 and 3 were also asked in regards to those modern made garments.

Where they buy new. Some of the participants do not strictly buy items they consider vintage. Newly made items were often purchased in conjunction with their vintage pieces. While some of the participants did discuss going to stores that sell brand new, mass produced garments, not everyone purchased "new" pieces this way. Frannie, Vivian, and James all explained that the "new" items they purchased still came from secondhand locations. Vivian states she had not bought anything new, as in new from a modern retailer, in four years. Mostly, this was due to the fact that she was at thrift stores all the time but, also, she felt that new items "feel different," are not made the same, and do not "fit the same." Price was a main factor for James. He questioned why someone would spend the money to buy something brand new when a few months later he can find it in a thrift store. As he so plainly put it:

James: "Retail is for suckers."

Why buy new. For those that go to stores which provide modern, more mass produced garments, their reasons were primarily due to necessity rather than some emotional fulfillment. This may come in the form of needing new basics, garment cost and fit, or lifestyle. Wardrobe basics, such as undergarments and white T-shirts, had to be bought new if only because getting them used in new condition was impossible. The cost of apparel items became a concern in two forms: 1) income was a prohibitive factor to having a complete vintage wardrobe and 2) a specific vintage item was too expensive; therefore, a modern alternative was purchased. Freddy, a college student, made it clear that he would love to buy only vintage clothes but, as a "poor college student," it really was not possible. For that reason, he turned to fashionable modern alternatives, such as ASOS, an online retailer, but kept the same mindset when purchasing newly made fashion pieces as he does when buying vintage. If he chose to buy fast fashion, Freddy wanted the possibility of "finding someone else wearing it very, very little," needed the pieces to

blend in well with his vintage pieces but can stand on their own, and shopped at places he considered the quality "reliable." Garments where fit was a primary issue, for example jeans, it was ultimately easier looking for pieces that were newly made, as Kira states:

> **Kira: "**… when it's impossible to find the perfect pair of mom jeans that are Guess and they zip up the back and because they're going for $200 on eBay because everyone wants them, um, I'll buy my Madewell jeans. Or I need a basic white t-shirt, you're not gonna find one of those vintage that's not covered in stains, or holes, or whatever, that's still white…"

In addition, lifestyle, like where they work or if they have children, dictated a need to purchase newly produced items. If their work environment was not conducive to vintage items, such as Grace's job that required unloading heavy inventory from trucks, vintage dresses were replaced with modern jeans. For one thing, the physical nature of Grace's job meant wearing pants was the more comfortable and practical option. In addition, she cared too deeply for her vintage dresses to have them be ruined while working. Two of the women interviewed were mothers and it was clear that parenthood led to a change in their buying habits of newly made items. Before kids, the mothers did not have to consider breastfeeding or quickly growing children. Vintage items stopped meeting all of their needs, thus leading to the addition of more mass produced items which were more accessible, less expensive, and could get damaged or outgrown without a huge sense of loss.

> **Cyndi:** "She's growing, she stains stuff constantly, and so I have to really think about like how long is she gonna wear this for, because I could buy a dress... Like, she's in a growth spurt right now and she's in a 2T going into a 3T so I'm like 'So, this 2T dress, probably she's gonna wear like three times versus something she could wear for like 3 or 4 months.' So I think about that growth."

Shopping process. Choosing to buy newly made apparel items for reasons of practicality and necessity means the shopping process is very different than that of shopping for vintage. When going to an actual store, the participants enter with a purpose; they seek out only the items

they really need with little browsing through the rest of the store. Even when shopping online, there is usually a specific item or style they have in mind, making the search process more purposeful. Freddy, who was the most frequent shopper of non-thrift stores, did not just browse a store's selection but was very intentional in the styles and pieces he sought, even though he did need the garments to fit the aesthetic of his vintage wardrobe. The treasure hunting mentality does not seem to exist with new stores nor does the need for positive emotional fulfillment gained from finding an item.

> **Cyndi:** "…I needed a bathing suit, I knew that [Target] would have something cute... so I just went right to the bathing suits, grabbed, I didn't even try it on in the store, I like put it in front of me, I was like 'This is gonna do,' cuz I knew how it was gonna fit."

For other participants, they approached shopping for newly made garments in a way similar to how they shopped for their vintage pieces: they wanted pieces that were somewhat unique and fit with their style. As part of the interview, the participants were asked to bring one vintage and one newly made item that they owned with them. None of the newly made items brought by the participants were pieces that could be considered basics; each were interesting on their own and clearly fit in with the participants' style. For example, Grace brought a dress she got on clearance from Anthropology that, at first glance, looked like it may have been a vintage dress from the 1950s due to its cut and floral print. Although these items were new, they still needed to represent the participants.

> **Freddy:** "If I'm doing fast fashion, I want the possibility of me finding someone else wearing it very, very little, very like, you know, if I'm gonna shop ASOS, one of my last purchases at ASOS was like these gold glitter Chelsea boots. Like I want statement pieces, always. So if I do fast fashion, I want it to be a piece that's a little out there and something that I feel if I, you know, it's gonna be very rare if I saw, if I find someone else in it. That's really my standard honestly. I'm trying to find pieces that will go very, that will blend well with my vintage pieces but also kind of stand out on their own."

Ownership: Storing and Caring. During the ownership phase, the way in which the participants stored and cared for their newly produced items depended on the item itself. Buying vintage made the participants more aware of fabrics, quality, and how to properly care for their garments. As a result, they often cared for their garments, vintage or not, in a similar way by washing on a delicate cycle, using gentle detergents, and hang drying as opposed to using a dryer. Although they understood their mass produced pieces would not last that long, the participants knew if they purchased certain items over others and took good care of them, they might be able to extend the garment's life. Kira, who used her experiences as a vintage buyer and a wardrobe stylist, very much considered a garment's quality, even during the shopping process, thinking forward into how she would have to care for the garment. Marilyn did this as well, explaining that she avoids new items that are "too high maintenance," passing up items that require her to go out of her way to care for, i.e. dry cleaning. However, Kira understood there were items that no amount of careful care would make it last longer than a few washes. For these pieces, she, and others, accepted this as a fact and bought the pieces anyway when she needed them.

> **Kira: "**I am more aware of materials. You know, do I need to worry about laying it flat to dry, for instance, so it doesn't get that crinkly thing under the armpit. Do I need to, more often than not when it's nicer blouses or something, I'll wash them in the delicates cycle too just because, even if it doesn't say to it's just like this may keep it a little bit longer. I still don't really dry stuff all that often. But when it's those plain white T shirts from Old Navy or something like that, I don't consider it because I know it's not going to last me that long so I just kinda chalk it up to well this has 3 more washes anyway.

Discarding. As part of this acceptance that their newly produced garments will not last as long, the participants discarded their items in a way that was much more passive than when they passed on their vintage pieces. Unlike their vintage pieces, the participants either put little forethought into where these garments went next or did not care who would own them. The

emotional connection the vintage consumer has with their vintage piece was not present with their newly produced garments, seemingly resulting in a willingness to donate for anyone to repurchase. Marilyn differentiated her "vintage inspired" from her true vintage pieces, opting to donate the inspired garments to Goodwill, noting there is a "pretty good chance" they came from there anyway, while keeping the true vintage items, even if she should get rid of them. For Freddy, the idea of someone "like a frat dude" getting a beloved vintage piece was a reason not to donate right away, a motivation that did not exist for his newly produced garments.

> **Freddy:** "With my fast fashion items, though, I don't feel so keen to like keep it and give it away to someone. I'll donate those in a heartbeat just because it's fast fashion, anyone can get them and I feel like... They not necessarily would be appreciated but more people would be open to wearing those. I'd be ok if like just the average Joe put on this like Kid Kudi graphic tee I bought, you know. Like this piece though, like if I donated this [picks up vintage item] I would hate if somebody like a frat dude came in and bought that."

The Vintage Consumer/Garment Relationship

Throughout the interview process, it became apparent that the vintage consumer's relationship to their vintage clothing played a very large part in how and why they consumed the clothing as well as why they were a vintage consumer to begin with. The language used by the participants indicates a humanization of their vintage pieces. These garments are no longer just objects, they have a life of their own and a history that the vintage consumer recognizes. This recognition of a previous life goes one step further with the amount of research the vintage consumer does in order to learn more about where the garment was made, when it is from, and any other details that can be gleamed from research.

"I feel like my love runs too deep."

There is an understanding that garments which come from secondhand sources are, for the most part, used. With the exception of deadstock pieces, clothing purchased through this

outlet had been owned, worn, and discarded prior to reentering the market. While non-vintage consumers understand this somewhat passively, for the vintage consumer, this history plays an active role in why they enjoy vintage. The garment has a past life that the vintage consumer respects and, therefore, they want to perpetuate that life with proper love and care. Throughout the interview process, the participants used words like "my baby," "responsibility," and "hurt" when talking about their vintage pieces. The language used shows that vintage garments are humanized to be more than objects. For Freddy, he explained that he approaches his vintage pieces as though they are his "baby," and, therefore, feels as though he must "take care of it," put himself in the piece, and take on the responsibility for the garment. When asked if her feelings ever change toward vintage pieces after she acquires them, Frannie confessed that her "love runs too deep" for her feelings to really change. While she might realize the size will not work for her, it does not change that she fell in love with the garment in the first place, cherishing it enough to search for "another good home." It is as though they are adopting the garments, not just purchasing them, and when they can no longer keep the pieces, they must search for someone who will care for them as deeply. Grace used the word "hurt" five times throughout the interview when talking about wearing and caring for her pieces. To her, damaging a garment would not only cause her pain but Grace believed she would also cause the garment pain.

> **Grace:** "I don't want to hurt [the dresses]. I could squeeze into them if I wanted to but I've broken a zipper in a dress before and it feels terrible and I… Like especially when you're looking for something and that's your hobby and you go on the weekends and you pick and you curate and you don't just... Go to the store and buy one, whichever one is the right size. Like it's really personal. And so to like mess up something that you looked for or found specifically like, you know, it's just, it hits you."

"That's why I like reading about zippers."

While the vintage consumer is aware that the garments have their own history, leading to a humanization, they also go one step further into actually finding out what that history is.

Research was common among all participants and increased the more involved they became as vintage consumers. For James, the participant who had been involved in vintage the longest, his research habits plateaued as a result of his experience. For those participants who were still learning, research was done out of necessity and enjoyment. Marilyn explained that she will pull out her phone while in thrift stores to do research on the spot, needing to know more information about the garment immediately. Grace, who frequented estate sales, described times when she would come across photographs of the individuals whose things are being sold and felt the need to buy pieces she saw in the photograph. Being able to tie a person to the object and knowing a glimpse of its history pushed Grace to purchase. In some cases, the research process is more proactive, done to build their knowledge of identifying when a piece was produced. Frannie found that it was like "learning about our history through fashion" and "the state of our country," which was why she liked "reading about zippers."

> **Frannie: "**I'm always trying to like educate myself. I feel like the third [favorite thing about vintage], I would say the history of it. I like reading about like, you know. Like I was just telling you about the zippers and when the war was going on and how everything changed. […] I think that's really cool. So I feel like you're learning about like our history through fashion. Like the state of the country. […] So I think that part of its, I don't know. That's why I like reading about zippers."

Conceptual Model.

The researcher's analysis of the process through which the vintage consumer consumes their clothing led to the identification of a new theoretical clothing consumption process. As a result, a pictorial representation of the vintage clothing consumption process emerged (see Figure 1). Unlike Winakor's (1969) clothing consumption process which happened in a linear format beginning with acquisition, moving through use/inventory, and ending with discard, the vintage clothing consumption process is cyclical. Vintage clothing consumption happens in 4 main stages: combat/hunting stage, discovery stage, ownership stage, and new life stage. The

combat/hunting stage portrays the search for vintage garments prior to being purchased or acquired. The discovery stage is the transition phase between the search process and ownership. The ownership stage is when the vintage consumer takes possession of the garment and can be broken down further into three phases of ownership: wearing, storing, and mending. The phases within the ownership stage do not happen in any particular order nor must a garment pass through all three phases. The wearing stage is when a garment is actively being worn, the storing stage is when a garment is in the condition to be worn but not actively, and the mending stage is when garments are not in the condition to be worn but being held for repair. Tools feed into the ownership to help maintain wearability. The final stage is the new life stage in which the garment is either resold, given away to someone the owner knows, or repurposed. From this stage, the process begins again, either through the combat/hunt phase or immediately to discovery, particularly when the garment is given away or repurposed. Discard, which leads to the garment leaving the process entirely, is not a common practice and only happens as a last resort.

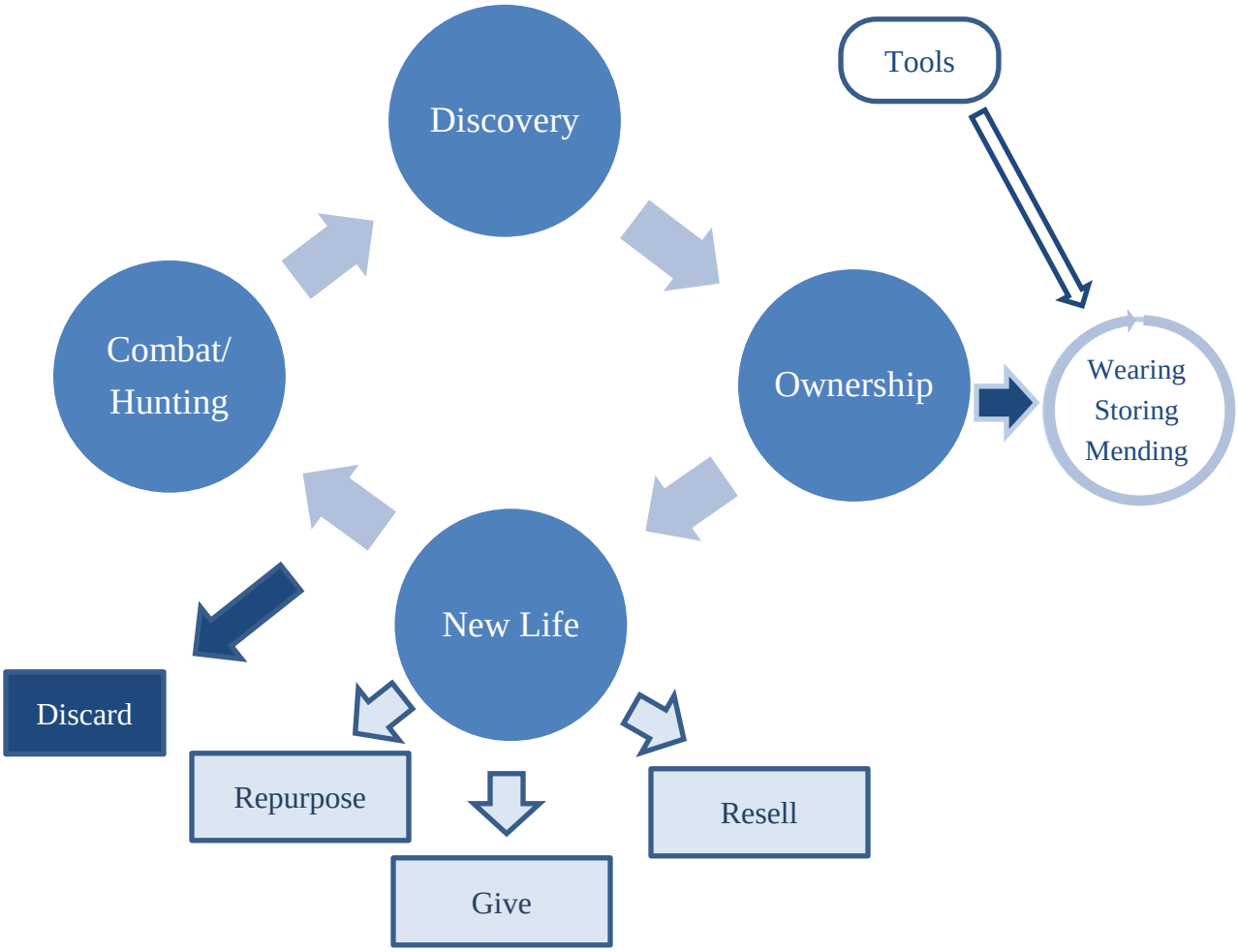

Figure 1. Vintage Clothing Consumption Process

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Chapter 5 contains the following sections (a) summary of findings, (b) implications, (c) contributions, (d) limitations and future research.

Summary of Findings

The aim of this study was to answer the three research questions posed: 1) To discover if vintage consumers have shared values that lead to the decision of consuming and wearing vintage and to understand how those values developed, 2) To determine if vintage consumers shop for and acquire their items differently than other types of consumers. To identify the attributes that lead to acquisition and if changes in these attributes affect the vintage consumers' expectations through acquisition, inventory, and discard; and 3) To understand if vintage consumers care for and discard their clothing differently than other types of consumers. First, the study revealed that the vintage consumer's values personal as well as communal, existing within the community and the vintage store, answering research question 1. Second, the vintage clothing consumption process was discovered to be different from the traditional clothing consumption process because of these values, answering research question 2 and 3. Finally, the theme of humanizing and researching the history of their garments developed as a common thread throughout the responses to all research questions.

In understanding the role that shared values play in the decision to consume and wear vintage clothing, data analysis revealed three categories of where those values exist and how

they influence the consumer. The first theme revealed that the individuals' need for uniqueness influenced their decision to consume vintage clothing initially. While this clothing was deemed "cooler than what everyone else was wearing," overtime, the individuals began to put more value on quality and strengthen their personal style and identity through a connection to specific decades. The selection of specific decades allowed the participants' a way of "living there, living that" in the sense of experiencing the energy of certain decades. The second theme revealed that, while vintage consumers value vintage clothing from multiple decades, when they attempt to dress in clothing of different decades they feel like "posers" and no longer like an authentic version of themselves.

The second theme category for understanding the vintage consumer's values was formed within the vintage community. While the individual's values started the interest in vintage, the community of people who appreciate vintage garments strengthened those values, making the vintage community feel like a "secret club." Within the community, two smaller themes developed. First, acceptance into the vintage community is easy because there is no requirement to show that you belong; if an individual exhibits interest in vintage then they are considered to be "already in it." The second is the comradery that exits between vintage individuals and stores. While the vintage stores and sellers are technically all competitors, the aesthetics and types of vintage clothing sold in each one is different as a result of the different preferences of the owners. Since each vintage seller understands the struggles that another goes through, there is a feeling of being "in this together," leading to cross promotion and sending customers to other stores.

The final theme category for understanding the vintage consumer's values developed within the store. There is much that goes on "behind the curtain of vintage" which is not

understood by many consumers such as the time it takes to search and understand history, age, and materials that all go into the final price of pieces within the vintage store. As a result, the vintage store becomes a physical ma of what itnifestation is to be a vintage consumer.

The vintage clothing consumption process was identified to be different from the traditional, linear understanding of how clothing is consumed in which clothing is acquired, goes through inventory/use, and ultimately discarded, as per Winakor's (1969) research. Vintage clothing consumption is a cyclical process, not linear, and goes through four main stages: (a) combat/hunting; (b) purchasing; (c) ownership; (d) new life.

The combat/hunt stage of consumption is most often the starting point for consuming vintage. While the act of shopping is not a part of the traditional consumption process, it is integral to the purchase of vintage. Much time and effort is often put into looking for vintage pieces that end up being purchased, leading to a process that resembles "combat" with "days and days of boredom" followed by short bursts of intense excitement. This "hunt" for vintage pieces, though quite often unsuccessful, does not deter the vintage consumer from continuing; in fact, it is a large reason why they choose to do it. The way in which they shopped was often influenced by familiarity with the store and the time they had to look. Within the combat/hunt stage, two smaller themes developed. First, there are certain pieces the vintage consumer was not intentionally searching for whose discovery "feeds the beast," leaving the vintage consumer both with the need to continue searching and with a fear that, by not going to certain stores or going often, they will miss out on a special find. Second, the vintage consumers had "holy grail" pieces, items that they look for specifically, which they have spent years searching for in some cases. These pieces are sought out with intent; they use resources like eBay and Etsy so as not to leave the discovery completely up to chance.

The second stage of the vintage clothing consumption process is purchasing, the transition between the search for and ownership of items. What makes this transition so important is the positive emotional and physical responses the vintage consumer experiences that carry over to taking the garment home. In addition to the "high" that the vintage consumer gets from purchasing the item, the need to be the sole owner of a vintage piece and the additional positive experience from putting the garment on feed into the purchase decision. Within the purchase stage, the theme of buying items that are not meant for the buyer developed. In these cases, the vintage consumer discovered items that would not work for them, either due to style or size, yet they still experienced the same overall positive response to their discovery. The vintage consumer would then "buy vicariously," making the purchase anyway to find another likeminded individual who would be able to wear it.

The third stage of the vintage clothing consumption process is ownership, the period after they acquire the item in which it is in their possession. The amount of time a garment is in the ownership phase varies widely, sometimes lasting a decade or more. Within the ownership stage, three themes developed: (a) wearing; (b) storing; (c) mending. There is no particular order to when a garment enters into these phases nor must a garment spend time in all three. In addition to these phases, the theme of using maintenance tools arose within ownership. The vintage consumer wants to ensure that garments stay in the best, wearable condition. Investment in specific tools, such as steamers and particular hangers, demonstrates the long-term thinking of the vintage consumer.

The wearing phase indicates that the garment plays an active role in the vintage consumer's wardrobe. Style and comfort of the garments and the wearer's lifestyle affected how active certain items were in the wear phase. Items that are not actively worn but are in the

condition to potentially be worn are in the storing phase. Vintage consumers store their items in very particular ways so as to prevent any damage that may happen to the garment. In addition, certain pieces within the store phase, while in the condition to be worn, almost never go into the wear phase and are viewed as "museum pieces" in their closet meant for admiration rather than wear. The third phase a vintage garment can go through is mending. Unlike the storing phase, items held in mending are not in the condition to be worn but are kept for the purpose of fixing to be worn. Many consumers described this as "the pile" of items that they just could not get rid of; when the items were finally repaired to be worn, it was as though the item was rediscovered, causing excitement similar to that experienced in the discovery phase. All participants had some level of sewing skills that they could make the mends on their own. If it was beyond their sewing expertise, they knew at least one person who could fix the item for them, indicating a level of care they have for the garments. One small theme developed within the mending phase. The first was expressed by one participant who viewed damages not as nuisances, but as character builders of items, allowing him to add his personal history to the garment.

The final stage of the vintage clothing consumption process is new life. Rather than discard the garments with little thought, the participants actively thought about who the garment would be owned by next. The decision to get rid of items was not easy, resulting in the need of knowing it was "going to another good home." Within the new life stage, four themes developed: (a) reselling; (b) giving away; (c) repurposing; (d) discarding. The high purchase rate of items they could not or would not wear by the vintage consumers resulted in many of them turning to the profitable option of reselling them to others who had equal appreciation for the garments. Giving, unlike selling, was done only for the satisfaction of knowing that the piece went to a like-minded individual, usually someone the vintage consumer knew, in order to "keep the cycle

going." On occasion, clothing swaps and donations were used to pass along items; while there was much less forethought as to who the garment would end up with, the purpose was still to ensure the garment continued to be used. The repurposing theme within new life demonstrated a conscious effort by the vintage consumer to not immediately dispose of a garment deemed unwearable, either as a result of condition or style; this decision indicates a level of sustainable thinking because that "don't want to throw shit in the landfill." The choice to discard is not made lightly and is the vintage consumer's absolute last resort. When the garment or its material are completely unusable, the vintage consumer's only option is to discard, a choice that often "breaks their heart," and the item completely leaves the vintage clothing consumption cycle.

Beyond the research questions that this research set to answer, the relationship between the vintage consumer and their garments, in terms of humanizing garments and understanding their history, developed as a common thread throughout how and why the vintage consumer's values developed as well as within the clothing consumption process. First, the theme of humanization became apparent in the vocabulary the participants used when talking about the garments. Words and phrases like "my baby," "take care of," "hurt," and "responsibility" indicate that the vintage garment is seen as more than an object and that they are, in a way, adopting the piece, instead of simply owning the piece. Second, not only is the vintage garment viewed as more than an object, but the vintage consumer actively tries to understand the history of the piece as well. The research the vintage consumer chooses to do, either pre- or post-purchase, was done out of necessity and for enjoyment. In some cases, research allowed the vintage consumer to attach a real person to the garment's history; in other cases, it was done proactively to build their knowledge on the history of garments.

Implications

This study has implications for society, the fashion industry, and academia. First, this research offered opportunities for the research participants to understand themselves better as consumers and as people. The in-depth nature of the interviews required the participants to reflect deeply on why they chose to buy vintage, the role vintage played in their lives, and how they consumed their clothing. Several participants, during the interviews, voiced that they had never thought about how or why they buy vintage. Not only did the interviews give them a new perspective on themselves, but they became aware of the important role they play as fashion consumers who buy through secondary outlets and who deeply care for their clothing as well. Discussing the relationship that they have with vintage empowered the participants to no longer feel like what they did seemed "crazy," especially when the interview was done with a like-minded individual who could relate to the choices they made and their lifestyle.

Second, the study's findings on the relationship vintage consumers have with their clothing and how they consume it may be helpful to other vintage consumers and to society as a whole. Like those who participated in the study, other vintage consumers may see parts of themselves reflected in the findings of this study and begin to have a deeper understanding of who they are. For those who are not vintage consumers, the research still provides valuable information, especially in terms of how the vintage consumer consumes clothing. The vintage clothing consumption process provides an alternative to the linear clothing consumption process many are used to, a process that is shortening as a result of fast fashion. The vintage consumer's close relationship to their clothing that leads to a more sustainable, cyclical consumption process may inspire consumers outside of the world of vintage to reconsider their own relationship with modern fashion.

Third, some within the fashion industry may see the findings of this study as useful. The modern fashion industry, in general, focuses on trends and "what's next," often resulting in a high turnover in clothing among those consumers who care deeply about being on trend. The alternative to this fast fashion processes is slow fashion, the exact opposite which involves buying only what is necessary in classic cuts and styles. The way vintage is consumed provides a middle ground to these two extremes: while the vintage consumer may tend to overbuy garments, the relationship they have with their clothing results in much less discard. If some companies take note of this way of consuming and build a brand that endorses an active relationship with their garments as well as making pieces that are higher quality, they may find themselves a loyal customer base who is tired of fast fashion but not ready for the extreme that slow fashion provides. In addition to mainstream fashion companies, other vintage stores may discover the findings in this study to be useful. This research provides information on the consumer behavior of those who buy and wear vintage. By knowing what exactly their consumers want and the important role that the vintage community and store plays in building up the customer relationship, vintage store owners can learn to market themselves for success.

Finally, the findings from this study contributes to academia research in terms of how clothing consumption is understood and taught. Students studying consumer behavior within the fashion field need to be given a broader perspective of how and why certain consumers purchase clothing. This study's findings provide a look into a unique group of clothing consumers who may not fit within the "normal" fashion consumer segment. In addition, the vintage clothing consumption process model could be taught as an alternative, more sustainable clothing consumption process as compared to fast fashion. This study's findings also have implications for students studying fashion design. By understanding this niche group of consumers who value

quality and uniqueness, and use repurposing as an alternative to discard, fashion design students can begin to build these characteristics into their designs as well as take advantage of vintage garments as material sources.

Contributions

This study has several contributions to the literature. First, the study's findings add to the body of knowledge on vintage and its consumers. The research that has been done in the field of vintage is predominately exploratory in nature. This study takes a deeper look into the consumer behavior of vintage consumers: their shared values, why those values are important, the relationship they have to their clothing, and the uniqueness of their clothing consumption process. While this study supports previous findings that value (in the forms of appreciation and price as compared to quality) (Baker, 2012; Duffy *et al*., 2012; Peters, 2014), uniqueness (Cassidy & Bennett, 2012; DeLong *et al.*, 2005; Palmer, 2005; Reiley, 2008), nostalgia (Duffy, Hewer, & Wilson, 2012; Fischer, 2015; Goulding, 2002; Veenstra & Kuipers, 2013), and eco-consciousness (Shen, Richards, & Liu, 2013; Sunhulde & Simona, 2014; Yan, Bae, & Xu, 2015) all act as motivators to the choice of vintage consumption, the scope of the research looked into what the underlying reasons for those motivators were and how those motivators impacted the consumption.

Second, the study's development of the vintage clothing consumption model challenges the idea that Winakor's (1969) model of consumption is the standard across all clothing consumers. The clothing consumption process model is linear and consists of three main parts: 1) acquisition, 2) inventory, 3) discard (Winakor, 1969). Within inventory exists use, when the garment is actively being used (Winakor, 1969). Unlike this model, the vintage clothing consumption model indicates a longer, more cyclical clothing consumption process consisting of

four main parts: 1) hunting/combat, 2) discovery, 3) ownership, 4) new life. The seeking of items plays an important role in the actual consumption of the end product and is not represented in Winakor's (1969) model. The ownership phase, akin to Winakor's (1969) inventory/use, is more complex; although inventory and use, named storing and wearing, respectively, play a role in ownership, mending is an equally active part of the ownership phase. Winakor (1969) broadly defines the moment when the garment leaves the possession of the individual as discard, no matter if it is handed down, sold, or thrown away. This research suggests that while vintage consumers do "discard," they are very conscious of where the garment ends up. As a result, this phase is named "new life" due to the awareness the vintage consumer has of what happens to the garment after they own it. When a vintage consumer does discard completely, allowing it to leave the cycle, this choice comes as a last resort. After the new life phase, the garment is knowingly reentered into the consumption process and the cycle continues.

In conjunction with defining a new clothing consumption process, the research indicates that the vintage consumer follows neither "fast" or "slow" consumption habits. Although vintage consumers choose to purchase items for reasons of quality, like slow fashion consumers, they also have a habit of buying higher quantities of clothing and may not be as concerned about finding staple garments that can be worn through many seasons (Watson & Yan, 2013). Vintage consumers, therefore, appear to fit somewhere between slow and fast fashion consumers. They share the trait of buying in higher quantities with fast fashion consumers, but are in still concerned with quality and discard much less often, like slow fashion consumers. The vintage consumer indicates a new type of consumer who can still be frequently involved in the consumption of clothing, but demonstrate more sustainable habits, once the clothing is in their possession.

Next, the study's findings demonstrate a need to redefine "treasure hunting" in relation to the shopping process of vintage. Cervellon *et al.* (2012) described treasure hunting as the hedonic motives and recreational aspects of searching for and buying vintage goods while being selective and passionate in the acquiring of such items. Based on Frannie's statement, there are aspects to this definition that require some reconsideration. First, the word "recreational," which is defined as "relating to or denoting activity done for enjoyment when one is not working" (Recreational, n.d.). The act of looking for vintage goods worthy of purchase is work, both in the sense that it is physically laborious and an actual job for some of the participants. Second, the word "buying" and the phrase "in the acquiring of such items." This goes back to what Frannie believes; since vintage items are not acquired and bought during every shopping trip, the end goal of finding treasure is not met. For these reasons, it is possible that "combat" is a better comparison to the vintage shopping process.

Finally, this research strengthens the evidence that vintage consumers are part of a subculture. Not only do the participants demonstrate that there are shared values among vintage consumers, but how they consume, take care of, and pass on their vintage garments establishes a set lifestyle in regards to consumption practices. In addition, the importance of the community and the role the vintage store plays may indicate that, at least within Athens, Georgia, the subculture has in institutional structure to help it perpetuate and endure.

Limitations and Future Research

As in other research, this study had certain limitations and, therefore, future research opportunities. First, this study highlighted vintage consumers solely from the Athens, Georgia community, meaning these findings are not generalizable. However, the strength of the vintage community that exists within Athens, Georgia does justify the use of a single location for this

study. Future research could conduct similar studies in cities around the United States where vintage communities exist to validate the themes from this study. Comparing the values and consumption habits of vintage consumers from around the country would build stronger evidence for the importance of the way vintage consumers consume their clothing as well as the impact their values have on how they consume. This could lead to a cross-cultural comparison of vintage consumers from around the world in the long-term. When considering how different the vintage consumer is to those who buy and wear apparel from traditional sources, if there is evidence of their shared values and consumption habits around the world, even with differences in cultural values, the understanding of the vintage community in a grander scale would be strengthened.

Second, a majority of the participants in the study were under the age of 35, Caucasian, and female. Future research, that encompasses a more diverse group, would help to identify if the themes and the vintage clothing consumption process are shared among a more diverse group of vintage individuals. Similar to moving outside of the region where this study was conducted, diversifying the group of participants would help strengthen the argument that the values and consumption process are shared among a majority of the vintage population.

Third, most of the participants sold vintage or worked in a vintage store as an occupation. Future research could focus on those consumers whose involvement with vintage is only in the consumption realm. While there were shared characteristics among the participants who sold vintage and those who did not, the results may have been skewed due to the shared occupations and lifestyles of the participants. If the level of involvement in vintage was only at the consumption level and not engrained deeper into their lifestyle, would the results be the same? Understanding if consumers who are only involved in the consumption of vintage still hold the

same values as those whose lives are further engrained into vintage would further validate this study's results.

Fourth, this study's end goal was not to identify the vintage community as a subculture. Although this research gives more evidence to strengthen the argument, it was not the intended purpose to define it as such. For that reason, future research may build from these findings in order to further strengthen the argument that the vintage community is a subculture and to better understand the role it plays, both now and for the future, within our culture. One way this can be done is by looking at the vintage consumer through the lens of a collector. This may be particularly useful in understanding their consumption process. Second, styling and the interpretation of certain time periods, not just the clothing the vintage consumer buys, play roles in the vintage consumer's values and style. Future research on the full embodied experience of the vintage consumer could help strengthen their recognition as a subculture.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
CONSENT FORM

IF IT'S LASTED THIS LONG, IT MUST BE GOOD:

VINTAGE, PERCIEVED QUALITY, AND THE CLOTHING CONSUMPTION PROCESS

Researcher's Statement

We are asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: Laura McAndrews
Textiles, Merchandising, and Interiors
lauraemc@uga.edu
706.542.6771

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study it so gain a better understanding of what qualities in clothing items people look for when they are out shopping for vintage and fast fashion items. This study also aims to understand how consumers of vintage and fast fashion clothing care for their items as well as get rid of their items. You are being asked to participate in this study because, as a consumer, you buy both vintage and fast fashion items in some degree.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to partake in an interview, during which you will answer questions about what you do when you shop for vintage/fast fashion items, what you look for when shopping for said items, your feelings on the items you buy when you take them home, and how you care for and discard your items. Along with the interview, you have been asked to bring two items: one vintage and one fast fashion. These items, along with yourself, will be photographed, with your permission. The interview process may take between 1 to 2 hours. The entirety of the interview will be audio recorded. Following the initial interview, you may be contacted again via email with follow-up questions and to ensure what you said during your interview is a true representation of you. The follow-up contact may take up to an additional hour of your time.

Risks and discomforts
We do not anticipate any risk from participating in this research. If, for any reason, you become uncomfortable in any way, you may stop the interview at any time.

Benefits
As the participant in this research, you may benefit from partaking by gaining a better understanding of your own shopping habits, why you buy vintage/fast fashion items, and how you care for or discard your items. It is the hopes of the researcher that this study benefits society through understanding what consumers of vintage and fast fashion see as "quality items" and if there are any differences in how they care for each type of item. Through this, if consumers take better care of those pieces they consider better quality, thus keeping them longer; we may find a way to cut back on the high amount of textile disposal and waste in the United States.

Incentives for participation
There are no incentives provided for participation in this study.

Audio/Video Recording
An audio recording device will be used for this research. These recordings are needed so that the researcher does not paraphrase or misquote you in any way. The audio recordings will ensure that what you say is represented in exactly the way you said it. The recordings will be archived after transcription for six months and then destroyed. In addition to audio recording, pictures of the items you bring and of yourself will be taken to provide a full representation of you as an individual.

Privacy/Confidentiality
Due to the use of photographs in this research, total confidentiality of your identity cannot be guaranteed. A pseudonym of your choosing will be used in the research and only the state you reside in will be mentioned. Your real name will not be used at any point in the research. If any picture taken of you is used in the final publication, it will not include your face; however, since these photographs may be published, any use of them may compromise confidentiality. Due to this, you have the choice of opting out of one or all photographs. All audio and visual recordings will be stored on the researcher's personal computer.

Taking part is voluntary
Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have questions
The main researcher conducting this study is Samantha Meacham, a graduate student at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Samantha Meacham at skm47267@uga.edu or at 419-389-2221. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:
To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Along with your signature, please indicate that you agree to have pictures taken of your items and your person. If you would only like a picture taken of one or the other, please mark the one you agree to. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

____ I agree to have pictures taken of my items and myself for use in this research. I understand what these pictures will be used for and how they will be used.
____ I only agree to have the pictures of my items taken.
____ I only agree to have a picture of myself taken.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

APPENDIX B: RECRUITING MATERIAL

Hello,

My name is Samantha Meacham and I am a graduate student at the University of Georgia in the Textiles, Merchandising, and Interiors department.

I am contacting you today about possibly being a participant in research I am doing currently on quality in relation to vintage and fast fashion clothing. (Because of your interest in vintage clothing, you make an excellent candidate for this research.)/(Your contact information was given to be because of your interest in vintage clothing, making you an excellent candidate for this research.) Along with buying vintage, you need to, in some, degree, buy mass produced clothing items as well.

Agreeing to this research will require a one-on-one interview with me that may last anywhere from one to two hours. In addition, I ask that you bring two apparel items, one vintage and one mass produced, with you to this interview. I will leave the location of the interview up to you (e.g. your home, a public place, your place of business). Be advised, the interviews will be audio recorded.

If you are interested in participating, please respond as soon as possible. From there we can begin to plan the where and when of the interview.

I greatly appreciate you considering partaking in my research.

Thank you,

Samantha Meacham