A Study of the Symbolic Clothing Disposition Behaviors of Generation Y

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A STUDY OF THE SYMBOLIC CLOTHING DISPOSITION BEHAVIORS OF

GENERATION Y

by

Patti A. Borrello

A thesis submitted to the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Masters of Arts
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A STUDY OF THE SYMBOLIC CLOTHING DISPOSITION BEHAVIORS OF GENERATION Y

Patti A. Borrello, MA
Western Michigan University, 2014

This qualitative study explored symbolic clothing disposition behaviors of Generation Y. The disposition of their wedding gowns was investigated using material possession attachment concepts. The study explored the following research questions: (1) What did Generation Y wedding gown owners do with their wedding gowns after the wedding?, (2) What disposition method was used and why the disposition method was chosen?, and (3) How is attachment to a wedding gowns related to the disposition method selected? Subjects were recruited using a non-probability, chain referral or snowball purposive approach. Within the broad categories of keeping and disposing of, many of the specific disposition behaviors described in the literature were found in these subjects, with additional previously undescribed behavior of storing without cleaning. The major drivers of disposition behavior were sentimental keeper, minimalist reducer, making money, helping others, damaged garment, lack of money, disappointment in garment, and artistic expression. Attachment to a garment was found to affect the disposition behavior, with higher level of attachment associated with keeping behaviors. Influencing factors of attachment included self-identity, mental energy, interpersonal ties, emotional attachment, condition of the garment, and cost.
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Patti A. Borrello
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore symbolic clothing disposition behaviors of Generation Y women in relation to their wedding gowns. Generation Y women are the children of Baby Boomers, born between 1980 and 1994. The clothing disposition behavior of Generation Y has been studied in the academic literature in general, but not in relation to symbolic garments. The media suggests disposition behavior of Generation Y in relation to their wedding gowns that is different from the documented disposition behavior of Baby Boomers.

The purchase decision-making process of Generation Y wedding gown owners is documented in the academic literature (Geller, 2001; Howard, 2006; Jellison, 2008; Otnes & Pleck, 2003). The bride, in preparation for her wedding, identifies her needs for a wedding gown, collects information about wedding gowns, evaluates alternatives, purchases her gown, and finally enjoys her dress or is disappointed with her dress (Engel, Blackwell, & Kollat, 1978; Jellison, 2008). The decision-making process is influenced by the consumer’s beliefs, culture, and social values as well as psychological and economical factors (Engel et al., 1978). The academic literature on weddings and brides describes consumer behavior of Generation Y during the acquisition and consumption stages, but not disposition behavior (Geller, 2001; Howard, 2006; Jellison, 2008; Otnes & Pleck, 2003). This study will examine disposition behavior of Generation Y, but their acquisition and consumption behaviors will also be considered, which may be related to the owner’s attachment to the wedding gown. In other words, acquisition and
consumption behaviors of wedding owners may contribute to the attachment they have toward their wedding gowns and hence affect the disposition stage of their behavior.

Clothing disposition behavior can be divided into two general categories: keeping and disposing of permanently. Keeping behavior can be expanded to using as designed, repurposing, and storing (Jacoby, Berning & Dietvorst, 1977). Disposing behavior refers to the act of getting rid of a garment. Disposition behaviors include giving away, selling, and throwing away. In this study the term disposition behavior will refer to keeping and/or disposing of a garment in general.

Symbolic clothing is defined as clothing that represents and communicates assigned meanings. It is a social tool that helps the individual communicate values and beliefs to others (Grubb & Grathwohl 1967). Symbolic clothing is part of identity development (Leigh & Gabel, 1992). The meaning of symbolic clothing is socially constructed and defined, and helps the individual define situations and reasons for interaction, making it easier to relate to others (Kaiser, 1983). In this study the symbolic garment is the wedding gown.

**Significance of Study**

The wedding gown is a symbolic garment that is steeped in tradition and is part of an important rite of passage ceremony (Church, 2003; Geller, 2001; Kahn, 2001). Rite of passage ceremonies are events that facilitate the transition from one specific position to another. In the case of the wedding ceremony it is the change from single person to part of a couple (van Gennep, 1960). The wedding gown reflects the values and beliefs of the bride’s culture (Whelehan & Carter, 2007). Attitudes about wedding gowns have changed since the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s. American society today does not
place the same meaning on the white wedding gown as it had several decades ago (Jellison, 2008). Before the feminist movement the white wedding gown was a symbol of bridal virginity and a woman’s changing role from single woman to wife (Jellison, 2008). Over the last sixty years the white wedding gown has become the standard costume of the American bride to wear at her wedding (Jellison, 2008). The changes in attitudes about the wedding gown in general have, changed from the Baby Boomer generation to Generation Y (Jellison, 2008). The effects of these changes in attitude on attachment and disposition behavior of Generation Y toward their wedding gowns have not been documented.

The wedding gown disposition behavior of Baby Boomers has been documented, but not the disposition behaviors of Generation Y. Baby Boomers traditionally stored and cherished their wedding gowns by cleaning and storing them in a safe place (Church, 2003; Geller, 2001; Howard, 2006; Whelehan & Carter, 2007). According to McMurray (2013) the estimated number of wedding gowns preserved in 2012 was 231,000, or 11% of the gowns purchased. This is the only study found that has data about the number of wedding gowns preserved, although Naylor (2013) suggests that Baby Boomers were more likely to preserve their gowns than were Generation Y. There are no statistical data to back up this claim. Websites encourage women to sell their gowns, donate them to charities, or destroy the gowns in photo shoots (“Making Memories Breast Cancer Foundation”, 2010; “PreOwned Wedding Dresses.com”, 2013; Richards, 2013; White, 2012). A review of selected current television shows about weddings and wedding gowns, newspaper articles related to wedding gown disposition, Internet websites about wedding gown disposition, and bridal magazines from 2010 to 2014 suggests a change in
the disposition behavior of Generation Y. This study will explore the disposition behavior of Generation Y in relation to their wedding gowns, which has not been studied in an academic context.

Material possession attachment is the conceptual framework that helps to provide a broad description of the characteristics involved with the connection of a specific person with a specific material possession. Material possession attachment frames this qualitative study by identifying factors that affect the level of possession attachment as they relate to the wedding gown. The conceptual framework states that material possessions to which an owner is attached are an extension of the owner’s self; they show the world who the owners are, which group the owners belong to, and/or where the owners came from (Belk, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Richins, 1994b).

Strong attachments may be made to garments that are part of the owner’s life story and connect the owner to people they care about (Belk, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Kleine, Kleine & Allen, 1995; Richins, 1994b). In order to understand attachment to symbolic garments such as wedding gowns, an understanding of the meaning and value of the garment to the owner and how it reflects the identity of the owner is needed (Sontag & Lee, 2004; Sontag & Schlater, 1982). The value of a symbolic garment is not just in the cost and quality of the garment, but also in the emotional attachment (Belk, 1988). Strong attachments may be made to possessions that define the owner as a person and strengthen their identity as an individual and as a member of a group (Belk, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Kleine et al., 1995; Richins, 1994b).
In a study of treasured possessions of early Generation Y adolescents, Kamptner (1995) showed that females were more likely to cherish items that related to them and/or had social meaning. They were also more likely to keep cherished items, thus providing a link with their past. In this study ‘cherished’ refers to items that are cared for, considered either monetarily or emotionally valuable, and thought of in a positive manner.

Generation Y females valued jewelry and photographs above clothing (Kamptner, 1995). Grayson and Shulman (2000) noted that Generation Y associated irreplaceable possessions with a specific time or person or in special context. The wedding gown is a garment that is associated with a specific time and person and in special context and so may be cherished.

Although studies involving Generation Y and disposition of symbolic garments have been rather limited, there are a few studies that touch upon special clothing and disposition with Generation Y. Generation Y has difficulty disposing of garments that they are tied to emotionally (Lee, Halter, Johnson, & Ju, 2013). An example of this is found with Generation Y’s attachment to fan clothing (Ortiz, Reynolds, & Franke, 2013). Multiple disposition behaviors, in general, of the Generation Y consumers in relation to “fast fashion” included donating, selling, throwing items away, recycling, swapping, and storing (Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013; Lee et al., 2013; Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). Lee et al. (2013) found Generation Y’s motivation for disposition of clothing was self-oriented. Generation Y would donate clothing or give it away if they needed room in their closet, or sell it if they needed money (Lee et al., 2013). The choice of method of disposition also took into account social responsibility. They would donate to a charity after a call to action after a disaster, instead of disposing of clothing into landfills (Lee et al., 2013).
Studies of Joung and Park-Poaps (2013), Lee et al. (2013), Morgan and Birtwistle (2009), in their studies of Generation Y’s identified behaviors that are being mirrored in the current media by wedding gown owners. Some women donate their gowns to charities such as Brides for Breast Cancer, or Every Girls Dream Inc. Since 2001, “trash the dress,” a phenomenon started by photographer John Michael Cooper, in which women destroy their gowns during a photo shoot by lying in water or on the ground or other creative destructive manner, changed how some brides disposed of their wedding gown. According to PreOwned Wedding Dresses.com (2013), each year thousands of wedding gown owners are selling their wedding gowns after the wedding through online marketplaces to help offset the cost of the gown. Naylor (2013) advised preservation companies to target mothers of the bride instead of the bride, because the mothers, who are Baby Boomers, are more sentimental about wedding gowns than Generation Y “for whom disposability is a way of life” (p. 4). Academic studies have been conducted about Generation Y and clothing disposition, but not about symbolic clothing disposition.

This study will contribute to a clearer understanding of attachment and behaviors that drive decisions at the disposition stage of the symbolic clothing’s ownership of Generation Y. Generation Y’s consumer behavior is different from previous generations (Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013; Lee et al., 2013; Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). There are many disposition choices available to Generation Y in relation to their wedding gowns.

In Chapter two, literature related to general disposition behavior, and disposition behavior of Generation Y in general, will be reviewed in order to explain the disposition choices of Generation Y. Attachment to symbolic clothing in general will also be reviewed. Understanding attachment to wedding gowns and disposition behavior of
Generation Y can provide insight to explain why the owners made the choices they did when it came to disposition of their wedding gowns beyond storage.
CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of literature starts with an overview of material possession attachment and the specific effects of material possession on disposition behavior. The literature review continues with a discussion of disposition behavior in general and specific disposition. The chapter concludes with a review of literature about Generation Y in general and a review of Generation Y and wedding disposition in the media.

Material Possession Attachment

Material possession attachment is a complex relationship between an individual and a specific material possession (Kleine & Baker, 2004). Said possession is one that the owner has an emotional attachment to on many levels, and is a reflection or extension of one’s self, self-concept, or self-identity; it is described as special, favorite or cherished (Ball & Tasaki, 1992; Belk, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Kleine, 1990; Kleine & Baker, 2004; Kleine et al., 1995; Richins, 1994b). People develop strong emotional connections to possessions into which they invested themselves. People invest mental energy in an object with their efforts, time, and attention, and the more mental energy or attention an item gets the more important it becomes (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Grayson & Shulman, 2000; Kleine et al., 1995). Personal attention to a possession increases its meaning over time (Belk, 1988; Richins, 1994a; Richins, 1994b; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988), and it is more likely to be specially cared for and/or displayed than are weak attachment possessions (Schultz, Kleine III, & Kernan, 1989).

Material possessions that owners have an attachment to are an extension of the
owners’ selves and are used to define and maintain their identity. They help to portray personality and give the owners a unique identity that is distinct from others and reflects their individuality (Belk, 1988; Kleine et al., 1995). Material possessions connect owners to others, representing interpersonal ties, emotional attachment to events and people, and portraying heritage and traditions that help to tell life stories and strengthen the attachment to the material possession (Ball, & Tasaki, 1992; Belk, 1988; Kleine, 1990; Kleine et al., 1995; Munson, & Spivey, 1981). Association with life transitions such as marriage, divorce, birth, death, children, work, and geographic change can affect attachment to the material possessions (Lastovicka & Fernandez, 2005).

Material possessions have public and private meanings. Public meaning are assigned by society at large, with shared meaning formed by socialization and enculturation experiences, including exposure to advertising and other media (Laverie, Kleine III, & Kleine, 2002; Munson, & Spivey, 1981; Richins, 1994a). Cultural meaning changes over time, and sources of cultural meaning are numerous; for example the fashion system, a person’s ethnic background, family customs, and the media (McCracken, 1986). Private meaning of material possessions is related to interpersonal ties, personal appearance-related objects, and extension of self (Laverie et al., 2002; Munson, & Spivey, 1981; Richins, 1994a). Thus, an individual’s attachment to a possession such as a wedding gown may be influenced by both cultural and personal factors (Laverie et al., 2002; Munson, & Spivey, 1981; Richins, 1994a).

**Clothing Disposition Behavior**

Clothing disposition behavior is divided into two categories: keeping and disposing of (Jacoby et al., 1977). Harrell and McConocha (1992) expanded disposition
behavior to include keeping/storing, throwing away, selling/swapping, and giving away. Birtwistle and Moore (2007) and Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) refined the disposition behavior list to include donation to charity or unknown person, giving to family or friends, swapping, selling, recycling or repurposing, and throwing away.

A qualitative study by Roster (2001) on the consumers’ disposition of possessions with special meaning increased understanding of the psychological process that consumers go through when detaching themselves from these items. This study focused on individuals born between 1926-1979 who sold their special possessions, and identified divestment rituals such as cleaning and/or restoring item to original condition, transferring special meaning of the item through storytelling, instilling value in the item by making it hard to buy the item by over-pricing, or guilt after selling the item. Several behaviors were noted to help the consumer detach from an object. These included neglect, concealment, and continued storage without use (Roster, 2001). Roster (2001) stated that these items are stored in the attic, closet, or shed where the owner does not see them. Lastovicka and Fernandez (2005) looked at consumers who sold or gave away meaningful possessions to strangers, adding to the knowledge of divestment rituals by including iconic transfer, which is retaining private meaning by filming or photographing items, and transition rituals, which are eroding private meaning by placing the item away from oneself in storage.

**Clothing Disposition Behavior based on Material Possession Attachment**

Attachment to possessions varies over length of ownership (Schifferstein & Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, 2008). Some material possession attachments can strengthen, while others can diminish to the point that they are no longer cherished possessions and
therefore become candidates for disposal (Kleine et al., 1995; Price, Arnould & Curasi, 2000; Schifferstein & Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, 2008). Disposition of possessions is complex when possessions have symbolic meaning that reflects a person’s identity and social affiliations (Roster, 2001). The importance of a possession can diminish and decrease in value the longer it is in storage, and events in a person’s life (death, divorce, or down-sizing) can also change the attachment to an object (Roster, 2001). When the cost of keeping an item financially and emotionally exceeds the benefits, then that item becomes expendable (Roster, 2001).

As time passes and self-concept and relationships to others change, it becomes easier to dispose of possessions that are tied to an identity with which the owner no longer identifies (Kleine et al., 1995). Lastovicka and Fernandez (2005), in their study of thirty-nine wedding gown owners, noted that the owners were more likely to dispose of gowns they feel never defined them as an individual, did not represent them as they currently were, represented a past undesirable self, or were a reminder of a mistake in the owner’s life. Dispossessing of symbols of the owner’s former self helps the owner to leave behind the past and a reminder of a self that the owner no longer feels is a reflection of who she is today (Belk, Sherry, & Wallendorf, 1988; Kleine et al., 1995). If the possession is associated with a person that the owner has bad feelings toward or a weak relationship with, then it is easier to disconnect from the possession (Kleine et al., 1995).

Elements of garments that affect disposition are related to functional or style obsolescence, storage capability/cost, convertibility, and value, as well as condition, age, and size, (Hanson, 1980). The condition of the wedding gown can have an effect on disposition behavior (Jacoby et al., 1977; Koch & Domina, 1999; Lee et al., 2013; Shim,
The longer the gown is kept, the more likely it is to be no longer in current style, and a woman usually wears her wedding gown only once (Howard, 2006). Wedding gowns are not usually remade and worn again after the wedding (Howard, 2006). If the owner does not have the money or space to save her garment, or the garment was not very expensive, was damaged beyond repair, or no longer fits, it is more likely to be disposed of (Hanson, 1980).

**Keeping in Storage**

Garments with a high sentimental value, that are part of the owner’s personal history or reflect and shape the owner’s identity, or garments that were expensive and of high quality are often placed in storage and kept as cherished possessions (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Ha-Brookshire & Hodges, 2009; Jacoby et al., 1977; Lee et al., 2013; Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). The literature describes the disposition behavior of earlier generations, before Generation Y, as storing and cherishing their wedding gowns (Church, 2003; Geller, 2001; Howard, 2006; Whelehan & Carter, 2007). Kahn (2001) described wedding gowns donated to The Goldstein Museum. One of the gowns donated was made in 1860 and had been worn by eleven members of the same family. The last bride to wear it in 1958 donated it to the museum because no one from the present generation wanted to wear the gown. This is an example of a gown that the wedding gown owner used a combination of disposition behaviors: storing, reusing and donating.

**Donation**

Donation of used clothing to charitable organizations is an important avenue of disposition for clothing in general (Bianchi & Birtwistle, 2010; Birtwistle & Moore,
Ha-Brookshire and Hodges (2009) found that the catalyst behind donations was a cleaning spree to make room in the closet and get rid of unwanted items. A study by Koch and Domina (1999) revealed that consumers did not want to waste garments that were originally valuable or expensive and not worn out or damaged, but did not fit, were out of style, or that they were tired of. These garments were donated to charity. Donating clothing is more socially acceptable and better for the environment than throwing away garments that are still useable (Harrell & McConocha, 1992; Shim, 1995). Many consumers donate clothing in order to obtain a tax deduction, but donating without a tax deduction or personal gain, just to help others, is perceived as making a person less selfish (Harrell & McConocha, 1992). Lee et al. (2013) noted in their study that Generation Y donates clothing to charitable organizations as a response to “calls for action from charity organization or natural disaster relief” (p. 72). Organizations like Brides for Breast Cancer and Brides Across America noted that Generation Y women often respond to calls for action by donating their wedding gowns. Fifty thousand brides donated dresses in 2009 (Making Memories Breast Cancer Foundation, 2010). Organizations that also sell wedding gowns to make money are Brides for Haiti, or Bridal Garden, that helps underprivileged children in New York City (Jamison, 2013). Organizations like Every Girls Dream, Inc. give wedding gowns to women for free who cannot afford to buy a wedding dress (Richards, 2013). Brides Across America helps US military brides by giving them free wedding gowns (Jamison, 2013).

**Giving to Family or Friends**

Expensive garments of high quality or sentimental value may be offered to family
members or friends rather than being disposed of in other ways (Bianchi & Birtwistle, 2010; Birtwistle & Moore, 2007; Ha-Brookshire & Hodges, 2009; Lee et al., 2013).

Giving special possessions to family members passes on feelings and history tied to the garment; the story of the garment and person who owned it lives on with the new owner (Price et al., 2000). For this reason many possessions are given as a gift for a special occasion (Price et al., 2000).

**Selling**

Selling garments as a disposition behavior is not as common as donation (Bianchi & Birtwistle, 2010). Selling takes more time and effort in preparing the garment, before sale sorting, cleaning and pricing. If it does not sell, then the owner still has to dispose of the garment (Rucker, et al., 1995). This method of disposition is motivated by personal gain, or economic or emotional reasons (Ha-Brookshire & Hodges, 2009; Harrell & McConocha, 1992; Rucker, et al. 1995; Shim, 1995). Generation Y often sells unwanted clothing on eBay or in consignment stores or garage sales as a way to save money and recoup some of the money they spent on their wardrobe (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007, Lee et al., 2013; Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009).

Lastovicka and Fernandez (2005) looked at the selling of meaningful possessions at garage sales and online wedding gown sales. Two thirds of the wedding gown owners sampled had negative feelings about their gowns. According to PreOwned Wedding Dresses.com (2013), thousands of wedding gown owners are selling their wedding gowns on line each year after the wedding to help offset the cost of the gown. They also stated that the owners do not want to save their dresses because they want their daughters to have the pleasure of finding their own gowns.
Throwing Away or Destroying

Consumers do not think of clothing as a waste material (Domina & Koch, 2002). In their study Harrell and McConocha (1992) noted that Baby Boomers and Generation Y consider throwing garments away a negative, irresponsible behavior. Ekerdt, Sergeant, Dingel, and Bowen (2004) noted that consumers would throw clothing in the trash if other methods of disposal were not available. In their studies Bianchi and Birtwistle (2010), Birtwistle and Moore (2007), Ha-Brookshire and Hodges (2009), Lee et al. (2013), and Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) noted that consumers throw away damaged garments in the trash. Other methods of disposition such as donation or giving away to family and friends are more likely to be used before throwing away or destroying a garment (Domina & Koch, 2002).

Since 2001, “trash the dress” a phenomenon started by photographer John Michael Cooper, changed how some brides dispose of their wedding gowns. This phenomenon is associated with a photo shoot; brides are photographed in their wedding gowns in a manner that destroys the dress (Willis, 2008). White (2012) looked at the “trash the dress” phenomenon from the photographer’s point of view to explain the message that the photographs were portraying as a marketing strategy. The messages portrayed were those of resistance to the norm, breaking from tradition, expressing rage at the stress a formal wedding causes, and expressing rage and/or celebration after a divorce (White, 2012). “Trash the dress” photo shoots are documented in the media, but it is difficult to know if it is a significant trend, because there is no academic literature available.
Generation Y

Generation Y is the next largest generation of consumers after Baby Boomers, at 82 million (O'Donnell, 2006). They are the children of the Baby Boomers (Neuborne, & Kerwin, 1999), many of whom gave their children a lot of attention and advantages (Atkinson, 2008). Because of the attention and advantages Generation Y received, they have a strong sense of self-identity (Sebor, 2006). Generation Y is the most looked after generation in modern history; they have been in groups with supervision their whole lives, and they rely on family and friends for support and validation (Atkinson, 2008; Beirne, 2008). They are used to being catered to and entertained; they want to be part of a group but at the same time be unique (Atkinson, 2008; Beirne, 2008). Generation Y has a social conscience; they care about others and want to help the world (Beirne, 2008, Featherstone, 2007; Tsai, J. 2008). They trust their parents, have a good relationship with them, and ask them for advice (Beirne, 2008; Featherstone, 2007). When it come to disposition behavior Generation Y consumers are influenced more by their families than their friends (Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013). Generation Y was raised with “fast fashion” and an abundance of cheap clothing of which they have no problem disposing of (Lee et al., 2013). The question arises about their attachment to clothing. They are influenced by their parents in relation to disposition behaviors, but they do not value clothing in the same way as their parents (Lee et al., 2013).

Many gowns were saved by earlier generations with the hope that future generations would want to wear the gown (Otnes & Pleck, 2003). The reasons for saving the gown are not only emotional but also financial (Otnes & Pleck, 2003). This custom was more common in past generations, before Baby Boomers, when most people could
not afford the cost of fine garments (Otnes & Pleck, 2003). Since World War II, with the rise of the middle class and the availability of synthetic textiles, satin and lace are easier to purchase, and women can have a gown made just for them (Otnes & Pleck, 2003). On the other hand, the Great Depression created a society in which items that were potentially useful were not disposed of. In contrast to the effects of post World War II prosperity, the frugality learned during the Great Depression tended to make women hold on to their dresses with the intention of the gowns being worn again by future generations (Howard, 2006; Kahn, 2001; Otnes & Pleck, 2003). The custom of wearing a wedding gown once was in place by the later 1930s to early 1940s, but the custom of long-term preservation of wedding gowns began at the end of the eighteenth century (Howard, 2006). The Baby Boomer generation wore their gowns once and placed them in storage (Howard, 2006). The disposition behaviors of Generation Y wedding gown owners reflected in the media is not the same as earlier generations.

A good example of the difference in the attitudes between Generation Y women and their Baby Boomer mothers toward their wedding gowns is the reality television program on The Learning Channel, Something Borrowed Something New. In each episode the different attitudes toward wedding gowns of Baby Boomer mother and Generation Y daughter are portrayed. In one episode, the Baby Boomer mother saved her dress and wants her daughter to wear her gown, but the daughter does not want to wear the gown as is. The episode ends as a dressmaker cuts up the gown and remakes it for the daughter. The mother and sometimes the grandmother cry when this happens, while the daughter, dry-eyed, says, Mom that dress was you not me. (Deprez-Wright, & Gill, 2013). PreOwned Wedding Dresses.com (2013) state on their website that some women
sell their dresses because they want their daughters to have the pleasure of buying their own dress.

There was limited academic research about Generation Y and their wedding gowns. The researcher looked at the current media to gain information about Generation Y and their wedding gowns. The researcher used Google search engine on the Internet and asked the question what did you do with your wedding gown after the wedding? A sampling of the websites was conducted, and several of the sites are mentioned in this paper. The researcher watched television shows about weddings and wedding gowns that involved Generation Y such as: Women’s Entertainment TV’s “My Fair Wedding,” “Bridezillas,” and “Platinum Wedding”; The Learning Channel’s “Wild About Weddings,” “Say Yes to the Dress,” “Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding,” “A Wedding Story,” “For Better or For Worse,” “Something Borrowed Something New,” “Whose Wedding Is It Anyway,” and “Destination Weddings,” and Bravo’s “The Wedding Party,” and “ The Ring Leader.” The researcher also looked at bridal magazines such as: Brides, Bridal Guide, Wedding, Martha Stewart Weddings, and The Knot Magazine. These are not academic sources but they helped the researcher to learn about Generation Y and their disposition behavior in relation to their wedding gowns.

In popular media reviewed Generation Y women expressed the desire to own a wedding gown that reflected their personality and made them feel special. Generation Y women in the popular media reviewed also demonstrated many disposition behaviors with their wedding gowns such as: selling, donating to charity, repurposing, and storing.

The attitudes of Generation Y in relation to their wedding gowns have not been explored in an academic context. This study will explore the complex relationship
between attachment to the wedding gown and disposition behavior of Generation Y.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to gather information regarding participants' attachment and disposition behavior in relation to their wedding gowns. The study will explore the following research questions:

1. What did Generation Y wedding gown owners interviewed do with their wedding gowns after the wedding?
2. Why did the sample of Generation Y wedding gown owners interviewed in this study chose their method of disposition?
3. How is Generation Y wedding gown owners’ attachment to the wedding gowns related to the disposition behavior selected?

The review of literature illustrates the complex relationship between attachment to material possessions, and disposition behavior. Attachment to material possessions may be influenced by the relationship of the garment to a person’s self-identity, the amount of mental energy expended, cost of the garment and care of the garment, affiliations, and interpersonal ties. Attachment is also influenced if the garment is part of a life transition ceremony, and has private and public meaning. Emotional attachment and condition of the garment also affect the attachment. Disposition behavior was described as keeping and disposing of and how attachment influenced the decision making process. The disposition behavior and attachment to material possessions of Generation Y women was discussed. The academic research about Generation Y and symbolic garments was discussed and the consumer behavior documented in the media was described leading to the research questions. Chapter three will discuss the methodology of this qualitative
research study. Recruitment procedure, sample selection, interview question data
collection and analysis procedures will be discussed.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methodology was used to explore the disposition behavior of Generation Y in relation to their wedding gowns. The first section of this chapter focuses on the research methodology and theoretical framework for this study. The second section describes the sampling procedures, selection of participants, and participant characteristics, as well as recruitment procedure. The third section lists semi-structured interview questions. The chapter concludes with research procedures involving data collection and analysis.

Methodology

Material possession attachment framework was used to frame the qualitative phenomenological research of the disposition of wedding gowns among Generation Y women. “Phenomenological approaches seek to explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of individual lived experiences” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p.19). A qualitative phenomenological research approach using in-depth semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, and guided questions when more information was needed was used to explore the attitudes and behaviors of wedding gown owners in the Generation Y age category in relation to their attachments and disposition behavior in order to better understand the phenomenon. Two questions were asked which measured the level of attachment to the wedding gowns using a five point Likert scale. The questions asked level of attachment at the time of their wedding and at the time of the interview.

All requirements set down by the Human Subject Institutional Review Board
(HSIRB) were followed. All participants were emailed an informed consent form that was approved by the HSIRB before the interviews were conducted. The participants emailed the signed consent forms to the researcher before the interviews were conducted. While being audiotaped, the researcher asked the participants if they had read the informed consent and if they had any questions about the study. All participants responded that they read the informed consent and had no questions. The participants were told before the interview began and again while being recorded that the interview was being recorded. All of the participants were informed that they could stop the interview at any time and could decline to answer any questions, or stop the interview at any time. The participants were told not to use their name during the interview and the interviewer did not use their name during the interview. The recording files were labeled with a code that the transcriptionist used when transcribing. Each participant’s name was placed on a list with the codes assigned to their transcript. The code list and the transcripts were not stored in the same place. All electronic files containing recorded transcripts were destroyed after the transcripts were checked for accuracy.

**Qualitative Research**

This study was approached qualitatively and examined the attachment and disposition behavior of Generation Y toward their wedding gown. Qualitative research was chosen as the method used in this study because this study needs to observe and describe on behaviors and meanings that Generation Y women give to their wedding gowns (Adler & Clark, 2011). Qualitative research generates hypotheses as opposed to testing hypotheses; this study observed and described attachment and disposition behavior. The behaviors and attitudes of Generation Y in relation to wedding gown
disposition had not been studied previously. Using a qualitative approach to this inquiry allowed the data collection to be guided by the participants, allowing them to explain their motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in their own words (Creswell 2013).

Qualitative research produced insights and descriptions of the Generation Y wedding gown owner and their disposition behavior. The researcher approached this study with an open mind and allowed the wedding gown owners to reveal content and details about their disposition behavior. This qualitative research used a small number of participants and collected detailed information about attachment and disposition behavior, which increased the depth of understanding of the Generation Y in relation to their wedding gowns (Adler & Clark, 2011; Marshall & Rossman 2011).

Awareness of personal biases and assumptions helps to increase the validity of the data collected and its analysis (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). The primary researcher and the only interviewer in this study had personal biases and assumptions, and along with previous experience as an historian and textile conservator. This may possibly influence interpretation of the results. The researcher is a Baby Boomer and saved and stored her wedding gown. As an historian and textile conservator the researcher works to preserve and protect symbolic clothing. The researcher has the biases that wedding gowns should be stored and cherished. While conducting the interviews the researcher did not express her opinion about wedding gowns to the interviewees. The researcher allowed the interviewees to express their opinions without coaching or influencing their responses. When analyzing the data the researcher analyzed the research in an objective manner.

Phenomenological research was chosen as the specific type of qualitative research
for this study. The specific focus of the phenomenological study is what the person experienced and the underlying meaning of the experience to the person studied (Creswell, 2013). In this case the phenomenon is the disposition behaviors of Generation Y towards their wedding gowns. The objective of phenomenological research is to provide a description of the experience from the subject’s point of view (Creswell, 2013). Generation Y women’s weddings and their disposition behavior with their wedding gowns were analyzed and compared to identify the reasons for their level of attachment, the disposition behavior selected, and their reason for choosing the disposition behaviors.

**Recruitment Procedure and Sample Selection**

Data collection in a phenomenological study starts with locating the participants who have experienced the phenomenon to be studied. All participants have to experience the phenomenon studied; the preferred sampling strategy in phenomenological studies is criterion sampling, which involves selecting the cases that meet some specified criteria (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman 2011). In this case the participants included women who were raised in the United States, born between 1980 and 1994, purchased wedding gowns, and were married at least two years. The two-year period was included to allow sufficient time for an individual to make and act upon a long-term disposition decision. Participants were selected to reflect an array of disposition behavior: keeping, disposing of, or destroying their gown.

A non-probability, chain referral or snowball, purposive approach was an appropriate method of recruitment, given that this study was comprised of a specific group of people (Generation Y women) with specific behaviors (disposing of wedding gowns by keeping, disposing of, or destroying) that are not present in the general
population as a whole and otherwise would be difficult to recruit (Adler & Clark, 2008; Brace-Govan, 2004; Miles et al., 2014). Subjects were recruited by posting an invitation on the Facebook social networking site. This was an appropriate recruitment method because seventy-six percent of Generation Y spends more than one hour each day on Facebook to connect with family and friends (Gibson, 2013). According to Baltar and Brunet (2012) Facebook is an effective source to reach specific populations, as well as reducing the time and cost of contacting participants. In this study the specific population is Generation Y wedding gown owners.

An invitation to participate in the study was posted on Facebook. It included a description of disposition behaviors that the participant may have demonstrated. A description of the study was presented to convey the scope of the project and to invite participants regardless of disposition behavior (Appendices A and C). The invitation also specified participation criteria: age, marital status (married or divorced) wedding gown ownership and a minimum of two years since the wedding. The invitation was posted on the researcher’s Facebook page. The researcher asked family and friends to repost the invitation on their pages, and to ask their family and friends to post the invitation on their pages. All the participants for this study were found using Facebook’s social networks.

Businesses related to the wedding industry such as wedding gown resale shops charities that collect wedding gowns photographers that advertise “trash the dress” photo shoots, and jewelers were contacted and asked to post an invitation to take part in the study on their website or Facebook page. No participants were found from these sources. The sample was biased toward women who have access to Facebook.
The Facebook post was designed in a way to catch the attention of the prospective participants by using photographs and text (Appendix H). A description of the study and the requirements of the participants were included, as well as the time requirement, and benefits to participants as set down by the Human Subject Institutional Review Board (HSIRB). The researcher’s contact information was also included in the invitation. The response to the invitation was unexpected. Many women responded by telling the story of their dress and what they did with it on Facebook, and a discussion was generated with the invitation. The researcher contacted the women who responded and emailed each person an informed consent document, with an invitation to take part in the study with an interview. The participants contacted the researcher through Facebook or by email. During the interview the consent form was reviewed and the participants were asked if they read the form and if they had questions. It was stressed that the interview was recorded and they could stop the interview at anytime. All participants were placed in a drawing for a $50 credit gift card as an incentive to participate.

The collection of data for each of the two categories of disposition behavior should have stopped when saturation of information was reached for that category (Mason, 2010). The saturation of data was difficult to attain, and the study did not reach saturation. Saturation of data was not attained due to several reasons. Many of the women contacted stated that they told their story on Facebook and felt they had nothing to add by being interviewed. Over 30 women responded by email and stated they would take part in the study, but they never committed to a time and date to conduct the interview. All participants replied by email to notify the researcher of their agreement to be interviewed. Many emails were sent back and forth in order to set a time and date for
the interview. Many of the women stated that they had children and setting a time in advance was difficult. These women were asked to call the researcher when they were free to talk. Fourteen women responded by calling the researcher to complete the interview over the phone. One participant, after several email correspondences with the researcher to arrange an interview time, asked to have the questions sent to her. The researcher sent the interview questions by email and the respondent answered the questions in written form and emailed the completed interview to the researcher. The goal for collection of data was to have multiple women in each of the disposition categories. Only one woman was interviewed for each of these disposition behaviors: selling, donation to charity, and “trash the dress”. None of the participants gave their wedding gown away to family or a friend. The Facebook post was up for one hundred and thirty-seven days and no new participants contacted the researcher after September 14, 2014.

The sample size was fifteen participants. The interviews for this study involved an in-depth look at specific behaviors and attitudes toward a specific event and garment. The number of participants was manageable while providing a variation of behaviors and attitudes among the participants (Adler & Clark, 2008; Miles et al., 2014). Creswell (2014) stated when studying a phenomenon three to ten cases could be enough, while Mason (2010) also noted that the average qualitative study was twenty to thirty participants. The researcher was able to recruit fifteen participants, which was within the range for the study.

**Interview Questions**

This research is a topical study that required that the interviewer keep the interviewee on topic (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The type of information sought was
specific to wedding gowns and the attachment, attitudes, and behaviors of disposition of the owners. In order to prevent the interviewee from discussing subjects unrelated to the topic, the interviewer used a semi structured interview protocol with open-ended questions, guided questions and two scale questions. This format is appropriate for this study because specific information was needed from the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Open-ended questions were asked first and then the guided questions were asked to clarify answers. Questions were asked that revealed the wedding gown owners’ degree of attachment to their gowns and their methods and reason for disposition. The scale questions were asked about the participants’ level of attachment to their gown at the time of the wedding and at the time of the interview. The interviews lasted about fifteen minutes and the participants were interviewed only once.

The questions for this study were developed using the material possession attachment concept as a framework. Questions were adapted using questions from Kleine et al. (1995), Kleine and Baker (2004), Sontag and Lee (2004), and Sontag and Schlater (1982) as a guide. The instrument is in appendix E.

**Data Collection Procedure**

After the initial contact and before conducting any interviews, a consent form was emailed to all the participants, and they were asked to return a signed form to the researcher before the interview took place. If the participant could not send a signed consent form to the researcher, the researcher read the consent form to the participant and a verbal consent was recorded before the interview took place. Interviews were conducted over the phone, using Skype to record the audio only. The Skype recorder program allowed the interviewer to call the participant on their phone through the Skype
program, allowing the interviewer to voice record the interview. This program provides clear recording of both sides of the conversation. The recordings are not kept on Skype and were recorded on the interviewer’s computer. Starting the recordings after instructing the participant not to use their names protected the identity of the participants. The participants were given a code on the consent form and assigned a number for the interview. The codes and numbers are not stored in the same place as the list that connects the participant’s name and code number. The list is kept in a locked file cabinet in the researchers office in 3403 Kohrman Hall. The transcripts are kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s office in 3403 Kohrman Hall. The files on the researcher’s personal computer are all encrypted. Interviews were audio recorded through Skype and then transcribed. All recordings were destroyed after the transcripts were checked for accuracy.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

Within-case analysis involved a thorough reading of all transcribed data, followed by highlighting of the most significant phrases and statements in terms of the research questions. The next step was formulating meanings for each significant statement, followed by the identification of emergent themes. These emergent themes were then organized in clusters, and the results were integrated into a meaningful description of the phenomenon (Miles et al., 2014). As framed by material possession attachment the initial codes were:

1. Attachment
   a. Self-identity
   b. Mental energy
   c. Affiliation
   d. Public meaning
   e. Emotion
2. Disposition
   a. Clean & stored
   b. Stored
   c. Sold
   d. Donated
   e. Gave (family or friend)
   f. Trashed

3. Reason for behavior (driven by responses)
   a. Sentimental keeper
   b. Minimalist reducer

   A cross-case analysis was conducted to look for similarities and differences between participants. Each participant’s interview was analyzed individually and then variables were identified that were present in other participants’ interviews. Cross-case analysis is used to “enhance generalizability or transferability to other context” (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014, p. 101). Cross-case analysis gives the researcher more information about the phenomenon and deepens knowledge by looking at the similarities and the differences between participants (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014).

   This chapter provided an overview of the methodology used in this study. Specific methods of sampling, data collection, and data analysis employed were also covered. Participants were selected by a non-probability, chain referral or snowball sampling procedures. In-depth semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data. Methods of phenomenological research data analysis were also addressed. The findings resulting from the data collection and analyses will be presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

The chapter documents the findings from the within-case analyses, and profiles the respondents, followed by findings from the cross-case analyses. The interviews for this study were summarized and analyzed using the specific codes as framed by material possession attachment. The results are organized to provide insight into attachment and disposition behaviors of the Participants.

Analysis of Interviews

The fifteen women interviewed were born after 1980. The study focused on women who had been married at least two years. Eight of the women were married two years, one was married three years, two were married four years, one was married six years, two were married seven years and one woman was divorced and was ten years from her wedding day. The fourteen interviews were recorded using Skype and one interview was completed by email. The interviews lasted from nine to twenty minutes, with the average interview lasting eleven minutes. A professional research transcriptionist, who was trained in HSIRB procedures, transcribed the audio recordings into Microsoft Word documents. The researcher as the initial coder listened to the interviews and checked them against the transcripts for accuracy. The transcripts were reread several times by the initial coder looking for themes and patterns. In the initial coding phase, the researcher looked for descriptions, key phrases, disposition behaviors, emotions, attitudes and beliefs, judgments, and relationships that reflected the study questions (Miles et al., 2014). After the initial coding, emerging themes appeared, and the coding list was revised (see Table 1). It was determined that interpersonal ties had an
effect on attachment. It was also determined that the condition of the garment (good or damaged) and cost of the garment had an effect on the attachment to the wedding gown. Interpersonal ties, condition of the garment and cost were added to the list of attachments. New disposition behaviors not included in initial coding scheme were identified and the list was adjusted to include repurposed, intact and as new form (no longer a dress), and rented out. Stored, which was a code in the initial coding structure, was changed to saved and not cleaned in the list of disposition behaviors. Mother sentimental keeper, making money, helping others, high value of the garment, damaged garment, lack of money, disappointment in garment, artistic expression, and lack of interest were added to reason for behavior. A second round of coding was completed using the new codes.

Table 1. Codes used for analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Coding</th>
<th>Final Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attachment</td>
<td>Attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-identity</td>
<td>Self-identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental energy</td>
<td>Mental energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td>Affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public meaning</td>
<td>Public meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion</td>
<td>Emotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpersonal Ties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Condition of the garment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposition</td>
<td>Disposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaned &amp; stored</td>
<td>Cleaned &amp; stored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stored</td>
<td>Saved &amp; not cleaned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sold</td>
<td>Sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donated</td>
<td>Donated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave (family or friend)</td>
<td>Gave (family or friend)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trashed</td>
<td>Trashed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repurposed (Intact)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repurposed (In a New Form)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rented out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1. Codes used for analysis (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Coding</th>
<th>Final Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason for Disposition Behavior</td>
<td>Reason for Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentimental keeper</td>
<td>Sentimental keeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimalist reducer</td>
<td>Minimalist reducer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother sentimental keeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helping others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High value of the garment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Damaged garment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disappointment in garment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Artistic expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of interest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To ensure reliability of the coding, a second coder read the transcripts (Miles et al., 2014). The second coder’s results were compared to the first coder’s findings. Two hundred forty-two passages were coded by both coders. Coders agreed on 231 passages, yielding inter-rater reliability of 95%. A consensus was reached after differences in the coding were discussed. After coding, matrices and network display were utilized to organize the data and coding and pattern development were used to condense the data (Miles et al., 2014). A matrix is a data display that allows the researcher to see the analyzed data in an organized manner (Miles et al., 2014). Network displays are diagrams that help the researcher to understand connections between the data (Miles et al., 2014).

Data displays were developed to aid in the analysis process and to organize the data (Miles et al., 2014). The data were analyzed using Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel computer programs. These programs helped to sort, organize, display, and store the data. Using the search tool program allowed the researcher to search for words and phrases. The ‘review’ tool in Word allowed notes and comments to be attached to identified words and phrases, aiding in the coding process. Data were entered into
Microsoft Excel, which aided the analysis of the coded information. The data spreadsheet was sorted based on various fields, demonstrating similarities and differences among the participants.

Coding of Interviews

The transcripts were analyzed using the codes that were developed to represent concepts of material possession attachment and disposition behavior. Attachment to the wedding gown was determined using the criteria listed in Table 1. Examples of phrases used by the participants when describing attachment concepts, disposition behavior and reasons for disposition behavior are in Table 2.

Table 2. Exemplar statements of codes used for analysis from the interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Exemplar statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attachment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-identity</td>
<td>“I would say it absolutely fit my personality” (positive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…that’s not really usually me.” (negative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental energy</td>
<td>“It was the first wedding dress I tried on.” (low energy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…so I had a good three years or so to find my dress, I mean we tried on dresses.” (high energy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td>“The wedding was very Christ centered.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…we had the pastor from our family church come out to the ceremony site…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal ties</td>
<td>“…out of respect for my mother who bought the dress there is no way that I can get rid of the dress.” (positive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“My sister coerced me into trying on my dress” (negative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public meaning</td>
<td>“It was the right dress for a wedding.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>“I loved my dress” (positive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I was disappointed in my dress” (negative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition of a garment</td>
<td>“…the hoop skirt had broke so the dress dragged in the dirt and mud a lot so it was very, very dirty afterwards.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The red one just never got damaged so I just I never preserved”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Exemplar statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It in anyways.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>“There were designs from Italy that I tried on but it was $15,000, I could not afford it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It was the most expensive dress I ever owned.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disposition Behavior</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleaned &amp; stored</td>
<td>“…had it preserved and now it’s sitting in a box but I know that it’s safe in my house.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I had it preserved and I bought the I don’t know what they call it, preservation kit from David’s Bridal.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not cleaned &amp; Saved</td>
<td>“It’s hung in my mom’s closet at her house from the day I wore it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Well it’s wrapped up in like a dress bag but nothing else I really did with it. Just it’s in a closet in a right now.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sold</td>
<td>“I was going to resell the dress.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donated</td>
<td>“I looked online at places to donate it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trashed</td>
<td>“…excited about doing kind of a full on get soaked kind of set of pictures and so I stayed in and I have a bunch of pictures of me in the fountain.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repurposed (Intact)</td>
<td>“It will be used as an educational piece during when we go to reenactments we occasionally will do fashion.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repurposed (In a new form)</td>
<td>“And one thing I came across was turning it into a christening gown”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented out</td>
<td>“I decided to throw my wedding dress in with some bridesmaid dresses for rent.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for behavior</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sentimental keeper</td>
<td>“I thought well maybe my daughter would want to wear it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimalist reducer</td>
<td>“I’m not one for holding on to stuff.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother sentimental keeper</td>
<td>“My mom told me that I should do it, she paid to have the dress cleaned and preserved.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making money</td>
<td>“I’d also get money.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic expression</td>
<td>“She converted my wedding dress into a Christmas tree skirt.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping others</td>
<td>“People if they couldn’t afford to buy a wedding dress they could rent it and it would be, you know, significantly at less cost for them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High value of the garment</td>
<td>“I just didn’t want to part with it because it was a really good quality dress.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damaged garment</td>
<td>“My husband actually stepped on the train and on the front so it’s ripped in a couple places, so I don’t want to pay the money to preserve it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of money</td>
<td>“…well we really didn’t have the money to like preserve it at the time.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Exemplar statements of codes used for analysis from the interviews (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Exemplar statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disappointment in garment</td>
<td>“I didn’t want anything to do with the dress anymore.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of interest</td>
<td>“It’s hung at my mom’s closet at her house for a few years.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Attachment.** Generation Y wedding gown owners’ attachment to their wedding gowns was measured using material possession attachment framework. The influences were coded and are listed in Table 1. The influences will be explained in this section as they relate to the wedding gown owners. This section is related to research question three, but in order to understand disposition behavior and reasons for these behaviors, an understanding of attachment to the wedding gowns needs to be discussed first.

**Self-Identity.** The participants were asked if their wedding gown reflected their personality. Ten women stated that their wedding gown reflected their personality and five women stated that their gown did not reflect their personality. One of the women stated that her gown reflected her personality but she was unhappy with her choice and wished she had worn a different dress. The five women interviewed who felt that their wedding gown did not reflect their personality felt that their wedding gown was the expected dress to wear for a wedding, but were disappointed in their wedding gown. These five participants said they pictured themselves in a different dress.

**Mental Energy.** Mental energy or time invested was determined by asking the women how they found their wedding gown. They were divided into low and high mental energy. A high rating was given to women who tried on many dresses and/or visited many stores and/or spent many days looking for their dress. Conversely, low rating was given to women who spent little time finding their dress, tried on few dresses,
visited one store, and spent one day looking for a dress. Two women did not buy their
gown, but they expended high mental energy with their gown. One had her mother’s
dress altered to fit her personality after trying on many dresses at many stores over many
days. The second woman had a custom dress that she helped to design and construct. She
also spent a great deal of time researching a historically accurate gown.

*Affiliation.* Affiliations were identified by description of the wedding ceremonies.
Some of the women’s religious affiliation influenced the attachment to their wedding
gown. Eight participants mentioned affiliations to religion. Five of these participants said
they had strong ties to their churches. Seven participants stated they were not affiliated
with a religion. The only other affiliation mentioned was the woman who did the “trash
the dress” photo shoot on the campus of the university she attended.

*Interpersonal Ties.* Interpersonal ties were identified by descriptions given when
asked to describe their wedding ceremonies and who helped the women with their
wedding and finding their gown. Also the women were asked about their mothers’
dresses. Their interpersonal ties influenced the attachment to their wedding gown of the
women interviewed. Material possessions connect owners to others and strengthen the
attachment to the material possession (Belk, 1988). The women described the
relationships with their husbands, families, and friends. The strongest relationship
mentioned by the women interviewed, other than their husband, was their mother.
Twelve of the women mentioned that their mothers helped with selection, buying and/or
caring for their wedding gowns. Of these women three stated that their mother told them
to get their dress cleaned and preserved, and the mother of one woman paid for the
cleaning. One woman wore her mother’s dress, and she felt she had a special connection
to her mother. This woman stated that her mother-in-law influenced her to send her dress to a textile conservator to “…have it cared for properly”. Positive interpersonal ties strengthened the attachment to the wedding gowns of the participants.

Not all the interpersonal ties were positive. One woman bought a dress that her mother and sister wanted her to wear. She felt that the dress did not match her personality and expressed disappointment in her gown. She gave a low attachment rating. Negative interpersonal ties weaken the attachment to the wedding gown for this participant.

Public Meaning. The Generation Y women who were interviewed had a clear picture of what the wedding gown was expected to look like. Fourteen of the women interviewed expressed that their wedding gowns were the publicly expected apparel for their wedding. One woman wore a burgundy ball gown to her wedding and surprised all the guests, except her family, with her gown. She looked at white wedding gowns before deciding on this gown. Public meaning of the wedding gown was reflected in all the interviews. Five women wore wedding gowns that they stated did not reflect their personality, but they wore a gown that was the expected dress for the wedding. Fourteen of the women shopped or tried on their dresses at bridal shops. One woman researched wedding gowns worn in the 1860s and wore a reproduction garment.

Emotional Attachment. The emotional attachment of Participants to their dresses was measured in several ways. The women were asked to rate their emotional attachment to their wedding gowns at the time of their wedding and at the time of the interview (see Table 2). The women were asked to rate their attachment on a scale of one to five with five being the highest. A high attachment rating is four to five. A low attachment is one
to three. Several of the women, instead of giving a single number, responded with “two to three”. For this reason three was included in the low rating. At the time of their wedding thirteen women had a high attachment rating, and two women had a low attachment rating. At the time of the interview nine women gave a high attachment rating, five women gave a low attachment rating, and one had no attachment at all. The five women whose attachment rating dropped to a low attachment rating after the wedding stated that they were disappointed with their gown at the wedding. The woman with no attachment had a low attachment at the time of her wedding and sold her dress right after the wedding.

The women also used statements that expressed their emotions during the interviews when asked to describe their dress when they purchased it and wore it at the wedding, what they did with the dress after the wedding, and why they chose the method of disposition. In the course of the interviews the women used phrases that portrayed their emotion such as, “I loved my dress,” “I was disappointed,” “I felt special,” “I felt great,” “I didn’t feel comfortable,” and/or “I didn’t like the dress.” Some individuals gave conflicting answers and many of the statements above were made in the same interview. Emotions towards the dresses changed from the time of purchase to the time of the interview. The women made statements that expressed emotion when talking about how they found their dresses and at some point thought the dress was right for them. Four of the women expressed regret that they purchased the gown that they wore. Three of these women expressed low attachment to their gown.

**Condition of the Garment.** The condition of the garment during and after the wedding had an effect on the attachment toward the wedding gown. Seven of the women
had issues with the condition of the dress. All of these gowns were damaged at the wedding. Three of the participants had a problem with their gown not fitting them at the wedding. One lost weight and the gown had to be taken in at the last minute. She stated that she felt more attachment to her dress because she had to spend a lot of time at the seamstress to get her gown fixed, but at the wedding her gown was torn, and stained beyond repair. Because of these damages she stated she felt less attached after the wedding. One of the women gained weight and the dress was too tight at the wedding, causing her to be very uncomfortable at the wedding. She did not like her dress after the wedding. “I never thought about am I going to wear this for 12 hours and be happy? That didn’t come across my mind when I was trying it on. It was oh is this me? Is it pretty?”

A second woman gained weight, and the day of her wedding the seamstress destroyed the inside of the dress, and the boning cut her. She stated, “I think by the end of that day I was done with the dress. I didn’t want anything to do with the dress anymore.”

Cost. The cost of the wedding gown was a factor in the choice of the wedding gown. All the brides had a budget. Cost was a factor in attachment for some of the women interviewed. Four of the women were unhappy with the dress they purchased because they wanted a more expensive dress and could not afford the one they wanted. They stated that they settled for a less expensive dress within their budget. One of the women interviewed stated that she was attached to her gown because it was a very expensive, high quality gown. Two of the women stated that they were attached to their wedding gown, because it was the most expensive garment they ever owned.

Lack of Interest. Five participants expressed a lack of interest in their wedding gowns after the wedding. Lack of interest in a material possession is associated with low
attachment and all of the participants that expressed a lack of interest in their gown gave themselves a low attachment rating. The participants were not asked specifically if they had low attachment because they were not interested in their gown or if they had a lack of interest because they had a low attachment. The relationship is important to note because it had an affect on disposition behavior.

Table 3 is a summary of the attachment influences as described above. The table describes the factors that influence the high and low attachment ratings. The literature on material possession attachment defines the influences that contribute to high and low attachments. The women interviewed stated the factors that contributed their attachment or lack of attachment in the course of the interviews. An explanation of attachment is presented before the research questions because attachment to the symbolic garments is the foundation for this study and interrelated with the research questions.

**Table 3. Influencing factors affecting attachment to wedding gown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Attachment Rating</th>
<th>Low Attachment Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflect self</td>
<td>Does not reflect self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High mental energy</td>
<td>Low mental energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong/positive affiliation</td>
<td>Weak/negative interpersonal ties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong/positive interpersonal ties</td>
<td>Negative emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits public image</td>
<td>Garment in bad condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive emotions</td>
<td>Cost-can’t afford dress they wanted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garment in good condition</td>
<td>Poor quality of the garment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High cost</td>
<td>Lack of interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High quality of the garment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Within Case Interviews**

Table 4 is a summary of within case analysis of the interviews. The participants identified disposition behaviors in relation to their wedding gowns. These behaviors are cleaned and stored, saved and not cleaned, sold, donated, “trashed the dress” photo shoot, repurposed (intact), repurposed (in a new form), and rented out. The participants gave
the attachment rating in the scaled questions at the time of their wedding and at the time of the interview. The participants were asked why they chose the disposition behavior that they did and their reasons for the disposition behavior were sentimental keeper, minimalist reducer, mother sentimental keeper, making money, helping others, high value of the garment, damaged garment, lack of money, disappointment in garment, artistic expression, and lack of interest. Self-identity represents the women’s response to the question, “Did your wedding reflect your personality?” This was answered as a yes or no, but the participants all gave an explanation for their answer. Mental energy or time invested was determined by asking the women how they found their wedding gown. The participants described the condition of their dress as damaged or in good shape at the time of disposition. The participants were not asked specifically if they were influenced by outside forces; however, all the participants expressed that they were influenced by outside forces in relation to their disposition behavior. Work is listed because the participants mentioned that their job influenced their disposition choice for example a woman was a nurse in a newborn intensive care and she donated her gown to make burial dresses for infants. Internet is listed because the participants said that they used the Internet to decide on a disposition behavior. The participants who stated that they had no outside influences in their disposition behavior were listed as self. Mother is listed if only their mother and no other family member influenced their disposition behavior. The participants were asked what their mother’s disposition behavior in relation to her wedding gown was. Five of the women interviewed did not know what their mothers did with their gowns.
Table 4. Within case analysis of individual interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Disposition Behavior</th>
<th>Attachment Rating</th>
<th>Reasons for Disposition Behavior</th>
<th>Self Identity</th>
<th>Mental Energy</th>
<th>Condition of Dress</th>
<th>Outside Influences</th>
<th>Mother’s disposition behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cleaned &amp; Saved</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Sentimental keeper</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Work Mother</td>
<td>Saved &amp; Not cleaned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cleaned &amp; Saved</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Mother &amp; owner sentimental keeper</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Saved &amp; Not cleaned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cleaned &amp; Saved</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Sentimental keeper</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Damaged</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>No dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Cleaned &amp; Saved</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Mother &amp; owner sentimental keeper</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Damaged</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Cleaned &amp; Saved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Cleaned &amp; Saved</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Sentimental keeper &amp; minimalist reducer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Work Family</td>
<td>Saved &amp; Not cleaned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rented out</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Sentimental keeper Helping others</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Repurposed in tact</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Sentimental keeper Artistic expression Helping others</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Cleaned &amp; Saved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Repurposed in new Form</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Sentimental keeper Artistic expression Disappointment in garment</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Damaged</td>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>Doesn’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Trash the dress</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Sentimental keeper Artistic expression</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Damaged</td>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>Doesn’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Saved &amp; not cleaned</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Sentimental keeper Value of the garment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Doesn’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Saved &amp; not cleaned</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Sentimental keeper Artistic expression Lack of interest</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>Saved &amp; Not cleaned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Saved &amp; not cleaned</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Minimalist reducer Lack of money Disappointment in garment Lack of interest</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Damaged</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Saved &amp; Not cleaned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Saved &amp; not cleaned</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Minimalist reducer Lack of money Disappointment in garment Lack of interest</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Damaged</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Saved &amp; Not cleaned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Donated</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Minimalist reducer &amp; sentimental keeper Disappointment in garment Helping others</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Damaged</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Doesn’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sold</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Minimalist reducer Make money Disappointment in garment Lack of interest</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Doesn’t Know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disposition Behaviors

Research question one is, “What did this sample of Generation Y wedding gown
owners interviewed do with their wedding gowns after the wedding?” Thirteen of the women interviewed kept their gowns in one form or another and two of the women interviewed permanently disposed of their wedding gown. Of the thirteen women interviewed who kept their gowns, five had their wedding gowns professionally dry-cleaned and stored in a preservation box. This disposition behavior will be referred to as cleaned and stored. Four of the thirteen women did not clean their wedding gowns after the wedding and just hung the gowns in the closet. This behavior is classified as saved and not cleaned. Saved and not cleaned was unexpected and not discussed in the literature or mentioned in the current media as a disposition behavior.

Unexpected disposition behaviors were found with the other four women who kept their dresses. Two of the women repurposed their wedding gowns. One woman repurposed her dress intact. She did not change the physical dress; she changed how the dress was used. She uses her dress at Civil War reenactments and as part of educational programs about 1860s fashions where her reproduction dress is used to educate the public at historic fashion shows. The second woman repurposed her dress twice. First she had her dress made into a christening gown, booties, bow ties, a memory handkerchief, and a headband. The christening dress did not fit her daughter, so she had the christening dress and the leftover fabric from the wedding gown made into a Christmas tree skirt. She kept the booties, bow ties, memory handkerchief, and headband for her other children to wear at their christening. Repurposing behavior was divided into two different categories, intact and a new form.

Another unexpected result was temporary clothing disposition behavior. Temporary disposition behavior is defined as renting the possession. These are
 possesses that the owner is still attached to and does not want to get rid of permanently (Jacoby et al., 1977). One woman started her own business sewing custom formal wear and costumes, which she rents out. A client was looking for a custom wedding gown and liked the owner’s wedding gown and rented it from her. The wedding gown owner now rents her the wedding gown and bridesmaid dresses as a package.

Another unexpected result was one woman engaged in a “trash the dress” photo shoot after the wedding. The media describes dresses being ruined and thrown away after these events, but this woman kept her gown. It was also unexpected that someone would exhibit more than one disposition behavior, but the woman who did the “trash the dress” photo shoot did several different disposition behaviors. Her dress was damaged at the wedding from the car seat of the car she rented. The car rental company paid to have her dress cleaned and repaired. She had a second wedding reception in a different state where she wore her dress again; she did not have it cleaned afterwards. She wore her dress a third time in a third state at a photo shoot in which she jumped into a fountain and soaked the dress. Afterwards she dried the dress but did not have it cleaned again and hung it in the closet. She stated she plans to repurpose her dress at a later date. This woman showed a range of disposition behaviors.

Two women in this study had permanent disposition behaviors. One woman permanently disposed of her wedding gown by donating it to a charity that repurposes wedding gowns into infant burial gowns. She stated, “I did find when I was looking online an organization that takes old wedding dresses, you have to ship them there and they turn them into little gowns for babies who don’t make it so their mommies can bury them in a nice little gown.” The second woman permanently disposed of her wedding
gown by selling it online. She stated, “I got it preserved right away and then I had taken photos of it too before the wedding and pictures from the wedding and posted them on preownedweddingdress.com. Then somebody basically came over, they looked at it and they purchased it”.

Table 5 shows the cross case analysis of the interviews and shows the disposition behavior and the factors that influence the behavior. The disposition behaviors identified by the participants were grouped together if there was more than one case with the behavior. Each of the interviews was examined for similar attachment influences and these were listed in Table 4. When only one case was listed with the disposition behavior then the influences expressed by that individual were listed. The terms sentimental keeper and minimalist reducer are used in two ways. When describing influencing behavior it is a personality characteristic that the participants used to describe themselves. Sentimental keeper and minimalist reducer are also listed as reasons for a disposition behavior, because the participants stated that this was a reason for the behavior. Sentimental keeper, minimalist reducer and attachment rating are bolded because they are the main influencing factors identified by the participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disposition Behavior</th>
<th>Influences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleaned &amp; stored (5 cases)</td>
<td>Sentimental keeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionally dry-cleaned stored in preservation box</td>
<td>Reflects self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family &amp; friends</td>
<td>High attachment rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflects self</td>
<td>High mental energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High value of the garment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repurposed intact (1 case)</td>
<td>Sentimental keeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still a dress used for a different reason Keeping behavior</td>
<td>Reflects self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress in good condition</td>
<td>High attachment rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflects self</td>
<td>High mental energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented out (1 case)</td>
<td>Sentimental keeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kept dress but rents out for other weddings Keeping behavior</td>
<td>Reflects self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making money</td>
<td>High attachment rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repurposed in new form (1 case)</td>
<td>Sentimental keeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress fabric used to made a new item Keeping behavior</td>
<td>Does not reflect self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage gown</td>
<td>Low attachment rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low attachment rating</td>
<td>Disappointed in gown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disposition Behavior</th>
<th>Influences</th>
<th>Low attachment rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Trash the dress” photo shoot (1 case)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sentimental keeper</strong></td>
<td><strong>Low attachment rating</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping behavior</td>
<td>Reflects self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photographs more important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low attachment rating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Damaged gown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not cleaned &amp; saved (4 cases)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sentimental keeper</strong></td>
<td><strong>Low attachment rating</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not dry-cleaned; hung in closet</td>
<td>Does not reflect self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping behavior, but neglected</td>
<td>Damaged gown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donated (1 case)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Minimalist reducer</strong></td>
<td><strong>Low attachment rating</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given to a charity</td>
<td>Reflects self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposing of behavior</td>
<td>Helping others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sold (1 case)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Minimalist reducer</strong></td>
<td><strong>Low attachment rating</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposing of behavior</td>
<td>Does not reflect personality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gown in good condition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photographs more important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for Disposition Behavior

Research question two is, “Why did wedding gown owners interviewed in this study choose their method of disposition?” The reasons given for disposition behaviors were varied depending on the disposition behavior (see Table 6). The Generation Y women were asked if they considered themselves sentimental keepers or minimalist reducers. In this study sentimental keepers or minimalist reducers are both self identified personality characteristic and reason for a disposition behavior. In this section sentimental keepers or minimalist reducers are reasons that the participants gave for their disposition behavior. Each of the participants described their reasons for their disposition behaviors within the general categories of sentimental keepers have keeping behaviors and minimalist reducers either disposed of or neglected their wedding gowns. The participants go on to give other reasons for their specific disposition behaviors within the general category of keeping or disposing of. The codes used for the analysis of reason for behavior are in Table 1. Table 4 lists the disposition behaviors and the factors that influenced the behavior. Multiple reasons were given for the disposition behaviors.

Table 6 lists the reasons that the women interviewed gave for their disposition
behavior and the number of cases in the study that identified these reasons. The disposition behaviors column lists all the disposition behaviors that are associated with the reasons given in the interviews.

Table 6. Disposition behaviors associated with reasons given for behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keeping/disposing of or neglect</th>
<th>Reason for disposition behavior</th>
<th>Disposition behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keeping</td>
<td>Sentimental keeper (11 cases)</td>
<td>Cleaned &amp; stored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saved &amp; not cleaned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Repurposed (intact &amp; new form)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rented out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Trashed the Dress” photo shoot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposing of/ neglect</td>
<td>Minimalist reducer (4 cases)</td>
<td>Donated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saved &amp; not cleaned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping</td>
<td>Mother sentimental keeper (2 cases)</td>
<td>Cleaned &amp; stored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping</td>
<td>Artistic expression (4 cases)</td>
<td>Saved &amp; not cleaned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Repurposed (both)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Trash the dress” photo shoot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping</td>
<td>High value of the garment (2 cases)</td>
<td>Cleaned &amp; stored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping/ disposing of</td>
<td>Helping others (3 cases)</td>
<td>Rented out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Repurpose in tact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Donated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping/ disposing of or neglect</td>
<td>Damaged garment (5 cases) (2 other dresses were damaged, but they were repaired after the wedding and not included as a reason for disposition behavior)</td>
<td>Donated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saved &amp; not cleaned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Repurposed (in new form)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Trash the Dress” photo shoot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping/neglect</td>
<td>Lack of money (2 cases)</td>
<td>Saved &amp; not cleaned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disappointment in garment (5 cases)</td>
<td>Saved &amp; not cleaned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Repurposed (in new form)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Donated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping/neglect</td>
<td>Lack of interest (4 cases)</td>
<td>Cleaned &amp; stored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saved &amp; not cleaned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping/ disposing of</td>
<td>Making money (2 cases)</td>
<td>Rented out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Sentimental Keepers**

Ten of the fifteen Participants labeled themselves as sentimental keepers. Being a sentimental keeper is associated with a life transition ceremony (wedding). All of the women who called themselves sentimental keepers were attached to their wedding gowns because they wore their gown to their wedding. All of these women saved their gowns. Being a sentimental keeper influenced the keeping behavior of the women interviewed in general, but other influences contributed to the more specific keeping disposition behaviors selected.

Four of the women interviewed who labeled themselves sentimental keepers cleaned and stored their gowns. The fourth woman who cleaned and stored her gown was different from the others. Her gown was damaged at her wedding. However her mother was the sentimental keeper. She took the gown to be professionally dry-cleaned and placed in a preservation box. She also paid for the dress to be cleaned and is storing the dress at her home. This wedding gown owner expressed a lack of interest in her wedding gown.

Two of the women who labeled themselves as sentimental keepers hung their dresses in the closet and did not get them cleaned. One woman expressed a lack of interest in her gown for many years. She added artistic expression as a reason for her choice in disposition behavior after seeing a photograph with a four year old wearing her mother’s dress. The second woman stated that her dress was too valuable and high quality not to save. She stated her dress did not need cleaning because she wore it for a short period of time at the church ceremony.

One of the sentimental keepers rents out her dress as her disposition behavior.
She stated that making money, and helping others were her main reasons for her disposition behavior. She stated, “If they couldn’t afford to buy a wedding dress they could rent it and it would be, you know, significantly at less cost for them. But then I’d also get money out and then they wouldn’t have to figure out what to do with their dress after they were done with it.”

Two of the women who called themselves sentimental keepers repurposed their wedding gown. Both expressed artistic expression as their reason for the disposition behavior. One of the gowns was repurposed intact as a dress. This owner also included helping others as her reason for disposition behavior. One of the gowns was repurposed as a new item. The owner also stated her gown was badly damaged and she was disappointed with her dress, but she wanted to keep part of her dress, not an intact garment.

The last woman interviewed who calls herself a sentimental keeper “Trashed her Dress” in a photo shoot. She stated her main reason for this disposition behavior was artistic expression. The photographs of the wedding are more important than her dress. She also felt that because her dress was made out of polyester it could not be permanently damaged by water. She stated, “You can’t kill polyester.”

**Sentimental Keepers and Minimalist Reducers**

Two women said that they were both sentimental keepers and minimalist reducers. They both stated they were selective in what they saved and did not like clutter. In the case of her wedding gown one woman professionally dry-cleaned and stored her dress, because it was her mother’s dress. She also stated that her dress was important because she wore it at her wedding. She is considered more of a sentimental keeper,
because her disposition behavior with her gown was a keeping behavior. She is listed in Table 4 as a sentimental keeper/ minimal reducer and is listed in Table 6 as a sentimental keeper. The second woman donated her dress to charity because it was badly damaged and she wanted to help others. She did not say that her dress was important because she wore it at her wedding. She said she was sentimental about the photographs and jewelry from her wedding and that she did not feel she needed to keep her dress. She is considered more of a minimalist reducer because she permanently disposed of her gown. In Table 4 she is listed as a minimal reducer/sentimental saver and In Table 6 she is listed as a minimalist reducer.

**Minimalist Reducers**

Three of the women said they were minimalist reducers. These women stated that they did not feel attached to their dress. One woman sold her dress on line after the wedding to make money. She stated, “I was able to get like 60 or 70 percent of what I paid for it.” She also stated that before she bought her gown she planned to sell it after the wedding. The fact that she wore her dress at her wedding did not influence her disposition behavior.

Two of the three women who called themselves minimalist reducers did not dispose of their gown after the wedding. They hung their dresses in the closet and did not get them cleaned. The dresses were uncomfortable during the wedding and were damaged at the wedding. Both of these women expressed disappointment in their wedding gown. They both stated that lack of funds and interest influenced their behavior. They stated that family and friends did not influence their behavior, but both of their mothers did not clean their wedding gowns and hung them in the closet after the
wedding. One woman stated, “I'm like my mom. It’s kind of like it’s a dress. Moving on.” These women expressed contradictory behavior. The attitudes, behaviors and attachment to the gown are those that the literature described about garments that owners would dispose of. This is an area of symbolic garment ownership that needs more study.

**Mother Sentimental Keeper**

Mother is sentimental keeper was added as a separate category of reason for disposition behavior. Two of the participants had their gowns professionally cleaned, boxed and stored because their mothers told them to do it. The mothers also paid for the gowns to be cleaned. One mother is storing the gown at her home. The participants in these cases did not make the disposition decision. They allowed their mother to make the choice of disposition behavior.

The reasons that the participants interviewed gave for their disposition behavior was varied and complex. Being a sentimental keeper is a main reason for keeping behaviors, but other reasons were needed to help the participant to choose a specific keeping behavior. Conversely, minimalist reducers were associated with disposing of and neglect of wedding gowns, and other reasons were needed to make the specific disposition behavior. This study identified and documented the reasons that Generation Y women interviewed gave for their disposition behavior in relation to their symbolic garment.

**Attachment to the Wedding Gowns and Disposition Behavior**

Research question three is, “What is the relationship of the attachment to the wedding gowns and the disposition behavior selected?” The attachment to the wedding gown and disposition behaviors were described above. This section will describe how the variables
of attachment relate to the disposition behaviors of the women interviewed.

Each woman interviewed was asked to rate her attachment to her gown at the time of her wedding and at the time of the interview on a scale of one to five, five being high attachment. Fourteen of the women’s attachment decreased from the time of the wedding to the time of the interview. One woman had a low level of attachment at the time of her wedding and her attachment increased after she repurposed her gown into a Christmas tree skirt.

The attachment of participants to their symbolic garment is complex. The women interviewed with high attachment thought their dress reflected their personality. They expended high mental energy during the purchase decision-making process with their wedding gown. They were also sentimental about the fact that they wore the dress at a life transition ceremony. Ten of the women interviewed had a high level of attachment to their wedding gown at the time of the interview. The disposition behaviors of the women with a high level of attachment were all keeping behaviors: clean and save, not cleaning and saving, repurposing but still a dress, and renting out.

The researcher did not find documentation in the literature of women with high levels of attachment not caring for their wedding gowns by not cleaning them, and so did not expect this disposition behavior. The two women with high attachment that saved but did not clean had different reasons for their behavior. One woman did not think her gown needed cleaning, because she wore it for a short period of time. The second woman had a lack of interest in the gown after her wedding, but later planned on a photo shoot with were daughter.

When analyzing the interviews it was noted that some of the women had a low
level of attachment to their gowns before and/or after the wedding. Two characteristics were noted in all the women interviewed who had a low attachment rating: women who felt that their gowns did not reflect their personality, and the condition of the wedding gown during and after the wedding. The participants were less attached to gowns that did not reflect their personality, fit poorly and were uncomfortable to wear at the wedding, or were damaged during the wedding. This does not include the participant who had her gown repaired after the wedding before cleaning. Women with low attachment ratings did not clean or take care of their gown, or they permanently disposed of the gowns, or repurposed the gown into something else. The exception was a woman who has a low attachment rating but her mother is a sentimental keeper who cared for the gown.

The level of attachment to their symbolic garment influenced the disposition behavior of the participants. High level of attachment is associated with keeping behaviors. Conversely, low level of attachment is associated with disposing of, repurposing in a new form, “trash the dress” photo shoot, and neglect of the wedding gown.

**Influence of Participant’s Mother on Disposition Behavior**

The behaviors for some of the women interviewed are similar to their mother’s disposition behavior. In this study eight of the women knew what their mother did with their wedding gown. Six of the eight mothers saved their gowns, but did not clean them. Three of the Participants who saved but did not clean their gowns said that their mother saved but did not clean their gowns. One mother who cleaned, boxed, and saved her gown paid for her daughter to have her gown cleaned and boxed, and stores the dress at her home. One woman repurposed her dress intact, and she cleans and stores her dress
after each use. She stated her mother influenced her behavior and also cleaned, boxed and stored her gown.

Chapter IV documented the findings of this study. Disposition behavior and reasons for behavior of the participant in relation to their wedding gown was discussed. The relationship of attachment to the wedding gown and disposition behavior of the participants was discussed. The key findings presented in this chapter will be discussed and compared with previous literature review in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter consists of four sections. The first section covers the implications of findings of this study. The second section of this chapter addresses the study's strengths and limitations. The third section is comprised of recommendations for future research and practice. The fourth section presents the conclusions about this study.

Discussion of the Findings and Implications

This study was designed to gather preliminary information regarding Generation Y’s attachment and disposition behavior in relation to symbolic garments. The attachment to the wedding gowns was investigated using the material possession attachment conceptual framework. The disposition behaviors of the women interviewed were documented. The reasons that the participants choose their disposition behavior were described within the material possession attachment perspective. Information was gathered from the participants that relates to symbolic garment attachment and disposition behavior. Material possession attachment to symbolic garments is complex with many influencing factors that were documented in this study.

This research study revealed how attachment to symbolic garments and disposition behaviors of a small sample of Generation Y women are related. The disposition behavior of the Generation Y women in the study reflected the general disposition behaviors identified in the literature review, plus some new behaviors. The influencing factors that affected attachment to the wedding gowns of the women interviewed were similar to the literature review. In addition, several influences not addressed in previous literature were revealed in this study. This section outlines and
discusses these behaviors and factors influencing attachment to symbolic garments in the participants.

**Disposition Behavior**

The academic literature has not documented the disposition behavior of Generation Y women in relation to symbolic garments. This study is the first to document this behavior. Several disposition behaviors were unexpected with symbolic garments and not found in the academic literature. These were garments that were saved without cleaning, repurposing garments, and renting out garments.

In this study Generation Y women displayed permanent disposing of disposition behaviors of symbolic garments by donating and selling. The literature review of permanent disposing of disposition behaviors also documented this behavior, but not with symbolic garments. Lee et al. (2013) noted in their study that Generation Y donates clothing to charitable organizations as a response to “calls for action from charity organization.” It could be that the propensity to donate clothing to charitable causes could also extend to symbolic clothing items, breaking with traditions followed by previous generations. Birtwistle and Moore (2007), Lee et al. (2013), and Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) also described that Generation Y often sells unwanted clothing on eBay to recoup some of the money they spent on their wardrobe.

Church (2003), Geller (2001), Howard (2006), and Whelehan and Carter (2007) noted that Baby Boomers traditionally stored and cherished their wedding gowns. The literature did not address women who kept their gowns but did not care for them. Roster (2001) noted that neglect, concealment, and continued storage without use is part of divestment rituals that lead to disposition. Neglect is considered when a garment is not
cared for by cleaning and/or storing in a safe place. The disposition behavior of the participants and their mothers demonstrated the behavior of neglect by not cleaning their wedding gowns. The women with low attachment rating to their gowns stated that their gown did not reflect their personality, but was the expected dress to wear for the event. Their attachment reflected findings in Lastovicka and Fernandez’s (2005) study in that women are more likely to dispose of garments that the owner felt never defined them as an individual. However, the participants in this study kept their wedding gown in a neglected state.

A second new finding was repurposing of symbolic garments. This is discussed in the academic literature but not in relation to symbolic garments with Generation Y. In their studies Lee, et al. (2013) and Morgan and Britwistle (2009) reported that Generation Y consumers exhibited this disposition behavior with clothing in general. Wedding gowns of previous generations have been altered to fit later generations, but this behavior was not expected at this time for Generation Y women with their wedding gowns. The women in this study demonstrated two types of repurposing: intact and changed form. The attachment to the gown of these two behaviors was opposite. The attachment to the garment kept intact was high and the garment was in good condition. Conversely the attachment to the garment that changed form was low and the garment was damaged. In this study one woman repurposed her mother’s dress to fit her personality. Several of the women in the study stated that they would like to repurpose their gown at a later date but since they did not actually do this behavior it was not included in the results. There are many websites on the Internet such as Reuse Wedding Dresses on Pinterest.com (2014) that show Generation Y women repurposing their wedding gowns. This study has too
small a sample of Generation Y women to draw a conclusion, but this may be a
disposition behavior unique to Generation Y women in relation to their wedding gowns.

It was not expected that anyone in this study would have the temporary
disposition behavior of renting out a symbolic garment. The literature on loaning and
renting clothing is limited. Gregson and Beale (2004), in their study on maternity
clothing, discuss the circulation of clothing. Women loaned out their maternity clothing
to family and friends after the birth of their child, and the clothing was returned to them
when they had need of the clothing with subsequent pregnancies. There is mention in the
media of women renting preowned wedding gowns (Taylor, 2014). This behavior is
documented in the media, but it is difficult to know if it is a significant trend, because
there is no academic literature available. It also unclear if Generation Y women are the
owners of the pre-owned wedding gowns rented out or if it is a company that owns the
gowns. This behavior may be unique to the individual interviewed in this study.

The Generation Y participants displayed behaviors with their symbolic garment
that previous generations did not. However, Generation Y consumers in regard to “fast
fashion” display some of these behaviors. These behaviors are: donating, selling,
recycling, and storing.

**Reasons for Disposition Behavior**

This study documented a small group of Generation Y women’s reasons for their
disposition behavior in relation to symbolic garments. The reasons for their disposition
behavior were complex, varied and interrelated. The women interviewed gave no single
reason for their disposition behavior. All of the keeping behaviors were associated with a
self-reported predisposition as a sentimental keeper, and conversely the permanent
disposing of disposition behaviors were associated with participants who viewed themselves as minimalist reducers. Keeping behaviors were associated with their mother being a sentimental keeper, high value of the garment, and artistic expression.

Permanently disposing of disposition behaviors and neglect of kept garments are associated with making money, helping others, damaged garments, lack of money, lack of interest, and disappointment in the garments.

The academic literature discussed reasons for keeping garments in general and these reasons for the disposition behaviors were similar with the symbolic garments in this study. Birtwistle and Moore (2007), Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981), Ha-Brookshire and Hodges (2009), Jacoby et al. (1977), Lee et al. (2013), and Morgan and Birtwistle, (2009) noted that garments with a high sentimental value, that are part of the owner’s personal history, or reflect and shape the owner’s identity, or garments that were expensive and of high quality are often placed in storage and kept as cherished possessions.

The academic literature discussed reasons for disposing of garments in general, and some of these reasons for the disposition behaviors were similar with the symbolic garment in this study. Beirne (2008), Featherstone (2007), and Tsai (2008) noted that Generation Y wanted to help others. Hanson (1980) also noted that if the garment was damaged beyond repair it was more likely to be disposed of. Birtwistle and Moore (2007), Lee et al. (2013), and Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) also described that Generation Y often sells unwanted clothing on eBay to recoup some of the money they spent on their wardrobe. This was also the reason given by the Generation Y woman in this study that sold her dress.
The two women in this study who disposed of their garments stated that they valued the pictures from their wedding higher than the dress. They stated that they felt they did not need the dress as a reminder of the wedding. Kamptner (1995) also found that Generation Y females valued jewelry and photographs above clothing and Lastovicka and Fernandez (2005) noted that consumers who sold meaningful possessions to strangers would retain private meaning by photographing the items.

**Attachment to the Wedding Gowns and Disposition Behavior**

In this present study attachment to the wedding gowns is important and affects the disposition behavior of the women studied. The attachment to the wedding gowns was investigated using the material possession attachment conceptual framework. The Generation Y women interviewed described their attachment within this framework: self-identity, mental energy, interpersonal ties, part of life transition ceremony, emotional attachment, condition of the garment, and cost. Each of these factors influenced the attachment that the women had for their gown. The combinations and interrelationship of these factors was complex and varied. All of these factors influenced the disposition behavior of the women studied. The literature on material possession attachment supported this study.

Belk (1988) and Kleine et al. (1995) noted that material possessions owners have an attachment to help to portray personality and give the owners a unique identity that is distinct from others and reflects their individuality. This was also demonstrated in this study by nine of the women interviewed. The Generation Y women in this study who felt that their gown reflected their personality had a high attachment to their gowns. They demonstrated keeping behaviors. Roster (2001) noted that disposition of possessions is
complex when possessions have symbolic meaning that reflects a person’s identity. This was also true with these women in this study. The disposition behavior of these women in the study was varied, but all were keeping behaviors.

Conversely, the women who did not feel that their gowns reflected their self-identify showed a lack of interest and disappointment in the gowns after the wedding. Lastovicka and Fernandez (2005) in their study also found that wedding gowns that the owner felt never defined them as an individual are more likely to be disposed of. The women in this study who did not feel their gowns reflected their personality either neglected their gown, disposed of their gown, or repurposed it into a new form.

“Trash the Dress” Photo Shoot

One of the women interviewed did a “trash the dress” photo shoot after her wedding. With only one case in this category conclusions cannot be drawn. This phenomenon has not been studied in the academic literature, and this study gives a starting point to begin understanding the phenomenon. This woman demonstrated several disposition behaviors with her symbolic garment. Her attachment, attitudes and disposition behaviors were more complex than the other women interviewed. The wedding gown was not really trashed and the owner stated, “…my dress is plastic and you can’t kill polyester.”

Several of the other women interviewed stated they planned to do other disposition behaviors in the future. The behaviors were not included in the study because they did not actually do the behaviors. The question arises about whether Generation Y women will change their disposition behaviors at a later date if they had other options available to them.
Baby Boomers and Generation Y’s Symbolic Garments

In this study nine of the women knew what their mother did with their wedding gown. Joung and Park-Poaps (2013), Lee et al. (2013), and Morgan and Birtwistle (2009) noted in their studies that Generation Y’s consumer behavior is different than previous generations. However, in this study four participants demonstrated the same behavior as their mother. Thirteen of the participants demonstrated keeping behaviors and eight of their mothers also had keeping behaviors. According to Church (2003), Geller (2001), Howard (2006), and Whelehan and Carter (2007), Baby Boomers traditionally stored and cherished their wedding gowns. Four of the participants saved and neglected their gowns, and the mother’s of three of them also saved and neglected their gowns. An additional three participant’s mothers also saved and neglected their gowns. Saving yet neglecting is an area of disposition behavior not found in the literature.

Study Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

This is an exploratory study on a phenomenon that has not been studied in academic literature. This study added to the knowledge about attachment of Generation Y women to symbolic garments, and their disposition behaviors toward their symbolic garments. Interviewing the women about their reasons for the disposition behavior selected provided new information on what motivates Generation Y women in their disposition behavior in relation to symbolic garments. All of the general categories of clothing disposition, keeping, disposing of permanently, and disposing temporarily, were represented in the study. This study give a different perspective on wedding gowns than
previously studied. In past studies the question of neglect was not asked.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the study in relation to the method of participation recruitment. The sample was biased toward women who had access to Facebook. The subjects for this study were found using Facebook social network site.

Another limitation is that not all the disposition behaviors of Generation Y women in relation to their wedding gowns were represented in the sample. The goal of the study was to have more than one sample of each disposition behavior. Each of the general disposition categories of keeping, disposing of permanently, and disposing temporarily was covered. One of the disposing of permanently subcategories, women who gave away their gowns to family and friends, was not represented in the study. The implications of attachment to this behavior or the reasons for this disposition behavior in symbolic garments are unknown.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

This study identified disposition behavior and motivation for behavior of Participants in relation to their wedding gowns. This study contributes to a clearer understanding of meanings and behaviors that drive decisions at the disposition stage of symbolic clothing’s ownership of Participants. This study identified many disposition choices available for Generation Y women in relation to their wedding gowns. Conclusions drawn from this study contribute to the knowledge base of Generation Y in relation to symbolic garment disposition that can be used by consumer behavior researchers.

There are many charities and business that are interested in the disposition of
wedding gowns. Some of the women interviewed had a clear idea what they were going to do with their gowns. Some of the women did not know what to do with their dress. They had a low attachment and could not afford to care for their gown and hung it in a closet without cleaning it. These women could be of interest to charities and businesses. Marketing strategies could be developed that make it easy and cost efficient for women to donate their dresses. Photographers that offer the “trash the dress” photo shoots could explain in their marketing materials that not all the dresses will be damaged beyond repair. They could also show that “trashing the dress” is not always violent and destructive. It can also be fun and playful. Generation Y women could benefit from the information in the study to give them different choices they may not have considered before.

This study used Facebook social network to find the participants. Generation Y is very active on Facebook. For example, one of the women who posted the study invitation had over two thousand “friends” on her network. When the invitation to take part in the study was posted it generated a discussion on Facebook where many people responded by telling what they did with their wedding gowns. Men also responded telling what their wives and daughters did with their gowns. The responses in the discussion were from the GI Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Y. Exploring written descriptions rather than conducting interviews could be a tool that future researchers can use with any generation on Facebook. The issue is that after writing some declined to participate in the interview because they wrote they had nothing else to say. That could be a problem for researchers but that point is really unknown. Do people disclose as much on Facebook as they would in an interview? Or more? Or less?
Recommendation for Future Research

This study was an exploratory qualitative research study with fifteen interviews. The next step would be to do a quantitative study looking at the relationship between attachment and disposition behavior, and the reason for these disposition behaviors of symbolic garments to see if the results are reproducible in a larger population of Generation Y women.

It was noted in this study that some women hung their wedding gowns in the closet without cleaning or care. The reason for the behavior in this study was varied and contradictory. This disposition behavior is not described in the literature or in the media. This study also noted that six of the women interviewed said that their mothers saved and stored their gown dirty. The neglect of symbolic garments of Baby Boomers has not been studied. A qualitative research study interviewing both groups of women could explore the neglect of the wedding gown and the reason for this disposition behavior.

The Generation Y woman interviewed who did the “trash the dress” photo shoot did not give the same reason for her disposition behavior as that given in the media for this disposition behavior. “Trash the dress” photo shoot is a very complex phenomenon that is described in the media, and it is not clear how this affects disposition behavior of symbolic garments. This is a previously unstudied phenomenon, and a second qualitative research study with a larger number of Generation Y women who trashed their wedding gowns could improve our understanding and the results of which could guide survey research.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore symbolic clothing disposition behaviors
of Generation Y women in relation to their wedding gowns. This study looked at a small sample of Generation Y women and gathered information about their attachment, disposition behaviors, and reasons for their disposition behaviors toward their wedding gowns. Broad conclusions about the Generation Y women in general cannot be drawn from this small sample. Material possession attachment conceptual framework framed the qualitative research by identifying levels of possession attachment as they relate to the wedding gown.

This study identified the symbolic garment disposition behaviors of the Generation Y participants. The literature review and current media suggested disposition behaviors that Generation Y could demonstrate. The participants did demonstrate these disposition behaviors with their symbolic garments. Several disposition behaviors were unexpected with symbolic garments and not found in the academic literature. These disposition behaviors were saving without cleaning, repurposing, and renting.

Both wedding gown owners interviewed and their mothers demonstrated the disposition behavior of saving without cleaning. This disposition behavior in the women interviewed is associated with low attachment. Other influencing factors associated with the women interviewed included: garment does not reflect personality, disappointment in the gown, the gown was damaged, and lack of money to care for the gown. In the literature these influences were associated with garments that were disposed of, but the women in this study kept their gowns. The difference in the women interviewed and the literature is the women describe themselves as sentimental keepers, and they were sentimental about the gown they wore at their wedding. This disposition behavior suggests neglect of the symbolic garment. The women interviewed did not label their
behavior as neglect. The literature has not addressed neglect of a symbolic garment.

Repurposing clothing is discussed in the literature, but not with symbolic garments. This study found two different categories related to repurposing wedding gowns and contrasting reasons for the disposition behavior. The attachment to the gowns and condition of the gown appears to be the reason for the different methods of repurposing.

Renting wedding gowns is discussed in the current media, but it is unclear who is renting out the gowns, a company or an individual. One woman in the study rents out her wedding gown. This wedding gown owner started her own business. This behavior was not expected and may be unique to this individual and not reproducible in future studies.

The symbolic garments in this study that were cleaned, boxed and saved were associated with a high level of attachment or the mother of the owner decided the disposition of the gown. These women were sentimental savers. This behavior was discussed in the literature and was the expected disposition behavior of the symbolic garments studied.

The symbolic garments in this study that were permanently disposed of were donated to charity or sold. Both women in the study had low attachment to their gowns and described themselves as minimalist reducers. The woman who donated her gown wanted to help others, and her gown was badly damaged. The woman who sold her dress wanted to make money. Both of these disposition behaviors were described in the literature as behaviors that Generation Y women demonstrated with their garments. The two women who disposed of their wedding gowns in this study demonstrated this behavior with their symbolic garments.
Generation Y in the literature demonstrates many disposition behaviors with “fast fashion”. This study suggests that Generation Y may take the choices available to them with the “fast fashion” and utilize these disposition behaviors with their symbolic garments. Generation Y uses the Internet to search out options that previous generations may not have know about. Lastly, some of participants in this study were sentimental in relation to their wedding gown and this behavior was similar to previous generations.
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Appendix A

Message on Facebook

Dear Family and Friends,

I have been working on my Master’s Degree in Textiles and Apparel Studies at Western Michigan University. I need your help with my research on Generation Y and what they did with their wedding gowns after their wedding. Could you please share this invitation to take part in my study on your Facebook page? I would like to interview women born between 1980 and 1994 about their wedding gowns. I am looking for participants for my study who preserved and stored their gowns, donated their gown to charity, gave it away to family or friends, sold it, or did a photo shoot where they trashed their dress. If you know of someone who fits the description of my study, could you please send the invitation below to them. Thank you for your support and help.

Patti
Appendix B

Letter to Businesses

(Letter will be on Western Michigan University paper with letter head)
Business and address

Name of business owner or manager,

My name is Patti Borrello and I am a Graduate student in the Family and Consumer Sciences Department at Western Michigan University. I am working on my Master’s Thesis titled *A Study of the Symbolic Clothing Disposition Behaviors of Generation Y*. I am studying consumer behavior of women born between 1980 and 1994 in relation to what they did with their wedding gowns after their wedding. I need to find women who (donated it to charity; sold it; or did a photo shoot where they trashed the dress). I will select the behavior that the particular business deals with. Could you please post my flyer on your website or facebook page or allow me to place a poster in your store?

Thank you very much for your help. If you have any questions, or do not wish to be contacted further about the study, please contact Patti Borrello at 269-352-0432, or patti.a.borrello@wmich.edu, or Dr. Barbara Frazier at 269 387-3719 or barbarafrazier@wmich.edu or the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (269-387-8293) or the vice president for research (269-387-8298).

Sincerely,

Patti Borrello
Family and Consumer Sciences Department
Western Michigan University
Appendix C

Recruitment Flyer

Internet post for web pages and Facebook

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR DRESS AFTER THE WEDDING?

What did you do with your wedding gown after the wedding? Did you preserve and store it away, donate it to charity, give it to family or friends, sell it, or did you do a photo shoot where you trashed the dress? I am a graduate student in Textiles and Apparel Studies at Western Michigan University working on my Master’s thesis, which investigates what happens to wedding gowns after the wedding. I would like to interview women born between 1980 and 1994 about their wedding gowns. The interview will take about an hour and can take place on the phone, over Skype or face to face. All participants will be placed in a drawing for a $50 credit gift card. If you are interested in learning about participating please email me at patti.a.borrello@wmich.edu and I will contact you with more details.
Appendix D

Response Email

Thank you for responding to my invitation to take part in my study titled *A Study of the Symbolic Clothing Disposition Behaviors of Generation Y*.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview. These interviews are comprised of nine open-ended questions, as well as follow up questions when details are needed. It will take approximately one hour to complete. The questions are not difficult and mainly ask for your opinions about your wedding and your wedding gown, your attachment to wedding gown, what you did with your wedding gown after the wedding, and why you chose that method. I will also ask you about your beliefs and attitudes in relation to weddings and clothing. Your replies will be completely anonymous. You may choose to not answer any question. If you choose to not participate in this interview, you may delete this email invitation.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; however it is very important that your opinions and experiences are included. The names of those who participate in the interview will never be made public. All the information you provide will be kept completely confidential and you will be free to refuse to answer any question you feel is too personal.

If you agree to participate, would you prefer to complete the interview in person, over the phone, or by Skype?

Thank you very much for your help. If you have any questions, or do not wish to be contacted further about the study, please contact Patti Borrello at 269-352-0432, or patti.a.borrello@wmich.edu, or Barbara Frazier at 269 387-3719 or barbara.frazier@wmich.edu or the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (269-387-8293) or the vice president for research (269-387-8298).
Appendix E

Questionnaires, Interview Scripts, and Data Collection Instruments

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this study on wedding gowns. This interview is comprised of 9 open-ended questions as well as follow up questions when details are needed will take approximately 1 hour to complete. The questions are not difficult and mainly ask for your opinions about your wedding, wedding gown, attachment to wedding gown, what you did with your wedding gown after the wedding and why you chose that method. I will also ask you about your beliefs and attitudes in relation to weddings and clothing.

1. Tell me about your wedding.
   a. What size was the wedding? (Number of guests)
   b. Where was the wedding held?
   c. Cost of wedding and who paid for it?
   d. Who helped you plan your wedding?
   e. When did you get married?
   f. Are you still married?

2. What are your beliefs and attitudes toward wedding traditions?
   a. Did your beliefs and attitudes differ from you mothers and grandmother’s wedding?

3. Tell me about your wedding gown in detail.
   a. Who helped you find it? (Family, friends)
   b. What did it cost?
   c. How long did it take to find your dress?
   d. Was it what you really wanted?
   e. What made it special?
   f. Did your family and friends like your dress?

4. What were your feelings about wedding gown at that time of your wedding?
   a. How did you feel when you wore the dress?
   b. Did it reflect your personality (Was it you)?

5. What kind of attachment did you feel towards your dress when you bought and wore it?
   a. On a scale of 1-5. One being low, five very attached

6. What happened to the wedding gown after the wedding?
   a. Do you still have your wedding gown?
   b. Did you have it cleaned after the wedding?
   c. How long after the wedding did you have your dress before you did anything with it?

7. Why did you choose method of disposition? Why did you keep/ get rid of your dress?
   a. Did anyone influence your decision?
   b. Do you regret your decision?
   c. Would you describe your self as a sentimental keeper or a minimalist reducer.
8. What did your mother do with her dress after her wedding?
9. How do you feel about your wedding gown now?
   a. Any emotions positive or negative about your wedding gown?
   b. What kind of attachment do you feel towards your dress now?
   c. On a scale of 1-5. One being low, five very attached.

Thank you for taking part in this study.
Appendix F

HSIRB Approval Letter

Date: May 1, 2014

To: Barbara Frazier, Principal Investigator
Patti Borrello, Student Investigator for thesis

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 14-04-18

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “A Study of the Symbolic Clothing Disposition Behaviors of Generation Y” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under “Number of subjects you want to complete the study”). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: April 30, 2015
Appendix G

Informed Consent

Western Michigan University

Family and Consumer Sciences Department

Principal Investigator: Dr. Barbara Frazier
Student Investigator: Patti Borrello
Title of Study: A Study of the Symbolic Clothing Disposition Behaviors of Generation Y

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled “A study of the symbolic clothing disposition behaviors of Generation Y.” This project will serve as Patti Borrello’s thesis project for the requirements of the Master of Arts in Family and Consumer Sciences; Textile and Apparel Studies concentration degree at Western Michigan University. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project, and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
The study focuses on attitudes, beliefs and behaviors with respect to wedding gowns in contemporary society. The researcher is interested in learning about the degree of attachment women have to their wedding gowns, and how it affects decisions about what that person did with the gown after the wedding.

Who can participate in this study?
U.S. women born between 1980-1994, who purchased a wedding gown, and were married at least two years are eligible to participate in the study. Further, eligible participants are those women who disposed of their gown by saving, storing, selling, donating or destroying it.

Where will this study take place?
Interviews may take place in person, by phone, or by Skype. A mutually agreeable mode and location will be determined when the interview time is set.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
You may be required to participate in an interview lasting one hour.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
The researcher may ask you to share details about your wedding, how you chose your wedding gown, what the gown means to you, what you did with your gown after the wedding and why you chose the method of disposition.

What information is being measured during the study?
Your responses to the questions asked during the interview will be recorded. The researcher will record your interview and will look at your feelings about your dress and how that relates to what you did with the dress. The intent is to determine if a method of disposition is related to the
degree of psychological attachment. Your answers will be compared to others that chose the same method of disposition.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
You may be discussing personal details and feelings with the interviewer during the interview. Your interview answers will be recorded using digital equipment, and will be transcribed into a Word document. Therefore, there is a risk that your responses could inadvertently become public. To minimize these risks, the interviewer will not use your name in the interview. Also, any references (names, places) inadvertently recorded while taping the interview will be deleted from the transcript. All digital recordings and electronic files related to the interview will be encrypted prior to storage.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. The results of this study may contribute to consumer behavior researchers’ understanding of meanings and behaviors that drive decisions at the disposition stage of symbolic clothing’s ownership of Generation Y. Understanding attachment to wedding gowns and identifying disposition behavior may help generation Y and earlier generations to better understand differences in attitudes and behaviors related to symbolic garment attachment. The study may also provide valuable insights into Generation Y consumer behavior toward their wedding gowns to wedding industry businesses that focus on Generation Y disposition behavior.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
There is no monetary cost to you for participating in this study. You will be asked to give approximately one hours of your time to participate in the interview.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
You will be placed in a drawing for a $50 gift card.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
A professional transcriptionist will transcribe the transcripts of the interview. Faculty advisors will have access to the digital materials and transcripts. Study results will be disseminated via publications in peer-reviewed research journals, professional association newsletter, and conference presentations. No information identifying you will be given in presentation of study results.

How confidentiality will be maintained and any limits to confidentiality?
The researcher will compile a single master file of potential subjects using Excel. Your name, contact information, and method of disposition will be in the Excel document. The master file will be stored on the researcher’s portable external hard drive in 3403 North Kohrman Hall and will be encrypted using the TrueCrypt encryption process. If you are not selected for the interview or decline to participate you will be removed from the list. You will be assigned an identification number. The identification number will not be connected to any information that could identify you by name, email address, location or employer. You will be given a code on the consent form and assigned a number for the interview. The codes and numbers will not be
stored in the same place and a list will connect the two. The list will be kept on the researcher’s external hard drive. Removing references to you from the transcripts will protect your identity. The digital recordings will be stored on external hard drive. Transcripts and field notes on paper will be kept in a locked file cabinet in 3403 Kohrman Hall and electronic copies will be on the researcher’s external hard drive. All files on the computer will be encrypted with TrueCrypt encryption process. Interviews will be digitally recorded and then transcribed. Two digital recorders will be used to prevent loss of data. All recordings will be destroyed after they have been transcribed. Data will also be stored in an electronic format Excel file in a password-protected file on the WMU College of Education and Human Development Novell server, the consent forms will be stored separately in 3403 Kohrman Hall. All research data will be kept for at least three years after close of the study.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?

You can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences either academically or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study.

The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the primary investigator, Dr. Barbara Frazier at 269-387-3719 or barbara.frazier@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

Please Print Your Name

Participant’s signature

Date
Appendix H

Facebook Page

Patti Anne Wise Borrello
May 1 · Edited · 🕒

Dear Family and Friends,
I have been working on my Master’s Degree in Textiles and Apparel Studies at Western Michigan University. I need your help with my research on Generation Y and what they did with their wedding gowns after their wedding. Could you please share this invitation to take part in my study on your Facebook page? I would like to interview women born between 1980 and 1994 about their wedding gowns. I am looking for participants for my study who preserved and stored their gowns, donated their gown to charity, gave it away to family or friends, sold it, or did a photo shoot where they trashed their dress. If you know of someone who fits the description of my study, could you please send the invitation below to them.
Thank you for your support and help.
Patti

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR DRESS AFTER THE WEDDING?

What did you do with your wedding gown after the wedding? Did you preserve and store it away, donate it to charity, give it to family or friends, sell it, or did you do a photo shoot where you trashed the dress? I am a graduate student in Textiles and Apparel Studies at Western Michigan University working on my Master’s thesis, which investigates what happens to wedding gowns after the wedding. I would like to interview women born between 1980 and 1994 about their wedding gowns. The interview will take about an hour and can take place on the phone, over Skype or face to face. All participants will be placed in a drawing for a $50 credit gift card. If you are interested in learning about participating please email me at patti.a.borrello@wmich.edu and I will contact you with more details.