

THESIS

DONOR DECISION-MAKING, MOTIVATIONS, AND MEANING-MAKING IN THE
CONTEXT OF A HISTORIC FASHION AND TEXTILES MUSEUM ON A UNIVERSITY
CAMPUS: A CASE STUDY

Submitted by

Brooklyn Benjamin

Department of Design and Merchandising

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Master's Committee:

Advisor: Jennifer Paff

Karen Hyllegard
Elizabeth Williams
Paula Alaszkievicz

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ABSTRACT

DONOR DECISION-MAKING, MOTIVATIONS, AND MEANING-MAKING IN THE CONTEXT OF A HISTORIC FASHION AND TEXTILES MUSEUM ON A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS: A CASE STUDY

This study explored the decision-making processes, motives, and meaning-making experiences of individuals who enacted a passive donation of objects to a historic fashion and textiles museum on a university campus. The work was informed by theory on the extended self and extended object. I adopted an exploratory, qualitative case study methodology to collect in-depth interviews from 13 donors. The major contribution of this study is a grounded theory model illuminating the *Decision-Making Process to Donate Objects to a University Historic Fashion and Textiles Museum*. Unique to the decision-making model developed for the present study are the incorporation of the meaning of the object to the overall decision-making process and the identification of motives specific to the donation of historic fashion and textiles objects (e.g., *Educational* and *Relational Motives*). The work also highlights the way in which participants extended their sense of self and identity through object donations to the Museum.

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Introduction

University museums hold collections that contain objects related to local, regional, and global history and that make up “an essential part of a country’s heritage” (Stanbury, 2000, p. 4). Historic fashion and textiles collections held on college campuses are a unique example of university museums; these teaching collections provide access to inimitable learning opportunities pertaining to material culture, global perspectives, design disciplines, and archival skills (Welters & Ordoñez, 2011, p. 6). Historic fashion and textiles collections with exhibition spaces extend these learning experiences to the public as a form of outreach, hoping to facilitate an intimate experience and nostalgia (Marcketti et al., 2011). Exhibitions of historic fashion and textiles beckon visitors to “become involved...through sight and remembered experience of...touching and wearing what is on view” (Palmer, 2008, p. 32). Many university-based fashion and textile museums in the United States were spawned as teaching collections for textiles courses in the 20th century and continue to rely on object donations to satisfy university and museum missions (Welters & Ordoñez, 2011).

Despite the importance of object donations to historic fashion and textiles collections/museums housed on university campuses (Welters & Ordoñez, 2011), very little academic attention has been given to exploring perspectives of donors to such collections/museums (Marcketti, et al., 2011; Welters & Ordoñez, 2011; Szczepanski, 2017). In fact, donor experiences and perspectives seem to be lacking in the museum literature, in general, especially when compared to an abundance of research on other stakeholder groups, such as visitors (Szczepanski, 2017). Thus, the purpose of the present study was to explore the behaviors and experiences – including decision-making, motivations, and meaning-making – of object donors to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising, a historic fashion and textiles

museum housed within the Department of Design and Merchandising at Colorado State University.

Literature Review

Object Donations to Museum Collections

Gifts or donations to museums can be in the form of money or property (i.e., objects); the present work focuses upon object donations. Due to museums' positions in society as stewards of public knowledge and memory (Foster, 2019), when a donor initiates a donation that is accepted by the institution, that donation is essentially "given to the imagined community as a whole" (van der Grijp, 2014, p. 22). Szczepanski (2017) used the word "reciprocal" (p. 272) to describe the relationship between donors and museums in instances where donors were motivated to make a donation by an impactful visit to the institution, illustrating the unique stakeholder position donors hold in museums; they help shape collections while simultaneously being part of the community the museum aims to serve.

Donors may choose to give objects to museums in varied ways. Over time, if a donor has a large collection of items that they wish to give, they may make singular or multiple donations of many objects (Marcketti, et al., 2011). Larger donations historically come from wealthy and/or well-connected donors (Szczepanski, 2017; Wintle, 2010). Often, these larger collections are built from years of collecting (e.g. textile collections donated by faculty members that provide the basis for university textile collections) (Welters & Ordoñez, 2011) and/or experience in the fashion industry (e.g., the foundational gift from the Minneapolis/St. Paul chapter of the Fashion Group International that formed the Goldstein Museum of Design's *Premier Designer Fashion Collection*, located on the University of Minnesota campus) (The Goldstein Museum of Design, 2022). Donors may choose to bequest their belongings, which is a mechanism for a donation that is enacted when the donor leaves objects to the museum in their will. Often in bequest situations, the donor is no longer living when their donation is fully realized (Sargeant &

Shang, 2011; Wiepking et al., 2012). The loss of the donor's presence in the donation process creates significant barriers to collecting and preserving information pertinent to the museum record (Strawn, Littrell, & Carlson, 2006).

Voluntary donations initiated by a donor or otherwise unsolicited by the museum are termed, "passive acquisitions." Szczepanski (2017) highlights the lack of knowledge on why donors choose to donate their belongings, stating, "Although passive acquisitions make up a significant portion of museum collections, very little is known about why people choose to donate their objects" (p. 272). Whereas substantial donations of money and large collections are certainly worthy of study, the literature has comparatively little representation of work exploring the activities of individual donors who shape collections passively and incrementally, as in instances where a donor initiates single item or small quantity donations.

Donation Behavior

Motives Underpinning Donations to Museums and Nonprofit Organizations

Motivation is defined as the internal "driving force" (p. 79) that stimulates individuals to decide whether to participate, not participate, or cease to participate in a certain behavior such as making a donation to a museum (Simamora, 2021). Due to a notable lack of research on the motivations of living donors of objects to museums, the literature analyzing motivations of monetary gifts to non-profit organizations such as museums is considered here alongside the sparse literature on motivations for object donations.

Bekkers and Wiepking (2011) reviewed more than 500 articles to explore why people donate money to charitable/nonprofit organizations (including museums). Based upon their review, the authors identified eight key mechanisms that drive charitable giving. *Awareness of needs* refers to the notion that, for a donor to support a nonprofit or other charitable organization,

the donor must be aware of a need to support. *Solicitation* refers to situations in which nonprofit organizations request donations from potential donors. *Costs and benefits* acknowledges that philanthropic gifts may be expanded when they can be made at a lower cost to the donor and when benefits can be increased. *Altruism* refers to a donation motivated by care for the well-being of the beneficiary or the support of the public good. A donor also may be motivated by *reputation*, in hopes that their peers will look upon their donation positively, resulting in a positive reputation for the donor. *Values* also play an important role in motivating donation behavior, as actions can reflect the belief system of the donor from religious, political, to altruistic values. Lastly, *efficacy* refers to a donation driven by the desire to give an impactful and effective gift (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011). Based upon their review, Bekkers and Wiepking concluded that individuals may be motivated by a combination of these mechanisms, with different motives being prioritized for different donors and different gifts.

Konrath and Handy (2018) divide motives for charitable giving into two categories: *other-oriented motives*, which yield public benefits, and *self-oriented motives*, which yield private benefits. *Altruism* (e.g., improving the well-being of others), *trust in charitable organizations* (e.g., increased impact of donations), and *social motives* (e.g., pleasing friends or family) are categorized as other oriented, whereas *social* (e.g., avoiding disapproval from peers), *egoism* (e.g., reputation), *fiscal incentives* (e.g., tax benefits), *guilt* (e.g., reduce internal negative feelings), and *self-esteem* (e.g., feelings after donating) motives are categorized as *self-oriented*. *Social motives* appearing in both categories illustrate that charitable giving may be motivated by public and private benefits simultaneously, further asserting that donors experience different motives, at different times, for different gifts.

Only one study was identified that aimed to analyze motives of individuals who initiated object donations to museums. In a case study of donations made to an English World War I regimental museum in the 1970s and 1980s, Foster (2019) analyzed donor motives via archival documentation. Foster (2019) found that both *personal motivations*, such as the advancing age of the veterans during the period, and *social motivations*, such as “disrupting cultural homogeneity” (p. 109) of the narrative of the Great War at the time, played a role in the decision to donate. Instances of intergenerational donation to the museum, where a family member donated on behalf of a deceased first-generation veteran relative, revealed that the museum was regarded as a “place of physical security for the object” (p. 102) for some donors, who expressed the need to donate because they had no other family to pass the objects on to.

Decision Making and Individual Charity Giving/Donation Behavior

A handful of researchers (e.g., Burnett & Wood, 1988; Guy & Patton, 1989; Sargeant 1999) have attempted to understand individual donation behavior through the development of decision-making models. Although no models of decisions to donate objects to museums were identified, Sargeant (1999) streamlined and presented the “Model of Individual Charity Giving Behavior” to address noted drawbacks in earlier work (e.g., Burnett & Wood, 1988; Guy & Patton, 1989). Sargeant’s model suggests that *external inputs*, such as fundraising efforts that charities engage in to create a “trusted brand” (e.g., charity appeals, sharing information, modes of solicitation), prompt various *perceptual reactions* in potential donors. *Perceptual reactions* include potential donors’ responses to portrayals of the charity, their perceived fit of the charity with their self-image, the strength of the request for support made by the charity, and competition from other charities’ appeals. Two key factors – or *processing determinants* – then shape how the giving decision is processed: the donor’s past experiences with a given charity

and criteria that the donor may use to evaluate potential organizations for support. How charity appeals are perceived and how the decision-making process unfolds are moderated by both *extrinsic characteristics* (e.g., demographic characteristics such as age, gender, social class, income, and geodemographics) and *intrinsic characteristics* (e.g., need for self-esteem, guilt, pity, social justice, empathy, fear, and sympathy). The final dimension of the model relates to the *outcome* of the decision-making process, which may take the form of cash, time, or in-kind donations. Also considered in the model are the size of the gift and the donor's loyalty to the organization.

In 2014, Sargeant refined his model to reflect updates in understanding in charitable giving. First, Sargeant suggested that the model should be expanded to comprise a fuller list of *intrinsic determinants* – or motives for philanthropy – including, *emotional utility* (e.g., giving for “a sense of having done the right thing”) (p. 296), *familial utility* (e.g., giving in memory of a loved one), *demonstrable utility* (e.g., giving where a gift makes the most significant impact), *practical utility* (e.g., giving to accrue practical benefits such as social recognition), and *spiritual utility* (e.g., giving as an expression of faith). Second, Sargeant argued that his model should more clearly incorporate the concept of giving as an expression of self, as “gifts speak to the nature and identity of the individual offering them to the organization” (p. 296). Third, Sargeant proposed the addition of a social component as an influence on giving (p. 297), in the spirit of Schervish and Havens's (1997) concept of *communities of participation*. *Communities of participation* relate to the “formal and informal relationships (with) which people are associated” (Schervish & Havens, 1997, p. 240). Fourth, Sargeant suggested that an updated model include inhibitors or obstacles to giving, such as money, time, ego risks, or concerns about the value of a cause. Finally, Sargeant proposed adding a feedback loop connecting outcomes of the decision to

cognitive processing that underpins the decision to donate again. For instance, if the donor is thanked, this action may label the donor as “generous” or “kind” and may create an emotional response that prompts that donor to give again (Shang, Reed, Sargeant, & Carpenter, 2020). Important to note is that Sargeant’s model (1999, 2014) for donor behavior is focused on gifts that are solicited. A key void in the literature is a model of decision-making processes used for passively donated objects to museums, specifically.

Meanings of Object Donations to Museums

Although Sargeant (2014) does not reference Belk’s (1988) work on *the extended self* and *the extended object*, it seems relevant to his argument that gifts/donations to charitable organizations reflect an expression of self and identity. Belk (1988) asserts that “knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard our possessions as parts of ourselves” (p. 139). This relationship between people and their possessions forms the basis for Belk’s concept of the *extended self* (1988), a theoretical perspective suggesting that people’s possessions are an extension of their identity and provide an enlargement of the symbolic self. Belk (1988) cites seminal work by Sartre (1943/1992) when explaining the process of self-extension through possessions happens via *control* (i.e., mastery of the object), *creation* (i.e., the time and labor to produce the object), and/or *knowledge* (i.e., intimate knowledge of an object)

The theoretical conception of *the extended self* and its emphasis on the relationship between owner and object implies a counterpart conception of *the extended object*. *The extended object* conceptualizes the ways people leave their mark on objects and objects extend themselves through associations with people and other objects (Belk, 2018). Consider an old house with evidence of a previous tenant, or perhaps, the wear left on secondhand clothing or museum objects from being previously worn and owned. In terms of donors’ relationships with their

objects, possessions can also be used to “create, store, and retrieve memories of the past that contribute significantly to the management of individual identities” (Belk, 1991, p. 114).

When considered from Belk’s *extended self* and *extended object* perspective, an object donation to a museum initiated by a donor may be conceptualized as a further extension of the self, for both the donor and the museum. For instance, although heretofore unexplored, it is possible that, for the donor, the gift of an object to a museum may represent an extension of oneself or a way to keep their mark on the world alive, as a narrative of their unique past. Similarly, for the museum, this donation may represent a tangible portrait of that person’s life or identity, in the “concrete form of an object” (Baudrillard, 1968/1996, p. 79).

Justification and Research Questions

Research on object donation decision-making, motivations, and meaning-making from a museum donor perspective is sparse or nonexistent compared to research examining monetary donation motivations to museums and other non-profits (Conley & Shaker, 2021; Szczepanski, 2017). And, as noted, understanding about the activities of donors who contribute to collections passively and incrementally – through small quantity donations – is limited; Strawn et al. (2006) highlighted the value of a collaborative documentation process with a living donor of a planned gift, and Foster (2019) demonstrated the importance of first-hand perspectives and documentation in the donation process and the effect it has on the transmission of memory, and by extension, institutional memory held in museums. Further, to date, researchers have yet to explore experiences of donors to university historic fashion and textiles collections, despite the importance of donations to building such collections (Welters & Ordoñez, 2011). Thus, by exploring the decision-making processes, motivations, and meaning-making experiences of passive, small quantity object donations to historic fashion and textiles collections at the Avenir Museum, the current study aimed to contribute new insights by answering the following research questions: What is the decision-making process used by donors of smaller quantity and passively donated textile objects to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising? What are the motivations experienced by donors of smaller quantity and passively donated textile objects to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising? How and when do donors to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising experience meaning and identity when making smaller quantity and passive donations?

Method

The present work adopted an exploratory, qualitative case study methodology, allowing the researcher to conduct an in-depth inquiry into the decision-making, motivations, and meaning-making processes of the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising's donor pool via semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising, one of the premiere university historic fashion and textiles collections in the country, houses around 25,000 textile and clothing objects from designer garments to ethnographic textiles spanning the globe, which are used for teaching, research, and exhibition purposes (The Collection, 2022). The Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising provided a purposive and convenience sample for the current study, as the Museum has an active donor pool and the researcher, as a Colorado State University student and an employee of the Avenir Museum, had ready access to the donor list.

The boundaries of the study included any donors (a) who were 18 years of age or older; (b) who had made an individual, passive donation of 10 or fewer objects to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising between January 2013 and December 2019; and (c) whose donation included at least one object worn, used, or cherished by the self or by family members. The criterion for 10 or fewer objects was selected because typical donations to the Museum consist of 10 or fewer objects (M. Osborne, personal communication, September 19, 2022). Periods of time in which the Avenir Museum was on a collections hold (December 2019 – present) or when there were renovations ongoing to the Museum (2014-2016) were excluded from the date range for this study. Requiring that one object in the donation was worn, used, or cherished by the self or by family members of the donor serves to capture the “ubiquitous nature

of dress that would seem to point to the fact that dress or adornment is one of the means by which bodies are made social and given meaning and identity” (Entwistle, 2000, p. 7).

After receiving approval from the institutional review board, participants were recruited via emails collected from donor records. The initial email included background information about the study and a link to a survey to screen interested individuals for eligibility. Eligible participants were then contacted via phone to schedule face-to-face, semi-structured interviews.

Thirteen participants were recruited for this study. Participants ranged in age from 42 to 84 years ($M=71.4$ years), and all identified their gender as either male ($n=2$) or female ($n=11$). The entire sample identified as White/Euro-America and had post-secondary education ranging from associate degrees ($n=1$) to doctoral degrees ($n=1$), with most holding a bachelor’s ($n=5$) or master’s degree ($n=6$) in fields such as mathematics, home economics, history, library science, and teaching, among others. Five participants were alumni of Colorado State University, 2 participants were current employees, and 1 participant was retired faculty. Most participants were retired ($n=10$), married ($n=12$), and had children ($n=10$). A portion of the participants also participate in or previously participated in volunteer activities at the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising ($n=4$).

Participants were given the option of conducting their interviews face-to-face (at the Avenir Museum) or virtually. To gather narratives about participants’ donation activities and experiences, the researcher posed open-ended questions about their decision to donate an object to the Avenir Museum, their relationship with the object prior to donation, and how they viewed their donation. During participants’ interviews, the researcher pulled the objects donated to the Museum by the donor participant so that the objects could be used to guide participants’ conversation and prompt participants’ memories about objects and donation processes.

Sampling continued until saturation in meanings was achieved. During their interviews, participants were invited to select a pseudonym for use in this report.

On average, interviews lasted between 25 minutes and 63 minutes (mean = 41.6 minutes). All interviews were audio-recorded and were transcribed verbatim. To prepare the data for analysis, data were unitized, or broken into meaningful “chunks” (Guetzkow, 1950). Then, data were analyzed using constant comparison processes associated with the grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). First, key concepts were identified in the data using open coding. Next, concepts were then compared with one another and were organized under more abstract or broader categories. These concepts and categories formed the basis of a coding guide that was applied to the data. Then, higher order meanings and patterns among the data (e.g., themes, relationships) were explored using axial and selective coding. After analysis, themes, and the relationships among them, were developed into a visual grounded theory model.

Three approaches were used to establish the trustworthiness and credibility of the work. First, after each interview, the researcher recorded initial interpretive insights in a reflexive journal, searching for key ideas and early emergent themes within the data. Second, she regularly met with a senior researcher to discuss emerging ideas and analytic memos developed through her journaling, with the pair jointly searching the data for new meanings. Third, the researcher invited a senior researcher with expertise in the social and cultural aspects of dress to review and provide feedback upon her coding of 21% of the data (3 transcripts); 10% - 25% of the data is regarded as an acceptable subsample for purposes of calculating interrater reliability (O’Connor & Joffe, 2020). Interrater reliability was calculated by dividing the total number of agreements in coding decisions by the total number of coding decisions made and was 87%. According to

Saldaña (2011), interrater reliability between coders is considered acceptable if the level of agreement meets or exceeds 80%.

Results

Model of the Decision-Making Process to Donate Objects to a University Historic Fashion and Textiles Museum

The major contribution of this study is the *Model of the Decision-Making Process to Donate Objects to a University Historic Fashion and Textiles Museum* (Figure 1). This model visually depicts the decision-making process – including the components and relationships among these components – of donors who gave small-scale, passive object donations to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising. In this section, we elaborate on each component of the model, describing it and its relationship to the overall decision-making process.

Evaluation of Object Utility and Considering Divestment Options

The decision to donate an object to the Avenir Museum began with a simultaneous consideration of the object's utility (i.e., *Evaluation of Object Utility*) and options for divesting the self of the object (i.e., *Considering Divestment Options*). That is, all participants first engaged in a process of evaluating the practicality of keeping the object in their care and considered options for parting with the object. For many participants, the *Evaluation of the Object's Utility* happened almost in tandem with the consideration of where, to whom, and how the object would be passed on and cared for, reflecting a fluid, “back and forth” connection between the evaluation of the object's utility and the consideration of the object's divestment. In Figure 1, this fluid, multi-directional relationship is illustrated by a dotted line terminating in arrows and connecting the two components. Charlotte's comment below captures the essence of this fluid relationship between evaluation of object utility and divestment:

...I think eventually I just came to the conclusion, you know, I probably will never wear [the sequined Mr. Blackwell designer dress] again...I wanted it to be preserved, and I was worried about being able to take care of it. (Charlotte, female, 54 years)

In evaluating the object's utility, several participants noted that the objects in consideration for donation had been infrequently used or displayed recently or had been in storage for a prolonged period, and therefore, could be dispensed with. One participant, Weezer (female, 81 years), had purchased her donated object, a plaid shirtwaist dress, when she was in high school or early college and stored it until she donated it to the Avenir in 2019. In other cases, participants such as Charlotte (quoted above) determined that they could not properly care for special or aging objects, which would be better preserved in a museum context.

In *Considering Divestment Options*, many participants also concluded that a donation to a second-hand store was not a good fit with the object's utility; for instance, Vintage Lady (female, 71 years) shared that her objects (a 1960s three-piece suede suit and a camel wool bobby coat) were "too unusual" and "too unique to go to Goodwill." This conclusion therefore prompted participants to consider a museum donation as a more suitable divestment option for their objects. In this vein, MW (female, 80 years) shared, "Well, I didn't want to give [a custom-made three-piece suit] to Goodwill...and I knew [Colorado State University] had this museum..."

Factors Impacting Consideration of Divestment Options

Four factors impacted the participants' *Consideration of Divestment Options*; these were *Awareness of the Museum*, *Propensity for Donation*, *Reinforcements to Donation*, and *Barriers to Donation*. In Figure 1, the relationship of the impacting components (components in an oval)

on a primary component of the model (components in a rectangle) is illustrated by a thick black line.

Participants varied with respect to their general *Awareness of the Museum* prior to their donation. For several participants who were students, faculty, or alumni of Colorado State University or former or present Avenir Museum volunteers, the decision to donate their object to the Avenir was shaped in part by their *a priori* familiarity with the Museum preceding their donation. Such was the case for Pooker (female, 42 years) who stated, “...having worked at the Alumni Association, I had been aware of different alumni donations that had been given [to the Avenir]. The letter jackets and old beanies and stuff like that.” However, other participants were initially unaware of the Museum when considering divestment options for their object and came to know about it through social connections. For instance, Lindorfa learned about the Museum through a friend who was a previous Avenir donor and volunteer:

...I'm always looking around thinking. I wonder where [my mother's wedding dress] could go?...Who wants an old dress?...But the Avenir is special...I had no idea [there] was [a] design museum...I came to Fort Collins to visit [my friend], and she took me to the Avenir. (Lindorfa, female, 77 years)

In a couple cases, participants' *Propensity for Donation* was shaped by their experiences within fashion and textile collections, both at the Avenir Museum and other institutions. Larry, , a retired faculty member, (male, 69 years), mentioned his firsthand experiences bringing students into the Avenir Museum, as well as personal travel, research, and sabbatical in other fashion and textiles collections as a factor which shaped his general *Propensity for Donation*. Some participants also situated the donation of their fashion or textile object as part of their larger charitable giving philosophy. In addition to their donation to the Avenir Museum, many

participants reported engaging in other charitable behaviors such as the donation of money or time to nonprofit organizations as well as the donation of second-hand items for re-use in thrift stores. A few participants also reported object donation relationships with other museums or repositories, such as the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery, the Gregory Allicar Museum of Art, and the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

Participants reported experiencing a variety of *Reinforcements* and *Barriers to Donation*, which impacted their consideration of divestment options. Most frequently, participants' consideration to donate their object to the Avenir was supported by the lack of an apparent beneficiary, such as a child or other family member, who might be interested in inheriting the object. When potential beneficiaries were present, multiple participants noted a presumed generational difference between themselves and those whom they could potentially pass the object onto. Here, participants alluded to potential beneficiaries in their immediate or extended family who were largely disinterested in inheriting objects from their elder family members; this circumstance ultimately served as a reinforcement to donation:

I find that young people don't want to be bothered with heirlooms...My generation...and maybe one generation below...We're into keeping things [that belonged to] our mothers... But when I talk to the younger generation, I say, "Oh, don't you want this beautiful set of china?" [And they say] "Oh, no, we don't want to be bothered with that."
(Lindorfa, female, 77 years)

Other reinforcements to the decision to donate were observed. For instance, some participants perceived that their object lacked purpose in their personal custody, but felt the object could achieve greater utility, purpose, or meaning via donation to the Museum by increasing the "visibility" of the object (Larry, male, 69 years). In other cases, interactions with

the original owners of the objects served as a reinforcement to donation; in one special instance, Lindorfa (female, 77 years) was caring for her mother's cherished 1940s wedding dress after her mother had entered an assisted living facility. Lindorfa's eventual decision to donate the dress was reinforced by the conversations during which her mother shared her excitement at the prospect of a museum donation.

Many participants reported questioning the value of their object – a query that served as a potential barrier or obstacle to their decision to donate. Andy (male, 68 years) blatantly recalled wondering, “Why [would the Museum] really want [a football t-shirt]? I mean, this isn't, like, high fashion.” Emotional or sentimental attachment to the object also served as a potential barrier to donation; during her interview, Olga (female, 84 years), was moved to tears upon seeing her objects, pieces of her late-1950s United Airlines “stewardess” uniform and recounting her decision to donate them.

Participants overcame the *Barriers to Donation* in different ways. In many instances where participants were “timid” (GoGo, female, 77 years) to donate their object for fear of rejection by the Museum, participants eventually concluded that being potentially denied by the Museum was worth the chance at finding a more appropriate home for their objects. Olga (female, 84 years) ultimately decided that “sharing the [“stewardess”] uniform and the wing [pin] would be better than keeping them for [herself]” and stated she “didn't want to be selfish.” Initially, Pooker (female, 42 years) was “hesitant” to approach the Museum about donating her object. Even after contacting the Museum and being met with enthusiasm from the museum staff regarding her donation, Pooker still wondered, “Am I really willing to get rid of this kind of thing?” To assuage this anxiety, Pooker removed a section of her printed gown to keep and frame in her home as a memento of the object prior to donating.

Motives for Donation

Participants' *Motives for Donation* – or the internal rationales or “driving forces” that stimulated them to donate their objects (cf, Simamora, 2021) – impacted movement from *Considering Divestment Options* to *Donation*, which is illustrated in Figure 1 by a black line terminating in an arrow point at one end. Among participants, eight motives were identified: donations motivated by a connection to a place or a person (i.e., *Relational Motivations*); donations enacted to accrue practical benefits (i.e., *Pragmatic Motivations*); donations made in memory of a loved one (i.e., *Familial or Memorial Motivations*); donations enacted for catharsis or release of pressure (i.e., *Psychological Motivations*); donations motivated by the care and wellbeing of the object (i.e., *Custodial Motivations*); donations motivated by the Museum's ability to use the object to educate and impact others (i.e., *Educational Motivations*); donations given where the gift made the most significant impact (i.e., *Consequential Motivations*); and motivations related to doing the right thing (i.e., *Altruistic Motivations*).

Many participants who experienced *Relational Motivations* were prompted to donate their objects by a connection to the Avenir Museum, museum personnel, or Colorado State University. As noted previously, some participants had an *a priori* relationship with the Museum, such as volunteering at the Museum, which impacted their awareness of the Museum as a divestment option; this relationship also served as a motivation in their decision to donate:

I [volunteered] in the Museum for like 5 or 6 years...I thought that [the Avenir Museum] was the best place for [an embroidered Chinese skirt] to go...anytime I come up with [an object] that I think is historical [in a] textile clothing nature I always think of the Avenir first. (Chase, female, 73 years)

In other instances, participants were directly motivated through their connections to family or friends who had enacted a donation to another museum or similar institutions. When Nene (female, 69 years) asked her friend, a fashion designer with a history of donating textile objects to museums, what she should do with her 1920s blue velvet opera coat, her friend advised, “Well, you could try a museum, you know.”

Pragmatic Motivations were relevant to some participants who expressed that their donation was motivated by the practical benefits of freeing up space within their home, downsizing a family member’s belongings, or owing to the reason that the participant had no continued use for the object:

You get to a stage in your life when you need to...cut down on the... things that you keep. And so [donating to the Museum] is part of ...reducing the amount of things that we own. And then...we moved...which always is... a good impetus...[so I thought] I’ll see if [the collections manager] would take some of [my handmade maternity dresses from the late 1960s]. (Weezer, female, 81 years)

A few participants enacted donations motivated by *Familial or Memorial Motivations*, such as finding “the right home” for an object meaningful to a family member or providing closure for a departed loved one. One participant, Curly Tops (female, 83 years), was explicit in that her donation of clothing, such as her late-husband’s Pendleton driving cap, was a way for her “family to be remembered.”

Some participants who experienced *Psychological Motivations* mentioned acute internal pressure to “do good” by their object. Important to note is that participants who experienced *Psychological Motivations* were rarely the original owners of their objects and instead were stewarding an object they had inherited or received from a deceased loved one. Nene felt that

saving the object was not only necessary, but that, due to her professional background, she was uniquely positioned and personally responsible for doing so:

Me being...the home economics girl that I was, [I felt] that [my 1920s opera coat] needed to be saved, and I felt like I was the one that needed to save it...the one that [sic] needed to put it in some place [where it would be]...preserved. (Nene, female, 69 years)

A few participants who experienced *Psychological Motivations* to donate their object to the Museum mentioned donating as a way to experience emotional relief from the weight of the responsibility of caring for the object(s). Andy (male, 68 years) went so far as to say the experience of donating his objects, components of his football uniform from his time as a CSU athlete, was “cathartic” for him.

The participants’ concern for the care and wellbeing of the object was manifested as *Custodial Motivations*. Many participants who experienced *Custodial Motivations* recalled their decision to donate being motivated by their internal desire to prevent an unknown fate for their objects; participants wanted to avoid their object being thrown away or going to a secondhand store. A couple participants wanted to avoid a situation where family members would determine the fate of their object:

Better that...I know where things [are and] might have a chance of surviving...as opposed to my niece or nephew looking at them when I’m dead going, “What is this?”
(Larry, male, 69 years)

Other participants driven by *Custodial Motivations* were inspired by the care that the Museum could provide for their objects, especially in comparison to resources for care the participants had in their homes. Olga (female, 84 years) stated, “I felt that [the Museum] would do a lot better job of taking care of [my United Airlines “stewardess” uniforms] than I could ever do.”

Several participants recounted *Educational Motivations*, impelled to donate by the Museum's capacity to activate their object's story and potential to impact and educate others. Some of these participants were motivated by the Museum and its accessibility to the public at large, and specifically, students:

I knew [the objects are] used in classwork and the students...access them to study. As an educator myself, I was really happy about that, so I anything that I could help with in that respect was satisfying to me. (Chase, female, 73 years)

Other participants mentioned the preservation of the story related to the object, and the Museum's ability to use the story to impact others:

It's not only just, you know. How were these clothes made? It's really the history and the stories behind the objects that I think are really important. And I think the Avenir just [does] a great job of telling that story. (Charlotte, female, 54 years)

Selected participants were motivated by how their object would impact the collection itself, as in the case of *Consequential Motivations*. For instance, a few participants were inclined to donate their object to fill a specific need in the Museum's collection:

"I used to take [class] trips [to the Museum]... and I had never seen a bark cloth [skirt] like that [in the Collection]. And as you know, the men's fashion is pretty lopsidedly lower than the woman's fashion...[the museum staff] were happy about [the] addition [of the knit hunting sweater]." (Larry, male, 69 years)

Consequential Motivations also were experienced by several participants whose objects had a direct connection to the University, like Pooker (female, 42 years), who expressed they felt other museums "wouldn't appreciate" their object, an upcycled dress with the University president's

face stamped on it. Andy (male, 68 years) expressed feeling “a certain karma” about returning his football uniform to its place of origin.

A few participants also shared that their object donations were prompted by *Altruistic Motives*, or an interest in simply “doing the right thing” and the comfort derived from knowing their donation might help someone in the future. *Altruistic Motives* always overlapped with other motives such as *Educational*, *Custodial*, and/or *Familial Motivations*. Chase’s reflection reveals the interconnected nature of the *Altruistic* and *Educational Motives* impacting her decision to donate an embroidered Chinese skirt to the Museum:

I think it's worth preserving because of the amount of work in it and whatever history ...the Museum can learn about it. I'm not an expert in [Chinese embroidery]...so I'm [donating this skirt] hoping that someone can learn a little more about it and use it for teaching purposes. (Chase, female, 73 years)

Important to note is that each participant experienced a unique mix of the identified motives while making their donation decision, rather than being driven by any singular motivation. For example, Andy (male, 68 years) experienced a mix of *Psychological*, *Consequential*, *Relational*, *Custodial*, and *Pragmatic Motivations* for his donation of CSU football apparel from the 1970s. Additionally, different motives became relevant for distinct objects within the same donation, such as Larry’s (male, 69 years) donation of a barkcloth skirt prompted by *Consequential Motivations*, whereas the men’s knit sweater in Larry’s donation was more motivated by *Familial or Memorial Motivations*. As such, donors experienced a variety of motives for the same gift and encountered different motivations for different gifts.

Donation, Other Outcomes, and Post Donation Museum Interaction

After navigating the various components of the decision-making process to ultimately donate their object to the Museum, participants experienced a variety of *Other Outcomes* to the donation decision process. This relationship is illustrated by a dashed line, representing a possible result or outcome of the decision-making process. All participants reported feeling positive emotions and enjoyment as a result of their decision to donate. Two participants, Lindorfa (female, 77 years) and Andy (male, 68 years), noted their donation decision process helped to aid in the culmination of creative writing projects pertaining to their objects. Andy (male, 68 years) also revealed the donation decision process impacted his dreams.

From *Donation*, there is a unidirectional move to *Post Donation Museum Interaction*, illustrated by a continuous black line terminating in an arrow. Participants varied in terms of *Post Donation Museum Interaction*. A few participants continued their donation relationships with the Museum by enacting further donations, whereas a small portion of the sample had no post-donation interaction with the Museum; other participants reported developing donation relationships with other institutions. Some participants formed post-donation volunteer relationships with the Museum. In a few instances, the participants-turned-volunteers directly influenced peers to consider donating their objects to the Museum, increasing the awareness of the Museum within their social circles; this potential relationship between *Post Donation Museum Interaction* and *Awareness of the Museum* is illustrated by a dashed line (see Figure 1). Gogo (female, 77 years) even went so far as to say she has “become a magnet for people who want to talk about [the Museum].”

Meaning and Identity in the Donation Decision Process

Participants experienced *Meaning* in varied ways, throughout the donation decision process, which is reflected in the model by the placement of *Meaning* around the outer edges of

the model, with dotted lines and arrows pointing inward toward the model. In some cases, during the *Considering Divestment Options* stage, participants explicitly mentioned wanting to avoid an unknown fate for their object (e.g., by donating it to Goodwill or another secondhand store), which prompted them to seek the Museum as a divestment option. This desire to prevent an unknown fate for the object was mentioned in tandem with a desire to preserve the stories, and by extension, the *Meaning* associated with the object, in a more permanent way. In this way, we can see how the early stages of the decision-making process were influenced by the *Meaning* of the object held by the participants. Other participants found the donation decision process meaningful through the gratification they received after donation, knowing the object had a permanent and safe home where the story of the objects would be “understood and recorded”, and that the process of deciding to donate and potential future research by students “gave [the object] more meaning” (Olga, female, 84 years). Still other participants felt the entire donation process was good preparation for “saying goodbye” (Vintage Lady, female, 71 years) to the object.

Also reflected in participants’ accounts about the *Meaning* of their objects was the palpable way in which the objects donated were artifacts of dress or textiles, which were understood as expressions of the self and identity. Lindorfa (female, 77 years) explained that her mother’s wedding dress symbolized her mother’s “adventuresome” and “courageous” nature and her proclivity to “break the mold” and “do [life] her own way”. Lindorfa also mentioned meaningful discussions between her and her mother when her mother was in an assisted living facility. Although these discussions served as a *Reinforcement to Donation*, they also created *Meaning* for Lindorfa (female, 77 years) throughout the entire donation decision process,

increasing the sentimental connection she had to the object and providing a unique bonding experience with her mother:

"[When I told her] I have an opportunity to send your dress to a museum in Colorado...her eyes lit up...and we sat and talked about it, and she gave me all the details [of her dress]. She still had her mind and was still very excited to see the dress and talk about it." (Lindorfa, female, 77 years)

Lindorfa also echoed the sentiment presented by Olga that research about and exhibition of her mother's dress created *Meaning* and positive emotions for her personally, stating, "the fun continues" and expressing sadness at not being able to "run over [to her mother]" and tell her how her object was being used within the Museum.

In addition to recounting how objects of dress and textiles represented the identities and selves of beloved others, participants described how donated objects reflected their own past or current identities connected to their objects. Weezer (female, 81 years) enumerated how her gift of handmade maternity wear prompted memories of her identity as a mother and her days of raising her three children. And, GoGo (female, 77 years) shared how her 1970s Dior business suit represented her professional transition from teaching to working in the male-dominated field of business and her newfound identity as a businesswoman. Larry (male, 69 years) recalled how the knit sweater he donated, initially owned by his father-in-law, served as a "touchstone of childhood memories" for his partner. Vintage Lady (female, 71 years) echoed this notion that, for donors, objects can store and retrieve memories of childhood when she described her military upbringing, which resulted in many moves as a child, noting, "our things became more important than our house."

Meaning also was experienced when participants saw and/or engaged with the object(s) they had donated during their interviews; these interactions prompted positive memories and associations, such as physical comfort, comradery, or a thoughts of a specific person. One participant described seeing her objects again as “weird”, saying she “still views the cape as a friend, but not so much the leather [suit]” (Vintage Lady, female, 71 years), alluding to the manifold relationships one can have with different possessions. Another participant reported a negative emotional response, as the object reminded him of “physical pain” (Andy, male, 68 years) experienced while wearing the object, a football jersey.

Finally, participants varied in how they conceptualized their donor identity. Most participants agreed that “donor” is a term they would use to define their identity, but some participants were hesitant to describe themselves as a “donor” because they had donated only a few objects; “I would say a supporter...[I donated] three things. Does that make a person a donor? I guess technically.” (Larry, male, 69 years).

Discussion

The present case study drew upon semi-structured, in-depth interviews to explore the decision-making, motivations, and meaning-making processes of donors to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising. Analyses were used to construct a grounded theory model of the decision-making processes adopted by donors who enacted an individual, passive donation of 10 or fewer objects of dress and/or textiles to a historic fashion and textiles museum on a university campus. The model illustrates how donors move between the major components of the decision-making process (i.e., *Evaluation of Object Utility*, *Considering Divestment Options*, *Motives for Donation*, *Donation*, and *Post-Donation Museum Interaction*) and considers how *Meaning* shaped the entire decision-making process. Four impacting factors—*Awareness of the Museum*, *Propensity for Donation*, *Reinforcements to Donation*, and *Barriers to Donation*—affected the way participants experienced *Considering Divestment Options*. Analyses revealed 8 key motives influencing the decision to donate to a historic fashion and textiles objects to the Museum—*Relational*, *Pragmatic*, *Familial or Memorial*, *Psychological*, *Custodial*, *Educational*, *Consequential*, and *Altruistic Motivations*. The model also incorporates a “loop” illustrating the potential for a repeating cycle of donation by participants and/or their peers by increasing the *Awareness of the Museum*.

Importantly, the model developed for the present study makes a unique contribution to the literature in that it illustrates the decision-making process for *unsolicited* donations of fashion or textile objects to a university museum, rather than solicited requests for support in the form of money or time. Most participants became aware of the Museum largely through personal *a priori* connections, or through organic interactions with Museum personnel, such as volunteers. The

emphasis on *unsolicited* donations negates the need to consider the *mode of ask* (Sargeant, 2014) or *solicitation* (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011) included in previous research, thus shifting the focus from the institution to the individual experiences of the donor. This emphasis on the donor as the impetus for donation allows for examination of how *Meaning* is experienced by donors, as well as how it shapes the donation-decision making process.

Among participants, *Meaning* imbued in the donated objects began to shape the donation-decision making process long before the process started, via the incorporation of these objects into the extended selves of the participants or their dear others (Belk, 1988). It is because the donated objects were objects of dress or textiles, which can be understood as intimate expressions of identity for the donor or their loved ones (Çili, 2023; Entwistle, 2000), that participants sought the Avenir Museum as a divestment option for their cherished objects. Because possessions integrated into *the extended self*, such as objects of fashion or textiles, can serve as an “objective manifestation of the self” (Belk, 1988, p.159) a donation to the Museum can be viewed as purposeful extensions of the self for the participant and/or their loved ones. Belk (1988) mentions the important relationship between objects constituting *the extended self* and their care; the donation of cherished objects of fashion or textiles to a university museum can be conceptualized as an ultimate act of care or maintenance for objects representing “anchors for identity” (p. 159), in that the Museum agreed to steward the object and its associated history in perpetuity. Accepting a donation creates an indelible bond between the Museum, donor, and object, which evokes the concept of *the extended object* (Belk, 2018). Donated pieces of fashion or textiles and their respective stories, symbolism, and meaning can be infinitely extended through exhibition and education made possible by the Museum.

Another novel aspect of the model is the inclusion of distinct factors impacting how the participants navigate *Considering Divestment Options* for their object – *Propensity for Donation* and *Reinforcements to Donation* – as well as the identification of unique *Barriers to Donation* (i.e., participants’ queries of value or sentimental attachment) that donors of objects of historic fashion or textiles may experience. The present study also explored *Other Outcomes* related to the donation decision process, revealing a personal creative outlet for some participants in the form of essays or short histories about the donated objects.

The study revealed two motives specific to the donation of objects to a historic fashion and textiles museum on the university campus – *Educational* and *Relational Motives*. The identification of *Educational Motives* among participants can be viewed as a reflection of the Museum’s mission owing to its affiliation with a university and the participants’ desires to contribute to the fulfillment of that mission in their own unique way. Many participants in the study also had previous connections to the Museum, Museum personnel, or the University, which manifested as *Relational Motivations* and attest to the strength of *a priori* connections, which may have shaped the participants’ commitment to education.

Selected motives identified in this exploration align with findings from prior literature exploring charitable giving and other types of museum donations, suggesting, perhaps, that there may be some motives for donation that are universal, regardless of the type of donation. For instance, *Altruistic* and *Consequential Motives* – identified within the present sample – were conceptually similar to *Altruism* (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011; Konrath & Handy, 2017) and *Efficacy* (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011) as key motives that drive monetary charitable giving. Importantly, however, among the present sample, *Altruism* was not a sole motivator, but, at various times, operated in tandem with *Educational*, *Custodial*, and/or *Familial Motivations*.

Custodial Motivations identified in the present work also align to some extent with Foster's (2019) analysis of motives where intergenerational donations were driven by the perception of the museum as a "place of physical security for the object" (p.102). And, similar to Sargeant's (2014) work on solicited charitable donations, analyses provide empirical evidence that passive object donations to museums may be motivated by the aim of honoring the memory of a loved one (i.e., *Familial or Memorial Motivations*); making a significant impact (i.e., *Consequential Motivations*); or accruing practical benefits (i.e., *Pragmatic Motivations*). Finally, findings provide additional support for the supposition that donors experience different motives, at different times, for various gifts (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011; Konrath & Handy, 2017), including experiencing different motives, even for the same gift.

In a variety of ways, findings from the current study also support and extend Sargeant's (2014) work on individual charity giving. For instance, participants in the present sample encountered and overcame assorted *Barriers to Donation*, as Sargeant proposed may be the case for individuals making solicited charitable donations. Findings also suggest a potential relationship between a donor's *Post-Donation Museum Interaction* and the *Awareness of the Museum*. This potential relationship illustrates Sargeant's (2014) suggestion of including a feedback loop by modeling how donors might share their experiences of donating to the Museum with peers in their social circles, thereby increasing the *Awareness of the Museum* and, thus, potential future donations. Finally, Sargeant's (2014) acknowledgement of the importance of *communities of participation* (cf., Schervish & Havens, 1998) also was well represented in the current sample. Among participants, these communities most frequently included the social circles of the Avenir Museum volunteer pool and the University housing the Museum. In some cases, *a priori* relationships with these communities impacted *Awareness of the Museum* or

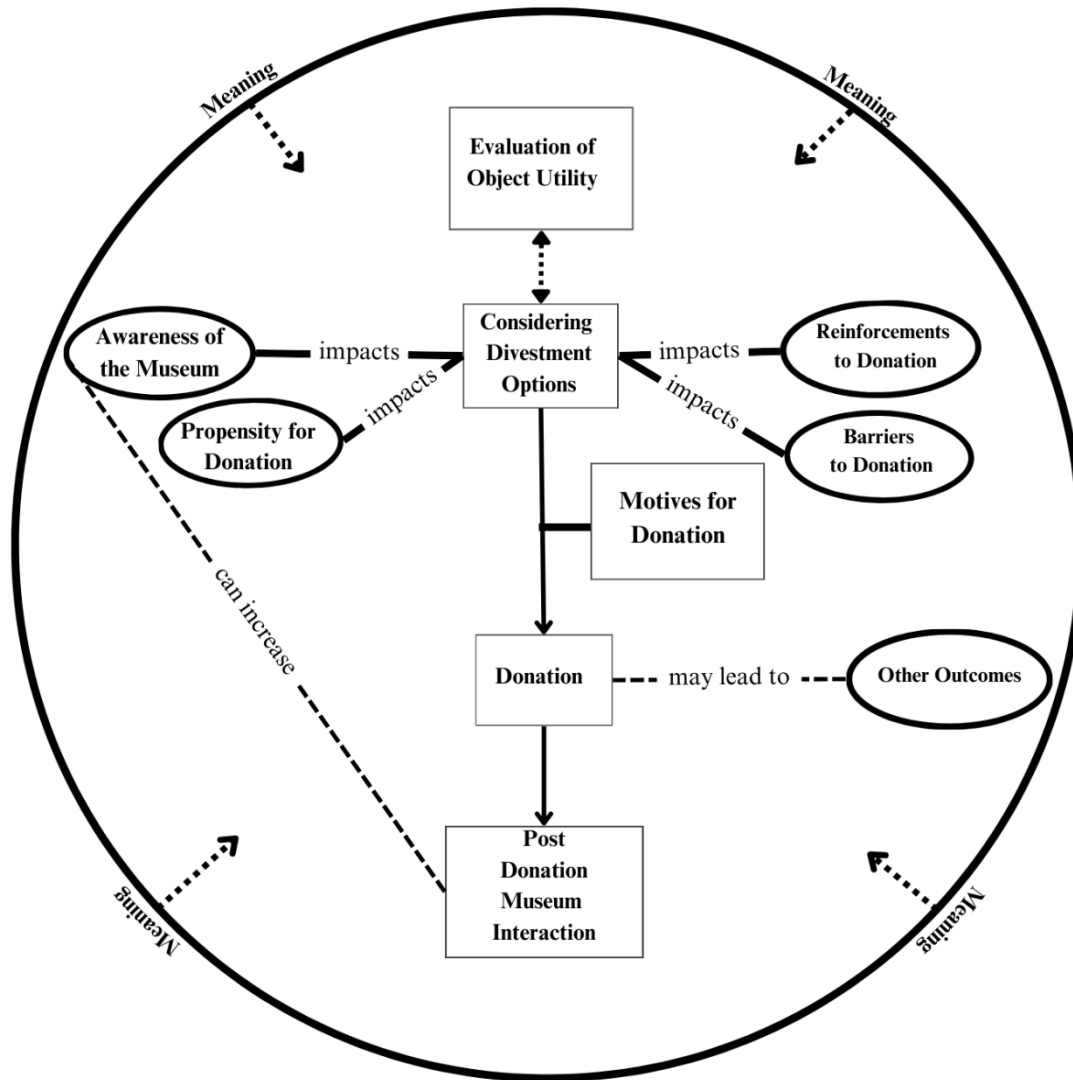
Relational Motives. In other instances, *Post-Donation Museum Interactions* prompted donors to join these communities or even to solicit the participation of others in these communities.

Conclusion

The present work is limited by its case study design inasmuch as it represents the experiences of 13 donors to a specific historic fashion and textiles museum on a university campus (the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising). Thus, results are not generalizable or suggestive of a larger population of museum donors. Additionally, the study is limited by its homogenous sample, which did not reflect much diversity in terms of age, ethnicity, or gender. This lack of diversity in the sample made it difficult to ascertain differences across participants' experiences that may have reflected their social locations (cf., Sargeant, 1999). Further, many participants had *a priori* connections to the University or the Museum itself, which impacted their *Awareness of the Museum* and their eventual donation. Future research can address the limitations of the present study. More than 50 museums of historic fashion and textiles can be found on university campuses across the United States (Queen & Berger, 2006); a broader study might analyze and compare donor experiences from different collections of these types to explore whether there may be differences in the decision-making, motivations, and meaning-making process based upon factors such as museum characteristics and location. Further, inclusion/exclusion criteria may be considered in future studies to capture evidence of a more diverse sample of donors of fashion and textile objects to a university museum.

This study represents the first known attempt to explore and model the decision-making processes, motives, and meaning-making experiences of individuals who enacted a passive donation of objects of fashion or textiles to a university museum. The present work addresses a gap in the broader charitable giving literature by examining an *unsolicited* charitable donation, allowing for discussion on how *Meaning* shapes this type of donation. Findings contribute empirical evidence to the literature in the identification of distinct motives and factors that

impact this type of decision-making. These contributions have implications for museum professionals employed within historic fashion and textile museum on a university campus; museum professionals can use the model and experiences of participants in this study to better understand their current donors, as well as how to position themselves and the museum to provide information pertinent to prospective donors seeking a university museum as a divestment option for their cherished fashion or textile objects.



Legend

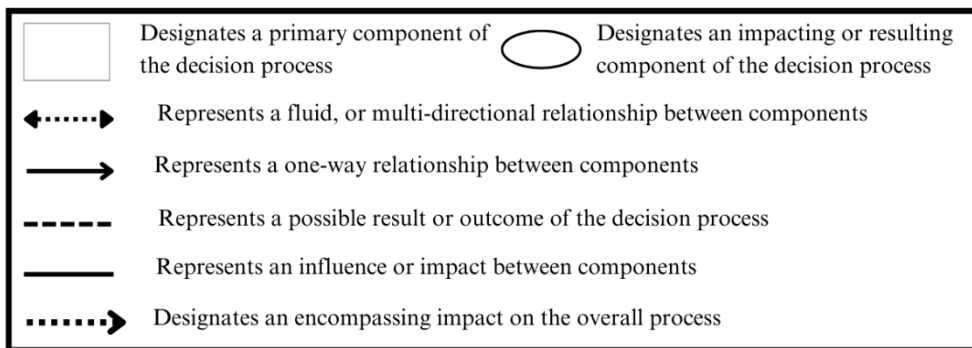


Figure 1
*Model of Decision-Making Process to Donate Objects
 to a University Historic Fashion and Textiles Museum*

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Appendices

Appendix A: Human Subjects' Approval

3/28/23, 2:28 PM

Protocols

PROTOCOLS

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COLORADO STATE
UNIVERSITY

The protocol listed below has been approved by the CSU IRB Determinations Fort Collins on Thursday, March 9th 2023.

PI: Ogle, Jennifer L

Submission Type and ID: Amendment 4053

Title: Donor Decision-Making, Motivation, and Meaning in the Context of the Historic Costume and Textiles Collection or Museum: An Interpretive Study

Approval Date: Thursday, March 9th 2023

Continuing Review Date: no date provided

Expiration Date: Sunday, February 20th 2028

The CSU IRB (FWA0000647) has completed its review of protocol 4053 Donor Decision-Making, Motivation, and Meaning in the Context of the Historic Costume and Textiles Collection or Museum: An Interpretive Study . In accordance with federal and state requirements, and policies established by the CSU IRB, the committee has approved this protocol under Exempt review.

Any additional comments regarding this approval are included below. If you have additional questions about this please contact RICRO IRB Staff.

Please note:

- This protocol will need to undergo Continuing Review and approval prior to no date provided.
- Any additional changes to this approved protocol must be obtained prior to implementation of those changes, by submitting an amendment request to the CSU IRB for review/approval.

<https://colostate.kuali.co/protocols/protocols/6408f7f1ddfd800359d800b/correspondence/6412475c70a5fb003b6ba47d>

1/2

Good luck in your research endeavors!

Amendment [4] has been reviewed on March 9, 2023 and determined to not alter the exempt determination. This amendment includes updated procedures to include a recruitment email; and to include a researcher (Megan Osborne) to the study. The IRB has determined that the risk level remains no more than minimal.

Attachments

Consent	CovLet Consent Online Survey v3.pdf	Cover Letter with Consent for Online Survey
Recruitment Materials	Eligible Participant Email.docx	Eligible Participant Email
Interview/Focus Group Questions	Interview Schedule .docx	Interview Schedule
Consent	Interview Confirmation.docx	Interview Confirmation Email
Letter of Cooperation	Letter of Cooperation.docx	Avenir Museum Letter of Cooperation
Screening Tool or Procedure	Screening Survey Donor Decision Motivation Meaning.docx	Electronic Screening Survey
Screening Tool or Procedure	Script to Notify Potential Participant Eligibility.docx	Script to Notify Potential Participants
Consent	Signed Consent Form for Audio Taped Interviews Revised.docx	Signed Consent Form for Audio Taped Interviews
Methodology Section	Methodology.docx	Thesis Methodology
Other	Introductory Email.pdf	Introductory Email Text

Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation from Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising

January 10th, 2023

Colorado State University
Institutional Review Board
321 General Services Building
Campus Delivery 2011
Fort Collins, CO 80523-2011
Attention: IRB Office

Dear IRB;

I am aware that Brooklyn Benjamin, a graduate student in the College of Health and Human Sciences at Colorado State University, is conducting a research study entitled: "Donor Decision-Making, Motivation, and Meaning in the Context of the Historic Costume and Textiles Collection or Museum: An Interpretive Study" and she has shared with me the details of the study.

I feel comfortable that the participants in this study will be adequately protected, and I give Brooklyn Benjamin permission to conduct this study at our museum. With support from Collections Manager and Assistant Curator, Megan Osborne, the researcher will access the institution's donor records for donations made from January 2000 to December 2019 and review the records for donors that fit the criteria of her study. Our museum staff will provide Brooklyn Benjamin the email listing of our donors in order to send them an email survey, screening them for eligibility for participation in the study.

The Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising requests that the name and identifiers of its donors be kept confidential in the research results. Brooklyn Benjamin has agreed to provide the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising a copy of the CSU IRB approval document before beginning recruitment.

If there are any questions, please contact the museum.

Sincerely,



Doreen M. Beard
Director of Operations and Engagement
Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising

Appendix C: Cover Letter for Consent: Online Screening Survey

CONSENT FOR ONLINE SCREENING SURVEY

Dear Participant,

My name is Brooklyn Benjamin. I am a graduate student in the Department of Design and Merchandising at Colorado State University. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study. The purpose of this research is to explore the behaviors and experiences – including decision-making, motivations, and meaning-making experiences – of object donors to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising, a historic costume and textiles museum housed within the Department of Design and Merchandising at Colorado State University. Dr. Jennifer Ogle, Department of Design and Merchandising, is my graduate advisor and is the Principal Investigator overseeing the study.

We invite you to take an online screening survey to determine if you meet the criteria to participate in a study that involves taking part in an interview. Completing the screening survey will take approximately 5 minutes. Your participation in this screening survey/research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the screening survey/study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty.

For this screening survey we will be collecting your name so that we may contact you to follow up about your eligibility to participate in the research. When we report and share the data to others, we will combine the data from all participants. We will also combine the data from this screening survey with your interview responses. We will keep your data confidential; your name and data will be kept separately. We will invite you to select a pseudonym. A linked list including only the participants' names and pseudonyms will be created. The linked list will be stored electronically on the researchers' password-protected computer drives at Colorado State University. Participants who are not eligible to participate in the study will be removed from the linked list after data collection for the study concludes. The list linking eligible participants to their pseudonyms will be destroyed three years after the conclusion of the study. We will save the data on a password protected computer accessible only to the research team. While there are no direct benefits to you, I hope to gain more knowledge about the motivations behind donating textile objects to a historic costume and textiles museum on a university campus.

There are no known risks to participating in this screening survey. You are free to decline to answer any questions you don't wish to, or to stop participation at any time. As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality could be compromised; however, we are taking precautions to minimize this risk. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any potential (but unknown) risks.

If you are eligible for and decide to participate in this study, we will save your responses to this survey (identified using your pseudonym) for possible use in future research done by ourselves or others. Specifically, if you choose to take part in this study, your private information will be collected. As noted, any identifiers linking you to your private information will be removed. After we remove those identifiers, the information could be used for future studies or distributed to another researcher for future research studies without your permission. We may be asked to

share the research files with the sponsor or the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee for auditing purposes.

To indicate your willingness to participate in this research and to continue on to the survey, click here: https://colostate.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_55VMP5nf5R5kS2i

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Jennifer Paff Ogle at 970-491-3794 or Jennifer.Ogle@colostate.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at: 970-491-1381, or e-mail csu_irb@colostate.edu.

Thank you for your consideration.

Warmly,

Brooklyn Benjamin
Graduate Student
Department of Design and Merchandising
Colorado State University

Dr. Jennifer Ogle
Professor
Department of Design and Merchandising
Colorado State University

Appendix D: Research Instrument: Screening Survey

Donor Decision-Making, Motivation, and Meaning in the Context of the Historic Costume and Textiles Collection or Museum: An Interpretive Study

Screening Survey

(to be administered electronically)

Thank you for your interest in our research project, “Donor Decision-Making, Motivation, and Meaning in the Context of the Historic Costume and Textiles Collection or Museum: An Interpretive Study.”

Answering these questions in this survey will help us to ensure that you meet the eligibility requirements for participating in our study (e.g., being 18 years of age or older, making an unsolicited donation of 10 or fewer objects to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising between January 2000 and December 2019, at least one object of which was worn, used, or cherished by either you or family members). We are seeking a diverse sample for this study; if you have a connection to or affiliation with Colorado State University aside from your object donation, you may or may not qualify for this study. We will maintain your data/responses to this survey until the end of this study.

1. **Are you 18 years of age or older?**
YES → move on to question 2
NO → Thank you! We appreciate you taking the time to complete our survey, but you do not qualify for participation in our study.
2. **Did you make an unsolicited donation of 10 or fewer objects to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising between January 2000 and December 2019?**
YES → move on to question 3
NO → Thank you! We appreciate you taking the time to complete our survey, but you do not qualify for participation in our study.
3. **Was at least one object in your donation worn, used, or cherished by either you or family members?**
YES → move on to question 4
NO → Thank you! We appreciate you taking the time to complete our survey, but you do not qualify for participation in our study.
4. **Do you have a connection to or affiliation with Colorado State University, aside from your object donation to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising? If yes, please describe.**
YES → Prompt for more information
NO → Move on to question 5

5. What would you like your pseudonym (fake name) to be for this research study?
This name will be used to refer to you in all research reports (to protect your identity).
6. So that we may follow up with you, can you please provide your name, email address, and phone number?

Appendix E: Script to Notify Participants of Eligibility

Script to Notify Potential Participants About Eligibility for Study

Based on Screening Survey

If participants do not meet criteria to participate (i.e., they are under 18 years of age, have not made a single, unsolicited donation of 10 or fewer objects to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising), we will send them the following email message;

If they are not 18 years or older or have not made a single, unsolicited donation of 10 or fewer objects to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising, they will receive an automated response thanking them for their participation in the screening survey and letting know that they do not qualify for the study.

Sent via email to participants who do not qualify:

Dear XXX,

Thank you for your interest in our research project, “Donor Decision Making, Motivation, and Meaning in the Context of the Historic Costume and Textiles Collection or Museum: An Interpretive Study”. Based upon your responses to our screening survey, we have determined that, unfortunately, you are not eligible to participate in the study at this time. We will maintain your data/responses to this survey until the end of this study. If we modify our criteria for participation in the future such that you do become eligible, we will reach out to let you know.

Sincerely,

Brooklyn Benjamin

Graduate Student

Department of Design and Merchandising

Colorado State University

Dr. Jennifer Ogle

Professor

Department of Design and Merchandising

Colorado State University

If participants do meet criteria to participate (i.e., they are over 18 years of age and have made a single, unsolicited donation of 10 or fewer objects to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising), we will use the following script, contacting them via phone or email.

PHONE SCRIPT FOR ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS:

Hello _____,

My name is Brooklyn Benjamin, and I am a CSU researcher conducting a study entitled, “Donor Decision-Making, Motivation, and Meaning in the Context of the Historic Costume and Textiles Collection or Museum: An Interpretive Study”. I wanted to thank you for taking our screening survey and to let you know that, based upon your responses to the screening survey, you meet our criteria for participation in our research study.

Next, I would like to go over the details of the interview. The interview will last between 60 and 90 minutes and can be conducted face-to-face or virtually. What is your preference?

If prefer face-to-face interview: We will meet at The Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising.

If prefer virtual interview: What is your preference for the virtual platform to use? We can use Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, etc.

Prior to the interview, we will send you the interview questions as well as a consent form that outlines the purpose of the study, the study protocol, and the risks and benefits of participation. We ask that you take time to review these documents before the interview and that you please sign the consent form before we meet, as well. If we are meeting in person, you may bring a signed hard copy of the consent form to our interview appointment. I also will have a hard copy of the form with me, in case it is needed. If we are meeting virtually, please sign the consent form and email it to me before our interview appointment. Typing your name on the consent form can signify your signature.

Do you have any questions?

[Answer questions]

Now let's go ahead and schedule the interview....

EMAIL SCRIPT FOR ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS:

[If participants are eligible for the study, contact via email]:

Dear XXX,

Thank you for your interest in our research project, “Donor Decision-Making, Motivation, and Meaning in the Context of the Historic Costume and Textiles Collection or Museum: An Interpretive Study”. Based upon your responses to our screening survey, we are pleased to share that you are eligible to participate in the study.

Thus, at this time, we would be delighted to move forward with the next stage of the study, which involves scheduling an interview with you. The interview will last 60-90 minutes. The questions we will ask during the interview are attached to this email. Please know that we can skip any questions that you prefer not to discuss. Also, the interview can be conducted face-to-face (at the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising) or virtually (e.g., using a platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams), depending upon your preference. Please respond to this email indicating your preference for a face-to-face or virtual interview as well as which of the following dates and times would work for you to take part in an interview with me, Brooklyn Benjamin:

LIST TIMES AND DATES

Also attached to this email is a consent form that outlines the purpose of the study, the study protocol, and the risks and benefits of participation. We would like to ask that you please review and sign the consent form before we meet for our interview. If we are meeting in person, you may bring a signed hard copy of the consent form to our interview appointment. I also will have a hard copy of form with me, in case it is needed. If we are meeting virtually, please sign the consent form and email it to me before our interview appointment. Typing your name on the consent form can signify your signature.

Please do let us know if you have any questions about study/any of the information covered in either of the documents attached to this email.. We are most pleased to help! We look forward to speaking with you soon!

Warmly,

Brooklyn Benjamin

Graduate Student

Department of Design and Merchandising

Colorado State University

Dr. Jennifer Ogle

Professor

Department of Design and Merchandising

Colorado State University

Appendix F: Eligible Participant Email

Dear XXX,

Thank you for your interest in our research project, “Donor Decision-Making, Motivation, and Meaning in the Context of the Historic Costume and Textiles Collection or Museum: An Interpretive Study”. Based upon your responses to our screening survey, we are pleased to share that you are eligible to participate in the study.

Thus, at this time, we would be delighted to move forward with the next stage of the study, which involves scheduling an interview with you. The interview will last 60-90 minutes. The questions we will ask during the interview are attached to this email. Please know that we can skip any questions that you prefer not to discuss. Also, the interview can be conducted face-to-face (at the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising) or virtually (e.g., using a platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams), depending upon your preference. Please respond to this email indicating your preference for a face-to-face or virtual interview as well as which of the following dates and times would work for you to take part in an interview with me, Brooklyn Benjamin:

LIST TIMES AND DATES

Also attached to this email is a consent form that outlines the purpose of the study, the study protocol, and the risks and benefits of participation. We would like to ask that you please review and sign the consent form before we meet for our interview. If we are meeting in person, you may bring a signed hard copy of the consent form to our interview appointment. I also will have a hard copy of form with me, in case it is needed. If we are meeting virtually, please sign the consent form and email it to me before our interview appointment. Typing your name on the consent form can signify your signature.

Please do let us know if you have any questions about study/any of the information covered in either of the documents attached to this email.. We are most pleased to help! We look forward to speaking with you soon!

Warmly,

Brooklyn Benjamin

Graduate Student

Department of Design and Merchandising

Colorado State University

Dr. Jennifer Ogle

Professor

Department of Design and Merchandising

Colorado State University

Appendix G: Signed Consent Form for Audio Recorded Interviews

1

Colorado State University

Consent to Participate in Research

Donor Decision Making, Motivation, and Meaning in the Context of the Historic Costume and Textiles Collection or Museum: An Interpretive Study

Introduction and Purpose

Our names are Brooklyn Benjamin and Dr. Jennifer Ogle. We are a graduate student and a faculty member, respectively, in the Department of Design and Merchandising at Colorado State University. We would like to invite you to take part in our research study. The purpose of the present study is to explore the behaviors and experiences – including decision-making, motivations, and meaning-making experiences – of object donors to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising, a historic costume and textiles museum housed within the Department of Design and Merchandising at Colorado State University.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in our research, Brooklyn will conduct an interview with you either at The Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising or virtually (using an online platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams). The interview will involve questions about your background (e.g., age, race/ethnic identity, education, occupation, marital status, children, locale, etc.); your ownership and interaction with donated objects prior to your donation to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising; factors influencing your decision to donate objects to the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising; and your view of the self in the context of the decision to donate. The interview should last about 60 to 90 minutes. With your permission, we will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you choose not to be audiotaped, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being audiotaped but feel uncomfortable or change your mind for any reason during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time.

I expect to conduct only one interview; however, a follow-up interview may be needed for added clarification. If so, I will contact you by e-mail or phone to request this. A follow-up interview would be used to request additional information about responses provided during the initial interview and would take place virtually and within one year of the initial interview. Only a limited number of questions would be asked (likely following up on a specific response or topic) during the follow-up interview.

Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. It is hoped that the research could be used to gain a deeper understanding of what motivates donors to give their belongings to a historic costume and textiles collection held on university campuses.

Risks/Discomforts

It is possible that some of the questions we ask during the interview may make you uncomfortable or upset. You are free to decline to answer any questions you don't wish to, or to stop the interview at any time. As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality could be compromised; however, we are taking precautions to minimize this risk.

Confidentiality

Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used.

To minimize the risks to confidentiality, we will invite participants to select their own pseudonyms for use in the reporting of the results, and findings will be reported in aggregate. A linked list will be created and will only include the participants' names and pseudonyms. The linked list will be stored electronically on the researchers' password-protected drives at their respective universities. The list linking participants to their pseudonyms will be destroyed three years after the conclusion of the study.

We will transcribe the audio recordings as soon as possible after the interview, and then destroy the audio recordings. When the research is completed, we will save the transcriptions and other study data for possible use in future research done by ourselves or others. Specifically, if you choose to take part in this study, your private information will be collected. Any identifiers linking you to your private information will be removed. After we remove those identifiers, the information could be used for future studies or distributed to another researcher for future research studies without your permission. That is, we may publish the data in a data repository called Open Science Framework, which involves making the interview transcripts for the study available for review by researchers and the public online. Publishing your data in the Open Science Framework is not required for participation in this study. But, if you do choose to include your data in the Open Science Framework, we will reach out to you via email with the opportunity to review, correct, and/or redact any information from your transcript that you choose. We also may be asked to share the research files with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee for auditing purposes.

Compensation

There is no compensation for participating in this research study.

Rights

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate in the research and whether or not you choose to answer any questions or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Jennifer Paff Ogle at 970-491-3794 or Jennifer.Ogle@colostate.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at: 970-491-1381, or e-mail CSU_IRB@colostate.edu.

CONSENT

Do you consent for your interview to be audiotaped?

___Yes

___No

Do you consent to future contact from the research team, in the instance where a follow-up interview is necessary?

___Yes

___No

Do you consent for your interview transcript to be included with those that are uploaded to the data repository (i.e., the Open Science Framework)?

___Yes

___No

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records. Typing your name below signifies your signature.

Participant's Name (please print)

Appendix H: Interview Confirmation Email

Dear XXXX,

Thank you, again, for your interest in participating in our study, “Donor Decision-Making, Motivation, and Meaning in the Context of the Historic Costume and Textiles Collection or Museum: An Interpretive Study”. I am looking forward to speaking with you during your interview appointment, which is scheduled for [date] in [location].

[If return consent form]: Thank you also for returning your signed consent form. Please do not hesitate to be in touch if you have any questions before the interview.

[If did not return consent form/meeting in person]: Please remember to return your signed consent form (attached to this email) prior to your interview appointment. You may do so via email, with your typed name signifying your signature. Or, you may bring a signed hard copy to your interview appointment. I also will have extra copies of the consent form at the interview appointment in case they are needed.

[If did not return consent form/meeting virtually]: Please remember to return your signed consent form (attached to this email) prior to your interview appointment. You may do so via email, with your typed name signifying your signature.

Thank you! Please do not hesitate to be in touch if you have any questions.

Warmly,

Brooklyn Benjamin

Graduate Student

Department of Design and Merchandising

Colorado State University

Dr. Jennifer Ogle

Professor

Department of Design and Merchandising

Colorado State University

Appendix I: Research Instrument: Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION

Thank you so much for volunteering to participate in this research. In this study, we are interested in exploring the behaviors and experiences – including decision-making, motivations, and meaning-making experiences – of object donors at the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising, a historic costume and textiles museum housed within the Department of Design and Merchandising at Colorado State University. As you can see, I have gathered the objects that you have donated to the Avenir Museum. We will use these objects to guide our discussion. I also will take photos of these objects to help me remember the details about our conversation when I am analyzing the data.

The questions that I ask may not address everything that you would like to discuss, so please feel free to add any information from any facet of your experience that you find pertinent. Also, if there are questions that you would prefer not to answer, please let me know.

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender identity?
3. What is your ethnic/racial identity?
4. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
5. Are you currently employed? If so, what is your occupation?
6. What is your marital status?
7. Do you have any children? If so, how many and what ages?
8. What city do you currently live in?

MEANINGS OF OBJECT DONATIONS/EXTENDED SELF

9. How does it feel to be sitting and interacting with the object(s) you donated again?
10. Pick one to three objects and share the story of how did you came to own the object?
How long had you owned the object before donating it?
11. Describe the relationship you had with this object prior to donating the object to the museum.
12. How frequently worn/used was the object? Who was the object worn/used by? What did the object mean to you (or a loved one)?
 - a. Prompts (for unworn object): what function did the object serve? What was its intended purpose/why was it acquired? Did it ever serve it's intended function while in you or a loved one's care?
13. Are there any specific memories that seeing this object recalls for you? If so, can you elaborate?

DECISION-MAKING AND MOTIVE QUESTIONS:

14. What motivated you to donate your objects to the Avenir? Can you think of some specific examples or stories of these motives related to the objects here (reference objects donated)?
 - a. Prompts: fulfilling a sense of doing the right thing, giving in memory of a loved one, giving a gift to make an impact, giving for social recognition or prestige, giving as an expression of faith, giving as an expression of self, giving to express a certain set of values, giving to fulfill a specific need (of the museum's or a personal one), giving to build a legacy

15. How did you learn about the Avenir Museum? What first ignited your interest in donating your objects to the Museum? How did you pick the Avenir as a repository for your objects? What about the Museum appealed to you?
 - a. Prompts: How important were the physical aspects of the museum, including its storage capacity? Its physical exhibit spaces? Its museum status (if donation occurred after move to UCA)?
16. Did the Avenir fit with your image of yourself as a donor? If yes, how so and how did this shape your decision to donate? If no, why not? And, how is it that you reconciled this when you made your donation?
17. Were you always going to donate the object to a museum? If yes, why? If no, what were your plans for it?
18. If they were always going to donate the object.... Were there other museums you were considering as a repository for your object? If yes, why did you eventually choose the Avenir? If no, why not?
19. Did you have past experiences with the Avenir? In what capacity? How did these experiences shape your decision to donate to the Avenir
20. How have others in your life influenced your giving and your decision to donate to the Avenir? Can you think of some specific examples related to the objects here (reference objects donated)?
21. Do you think your giving to the Avenir has influenced others? If so, how?
22. Can you please pick one to three of the objects here and tell me the story of your decision to donate it or them? What was your decision-making process? Can you please outline it for me?

23. Did you have to overcome any obstacles to donate your objects to the Avenir? If so, what were they? How did you overcome them?
24. For donors who have given more than one time: You have donated to the Museum multiple times. What motivated you to donate your objects again?
25. For one-time donors: Would you donate your objects again? Why or why not?
26. Can you recall what thoughts/feelings you had as you were navigating the donation process? How did it feel to turn ownership of your object over to the museum?
27. What did your donation mean to you then?
28. What does your donation mean to you now?

Is there anything else that you would like to share about your donation to the Avenir?