CLASSIFYING FASHION & FASHIONING CLASS

AN INQUIRY INTO CLASS DISTINCTIONS IN FASHION CONSUMPTION AND TASTE AMONGST BRITISH WOMEN TODAY

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THESIS SUBMITTED FOR PHD TO

THE LONDON COLLEGE OF FASHION

UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON

SEPTEMBER 2011

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ABSTRACT

This project explores the relationship between fashion and class for women in contemporary British society. In doing so, it contributes to the sociological literature on fashion, class, gender and space and provides a greater understanding of the class distinctions which exist in terms of British women's fashion attitudes and practices, within mainstream society.

Over the last thirty years fashion has been a growing area of sociological interest. But while authors have explored fashion production and consumption (Braham, 2003 [1997]; Sproles, 1985), and the relationship between fashion and gender (Woodward, 2007; Tseëlon, 1995), work which explores the contemporary association between fashion and class is scarce. What literature does exist tends either to focus on the historical relationship (Horwood, 2011), sits within the context of working class subcultures (Hebdige, 2006 [1979]), or evaluates the merits of emulation theories (e.g. Crane, 2000; Lipovetsky, 1994), often arguing that in modern society fashion is more democratised and therefore class distinctions are much less significant.

Indeed, since the 1980s there has been increasing debate over the relevance of 'class' today, with authors such as Beck (1992) claiming that a growth in opportunity and individuality has resulted in a 'classless society'. Yet within British sociology and British society, class appears to have remained significant, and although it does tend to focus much more on cultural differences rather than occupation, it is no less pertinent in people's lives (Lawler, 2005b; Skeggs, 1997; Savage, 2000).

Consequently, using interviews and participant observation, this project explores the relevance of class in relation to British women's fashion practices and attitudes. By exploring the notions of dressing up and looking good it highlights important class differences in relation to notions of femininity, public space and consumption practices, and it also demonstrates the importance of mothers in socialising women into classed practices and attitudes towards fashion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been a long journey to put this thesis together, and I could not have completed it without the help and support of a number of very important people. Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisors: Joanne Entwistle and Agnes Rocamora. Without their academic guidance, advice and significant emotional support over the past few years I would not have been able to complete this research. Indeed, their help in this project has been invaluable. Not only have they kept me motivated throughout and provided important contributions and comments to my research and writing, they have encouraged me to have confidence in my ability and urged me to keep going. Secondly, I am immensely grateful to my family and friends. Mum, Dad, Michael, though I may not have always said it, I have really appreciated your help and support over the last few years. Together, you have listened to read-throughs, read drafts, allowed me to work in peace and quiet, and kept me fed and watered, while a whole host of friends, including Chris, Claire, Jen, Jenny, Katherine, Lucy, Lisa, Matt and Ruth, have provided me with cups of tea, a listening ear and a shoulder to cry on. Thank you.

I also need to thank: the staff at Kingston University, and Emma Casey, Cecilia Cappel, Stephanie Eaton and Andy King in particular, for their support and guidance throughout this process; Allison McKechnie for her superb editing and Stephanie Lawler and Sue Scott for helping me write the initial research proposal.

Finally, I would like to thank Danny Peck, who has been a huge support to me and in my crisis of confidence, has been a source of constant encouragement.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1989 Reid's study into social class differences in the UK found that over half of the women interviewed rated dress and behaviour as the clearest indication of class position (Reid, 1989). Over twenty years on and not much has changed. Britain is still obsessed with class (Arnold, 2001; McRobbie, 2004; Jones, 2010; Solomon and Rabolt, 2009 [2004]), and fashion's use as a means of classifying and communicating 'social worth and status' has continued (Barnard, 2002 [1996]: 61; Vinken, 2005). Our newspapers continually identify a relationship between fashion and social class in terms of retail outlets and fashion trends (e.g. Mills, 2009; Gold, 2011), politicians and celebrities, and their outfits, are often evaluated in terms of class position or class background (Tyler and Bennett, 2010; White, 2011), whilst our reality fashion programmes often have class at their core (Palmer, 2004; McRobbie, 2004). Indeed, 'fashions remain ... class fashions' (Vinken, 2005: 15), enabling British society 'to distinguish the super ordinate from the subordinate' (McCracken, 1985: 46): the posh from the 'chav', the 'classy' from the 'tarty' (Fox, 2004). Yet, while authors often note that 'clothes are one of the main ways ... in which class is recognised' (Lurie, 1992 [1981]: 117), within contemporary research the relationship between class and fashion has often been overlooked.

I first developed the proposal for this research eight years ago, when I was a student at Durham University, in North East England. Formerly a coal mining area, County Durham is a predominately working class community, although its city is mostly populated by university students from middle class backgrounds. Distinctions between the local community and student population were often made by individuals on the basis of dress, and certainly amongst my peers, it appeared that fashion tastes were often perceived as an indicator of class status and educational background. In fact, just as other authors have suggested (Barnard, 2002 [1996]; Bourdieu 2005 [1984]; Crompton, 1998; Fox, 2004; Goffman, 1951; Lurie, 1981), fashion was a primary way in which classifications were made, as it offered an immediate means of differentiation. But although the association made between fashion and class was in constant evidence in my everyday life, I could find little sociological research which explains just how this relationship operated within contemporary British society.

Consequently, the aim of this project was to demonstrate, firstly, that class is still an important concept within British society, as well as British sociology and secondly, that women's fashion

operates as a means of classification and distinction. With the help of 53 women, who welcomed me into their homes and offered up their experiences, attitudes, values and practices, it demonstrates how class influences and informs women's perceptions of femininity, space, attitudes towards motherhood, and consumer practices and priorities. It highlights the significant role mothers play in forming attitudes and practices in relation to fashion. It discusses the ways in which women use fashion to make class evaluations and how it is employed as a means of distinction. More importantly, it demonstrates that class identity is a significant and relevant aspect of British women's fashion tastes and fashion practices, and that in turn fashion tastes and fashion practices operate as markers of class.

Although there is some current literature which discusses fashion and class in terms of women's practices, it has tended to focus predominantly on working class women (e.g. Skeggs, 1997; Storr, 2003) and it also does not fully explore how fashion and class operate in terms of consumption practices and tastes. Consequently, by looking at both middle class and working class women this research is able to make a comparison between them; and as it focuses specifically on fashion, unlike other studies (e.g. Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]; Skeggs, 1997), it is able to provide a rich and detailed explanation for these differences.

Individually, both fashion and class have been subject to increasing investigation (see for example Crane, 2000; Kawamura, 2005; Savage, 2000; Skeggs, 2004a). Fashion, though once considered a lesser subject within sociology, has become of much greater interest to authors in recent years. The *Journal of Fashion Theory*, for example, as well as a variety of other publications, including: *The Fashioned Body* (Entwistle, 2004 [2000]); *Fashioning the City* (Rocamora, 2009), *Why Women Wear What they Wear* (Woodward, 2007), and *Clothes* (Harvey, 2008), demonstrate its growing popularity as a topic for inquiry. In fact in 'the last fifteen years the study of fashion ... has been transformed' (Entwistle and Wilson, 2001: 1) and the important role it plays in regard to consumption and identity has been much more widely acknowledged.

This growing interest has raised questions as to just what is meant by the term 'fashion' (Barnard, 2010; Entwistle, 2004 [2000]). While for some, fashion is synonymous with 'clothing' and 'dress' (Hollander, 1994), others have argued that it is a form of 'adornment' and 'style' (Polhemus and Procter, 1978: 4). Indeed, Barnard (2010) argues that fashion is all of these things. A form of clothing which adorns the body, it is also a specific 'system of dress found in western modernity' (Entwistle, 2004 [2000]: 40), where there is the potential for social mobility, and which is characterised by constant change (Entwistle, 2004 [2000]; Wilson, 2007 [1985]). Put simply, fashion is 'what people wear' (Barnard, 2010). It is the clothes that people, in Britain, get dressed in every day and it refers to the changes in style that take place over time (Hollander, 1994). In this research, then, fashion is used interchangeably with the terms

'clothing', 'dress' and 'style', and it is used to refer to the clothes that British women wear in their everyday lives.

However, as Barnard (2010: 2) points out, a definition of fashion cannot just be left there, for fashion is not only used to refer to the items people wear, but can also be considered in terms of social action. Like the word 'style', fashion can also refer to the 'the manner or way of doing something' and therefore it is not only concerned with the clothes that people wear but can also be considered 'a socially or culturally approved way of doing something' (2010: 3). Indeed, Fred Davis argues that fashion is a key form of communication. Operating as a shared understanding or 'code', fashion, he suggests, makes 'clear reference to who we are and wish to be taken as' (1994 [1992]: 3-5). Laden with symbolic meaning, it is through fashion that 'people communicate some things about their persons', their personality, their age, their gender and so on, while at the same time fashion allows others to locate individuals within the social structure 'of status claims and life-style attachments' (1994 [1992]: 4).

Fashion is not simply the clothes that we wear then, it is a cultural phenomenon too (Barnard, 2010: 5), the embodiment of shared meanings, attitudes and values with a modern society. But as Davis (1994 [1992]) argues these meanings can change depending on the temporal and spatial context in which the clothes are worn, the social audience, and even the mood of the individual, and more importantly, the way in which fashion is interpreted by different social strata can vary enormously. Indeed, 'the universe of meanings attaching to clothes... is highly differentiated in terms of taste, social identity and persons' access to the symbolic wares of society' (1994 [1992]: 9). Fashions do not have the same meanings for everyone in a society and therefore, as Bourdieu (2005 [1984]) suggests, it operates as a form of 'symbolic capital' (1986). It is way of communicating economic wealth and cultural and social knowledge within a society and thus offers a means of classification and differentiation in terms of class status as this research shows.

While fashion has sat on the fringes of academic enquiry until relatively recently, class has always been a fundamental topic within British sociology (Savage, 2000), and it is one which has recently experienced something of a renaissance. While its relevance for understanding contemporary western societies was heavily questioned throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Smith, 2000), over the last decade or so authors such as Crompton (1998; 2008), Devine (2000), Savage (2000) and Skeggs (2004a) have convincingly argued for its continued salience in Britain today. Adopting Bourdieu's (2005 [1984]) definition of class, just as this research does, they suggest that it is through our consumption habits and cultural tastes, rather than occupation, that class distinctions are made.

For Bourdieu (2005 [1984]) class is defined not only on the basis of economic capital or wealth, but cultural and social capital too. Cultural capital refers, as explained in chapter 2, to the level cultural knowledge an individual has, which can be mobilised through tastes and dispositions, consumer goods or educational qualifications, while social capital is formed on the basis of social connections and group membership. Together these three types of capital, along with our experiences, form our 'habitus': 'a system of durable, transposable dispositions' and 'principles, which generate and organise practices and representations' (Bourdieu, 1990b: 53) such as our ways of eating, drinking, talking or walking, and even the most 'automatic gestures' such as 'blowing our nose' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 466]).

It is through our cultural practices, attitudes and dispositions, then, that class can be identified. But while sociologist have to explored class differences in cultural practice in relation to food (Tomlinson, 1994), leisure (Casey, 2008; Tomlinson, 2003; Taylor, 2008; Wardle and Steptoe, 2003) and politics (Marshall, 1988), the role that fashion plays in forming contemporary class distinctions has been largely ignored. Even within Bourdieu's *Distinction* (2005 [1984]), discussion of fashion specifically is limited to just a few sections, and instead greater credence is given to cultural distinctions in terms of food, art and music. Yet, at the same time authors continue to claim that fashion is a key way in which class is evaluated (e.g. Barnard, 2002 [1996]; Forsythe et al., 1985; Fox, 2004; Mount, 2004), and further suggest that there are marked class differences in consumer practices (Miller et al., 1998; Solomon and Rabolt, 2009 [2004]).

While it may seem surprising that the relationship between fashion and class has been largely overlooked, this may be due to the changing attitudes of sociologists towards the class concept, not to mention the unpopularity of historical fashion theories. Traditionally class had been understood from a Marxist perspective. Defined on one's relationship to the means of production, it relied on clear differences in terms of economic positions. From the 1970s, however, changes in western employment structures including increased feminisation of the workforce and a growing service sector industry, made these distinctions much less clear (Pakulski and Waters, 1996). Traditional class models were brought into question (Crompton, 1993, 2008; Devine, 1997; Savage, 2000). Doubts were raised over the extent to which class existed, and instead sociologists argued that society was increasingly individualised and stratified on the basis of lifestyle (e.g. Bauman, 1982; Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Pahl, 1989; Pakulski and Waters, 1996). Attention turned to other forms of stratification such as gender, race and subculture (Smith, 2000) and the importance of class as a means of explaining attitudes and practices waned (Walkerdine et al., 2001).

Moreover, within the field of fashion, many of the historical theories of fashion and class have been widely criticised because they tend to suggest that fashion is the innovation of the upper class and that it is subject to emulation by those lower down the hierarchy in a bid for social mobility (Simmel, 2004 [1901]). With contemporary fashion, and fashion media, so much more widely available today, however, it is argued that this type of model is just too simplistic, and that fashion adoption cannot simply be explained by social class, or a desire for social advancement (Blumer, 1981 [1969]; Davis, 1994 [1992]). In fact, Crane argues that we have moved from class fashion to 'consumer fashion' and further suggests that 'outside the workplace' clothing is 'characterised more by age graded than by class graded clothing' (2000: 198). As a result, much of the contemporary discussion of fashion has tended to concentrate on the relationships between fashion and gender (Woodward, 2007), dress and ethnicity (Eicher, 1995), or more recently fashion and religion (Tarlo, 2010). In fact, class is really only acknowledged within the context of predominantly male subcultures, such as Mods and Rockers, Skinheads (Hebdige, 2006 [1979]; Polhemus and Proctor, 1978) and more recently Chavs (Tyler, 2008; Tyler and Bennett, 2010).

Not only does this mean that sociology has neglected to fully explore the current relationship that exists between fashion and class, within mainstream British society, but it has also neglected to explore how this relationship is negotiated by women. This is significant, as historically women played a central role in communicating wealth through fashionable dress (Veblen, 1994 [1899]). For middle class women of the eighteenth century and later, fashion provided a means of achieving status (Veblen, 1994 [1899]), and a role within society (Simmel, 2004 [1901]; Tönnies, 2004 [1887]), and furthermore it established many aspects of femininity that still exist today (Evans and Thornton, 1989).

Though academic research may have overlooked the association between class and fashion for some time, class has recently re-emerged as a significant concept within British sociology (see *Sociology*, 2005; Savage, 2000; 2001), with authors such as Lawler (2005a) and Skeggs (2004a) suggesting that a more Bourdieuian approach to class is needed. While these authors accept that traditional class models, which differentiate solely on the basis of occupation, are somewhat limited (Crompton, 1993), they argue that class distinctions through cultural practices and tastes persist, and have in many ways become more definite (Bottero, 2004).

Moreover, though it is often suggested that individuals are 'hesitant', 'defensive' and 'ambivalent' when discussing their own class position (Bottero, 2004; Savage et al., 2001; Southerton, 2002), equally it is claimed that class as 'a set of benchmarks used to evaluate and "place" people is well understood' (Savage, 2000: 11). But rather than using occupation as the basis for these evaluations, it is argued that judgements are made on cultural practices (Devine

and Savage, 2000: 194), and that class is less concerned with modes of production, and determined far more by types of cultural knowledge and tastes. In fact, the BBC Lab research site is currently running a 'Great British Class Survey' (2011), designed by Mike Savage and Fiona Devine, to explore the extent to which class has changed and is now understood by Britons in terms of social and cultural capital, as well as economic wealth.

Moreover, the emergence of the 'Chav' phenomenon, which places emphasis on consumer goods as a means of identification (Jones, 2011; Lawler, 2005b; Nayak, 2006; Tyler, 2008; Tyler and Bennett, 2010), seems to further suggest that class locations are increasingly determined on the basis of consumption and taste, rather than occupation. Cultural preferences in relation to cars, mobile phones, pets, television programmes and fashion are used to classify Chavs, and, as this research shows, they also operate as means of class distancing.

Consequently, as a form of visual culture, it would seem reasonable to suggest that fashion plays an increasingly important role in terms of distinguishing and distancing oneself from 'others' within the mainstream culture too. '[A]lways in evidence' (Veblen, 1994 [1899]:102), fashion still offers an immediate means of recognition and differentiation, and while distinctions may be less overt than they have been in the past, they are still no less important.

By looking at the ways in which class informs British women's fashion practices and their evaluations and attitudes towards other women's dress, this research provides a new and original insight into the ways in which class and fashion operate in everyday Britain. As a result, it not only adds to our understanding of class and the ways in which class is expressed through cultural practice, it also adds to our knowledge of fashion and how fashion is used to differentiate or unite groups, even within mainstream society. Moreover, by focusing on women, the project further contributes to the literature on gender, and the interaction between gender and fashion and more importantly gender and class.

How one goes about categorising women into class groups has often been subject to debate (Duke and Edgell, 1987). Though traditionally women fell into the same category as their husbands, increased educational attainment and subsequent entry into the workforce has meant that classifying women has become increasingly difficult, and this is further complicated by the move towards cultural understandings of class. This project therefore demonstrates British women's awareness of class, and how women use fashion to classify themselves and others. It looks at how fashion, and which aspects of fashion, are read as indicative of class location, and it affords a greater understanding of the ways in which women's tastes and practices are informed by their own class position.

Moreover, as part of the discussion of dressing up, and looking good, the project also explores performances of femininity and notions of public space, and how these too are influenced by class. It explores class differences in consumption practices and buying criteria and the importance of mothers in terms of learning classed practices in relation to fashion and femininity. Though others have examined the role of fashion in performing gender, the notion of class is often missing from their discussions (e.g. Tseëlon, 1995; Wolf, 1990; Woodward, 2007). Gender, race and subculture, it seems, have overshadowed class in terms of fashion research, despite the fact that historically theorists such as Simmel (2004 [1901]) and Veblen (1994 [1899]) make strong links between class, fashion and gender. This research shows that class is still a significant and primary influence in terms of women's fashion choices, and that it is an important means of class distinction.

1.1 THESIS OUTLINE

The thesis is divided into two halves. The first half, chapters 2 to 4, is a literature review followed by methodology (chapter 5). The second half, chapters 6 to 8, explores the findings of the research. The first literature review chapter, chapter 2, explores the concept of class and how it has changed over the last fifty years. It evaluates the arguments put forward by post-class theorists such as Pakulski and Waters (1996) and Beck (1992) and modernist theorists such as Bottero (2004), Crompton (2008) and Savage (2000). Crucially, it explores the way in which British sociology has moved from a Marxist understanding of class, which focuses on production, towards a more Bourdieuian approach which centres on modes of consumption and cultural tastes. The chapter highlights the importance of fashion as a means of class distinction, in light of this new understanding of class, and also demonstrates how class is more concerned with identifying difference, class distancing and distinguishing 'others', than it is with class identity. This too is an important argument in this research, for as chapters 6 to 8 clearly demonstrate, fashion adoption, within the middle class at least, is often driven by a need for class distancing.

Chapter 3 looks at the historical theories of fashion, notions of emulation and trickle down theories as put forward by Veblen (1994 [1899]), Simmel (2004 [1901]) and Tönnies (2004 [1887]). Though much of this work has been criticised (Campbell, 2005 [1987]; Fine and Leopold, 1993), and is generally considered outdated in terms of an explanation for fashion adoption today (Crane, 2000; Davis, 1994 [1992]; Lipovetsky, 1998; King, 1981 [1969]), it is the main starting point for this project as there is so little contemporary research which explores the fashion and class relationship. The chapter evaluates the relevance of these theories for understanding fashion and class in Britain today. Though it agrees that 'trickle down' theories of

fashion are too simplistic an understanding of today's fashion cycle, I argue that Simmel's notion of union and segregation is still highly relevant, for as chapters 6 and 7 clearly demonstrate, fashion still provides a means of differentiating between class groups while at the same time offering women a sense of belonging.

Chapter 4 explores the role of fashion in the performance of gender, and public performances. As other sociologists have argued, the way in which women perform gender and femininity differs between class groups (Skeggs, 1997) and this has significant implications for women's fashion practices and tastes because, as chapter 6 shows, fashion is essential to the feminine performance. More importantly, however, this research found that there were significant class differences in terms of women's attitudes towards public and private space and these too had significant implications in terms of dressing up. Consequently, chapter 4 also looks at the work of Goffman (1993 [1959]) and Tseëlon (1995), and their discussion of public performance, as well as literature of fashion and gender such as De Beauvoir (1996 [1949]) and Craik (1998 [1993]). It acknowledges Bourdieu's ideas on middle class pretension, and taste of luxury as opposed to taste of necessity, and notes how these concepts are relevant in terms of explaining women's fashion practices today.

Chapter 5 is the methodology chapter, which sets out how the project was conducted. The chapter starts by exploring the way in which participants[1] were recruited, the subsequent sample and the methods that were employed. It evaluates the suitability and successfulness of the research process, and acknowledges the ways in which my role may have influenced or affected the results. Moreover, the chapter notes the problems incurred with carrying out participant observations, and the difficulties surrounding discussions of class and fashion. It examines how these factors affected participant recruitment and the format of the interview, and how these issues were resolved to a greater or lesser extent.

Chapter 6, the first of the three data chapters, explores the notion of dressing up. As the chapter explains, dressing up is a very important concept for British women and is closely related to notions of femininity and ideas about public and private space. Discussions about dressing up highlight some key class distinctions in terms of women's attitudes towards feminine dress, and public and private spaces. While middle class women are highly concerned about the image they present to nearly all audiences, there is far less concern amongst working class women in terms of local or familiar people. Though other sociologists have explored the relationship between dressing up, public space and performance (Goffman, 1993 [1959]; Tseëlon, 1995) or the relationship between social class and pretension, or 'image management' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]; Goffman, 1993 [1959]), there is a lack of contemporary research which looks

[1] A brief biography of participants is given in the Appendix.

specifically at the class distinctions in terms of perceptions of public and private space and how this relates to dress. Yet this chapter demonstrates that there is an important link between all four concepts: fashion, class, gender and space, and that it is often through public and feminine performances that class distinctions are made.

Chapter 7 looks at the notion of 'looking good', which participants often discussed alongside the concept of 'dressing up'. It explores women's consumption practices and the class distinctions that exist in terms of buying criteria. Crucially, it highlights the class differences in terms of women's attitudes towards fashion; the middle class preference for 'classic styles' over 'trends' compared to the keenness of working class women to be seen as fashionable. Consequently, it explores working class women's use of fashion catalogues, not only as a means of consumption, but as a form of fashion media, and contrasts this with the middle class 'anti-fashion' stance. Moreover, it argues that Bourdieu's (2005 [1984]) 'taste of necessity', which he attributes to the working class, appears to fit middle class fashion consumption more closely, and that within working class consumption there does appear to be aspects of imitation, even if there is not emulation as Simmel (2004 [1901]) or Veblen (1994 [1899]) suggest.

The final data chapter, chapter 8, explores the role of mothers in terms of passing on class practices. The mother-daughter relationship is often noted in discussions of gender and fashion practices, but again, the role that class plays within this relationship is often ignored. The research argues that mothers play a vital role in informing women's consumption habits and tastes, and that as a result they are key players in forming women's fashion habitus and classed dispositions. The chapter explores the class differences in the way that mothers teach daughters about fashion, and in examining the arguments concerning unconscious or conscious practices it demonstrates how many of the practices learnt as children continue well into adulthood and are often then reproduced by women in relation to their own daughters.

Overall the thesis argues that there is an important relationship between fashion and class in Britain today, which, although often acknowledged, is rarely fully explored. In doing so, the research highlights the class distinctions which operate in relation to women's fashion practices and tastes and, moreover, the ways in which British women use fashion to evaluate others. It demonstrates the interaction between fashion, class and gender, and highlights important differences in terms of middle class and working class women's attitudes towards public and private spaces, fashion trends, and notions of femininity. And it demonstrates the importance of mothers, not only in terms of having 'shared tastes' or in informing consumer behaviour, but in reproducing class distinctions. Consequently, it evaluates traditional theories of fashion and consumerism as well as more recent works on cultural practices and tastes, and explores the literature on gender, class, and space. By bringing these concepts together it demonstrates how

class is a fundamental aspect of British women's fashion practices and tastes today, and how fashion is used as a means of class distinction.

CHAPTER 2

CLASS IN MODERN BRITAIN

Just as many other nations are obsessed with food or football, it is often suggested that Britain is obsessed with class (Cannadine, 2000 [1998]; Crompton, 1998; Lawler, 2005b; Ringen, 1998; Savage, 2000). An 'essential' aspect of British culture, class has played a crucial role in Britain's political and social history since the eighteenth century (Cannadine, 2000 [1998]: 2) and has 'offered a valuable device for establishing the legitimacy of British Sociology' (Savage, 2000: 5). It has been used to explain historical developments such as the Industrial Revolution (1770-1830) and the Great Reform Act (1832); it was a key factor in the establishment of trade unions and the creation of the Labour Party; it provided a way of 'classifying and creating social boundaries' which became an integral part of British society, through the Registrar General Class scheme (1911); and it was an important 'means by which British social scientists identified their distinctive expertise' (Savage, 2000: 4).

Since the late 1950s and particularly during the 1990s, however, serious questions have been raised over the continued salience of class in western societies (Clarke and Lipset, 1991; Lash and Urry, 1994; Nisbet, 1959; Pahl, 1989; Pakulski and Waters, 1996). Changes in the employment structure, with increased feminisation of the labour market and a decline in manufacturing industry, along with greater affluence and a growth in administrative jobs, have led several researchers (e.g. Westergaard, 1995; Pahl, 1989) to question the validity of occupational class hierarchies as they no longer correspond accurately to wealth. Moreover, others such as Beck (1992), Beck and Beck-Gernshiem (2002), Nisbet (1959) and Pakulski and Waters (1996) argue that these changes, coupled with greater access to education, have served to increase social mobility, adding to a lack of class consciousness and a growing sense of individualisation in society. This, alongside a 'declining commitment to Marx' (Pakulski and Waters, 1996: 1) and an increased focus on stratification by race, gender, consumption and lifestyle, has brought class 'to a point of decomposition' (1996: 24) and Western Europe to a state 'beyond a class society' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 30).

Yet in Britain references to class continue to be made almost on a daily basis. In the press, our politicians are frequently scrutinised on the basis of their class background (e.g. White, 2011) and a growing number of reality television shows and documentary programmes have class at

their core (Palmer, 2004; Skeggs, 2005; Tyler, 2008). Indeed, talk of class is 'commonplace' and it forms an important part of the British psychology (Ringen, 1996). Although some sociologists would argue that class as an academic concept is quite different from 'common sense' understandings, and that everyday discussions of class fail to demonstrate its continued existence (Pakulski and Waters, 1996), for others, 'class is a word with a number of meanings' including 'prestige, status, culture or lifestyle' (Crompton, 2008: 15) and it is in this sense that class is still relevant (Savage, 2000; Savage et al., 2001; Skeggs, 1997; 2004).

Indeed, for Crompton (1998; 2008), Devine (1997), Devine and Savage (2005), Lawler (2005b), Savage (2000), Savage et al. (2001) and Skeggs (2004a; 2005), class remains 'central to the sociological enterprise' (Crompton, 2008: 1). But, they argue, the way in which we understand class has changed. Rather than taking a Marxist view of class which centres on production, contemporary understandings of class require a more Bourdieuian (1987; 2005 [1984]) approach. This not only removes the need for class consciousness, but further acknowledges that class is a culmination of both our economic position, or what Bourdieu terms 'condition of existence' (2005 [1984]: 53), and our consumption habits and practices, or 'dispositions' (2005 [1984]: 53). As a result, Bourdieu (1987; 2005 [1984]) suggests that class is not simply defined by occupation, but is fundamental to our cultural knowledge and lifestyle, and is apparent therefore in the food we eat, the books we read and the clothes we wear. Crucially, then, if we adopt a Bourdieuian perspective, fashion can be seen as symbolic of one's class location. It is a practice, as this research shows, which is informed by our 'conditions of existence' and cultural knowledge or 'capital' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 12), and it is a 'disposition' which operates as a means of class distinction.

While many authors acknowledge that class is increasingly related to cultural practice (Crompton, 2008; Skeggs, 2004a; Tomlinson, 2003) and often cite dress as a key means of class evaluation (Argyle, 1994; Barnard, 2002 [1996]; Mount, 2004; Reid, 1989; Solomon and Rabolt, 2009 [2004]; Southerton, 2002), rarely has sociology fully explored dress as a means of class distinction within mainstream contemporary culture. As chapter 3 demonstrates, with the exception of Skeggs (1997) and Storr (2003), most of the literature on fashion and class focuses either on their historical relationship (see Crane, 2000; Corrigan, 2008; Lipovetsky, 1994; or Purdy, 2004) or sits within the literature on subcultures. Hebdige (2006 [1979]), for example, talks about dress and working classness, but in the context of the Punks and Teddy Boys; and similarly although Hall and Jefferson (2000 [1975]) note that 'in modern societies the most fundamental groups are the social classes' (2000 [1975]: 12) they too only discuss class with reference to Skinheads and other working class subcultures.

Moreover, on those occasions when social theorists do explore the association between fashion and class in any mainstream or contemporary context, they nearly always focus on working class practices and thus are unable to offer any comparison between these, and the attitudes and practices of other class groups. Skeggs (1997), for example, provides a highly useful account of working class women's understandings of femininity, which gives an important insight into the ideas of dressing up and respectability. But she does not specifically focus on fashion practices, nor does she discuss how the attitudes and practices of middle class women may differ. Equally, while Storr's work (2002) argues that the relationship between class and fashion is not 'simply about buying what one can afford' (2002: 29) but rather about the links between class, taste, femininity and sexuality, she again only focuses on the practices of working class and 'lower middle class' women.

One exception to this is the work of Bourdieu (2005 [1984]), which in demonstrating the working class 'taste of necessity', provides a definite contrast between the practices of working- and middle class families in relation to fashion. In fact, he suggests that the working class has a functional approach to clothing and buys items on the basis of practicality, whereas the middle class, anxious over the judgements made by others, looks for 'fashionable and original garments' (247). Since his work is based on 1960s France, however, the extent to which his ideas are still relevant to contemporary Britain is questionable. As already noted, Britain has a peculiar obsession with class, and therefore his explanation of fashion and class, based on French society, will not necessarily accurately represent the relationship in today's UK (Archer, 1993). Moreover, the nature of fashion and consumption, as discussed in chapter 3, has changed considerably in recent years (Crane, 1999a; 1999b; 2000; Lipovetsky, 1994; Slater, 1997), while at the same time increased affluence across all social classes has also enabled the working class to engage much more in fashionable consumption (Partington, 1992). Consequently, though useful, Bourdieu's approach is arguably too reductionist (Rocamora, 2002). Today fashion is appropriated across a wide range of social groups for a number of different reasons, and more importantly it is used to communicate many aspects of identity, not simply social class (Davis, 1994 [1992]; Slater, 1997).

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the notion of class and to demonstrate how fashion can operate as a means of classification and distinction. A fundamental concept to sociology and British society, the chapter demonstrates how in contemporary society class relies more heavily on patterns of consumption as a means of distinction, rather than modes of production. It therefore examines the validity of the arguments put forward for the death of class, but demonstrates how class nevertheless exists in Britain despite these changes. More importantly, using the work of Bourdieu (2005 [1984]), the chapter argues that class can today be

determined on the basis of cultural 'dispositions', and that this means that women's attitudes to fashion and their consumption practices and tastes in relation to fashion can work to operate as a means of class distinction.

2.1 THE DEATH OF CLASS

Since the mid-twentieth century social theorists have been proclaiming the 'death of class', or at the very least have seriously questioned the salience and value of the concept in contemporary western societies. Nisbet (1959), for example, argues that class is 'valueless' and 'obsolete' (1959: 14), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) refer to it as a 'Zombie category' (2002: 202), suggesting that it is meaningless, and Gorz (1980) claims that class is dead. At the heart of their arguments, however, is an understanding of class as primarily a Marxist concept, which is economically determined through the ownership of property and which operates as a mechanism for social change. Yet rather than there being an increase in class consciousness and collective action, contemporary theorists argue that society is becoming more affluent and individualised (Beck, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1991). While at the same time the relationship between economic position and wealth, which so many class models rely on (e.g. Poulantzas, 1975; Wright, 1976), is increasingly blurred (Pahl, 1989). Consequently, they argue that these western societies do not constitute classed society. Indeed, class, they argue, is obsolete and modern societies are instead stratified on other social factors, such as risk (Beck, 1992).

Pakulski and Waters (1996), for instance, maintain that class is simply concerned with the 'economic productive location' of individuals (1996: 3). 'People participate in class as producers' and 'although the impact of class may extend far beyond production roles' (1996: 2), if class is separated from its economic connotations it becomes utterly meaningless. Consequently, because the relationship between wealth, power and status has lessened, due to significant changes in education, employment and property, class has dissolved (1996: 4). Today's societies are stratified by 'multidimensional' status inequalities (1996: 17) such as lifestyle and value commitments, and gender and race, leaving 'the class paradigm intellectually and morally bankrupt' (1996: 26).

Their argument has similarities to those of Nisbet (1959), Bauman (1982), Beck (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), who also see class in Marxist terms and again cite changes in the labour market and education as key to class's demise. Beck (1992), and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) claim, for example, that increased access to education means that one's position in the labour market is now determined by qualifications, knowledge and skills, rather than one's wealth or power. As forms of learning and teaching have become ever more

'universalistic' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 32) one's occupational success or lack thereof is further individualised and the opportunities for upward social mobility are increased. Removed from the bounds of the traditional hierarchy, people 'are forced to take charge of their own life', compelled to 'advertise the individuality and uniqueness of their work' in order to compete for jobs (Beck, 1992: 94-5). 'New patterns of social power and status' have emerged. Economic power no longer derives simply from the 'process of capital accumulation', which means that 'the relationship between property and class becomes more and more tenuous' (Nisbet, 1959: 14-15), if not completely destroyed.

The relationship between occupation and wealth has not only been affected by greater access to education; changes in the labour market have had a significant impact too. Even those who argue for the continued salience of class (Crompton, 1998, 2008; Devine, 1997; Erikson, 1984; Devine and Savage, 2005; Savage, 2000) admit that the steady decline in manufacturing industry and the growth in service sector employment severely damaged the occupational distinctions between the social classes and the opportunities for class consciousness and collective action. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Britain experienced a significant downturn in traditional working class employment, as manufacturing industry was increasingly outsourced. At the same time there was 'tremendous' growth in clerical work and service sector employment, such as retail and catering (Braverman, 1974; Lockwood, 1958). A growing number of women joined the labour force and work became far more flexible and less secure (Hayward and Yar, 2006).

As a result much of the working class experienced some form of upward social mobility as they moved into typically middle class jobs, such as secretarial and administration posts (Goldthorpe, 1987). The occupational categorisation of class was significantly destabilised (Crompton, 1998; Crompton and Scott, 2000) and class theorists had to find new ways to classify the position of men, women and families (Erikson, 1984). While authors such as Braverman (1974) and Lockwood (1958) argue that there has been a 'progressive social devaluation of clerical work' (1958: 125) due to the 'mechanisation of the office' (1974: 326) and subsequently question the continued status of clerical work as a middle class job, others such as Poulantzas (1975) and Wright (1976) explain the changes in terms of 'embourgeoisement' and 'contradictory class locations' (1976). For post-class theorists (e.g. Beck, 1992; Pakulski and Waters, 1996), however, these changes cannot be explained in class terms, but instead signal the end of classed society as they demonstrate a fundamental breakdown in stratification based on economic location, which is essential to the Marxist perspective.

Moreover, it is argued that these changes 'undermined the unique way of life, and values and beliefs' associated with types of employment (Devine and Savage, 2005: 5). Occupational positions no longer generate a clear sense of class identity and class consciousness (Parkin, 1972). In fact, the broadening of employment through the growth of service sector industry, professionalism and specialisation, has added to the growing individualisation. It has destroyed traditional social forms such as political views and voting patterns (Clarke et al., 1993) which have been an important aspects of class identity, and it has increased the demands and controls based upon the individual, while at the same time providing greater choice over lifestyle, career, and social relations (Beck, 1992: 90-91; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 3; Giddens, 1991). Consequently post-class theorists such Beck (1992), Gorz (1980) and Pakulski and Waters (1996) argue that class in late modern societies has dissolved and disintegrated, and that class as a social concept is obsolete.

2.2 PROBLEMS WITH 'POST-CLASS' THEORIES

Although 'post-class' theorists make a number of accurate observations, their arguments are greatly restricted by the fact that they tend to see class from a Marxist perspective. It is unsurprising that sociologists conclude that class is dead, if they view class as simply determined by clear distinctions in individuals' relationships to the means of production, rather than considering it in terms of consumption, lifestyle or status. Changes in education and the labour market have undoubtedly made the relationship between occupation and wealth more complex (Runciman, 1990). Traditional working class occupations, values and political views have been fragmented (Clarke et al., 1993) and political attention has moved to other areas of social inequality such as race, gender and sexuality (Smith, 2000). But as many post-class theorists note, income inequalities and divisions in terms of lifestyle and consumption still exist (Bauman, 1998; Beck, 1992; Lash and Urry, 1994; Pakulski and Waters, 1996). While these inequalities may not be seen as significant in other countries such as Germany (Beck, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) or the U.S.A (Devine, 1997), in Britain these distinctions are still an important aspect of mainstream culture and, more importantly, they continue to be understood in terms of social class (Hayward and Yar, 2006; Tomlinson, 1994).

Just as in the work of Bottero (2004), Le Roux et al. (2008), Savage et al. (2001), Skeggs (1997) and Southerton (2002), this research found that class is still frequently used in the evaluation of others. Women use differences in consumption practices and dress to distance themselves with other class groups. They use words such as 'posh', 'cheap', or 'tacky', which Payne and Grew (2005) identify as class terms, particularly in their evaluation of fashion and when making comparisons between women's dress. And as chapters 7 and 8 show, their own class position

significantly influences their fashion practices. If one takes a broader view of class which includes consumption practices, then stratification on the basis of lifestyle can be considered legitimate evidence of a continuing classed society (Crompton, 2008; Devine and Savage, 2005; Katz-Gerro and Shavit, 1998; Savage, 2000; Skeggs, 2005). And therefore fashion, as this research clearly shows, can be considered an important means by which women draw class distinctions and a way in which their own class location is made apparent.

In fact, although Giddens' (1991) work on lifestyles can be criticised because it overstates the working class' ability to 'creatively construct' their lifestyles (1991: 87), and thus implies that class is less of a structuring influence in individuals' lives today, in many respects his discussion documents this change in perspective, towards class as understood on basis of cultural practice. Like Beck (1992), Giddens identifies de-traditionalisation and increasing individualisation in modern western societies. He suggests that these factors mean that lifestyles; in other words our preference in food, clothing and leisure, are no longer 'handed down' (82), and instead individuals have far greater choice over the lifestyle they 'adopt' and the social relationships they create, as well as 'how to act and who to be' (182).

However, Giddens goes on to argue that our choices are somewhat restricted by our 'life chances' and therefore 'to speak of a multiplicity of choices, is not to suppose that all choices are open to everyone' (1991: 83). Giving the example of a black single mother, he argues that her choice of lifestyle is constrained by her 'arduous life': income, race, gender and marital status. Consequently, though aspects of her lifestyle may be adopted rather than ascribed through traditional forms, in many respects her 'style of life' is still a reflection of socio-economic position and status position, and her selection may be further influenced by a lack of visible role models and group pressures (83).

Although this statement seems to contradict the idea that individuals have 'diversity' and 'plurality of possible options' (1991: 5) in terms of consumption and relationships, Giddens' discussion demonstrates how stratification on the basis of lifestyle is actually class stratification. Indeed, he suggests that occupation 'strongly conditions life chances ... and life chances in turn is a concept which has to be understood in terms of availability of potential lifestyles' (1991: 83). The wealthier you are the more lifestyle choices you have and thus it follows that lifestyle is to some extent symbolic of one's class location.

In fact, in many respects Giddens' argument is similar to Beck's notion of risk stratification. Arguing that in late modern society income inequality has fallen off the political and social agenda in Germany, Beck (1992) suggests that contemporary social problems are understood in terms of risk rather than class. These risks include global dangers such as radioactivity and climate change, as well as more individualised risks such as obesity or unemployment. Risks, he

claims, have a more 'democratic' nature than social class as they can affect the rich and powerful as well as the poor and destitute. Like 'styles of life' they are open or available to all of society, in the sense that they are not constrained by any sense of tradition. However, in the same way that lifestyle is affected by wealth, so too is the potential for risk. 'Some people are more affected than others by the distribution and growth of risks' and in fact risks are 'often ... distributed in a ... class specific way' as wealth 'can purchase safety and freedom' (1992: 35). Yet while Beck sees risk stratification as something distinct from class and as evidence of a move beyond a class society, Giddens' work perhaps demonstrates how class can continue to exist if one adopts the view that lifestyle is representative of life chances, and thus class location. In fact, according to Bourdieu (1987; 2005 [1984]), it is precisely through lifestyle and tastes that class is mobilised.

2.3 CLASS AND CONSUMPTION

In *Distinction* (2005 [1984]), Bourdieu 'develops a systematic theory of symbolic power and its relations to economic and political power' (Brubaker, 1985: 747). By linking stratification by status to stratification by class, through the notion of lifestyle, he demonstrates how class-based inequalities are apparent in 'everyday consumption practices' (Brubaker, 1985: 749). Instead of defining class simply on the basis of production, Bourdieu takes a much broader view, arguing that one's position in the social space is dependent on 'capital', which can take 'three fundamental guises' (Bourdieu, 1986: 243). The first is economic capital, which is the traditional basis for class distinctions, and refers to income and wealth, or ownership of property. The second is 'cultural capital', which can either be embodied in perspectives, movements and mannerisms, objectified in the form of cultural goods, such as books and musical instruments, or institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications. Thirdly there is social capital. This refers to the social networks and acquaintances which bring some form of 'credential', either economic or cultural (Bourdieu, 1986).

Together, these various forms of capital provide the basis for 'conditions of existence', defined as our distance 'from necessity' and 'practical urgencies' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 53). Expressed through lifestyles, Bourdieu argues that 'conditions of existence' give rise to diverse practices and 'dispositions', such as the 'concern for conformity' or a desire for functionalism and practicality (2005 [1984]: 331). The 'aesthetic disposition', for instance, reflects an ability to fulfil basic necessities and practicalities and consequently concentrates on the 'mode of representation' and 'style', demonstrated through a 'practice of activities which are an end in themselves, such as scholastic exercise or the contemplation of works of art' (2005 [1984]: 54).

Not only do 'conditions of existence' result in differing lifestyles, however; they also produce different 'habitus' (1990b; 2005 [1984]). This is a structure which 'generates' internalised

practices and perceptions, that operate as 'distinctive signs' or 'classifiable' acts, and simultaneously allows individuals 'to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products (tastes)' (2005 [1984]: 170). It therefore enables individuals to classify others on the basis of taste, while their own practices operate as means of classification. As well as structuring individual practices, however, Bourdieu argues that the habitus also operates as a 'structuring structure' (170), locating individuals in a social hierarchy, as the appropriation of cultural goods and knowledge demonstrates their 'taste of freedom', while distance from necessity brings with it 'legitimated superiority' (56). As a result, their cultural practices and tastes, indeed their lifestyle, becomes what Weber terms 'stylisation of life' (1970 [1948]: 191): a sign of honour and status, associated with the most socially and economically privileged, while 'dispositions' become a means of distinction. Consequently, 'social class comes much closer to that of status group than does the conception of purely economic class' (Giddens, 1980 [1973]: 48), and is therefore identified on the basis of differences in leisure activities, food and clothing.

2.4 CRITICISMS OF BOURDIEU

Bourdieu's arguments on class and consumption have faced some criticism. In suggesting that all individuals with the same 'conditions of existence' exhibit the same 'dispositions' and the same 'habitus', his theory is quite deterministic and does not really allow any scope for individual agency (Calhoun, 2003; Crompton, 2008; Jenkins, 1992). As Giddens (1991), Beck (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) all note, late modern society has experienced a high degree of de-traditionalisation and far greater choice in terms of lifestyles and taste. Although the level of choice may be to some extent restricted by 'conditions of existence', individuals do still retain some level of freedom and discretion. Certainly within the literature on fashion and dress it is often argued that there are a wide range of motives behind individuals' fashion adoption (Blumer, 1981 [1969]; Davis, 1994 [1992]; Polhemus, 1994; Sproles, 1985) including peer group, subculture, and political affiliation.

Though there may be significant similarities in the practices and tastes of a class group, which operate as a mode of distinction, it is important to realise that classes are unlikely to operate in a completely uniform way, and that other factors such as gender, race and age will have a bearing on individuals' consumption habits and tastes (Davis, 1981). While Bourdieu sees these other variables as integral to 'conditions of existence' and thus part of class (Brubaker, 1985), those such as Dugger (1996), Rich (1979) and West and Fenstermaker (1996) argue that they produce significant differences in terms of consumption practices and tastes, and attitudes and values within class groups. Indeed, in their discussions of social research and race both Dugger (1996) and West and Fenstermaker (1996) argue that it is wrong to present the experience of

white women as the experience of women in general. Social research demonstrates that cultural attitudes and perceptions are affected by race and racial heritage (Davis, 1981; Rich, 1976). So, for example, the way in which women understand gender and femininity differs depending on whether they are black or white. Davis (1981) argues that while white women perceive womanhood as frail or delicate, the black definition of womanhood is one that includes 'hard work, perseverance, self reliance, a legacy of tenacity, resistance and an insistence on sexual equality' (Davis, 1981: 29). Yet despite their less traditional attitudes towards gender roles, research indicates that black women are more likely than white women of the same class to support conservative views of the family (Dugger, 1996; West and Fenstermaker, 1996). Moreover, Omi and Winant (1986) argue that race not only affects the cultural practices of the individual, but the way in which they are 'assessed' by others (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 137). An additional mode of distinction to that of class, it creates 'preconceived notions of what members of a particular group *look* like', and 'preconceived ideas of what members of these groups *are* like' (Omi and Winant, 1986: 62), and thus is used by others to evaluate and explain cultural practices and behaviours.

Significantly, in this research interview discussions do not appear to highlight any considerable differences in the attitudes and practices of women of different races, which is surprising considering that past social research has found racial differences in the notions of womanhood and gender (Davis, 1981); concepts which are both closely related to fashion. It may just be, however, as noted in chapter 5, that a higher proportion of ethnic minority women need to be interviewed in order to establish racial distinctions,[2] or that the racial difference between the interviewer and respondents means that subtle cultural differences are not detected, or that respondents are disinclined to discuss matter of race (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

Perhaps Bourdieu's work neglects to explore the impact of increasing cultural diversity or the effect of individualisation, however, because it is based on empirical research from France in 1963 and 1967-8. As Archer (1993) argues, while Bourdieu 'seeks to advance a general theory', his conclusions are ultimately situated within the context of French society, and thus what he presents is a not a universal theory, but 'French theory' which sees the French system as the 'norm' (1993: 227). Yet, between nations, social and cultural systems differ significantly (Archer, 1993; Lury, 2001 [1996]) and these further develop and change over time. Thus, while his work offers an insight into the relationship between fashion and class, it is unlikely that class

[2] In total eight of the women who were interviewed were of an ethnic minority background; six of them were African-Caribbean, African or of mixed Black heritage.

operates in the same way in Britain as it does in France, or that the fashion practices and tastes of British women today will be the same as they were more than fifty years ago.

Indeed, as already mentioned, Britain has a unique attitude to class, and more importantly the way in which it is perceived and understood has changed considerably since the 1970s (Crompton, 2008). In fact, Peterson (1993) and Peterson and Kern's (1996) work suggests that rather than tastes being clearly defined and homogenous within class groups, individuals are increasingly 'omnivorous' in terms of cultural pursuits and engagements. Globalisation and advances in technology have vastly increased individuals' access to cultural knowledge and information, and consequently status is not simply about being involved in 'legitimate culture', but about having a wide appreciation and knowledge of all cultural forms, and a broad range of social networks. Consequently, although it may still be true that lower down the social hierarchy cultural practices and knowledge are less diverse, social privilege is maintained through increased 'cultural variety' (Peterson, 1993; Peterson and Kern, 1996). Certainly within the realm of fashion, the growth of fashion media has meant that knowledge of fashionable styles is increasingly democratised (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Crane, 2000). Fashion today, as discussed in chapter 3, is more polycentric and appropriated from a wide range of sources (Davis, 1994 [1992]; Crane, 1999b). And increasingly within the UK at least, the ability of women in the upper echelons of society to mix designer fashion with high street labels is both applauded and encouraged (Barrett and Enright, 2011).

Consequently, Bourdieu's concept of 'distance from necessity' is also an area for critique. Though he argues that tastes are a matter of 'dispositions' as well as 'conditions of existence', he places significant emphasis on the working class 'taste of necessity' and middle class 'taste of freedom' as an explanation for class differences. In his discussion of food, for example, he suggests that the working class disposition means that food is about strength and masculinity, rather than taste and health. Consequently working class people are less likely to eat fish or fruit, because it 'has to be eaten in a way which totally contradicts the masculine way of eating' (2005 [1984]: 190), requiring delicacy and restraint. But he also notes, on more than one occasion, that working classes are unlikely to eat fish because it is not satisfying, and their 'distance from necessity' means that it is essential that food is 'cheap' and 'filling' (190). Similarly in his discussion of dress, Bourdieu stresses the working class priority for 'practical urgencies', arguing that their primary concern is that clothing and shoes are practical and durable.

There is no doubt that income inequality still exists in the UK (Devine, 1997; Brewer et al., 2009) and that the middle classes do have a greater distance from necessity than their working class counterparts. National statistics show, for example, that middle class households are more

able to afford consumer goods, such as home computers and internet access (Babb et al., 2004). But over the twentieth century wealth has become more evenly distributed (2004: 48) and despite the fact that the gap between the rich and the poor has continued to widen, real disposable income has risen for all social class groups since the 1970s (Brewer et al., 2009; Babb et al., 2004). As Goldthorpe et al. (1969) suggest, then, it seems that working class people have become more affluent and thus 'the immediate "survival" needs of the worker ... have been largely provided for' (1969: 16). While income may still influence one's ability to afford luxury items, particularly couture fashion, growing affluence nevertheless 'gives the worker increased possibilities as a consumer' (1969: 16) and therefore enables working class women to participate in fashionable consumption.

Indeed, Auty and Elliot claim that in terms of some fashion products such as trainers and jeans 'there is no longer any "taste of necessity" underlying the choice of products', and they 'are not worn because they are more affordable than other garments' but because of the image that they convey (1998: 109). As chapter 7 shows, within the working class there appears to be a keen desire to follow fashion, as others have suggested (Skeggs, 1997; Partington, 1992; Rocamora, 2002) while the increase in mass production, outsourcing of fashion manufacture, and the development of 'fast' and 'disposable' clothing has made fashion more democratised and affordable. '[W]ell made apparel is available for everyone' (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009 [2004]: 263), and the working classes are therefore much more able to engage with, and consume, fashionable goods and clothing (Partington, 1992; Tyler, 2008). Indeed, rather than working class tastes being dictated by necessity, this research suggests that working class consumption is influenced by media, catalogues and advertising. Television programmes, fashion magazines and catalogues are important means of communicating fashion knowledge. And while income does continue to be a factor in terms of their consumer habits, chapters 6 and 7 keenly demonstrate that many items are purchased for purposes other than that of 'practical urgency'.

Despite these points of criticism, however, the notion that class is present through consumption practices and tastes remains highly relevant to discussions of stratification in contemporary Britain (Crompton, 1998; 2008; Devine and Savage, 2005; Skeggs, 1997). Bourdieu's theory suggests how class distinctions can still exist within a society when occupational or economic distinctions are much less clear. And as one of the few contemporary theorists who offers an explanation for the relationship between fashion and class in a more mainstream context, his work is even more pertinent to this research.

Moreover, Bourdieu also supposes that class is 'asserted through difference' (2005 [1984]: 172). Therefore, instead of arguing that individuals should have a sense of class identity, his theory suggests, as Bottero (2004) argues, that individuals are more concerned with what they

are not and with distancing themselves from others. Though Bottero (2004) and others (e.g. Le Roux et al., 2008) have talked about class distancing or 'dis-identification' more generally, there is a lack of research that explores this idea in relation to fashion, and within both working- and middle class groups. Therefore, as well as offering an opinion on the suitability of Bourdieu's theory for explaining contemporary women's fashion practices, this research also adds to the discussion of class and asserting class location through differences and distinctions, by incorporating the views of middle class women.

2.5 FASHION AS A MEANS OF CLASSIFICATION & DIFFERENTIATION

If we explore the implications of Bourdieu's work, we find that the idea that consumption habits reflect class situations is not a new one. As discussed in chapter 3, the work of Campbell (2005 [1987]), Veblen (1994 [1899]) and Hebdige (2006 [1979]) clearly demonstrates how consumption is used in the construction of social identity. Indeed, it is argued that as early as the eighteenth century consumer practices operated as a means of classification (McKendrick et al., 1982) and that even 300 years before this, consumer items were to used to denote Court privilege (Breward, 1995). However, as already noted, in recent years consumption has taken on an even more 'dominant role in the production of social distinctions and classifications' (Hayward and Yar, 2006: 13) and thus people's tastes in clothing have become increasingly significant (Rojeck, 1985; Featherstone, 1991). This is clearly seen in the work on subcultures (Polhemus, 1994) and particularly the latest research into the 'Chav phenomenon' (Hayward and Yar, 2006; Martin, 2009).

According to Renouf (2007), 'Chav' was originally a Romany term for a young child, which first emerged in English texts in the 1990s. In 2004, however, the term was revised, and used by the press to refer to a 'British person of low education, having insufficient means to live away from home, though sufficient to indulge in the purchase and wearing of hitherto socially prestigious clothing, such as *Burberry* Caps' (2007: 75). Indeed, today 'Chavs' are identified by their 'excessive participation in forms of ... consumption' and in particular by their dress (Hayward and Yar, 2006: 14). Their 'branded or designer casual wear and sportswear' , excessive make up and jewellery, including 'chunky gold rings and chains' (2006: 14) and 'hoop earrings' (Tyler, 2008: 26) operate as class markers, allowing them to 'not only recognise themselves' but 'crucially' to be 'recognised by others' (Haywood and Yar, 2006: 14). In the same way that Punks are distinguishable by their quiffs and leather jackets, or Mods by their absurd neatness (Hebdige, 2006 [1979]), 'Chavs' too are chiefly differentiated from other groups, and mainstream society, on the basis of their dress. Moreover, as demonstrated in chapter 6, 'Chavs'

are often cited as a point of distinction for middle class women, who are eager to distance themselves from any working class connotations.

Bourdieu's work suggests, however, that it is not only in relation to cultural stereotypes or subcultures that dress is used a means of classification or differentiation. Ordinary dress operates as a means of distinction too and even within mainstream society 'taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier' (2005 [1984]: 6). Our habitus not only structures our own actions but our 'perception of the social world' (170), because it provides the 'capacity to differentiate and appreciate' (170) differences in tastes. This means that class is not only about the 'intrinsic properties' of a group but also 'the relational properties, which it derives from its position in the system of class conditions' (170). Consequently, as Savage (2000) argues, class is concerned with the evaluation of others and defining difference. Instead of having a strong class consciousness, individuals display a sense of 'classed identity' (Bottero, 2004), which causes them to distance themselves from tastes and practices which they associate with other (lower) class groups. Certainly in this research, as chapters 6 and 7 discuss, middle class women are very able to identify those practices and tastes which they associate with working class women, although they rarely identify their own practices or tastes as being middle class.

It seems that class 'is not based on recognising oneself as belonging to a given position, but as differentiating oneself from others in a field' (Devine and Savage, 2005: 14) and about drawing distinctions in consumer habits and tastes, such as fashion. Britons still acknowledge and understand class, 'but do not like to think about class ... with respect to their own identity' (Savage et al., 2001: 881). 'They are reluctant to place themselves "within" classes' (Bottero, 2004: 987), but instead use class as a 'benchmark' for others (Savage, 2000: 11). Preferring to think of themselves (and their friends and family) as 'normal' or 'ordinary' (Savage et al., 2001) they create the notion of 'us' and 'them' (Southerton, 2002) and establish clear divisions in terms of tastes and practices.

Perhaps this is because although class is widely accepted, it remains taboo. Sennett and Cobb (1972) and more recently Sayer (2000) argue that conversations of class are surrounded by embarrassment because class is about identifying differences and making moral judgements (Lawler, 1999; 2005a; Skeggs, 1997; 2005). Though it is not a difficult subject to discuss 'in the sense that there is plenty to talk about, it is complex and difficult in terms of forming quasi-sociological opinions' or when talking about it personally (Payne and Grew, 2005: 897) because it is emotive, and raises issues of social worth and inferiority (Reay, 1998; Sayer, 2000; Tyler, 2008). Indeed, morality is a key aspect of class. Class has always been concerned with the moral categorisation of people in terms of respectability. It is about identifying 'moral communities' (Goffman, 1951: 295). Middle class Victorians used class as a way of identifying and distancing

themselves from the practices and behaviours of the working class (Finch, 1993), and as Skeggs (1997; 2004a) and Lawler (1999; 2005a) discuss, the association between class and respectability continues today.

Whereas the middle class continues to be seen as 'ordinary' or 'normal', working class practices are seen as 'lacking' in taste or respectability (Lawler, 2005a) and working class people are still described in terms of disgust and in ways that pathologise them (Lawler, 2005a; Skeggs, 1997; 2005). In chapter 6 this is clearly demonstrated by differences in women's attitudes towards femininity and the way in which middle class women refer to working class women, and their perceived styles of dress. As Lawler argues, class is not only about economic inequality or difference in terms of material resources (Lawler, 1999: 4); it is also concerned with moral judgements. It is an 'ideology to explain inferiority' (Goffman, 1990 [1963]: 15), and as such it is a source of stigma. Thus, it is much easier to talk about class as something external, because in that context it is about discrediting others, and it is far more likely to be used by the middle class as a means of differentiation than by the working class, because for working class women it is a source of stigma. 'Class connotations may be ubiquitous but they are rarely directly spoken by those who do not want to be reminded of their social positioning in relation to it' (Skeggs, 1997: 77).

If class is a source of stigma, however, this suggests that fashion plays an important role in terms of classification, because according to Goffman, stigma or prestige are often recognised through visual symbols such as buttons or wedding rings (1990 [1963]: 59) or an individual's dress (1951: 300). Indeed, the work on 'Chavs' shows how fashion is used a means of 'class outing' and constant source of criticism and mockery, for celebrities such as Coleen Rooney or Kerry Katona (Tyler and Bennett, 2010: 381-2). But, as this research shows, it is not only in terms of Chavs or celebrities that this is the case. Fashion operates as a means of classification and differentiation for British women in their ordinary and everyday lives, and while for some their choice of clothing operates as a form of status, for others it is a source of stigma.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Over the last twenty years or so, there has been some debate over the relevance of class in western societies. But while post-class theorists make a number of relevant observations, these do not necessarily signal an end to class. Since the mid-1970s Britain has undergone significant changes in terms of its employment structure and access to education (Devine, 1997). A decline in manufacturing industry and an increase in service sector employment has undoubtedly made traditional occupational class hierarchies less relevant, as there is no longer a clear class distinction based on manual or non-manual labour, or a strong sense of class consciousness or

collective action (Pahl, 1989). The feminisation of the labour market has only added to this. Work has become increasingly flexible, there has been a rise in part-time and temporary employment, and there has been rising affluence amongst all social classes (Babb et al., 2004; Goldthorpe et al., 1969). As a result, traditional forms of stratification based on the relationship to the means of production are less pertinent, but that does not mean that class is obsolete. As Roberts (2001) argues, 'change is not decline' (2001: 10), and as this chapter has argued, class remains an important means of evaluation in Britain today. It continues to be a significant aspect of political and cultural debates (Lang, 2008), and as this research demonstrates, it is regularly used by women in order to classify, and distance themselves from, others.

Rather than focusing on occupation and modes of production, contemporary class evaluations centre on forms of consumption. It seems that sociology, and British society, has undergone a 'cultural turn', which has seen a move away from Marxist notions of class towards a more Bourdieuian approach, focusing more on lifestyle and taste. As Bourdieu (2005 [1984]) argues, this form of classification is not divorced from economics. Class is concerned to some extent with 'conditions of existence' and one's 'distance from necessity', but it is evaluated on the basis of consumption practices and lifestyle choices. The food we eat and the way we eat, the places we visit, the books and newspapers we read, the music we listen to (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 1; Bennett et al., 2010), and, more importantly, the clothes that we wear, all operate as forms of classification.

This research demonstrates that everyday fashion practices and fashion tastes operate as a means of class distinction. Not only do fashion practices differ significantly between classes, as discussed in chapters 6 and 7, but women use fashion in order to evaluate the class location of others and to distance themselves from lower class groups. Class, as Bottero (2004), Savage (2000) and Skeggs (1997) argue, is about classifying and positioning others. Rather than individuals having a strong sense of class identity, or class consciousness, class is concerned with identifying and classifying difference (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]). This is partly why fashion is such an important means of classification. As I discuss in chapter 3, historically fashion has operated as a key means of classification and distinction because of its visual immediacy, and as this research suggests, its ability to signify union and segregation still operates today.

Moreover, class is concerned with making moral judgements. It is about legitimising the practices of one group over another, and subsequently stigmatising that which is seen as different or 'other'. While middle class practices are seen as respectable and appropriate, working class practices are pathologised. The notion of respectability is, then, a classed concept, which is used by the middle class in order to distance themselves from working class practices. And as chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate, the notion of respectability is closely linked to fashion, as

it is a judgement based on appearance and manner. Although other authors such as Skeggs (1997) and Storr (20022; 2003) have hinted at a link between fashion and class, through their discussion of respectability and femininity, the relationship of both middle- and working class women within mainstream culture is lacking. This research suggests, however, that the relationship between fashion and class is an important association, and furthermore it argues that class is not only relevant, but that fashion is a key means through which it is mobilised.

CHAPTER 3

THEORIES OF FASHION & CLASS

Historically, fashion has rarely been credited with the same status as other topics such as politics, race or gender within sociology (Kawamura, 2005: 8). Often considered to be 'frivolous' or 'fickle', until fairly recently fashion was an undervalued area of research (Blumer, 1981 [1969]), and as a result much of the literature on the subject tended to sit within the field of art, or costume history, and design (Brydon and Nissen, 1998: ix). In the last twenty years, however, the subject has gained much greater esteem within the social sciences. The work of Breward (2003), Clarke and Miller (2002), Crane (1999b; 2000), Davis (1994 [1992]), Entwistle (2004 [2000]), Harvey (2008), Rocamora (2009), Wilson (2007 [1985]), and Woodward (2007), to name but a few, are testament to the growing sociological interest in the subject, and thus, like film, journalism and advertising, fashion has also become 'recognised' as a 'significant cultural force' (Breward, 2003: 9).

In fact, fashion 'now occupies the centre ground in popular understandings of modern culture' (Breward, 2003: 9). Recognising that it plays an important role in social identity, politics and consumption, sociologists have effectively explored its position in relation to gender socialisation, ethnicity, subculture, politics, and media. But contemporary theories which deal specifically with the everyday associations between fashion and class are limited (see for example McCracken, 1985 or Storr, 2002; 2003), and although many suggest that fashion is one of the key ways in which class is recognised (Argyle, 1994; Barnard, 2002 [1996]; Forsythe et al., 1985; Reid, 1998 [1989]; Skeggs, 1997 and Southerton, 2002), few actually explore just how it does this. Instead modern literature has tended to discuss class only in relation to working class subcultures and spectacle such as Teddy Boys, Mods and Rockers, Skinheads and Punks (Hall and Jefferson, 2000 [1975]; Hebdige, 2006 [1979]; Cohen, 2002 [1987]) or, much more recently, Chavs (Haywood and Yar, 2008; Tyler, 2008). Similarly the literature which has looked at the relationship between fashion and gender, or fashion and space, such as Tseëlon (1992; 1995) or Woodward (2007) largely overlooks the role that class plays, and consequently there is a lack of research which explores the association between fashion, gender and class within the context of mainstream British society. Consequently, this research looks to fill that gap, by

clearly demonstrating how British women's fashion practices and attitudes are influenced by class, and thus how fashion operates as a means of class distinction.

In fact, historically class has been central to explanations of fashion in capitalist societies. Simmel argues that 'fashion is a product of class distinction' (Simmel, 2004 [1901]: 291), and its ability to 'signify union' and at the same differentiate groups, or classes, means that it is a useful mode of classification at times of social change, or where there is the potential for social mobility (Simmel, 2004 [1901]; Polhemus and Procter, 1978; Wilson, 2007 [1985]). As a result, fashion has played a far 'more conspicuous role' in modern cultures (Breward, 1995; Lipovetsky, 1994; Wilson, 2007 [1985]), which would suggest that it is still of primary importance in Britain today, particularly when one considers that contemporary class analysis places much greater emphasis on the role of consumption, as discussed in chapter 2. Historical theories have faced extensive criticism, however, mainly because they tend to emphasise emulation as a motivation for fashion adoption. Fashion diffusion today, as several authors note, is a much more complex system, which involves designers, fashion forecasters, buyers, editors and advertisers (Crane, 1999b: 13; Blumer, 1981 [1969]; Davis, 1994 [1992]), and therefore to argue that fashion is simply an innovation of the upper classes is just too simplistic.

That does not mean that a relationship between fashion and class does not exist, however, but just that the relationship operates in new and different ways. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the traditional and contemporary theories of fashion, and to evaluate their relevance for understanding fashion and class today. The chapter explores the criticisms of the traditional explanations of fashion adoption, such as theories of emulation put forward by Simmel (2004 [1901]), Tönnies (2004 [1902]) and Veblen (1994 [1899]), but also highlights aspects of traditional models which have continued relevance. Using the work of Braham (1997), Campbell, 2005 [1987]), Crane (1999; 2000) and Davis (1994), it examines the debates over the democratisation of fashion, the arguments surrounding fashion and identity, and the range of motivations behind contemporary fashion production and consumption. It argues that despite these changes, an important link between fashion and class remains, as many authors suggests (Lurie, 1992 [1981]; Partington, 1992; and Skeggs. 1997), and furthermore, it highlights the usefulness of Bourdieu's work (2004 [1979]) in providing some explanation for this.

3.1 FASHION HISTORY

Though fashion 'as we understand it today', did not emerge 'until the latter half of the nineteenth century' (Lipovetsky, 1994: 55), fashion as a system existed in the west soon after the Middle Ages. Cloth trading can be traced back as early as the thirteenth century (Murkerji, 1983), and evidence suggests that fashionable consumption was certainly taking place within

the European courts from the fourteenth century onwards (Brenninkmeyer, 1963; Breward, 1995; Lipovetsky, 1994; Wilson, 2007 [1985]). 'From this point on, one change followed another: variations in appearance were more frequent, more extravagant and more arbitrary' (Lipovetsky, 1994: 21) and by the mid-sixteenth century London was well established 'as the centre for fashionable consumption and display' (Breward, 1995: 52). Members of the Court were leaders in fashion, setting the tone of social life in first Italy, then France and Spain and later England under Henry VIII and more noticeably Elizabeth I (Brenninkmeyer, 1963). Used as 'an indicator of class status and ... Court privilege' (Kawamura, 2005: 5), fashion was a means of distinguishing the elite, and while members of the poorest classes wore the cheapest materials such as bluett, russet and blanket cloth, the merchant class and gentry were 'sumptuously dressed ... wearing furs, silk and jewellery' (Wilson, 2007 [1985]: 22).

From its infancy, then, fashion has been used as a 'symbol of distinction' (Lipovetsky, 1994: 40), 'restricted to a small group of elite men and women who had the resources to invest in heavy ornate garments made from costly silks, and gold and silver brocade' (Jones, 2004: 74). Between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries it became an increasing significant means of differentiation between the nobility and newly wealthy members of the upper bourgeoisie who were advancing into dominant classes through their 'bought fiefdoms and offices' (Lipovetsky, 1994: 42). An important mechanism for establishing rank, any possible emulation posed a threat to the Courts' exclusivity and status (Cannon, 1998: 27) and consequently Sumptuary Laws, enacted from the 1300s up until the eighteenth century in parts of Europe (Breward, 1995; Craik, 1998 [1993]; Laver, 1988 [1982]), served to regulate consumption, and typically prescribed what people outside the Court could, and could not, wear (Benhamou, 2010).

3.2 THE CONSUMER REVOLUTION & THEORIES OF EMULATION

Although an association between fashion and wealth may have existed as early as the 1300s, it was arguably during the 1700s that the relationship between fashion and class really strengthened and developed. In the eighteenth century Britain experienced an Industrial Revolution (Campbell, 2005 [1987]). Developments in trade and industry, urbanisation and improvements in transport and communications propelled the country into a 'modern' and capitalist era. Increased trade and competition between trading companies meant that there was a far wider variety of goods available to a growing population, while 'new production and marketing techniques' and the 'eruption of new prosperity' meant large parts of society were now able to participate in the 'buying of consumer goods' (McKendrick et al., 1982: 9).

As a result 'aggregate consumption of services and material good – necessities, decencies and luxuries – was rising among an impressive social cross section' of the population (Porter, 1993:

65), and by 1750 the enthusiasm for fashion and ability to participate in changing styles had increased dramatically for those outside the aristocracy (Campbell, 2005 [1987]). Indeed, several authors argue that this growth in consumption was so significant that it could be considered a 'consumer revolution' (Agnew, 1993; Breward, 1995; Campbell, 2005 [1987]; McKendrick et al., 1982; Vickery, 1993; Weatherill 1993; Wilson, 2007 [1985]).

With advancements in mechanisation, such as mechanical looms, this increased demand could easily be met (Breward, 1995), and with the development of the railways in the late 1700s and the mass circulation of newspapers and magazines, the growing demand for fashion was fuelled still further (Wilson, 2007 [1985]: 27). Trading cards, newspapers, magazines and fashion dolls were keenly disseminated amongst the 'previously fashion-starved' classes (McKendrick et al., 1982: 71) and consequently knowledge of fashionable trends, cuts, and styles was reaching a far wider audience (Bell, 1976 [1947]; Breward, 1995: 130) increasing demand still further (Agnew, 1993).

Consumerism in the eighteenth century was not, however, simply the result of a greater availability of goods, mass media, or higher wages. Indeed, Jones (1973 cited in Shammas, 1993) argues that when people experience an increase in income they are much more likely to save rather than to spend. Moreover, those such as yeomen had arguably been in a position to engage in consumption for some time but only now felt obliged to do so (Campbell, 2005 [1987]: 18). A 'new ability to buy inessentials' does not automatically lead to 'a new willingness to do so' (Jones, 1973 cited in Shammas, 1993: 117) and therefore there must have been some form of cultural or social change which brought about a 'new moral attitude to consumer spending' (Thrisk, 1978: 23).

For McKendrick et al. (1982), this social change was the development of a new class structure. Industrialisation had given rise to a new middle class, who were keen to achieve greater social status, and differentiate themselves from lower class groups. As 'our apparel is always in evidence and affords an indication of our pecuniary standing to all observers at first glance' (Veblen, 1994 [1899]: 103), fashion was a useful means of displaying one's class position, and thus wearing fashionable items and buying consumer goods were seen as ways of gaining status and upward social mobility. Consequently, Perkins (1968) argues that 'nearly everyone was prepared to spend a large part of [their income] "keeping up with the Joneses"' (96-7) and certainly public displays of wealth and status through commodities such as pottery and silverware, as well as personal items such as gloves and watches, became much more frequent (Porter, 1997). As a family's incomes rose, it is argued that so too did their social expectations, and the middle classes were increasingly engaged in forms of 'social imitation, social emulation and emulative spending' (McKendrick et al., 1982: 53). As a result, the consumer revolution did

not just involve greater spending on behalf of the lower classes, but greater spending within all class groups. '[T]hose who had inherited ample possessions bought new ones and those born to superfluity seemed eager to add excess with every little passing fashion' (McKendrick et al., 1982: 27), whilst at the same time the elite, in an attempt to maintain their distinction, were forced to move to subtleties of cut and detail (Corrigan, 1997: 164; Kuchta, 1996 [1993]: 62).

During the nineteenth century the growth in consumerism accelerated, and fashion arguably experienced its very own 'metamorphosis' (Wilson, 2007 [1985]: 27). Industrialisation had revolutionised the cotton industry by introducing the use of steam-powered machinery for both weaving and spinning. By 1830 Britain and France were producing ready-to-wear clothing for the average British worker, and by 1840 watches and shoes were also being mass produced (Sennett, 2002 [1976]: 162). The introduction of the sewing machine (1851) and cutting machine (1858) further increased the speed and level of production and by 1890 there had been a dramatic expansion in the number of clothing factories across the UK (Craik, 1998 [1993]: 206; Wilson, 2007 [1985]: 75). Yet at the same time there was also increased demand for bespoke tailoring and fine needlework and consequently whilst a broader system of fashion was emerging in the UK, in France 'the first truly modern dress designer' Charles Fredrick Worth was establishing himself within the court of Napoleon III and the socially mobile society of the Second Empire (Wilson, 2007 [1985]: 32). Here importance was placed on the style and technical detail of the garments. '[C]lothes for the elite had to be perfectly executed since customers knew that their clothing would be carefully scrutinized at social gatherings by friends and acquaintances' (Crane, 2000: 136). And social success was entirely dependent on an individual's personality and look. 'In this rapacious world, beauty became the passport to social mobility ... Appearance replaced reality. Whoever wished to crash high society could, provided they looked the part' (Wilson, 2007 [1985]: 33).

In Britain too, fashion increasingly reflected the variety of bourgeois life with morning gowns, tea gowns and dinner gowns, travelling dresses, walking dresses and dresses for the country (Wilson, 2007 [1985]; 1994 [1993]). Clothing amongst the middle class and the upper class was no longer solely concerned with one's social position, but with the personality and pursuits of the individual (Bell, 1976 [1947]; Crane, 2000: 87; Craik, 1998 [1993]). This concern was most clearly articulated by the Dandy, who used his dress to communicate an 'aristocratic superiority of mind' (Baudelaire, 2004 [1863]: 194). Sober in colour and style, his understated appearance suggested a blasé attitude to luxury, and yet simultaneously demonstrated a level of wealth and class (2004 [1863]: 193) as it symbolised participation in forms of 'conspicuous leisure' (Veblen, 1994 [1899]: 105). Differences between upper class and middle class dress, however, were becoming less apparent as new machinery allowed dressmakers of the middle classes to

copy couturier's designs (Craik, 1998 [1993]: 206; Sennett, 2002 [1976]: 162). In coffee houses, department stores and theatres it became increasingly difficult to deduce an individual's social class by their appearance as often imitation garments would 'defy any but the closest scrutiny' (Veblen, 1994 [1899]: 104). Consequently there was 'compulsive attention to detail', as I discuss in chapter 4, with subtle differences in dress, such as decorative lace frills or the cleanliness of an item operating as important class indicators (Laver, 1969: 17; Sennett, 2002 [1976]: 162-6).

3.3 FASHION AND EMULATION

This increasing relationship between fashion, consumerism and social mobility creates the background for theories of emulation or trickle down models. Though Simmel (2004 [1901]), Spencer (2004 [1902]), Tönnies (2004 [1902]) and Veblen (1994 [1899]) never actually refer to the notion of 'trickle down', it is a phrase that is often used to describe their concepts of fashion adoption. Borrowed from economics, 'trickle down' describes the way in which wealth is supposed to move down the social hierarchy and according to Barber and Lobel (1993 [1952]) it was first applied to fashion by *Harper's Bazaar* in 1949. The main feature of this theory is the idea that fashion is the innovation or pursuit of the upper class, and that it is subject to emulation by the middle class in a bid for social status. 'Models of the few are imitated by the many' (Tönnies, 2004 [1909]: 335), motivated by a desire to belong to that group, or class, and in an attempt to advance up the social hierarchy. But as the nature of fashion 'demands that it should be exercised at one time only by a portion of the given group', universal adoption means styles of dress lose their exclusivity and fashionable status, and consequently the fashion soon dies out (Simmel, 2004 [1901]: 295). Moreover, the imitation and the mass appropriation of fashionable dress compromises fashion's role as a means of class identification and therefore causes the 'higher set [to] throw aside a fashion the moment a lower set adopts it' (Simmel, 2004 [1901]: 306), replacing it with new fashions in an attempt to re-establish class boundaries. And so the cycle continues.

Moreover, Veblen suggests that the upper class establish themselves through the expensiveness and authenticity of their items. Conspicuously expensive and conspicuously up-to-date, the fashionable dress of the upper classes is used to indicate that they can 'consume freely and uneconomically' (1994 [1899]: 103), disposing of old fashions and moving on to new ones without hesitation. Consequently their dress further demonstrates their wealth, through its expense and conspicuous waste, and implies that their time is spent engaged in conspicuous leisure rather than work (1994 [1899]: 104), as I discuss in chapter 4. Moreover, like Sombart (2004 [1902]: 315), Veblen (1994 [1899]: 91) suggests that it was through its authenticity that fashion was also able to convey wealth and status, as imitations, however convincing, lose their

aesthetic and commercial value as soon as they are detected. It is 'with few and inconsequential exceptions, we all find a costly hand-wrought article of apparel much preferable, in point of beauty and of serviceability, to a less expensive imitation of it, however cleverly the spurious article may imitate the costly original' (Veblen, 1994 [1899]: 104). In terms of the relationship between fashion and class today, although they do not necessarily operate in exactly the way Veblen (1994 [1899]) suggests, aspects of these arguments are still relevant. Chapter 7 for example demonstrates how authenticity is still an important factor in middle class consumption, and is viewed as a means of communicating status. Nevertheless, there is evidence of imitation of fashionable styles and although disposing of items quickly seems much more akin to the practices of working class women, it is still a feature of classed practice.

3.3.1 CRITICISMS OF TRICKLE DOWN MODELS

The idea that fashion consumption is driven by emulation does, however, pose a problem for understanding fashion and class today. Several authors, such as Campbell (2005 [1987]), Crane (2000) and Davis (1994), have questioned whether emulation and a desire for social mobility can explain contemporary fashion cycles. While others, such as Fine and Leopold (1993), Jones (1996) and Weatherill (1993; 1996) question the extent to which emulation has ever been a valid explanation for different class groups wearing similar fashion styles.

Using probate inventories dating back to the eighteenth century, Weatherill (1993: 208; 1996) claims that although consumption did increase during the eighteenth century, particularly amongst the middle class, evidence does not wholly support a theory of emulation. She argues that the middle class of the 1700s was composed of various groups including gentry, yeomen, tradesmen, shopkeepers and merchants, and that although it did not have a definite hierarchy, gentry and yeomen were considered to have the greatest prestige. Had emulation operated in the way it was suggested, consumption would be greatest within these two groups, and yet she argues that the consumption of decorative goods and luxuries was actually highest amongst the tradesmen and craftsmen. Pictures, mirrors, ornaments and saucepans were a regular feature of tradesmen's inventories, and though yeomen appeared to own a greater amount of china, the number of items for public display was far less than those in lower status groups (1996: 196).

Consequently, though it may have been the case that within some sections of the middle class consumption was seen as a method of social advancement or achieving status, the fact that those with the highest prestige had the lowest number of luxury goods suggests that emulation did not operate in the 'trickle down' fashion that has been claimed. Rather, with respect to the gentry at least, evidence would suggest that 'trickle up' was in fact taking place. As in their quest for more sober forms of dress, it would seem that the gentry adopted several working class

fashions, including the workman's frock coat (Fine and Leopold, 1993: 129; Cunnington and Cunnington, 1972).

Moreover, Fine and Leopold (1993) firmly deny that there was a 'progressive broadening' of purchasing power across all class groups during the 1700s. It seems highly unlikely that domestic servants or housemaids of the eighteenth century could have afforded to have even a single dress made, let alone continually update their wardrobes. Furthermore, low incomes meant that 'they could not have possibly contributed to any growth in the effective demand for new fashion goods' (Fine and Leopold, 1993: 125). Moreover, even if the lower classes had experienced greater prosperity, it seems far more likely that they would have saved this additional income or spent it on leisure activities (Perkins, 1968). 'Emulative spending emanating from below stairs appears highly improbable' (Fine and Leopold, 1993: 125), and rather than the lower classes actively participating in the consumer revolution, it would appear that instances of maids 'emulating' their mistresses were actually examples of 'vicarious consumption' or livery (Hecht, 1956).

Indeed, Fine and Leopold note that servants' clothes were often selected and purchased by their employers, and even if purchased independently by servants, they were frequently subject to their mistresses' approval (1993: 125). The more a servant was exposed to public life, the more likely it would be that her dress was dictated by her mistress and many servants received cast offs or bequeathed dresses previously owned by their employers (282). As a result the dress of the lower classes often reflected the preferences and practices of the household that they worked for, rather than their own personal tastes (125). Moreover, whilst Fine and Leopold do admit that the thriving second-hand market of the eighteenth century does 'lend weight' to the ideas of emulation, they argue that it could equally be understood in terms of gaining value for money with many 'almost-new' goods being sold at very low prices. 'If cost is the primary factor in making such a choice – as it must be where a pair of boots could account for more than a month's wage – the contribution made by fashion is to be negligible' (126).

Campbell also argues that theories of emulation fail to grasp the 'full complexity of either the symbolic meanings possessed by consumer products or services, or the communal associational dimension of the act of consumption' (1993: 50). The notion that goods are consumed as a result of 'invidious comparison' or social advancement is, Campbell argues, too simplistic. Commodities have various cultural meanings (Baudrillard, 1999 [1998]) and are appropriated for far wider reasons than just to show how rich a person is (Campbell, 1993; Davis, 1994 [1992]). As Douglas and Isherwood (1979) argue, objects function to show character rather than status and '[m]any goods are likely to be desired for their own sake rather than for any prestige which may be attached to them' (Campbell, 2005 [1987]: 40). Though it may well have

been the case that the lower classes were appropriating goods that had previously been associated with the upper classes, it does not necessarily follow that their motivation for this was social advancement.

Rather, Campbell (1993: 43) suggests that much of the consumption of the eighteenth century was driven by a desire to be seen as a 'specific character ideal' in the form of either the sensible, the aristocratic or the romantic, as these types were primarily identified through their dress and leisure. The sensible ideal was a person susceptible to emotions with a moral basis, who indicated his position by appreciating all things 'beautiful'. Failure to do so would be indicative of 'bad taste' and thus 'bad morals' and consequently those who saw themselves within this character ideal were keen to consume all items that were advertised as in good taste (1993: 49). Conversely the aristocratic ideal was proud, independent, accomplished and increasingly hedonistic, participating in heavy drinking, gambling and womanising. Examples included Dandies, who were a small and exclusive group of men who often borrowed money in order to go drinking or to the theatre. Their dress was perfect yet understated, symbolising their preference for subtleties of taste and refinement, and exclusive or elitist qualities. Finally, the romantics enjoyed the novel and strange. They were interested in poetry and music, but like the Dandies did not necessarily have the money to maintain an extravagant lifestyle, and so borrowed money in order to buy books, art, music and clothes. In each case, then, their consumption was not motivated by emulation or a desire for social advancement, but by a desire to adopt a particular identity or character. An argument which can be extended still further, when exploring the consumption practices of today.

3.4 CONTEMPORARY BRITISH FASHION

Indeed, it is when the 'trickle down' model is applied to contemporary fashion production and consumption that it faces even greater criticism. As Crane (2000: 16) argues, the 'diffusion of fashion today is highly complex'. While the 'top down model was characteristic of Western societies until the 1960s' (Crane, 1999b: 15), to suggest that fashion is exclusively the innovation of the upper class or even fashion designers; that fashion change is driven by a need for class distinction; or that fashion adoption is driven solely by emulation is a far too simplistic and over-deterministic explanation. Contemporary fashion emanates from a 'multiplicity' of sources (Crane, 1999b: 16) and rather than a top-down model, where fashion innovation is the product of a small highly centralised elite, today's fashion is 'the product of a chain of activities which are industrial, economic and cultural, as well as aesthetic' (Entwistle, 2004 [2000]: 220). It is diverse, heterogeneous and unpredictable (Braham, 2003 [1997]) and its adoption is

motivated by a range of factors including social identity and personal taste (Crane, 1999b; Davis, 1985; 1994 [1992])

The fashion industry is composed of a complex system of fashion designers, fabric and clothing manufacturers, and retailers (Breward, 2009; Entwistle, 2004 [2000]). There are now fashion capitals all over the globe, including Paris, London, New York, Milan and Tokyo, and fashion designers with teams of assistants from different countries and different continents are producing new designs at any given moment (Crane, 1999b: 15). The global nature of fashion means that there can be a number of fashionable trends at any one time. Indeed, there is often 'little consensus about the direction in which fashion is moving' (Crane, 2000: 161) as biannual fashion collections, used to generate publicity for luxury clothing firms, generate a host of possibilities for fashion trends which fashion editors, fashion forecasters and department store buyers then have to select from for the industrial fashion market.

Rather than there being one design disseminated down the social hierarchy, as the trickle down model suggests, fashion innovation and fashion production is increasingly differentiated. Today the luxury fashion market, for example, caters for the wealthy aristocracy through to the avant-garde, while at the same time generating ideas for mainstream consumer trends. In a bid to satisfy an array of different lifestyles and social groups, such as celebrities, professionals and executives, and the very rich, it produces designs which on the one hand are highly conformist, and on the other are 'so highly coded that they are not easily understood by the general public' (Crane, 1999b; 2000: 162). This diversity means that luxury fashion no longer simply represents the styles worn by the upper classes. And although 'an elite may influence the direction of taste' (Entwistle, 2004 [2000]: 222), rarely is it expected that these fashions will be adopted by the mass public.

Instead, 'some designers develop cult followings among very specific segments of the upper and upper middle class' (Crane, 1999b: 20) or within certain working class subcultures (De La Haye and Dingwall, 1996) such as the Chav's adoption of the Burberry tartan (Martin, 2009). For others, aspects of their work may develop subtle tendencies within more mainstream industrial fashion production, and high street clothing manufacture. In fact, Braham (1997) argues that couture fashion houses are still significant influences amongst ready-to-wear collections, and for those owned by multi-million dollar corporations it is even more important that their designs are 'popular and simple enough to be easily translated into mass produced high-street designs' (Entwistle, 2004 [2000]: 224).

Moreover, although some fashion trends or tendencies may emerge from luxury fashion at the top of the status hierarchy, contemporary fashion innovators can equally be found at the lower end of the social scale. Indeed, the 'bubble up' model suggests that widely accepted fashions can

be generated out of lower socio-economic groups, and in particular youth and music subcultures (Blumer, 1981 [1969]; Davis, 1994; Polhemus, 1994; Halnon, 2002). The process starts with a 'genuine streetstyle innovation' (Polhemus, 1994: 10) either started by middle class strata such as homosexual and artistic groups (Crane, 1999b: 15), or more typically created by adolescents or young adults within a subculture. Through media coverage such as music videos and magazine articles these fashion innovations are picked up on by others in different cities and countries around the world. As their popularity flourishes, they are adopted by increasing sections of the population, and eventually they work their way into the collections of top fashion designers. As a result, 'styles which start life on the street corner have a ways of ending up on the backs of top models on the world's most prestigious fashion catwalks' (Polhemus, 1994: 8) and items which were once sub-cultural emblems, such as the Bronx leather jacket, become mainstream fashionable alternatives for all (11-12).

Moreover, Crane (1999b) argues that the emergence of 'electronic fashion worlds' means that this type of fashion cycle is becoming more and more common, particularly within the urban music scene. She suggests that popular music corporations, in elevating new bands, also promote and develop new styles of clothing, primarily amongst adolescents and young people. Aided by the advancement of cable television, they are able to rapidly transmit 'street-generated clothing trends' to a wide range of social audiences within localities and across the globe, which consequently leads to more widespread adoption (1999b: 20). The development of the internet has intensified this still further, for not only has it concentrated individuals' involvement in subcultures (Hodkinson, 2005: 565), it operates a 'facilitating network' which allows the global spread of information and ideas, such as fashion trends, at a much greater pace. Indeed, Marciniak and Bruce argue that 'fashion e-tailing' is becoming more and more popular, and despite 'continued speculation over the ability to sell clothes online, the volume of sales of clothing and footwear sold via the Internet has grown steadily' (2007 [2001]: 259). Alongside traditional media formats, then, fashion trends are spreading by 'word of mouse' (303) in internet chat rooms, notice boards, blogs, and online stores as well as through music, clubs, offices and advertising.

The overall consequence is that today's fashion is much more pluralised and polycentric than the trickle down model would suggest (Braham, 2003 [1997]; Davis, 1994 [1992]). Fashion innovation does not simply exist within upper classes, or even couture fashion houses, and it is no longer centrally located, or controlled, and then diffused out to the periphery, or down the social hierarchy (Polhemus and Procter, 1978: 16). Rather, fashion leaders sit within all strata of society (Sproles, 1985) and there are 'multiple fashion systems in which fashion moves up, down and along from a variety of starting positions and in several directions' (Braham, 2003

[1997]: 145). Fashion is the innovation of designers, subcultures, students, pop icons, ethnic minorities and haute couture. It is global, local and electronic, and consequently the way in which it is marketed is increasingly diverse and the pace at which it changes has accelerated dramatically.

The substantial development of the fashion industry means that today it is mediated by a great variety of organisations and departments including fashion designers, editors, marketing groups, buyers, and advertisers (Braham, 2003 [1997]: 134; Blumer, 1981 [1969]; Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006). Fashion 'selection' is not simply a reflection of upper class tastes but a 'collective selection' which 'represents an effort to choose from among competing styles of models those which match developing tastes' (Blumer, 1981 [1969]: 52). '[C]onsumers can select from a wide range of current and classic designs and still be entirely "in fashion" regardless of the particular selection she makes' (King, 1981 [1969]). What is important is that a style corresponds to the 'incipient taste of the fashion consuming public' (Blumer, 1981 [1969]: 52). Much rather than answering a need for class differentiation or prestige, fashion is arguably adopted because it is considered fashionable (Blumer, 1981 [1969]: 52), and its appropriation is a matter of 'personal choice' (Polhemus and Procter, 1978: 16). Although it might be heralded by the elite as the up and coming new trend, this does not necessarily mean it will be widely appropriated. In 1922, for instance, the desire within the fashion elite to move away from shorter skirts was totally rejected by the consuming public, despite a highly organised marketing campaign which included manufacturers, fashion houses, fashion magazines, social commentators and actresses.

As Crane argues, for clothing companies 'to be successful, fashion clothes have to be synchronized with media culture as expressed in television, film and popular music' (1999b: 18). Fashion editors, buyers and marketers choose styles that will be in keeping with popular media culture as well as developing tastes (1999b: 18), while at the same time the producers and retailers rely on television media, fashion magazines and increasingly the internet, to democratise these fashion trends (Welters, 2007). Programmes such as 'Sex in the City', for example, have been fundamental in publicising particular brands and designs, such as Jimmy Choo and Manolo Blahnik, while simultaneously influencing the production of new fashion designs (König, 2007 [2004]: 301). Moreover, the growth in fashion magazines such as *Grazia*, *Look* and *Glamour* over the past decade, as well as television programmes such as 'What not to Wear', 'How to Look Good Naked' and 'Ten Years Younger', has significantly increased women's knowledge of fashionable styles and their awareness of catwalk designs across the social classes. This has arguably led to a dramatic rise in consumer demand, as women seek to constantly update their wardrobes with the latest designer trend or fashionable style, often

imitating celebrities' looks (Finkelstein, 1996; Church Gibson, 2010). Indeed websites such as ASOS (As Seen On Screen) are marketed precisely on this type of demand.

Combined with the emergence of new 'fast fashion' retailers, such as Primark, and the entry of supermarkets such as Asda, Sainsbury's and Tesco into the fashion market, there is far greater competition between traders, and with the rise of mass production, the British fashion cycle has accelerated rapidly. Though it has always been true that the 'essence of fashion' lies in its endless need to change and update (Bell, 1976 [1947]; Simmel, 2004 [1901]), 'nowadays a new fashion may well have difficulty in surviving for a season, let alone for several seasons' (Braham, 2003 [1997]: 131). According to Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, the '"fast fashion" concept has become a mainstay of the UK fashion industry' (2006: 259) and within Britain the fashion cycle has been dramatically reduced as retailers attempt to produce and distribute new fashion products as quickly as possible. This has led to fashion production being outsourced to countries such as Turkey, where 'trend fabric' is more readily available, and production costs are lower, ultimately 'resulting in as many as 20 "seasons" per year' (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006: 261). As a result 'the lag time for vertical flow of fashion adoption at the consumer level is almost non-existent' (King, 1981 [1969]: 33), which is yet another reason why trickle down models can no longer apply.

Not only do contemporary authors argue that fashion adoption is driven by 'collective selection' media influence and consumer tastes, they also suggest that fashion is highly concerned with the production of different social identities (Crane, 1999b; 2000; King, 1981 [1969]). Again, this poses a problem for trickle down models because they tend to see fashion adoption as solely concerned with social class. According to Davis, this 'reductionistic assumption' is 'the most obvious short-coming of trickle-down theory' (1994 [1992]: 112). Fashion, he claims, communicates far more about an individual than simply their class location. Age, sex, race, sexuality, political affiliation and so on, all influence fashion adoption and thus the fashion cycle is not simply driven by a desire for social mobility, or class distinction, but is linked much more closely to social identities and one's sense of self (Crane, 1999b: 18; Davis, 1994 [1992]; Woodward, 2007).

This is most clearly demonstrated when looking at the literature on fashion in relation to gender or subcultures. In writing about women and their wardrobes, for example, Woodward (2007) argues that clothing enables women to construct social identities, and enact certain personality traits. Women use fashion to extend their sense of self, and, depending on the social context, 'bring out' particular aspects of their character. As chapter 4 and chapter 6 discuss, fashion therefore helps women to perform different social roles, for different audiences (Tseëlon, 1995), which can bring about an 'internal and behavioural change' within the woman herself.

For example, Woodward suggests that wearing make-up or a business suit helps to 'create a powerful, confident and in-control woman' (2007: 21, 96). Fashion is therefore concerned with constructing social character, identity and behaviour. A woman's sense of who she is, and her place in the world is 'enacted through the routine and everyday act of getting dressed' (2007: 153).

Similarly, the work of Hall and Jefferson (2000 [1975]) Hebdige (2006 [1979]) and Polhemus (1994) clearly shows that fashion is often a crucial aspect in the construction of sub-cultural identities, used to create a spectacle and mark them out from the mainstream. Whether it be the distinctive 'tribal' hair and make-up of Punks, for example, the black velvet, lace, and tightly laced corsets of Goths (Polhemus, 1994) or bootlace ties and velvet-collared drape jackets of the Teddy Boys (Hebdige, 2006 [1979]: 96), clothing and possessions are used to identify individuals as belonging to a group or class, and at the same time distinguishing them from all others both inside and outside of the community (Entwistle, 2004 [2000]: 137), just as Simmel (2004 [1901]) suggests. Moreover, within these subcultures, fashion is often used to publicise a particular problem or political issue (Hebdige, 2006 [1979]; Polhemus, 1994), and thus the adoption of a particular style not only works as a means of identification but also to demonstrate the commitment to the group, and the subsequent 'opposition to dominant values' (Entwistle, 2004 [2000]: 136). The style of the Mods in the 1960s and 1970s, for example, was said to emanate from a desire to escape working class life, their cool exterior exemplifying their blasé attitude to their immediate situation of low paid work and poor social housing (Hedbige, 2006 [1979]), whereas the Punks of the 1970s arguably formed as a reaction against the 'back to nature aesthetic and lovey-dovey principles of the Leftover Hippies' (Polhemus, 1994: 90). Their black leather, safety pins, 'aggressive metal studs' and 'perverse bondage trousers' representing the 'angry antithesis' to the optimistic peace movement.

3.5 DISTINCTION, CLASS IDENTITY & IMITATION

While there may be limitations to the trickle down models, this does not mean that a relationship between fashion and class does not exist or that these traditional theories are totally obsolete. Though the nature of fashion production and consumption may have changed considerably since the eighteenth century, these more contemporary theories demonstrate that fashion is still used as a means of classification and distinction. As Giddens (1991) argues, 'dress and social identity have certainly not become entirely dissociated today and dress remains a signalling device of gender, class position and occupational status' (1991: 99). The work of Southerton (2002), Storr (2002; 2003) and Tyler (2009) further confirms this, suggesting that fashion is used to create distinction between 'us' and 'them' and to identify working class

women and subcultures. In fact, the literature on historical fashion (e.g. Vickery, 1993; Campbell, 2005 [1987]) and subcultures clearly shows that fashion is still an important means of 'union' and 'isolation', just as Simmel (2004 [1901]: 291) claims, signifying 'union with those in the same class' and at the same time excluding those from 'all other groups'. Though individuals may not consume with an 'active' intention to compete, fashion and consumption can nevertheless provide a means of solidarity and cohesion (Vickery, 1993: 278).

That is not to say that fashion is not concerned with individual identity or personal choice. Even Simmel (2004 [1901]) acknowledges that 'while fashion postulates a certain amount of general acceptance, it nevertheless is not without significance in the character of the individual, for it emphasises his personality' (297). But at the same time, despite the diversity in contemporary British fashion and increased availability of fashion trends, fashion choices still operate as an important means of evaluation in terms of wealth and class (Fischer-Mirkin, 1995; Storr, 2002; 2003). As Barber and Lobel argue,

> At least on first glance we all apply the following equation: consumption equals wealth or income, wealth or income equals occupational position, occupational position equals social class, and therefore consumption equals social class position (1993 [1957]: 130).

Moreover, if we follow Bourdieu's argument that taste is a marker of class (2005 [197]: 12), as set out in chapter 2, people's fashion choices, their knowledge of fashion and their consumption practices will still operate as a means of class distinction, no matter how democratised or pluralised fashion is. Ultimately determined by our 'conditions of existence' and social origins, Bourdieu argues that individual's dispositions are informed by their class location, and thus while women may have a greater awareness of fashion through magazines, television or the internet, and may be influenced by any number of fashion leaders, there will still be class differences in terms of their fashion adoption, preferences and tastes.

For instance, Bourdieu argues that while the middle class have a 'habitus of order' which places emphasis on formality, restraint and propriety, the working class, as discussed in chapter 2, have much greater concern for 'practical urgencies' and thus 'seek "value for money", and choose what will last' (201). These differences have crucial implications for the food that they eat and the clothes that they wear. Though it may be the case that the working class are less driven by 'necessity' than they were in the past (Rocamora, 2002), the discussion in chapter 7 clearly shows that fundamental class differences remain in relation to buying criteria and attitudes towards fashion. And as Partington (1992) suggests, even when social classes adopt the same styles of dress, they are still able to 'articulate class identities' by using 'deliberately different appropriation', thus creating a different version of given fashion and providing it with a new meaning (1992: 146).

In addition, while fashion may be used to create or mark out different social identities, such as gender, race or subculture, it is also likely that these identities will be classed. For instance, while Campbell (1993) argues that consumption is driven by identity, he relates his various 'character ideals' to class locations. So, for example, he describes the 'sensibility ideal' as having a propensity to consume, like middle class tradesmen or craftsmen. The aristocratic ideal is described as being elitist, exclusive, in many ways considered upper class, and he also argues that the romantics were perceived to have upper class values. Moreover, the more recent examples of Mods and Rockers, Skinheads and Teddy Boys, are all considered to be working class groups (Hall and Jefferson, 2000 [1975]; Hebdige, 2006 [1979]; Polhemus, 1994; Polhemus and Procter, 1978). And as Lawler (2005a), Skeggs (1997) and Storr (2002; 2003) suggest, notions of femininity are similarly created and performed within a classed context.

Fashion may be concerned with self-identity, gender, race, sexuality or subculture, but at the same time it is also concerned with class. Indeed, as with other areas of social life (Crenshaw, 1991) these different categories all intersect in terms of fashion choices. This is demonstrated in chapter 6, which argues that there are clear class distinctions in women's performance and notions of femininity and, even more crucially, their perception of public and private space, and social audiences, made apparent through dress. Though other authors such as Barnard (2002 [1996]: 115) have alluded to a link between fashion, class and space, they have not explored just *how* it operates, simply suggesting that the way in which individuals dress for social spaces differs with social class. While other authors such as Tseëlon (1992; 1995) have considered the link between fashion and space, as I discuss in chapter 4, they have tended to neglect the influence and importance of social class.

In fact, Bourdieu's work suggests that perceptions of social audiences differ between class groups and that this has implications for fashion adoption. Arguing that the middle classes are highly aware of the judgements made by others, he suggests that they have an immense desire to be 'seen in a good light' (2005 [1984]: 253). This leads to a 'disposition towards the bluff' which causes them to imitate or 'usurp' the social identity of higher social classes in order to give a 'self representation normally associated with those in a higher position'. In many respects his assertion is similar to those made by emulation theorists, as he argues that the middle classes imitate the 'symbolic goods' of those with 'distinction', thereby 'forcing the possessor of distinctive properties ... to engage in an endless pursuit of new properties through which to assert their rarity' (2005 [1984]: 251-2). As such, his argument is subject to the same criticisms as the work of Simmel (2004 [1901]) or Veblen (1994 [1899]). But at the same time it highlights how different perceptions or dispositions lead to differences in practice, and further suggests that there are significant distinctions in the way in which the middle- and working class view

audiences and themselves. As chapters 6 and 7 demonstrate, this argument is highly relevant in terms of fashion and class today. Working class and middle class women clearly have different attitudes in relation to fashion media, fashion buying and social spaces, and this has important consequences for their fashion practice.

Moreover, Bourdieu's work argues for the role of imitation in consumption, and thus fashion adoption, and while imitation may not be solely linked to the desire for social advancement, it nevertheless is still evident in fashion appropriation. As Crane (2000; 1999a) notes, women learn about fashion through fashion magazines, catalogues and watching other women. And more importantly, they often copy what they see. Indeed, chapter 7 shows that imitation is a highly important part of fashion adoption, particular amongst working class women. They copy images they see in magazines and catalogues and they gain inspiration and ideas by looking at other women. Moreover, Rutter and Bryce (2008) argue that in recent years much more has been made of counterfeit goods being sold on market stalls and internet sites both in the UK and abroad. The desire for designer imitations has risen considerably, and in fact these goods have become so available that the buying of 'fakes' has in many respects become an 'established consumption practice' within some sections of society (115). Again, chapter 7 explores the consumption of counterfeit items, particularly sunglasses and handbags, and demonstrates how this practice links to women's class position and a desire to be fashionable.

Moreover, fashion is one of the key ways in which British people talk about class, and make class distinctions. As I discuss in chapters 5, 6 and 7, fashion references are frequently class references. Discussions of tracksuit bottoms and trainers, the idea of being 'Chavvy', or phrases such as 'mutton dressed as lamb' are used as an indication for working classness, while references to 'classic', or 'yummy mummy' are often used as euphemisms for middle class respectability. Fashion is a fundamental aspect of class evaluations. The number of sociologists to note the relationship between fashion and class is testament to this, not to mention the press articles (Greene, 2011; Walden, 2011), television programmes (e.g. ITV 2's 'The Only Way is Essex' or Channel Four's 'Made in Chelsea') or public social events (e.g. the 'Class Show' at the Barbican 2006-7) which also emphasise the link between fashion and class. As chapter 2 explained, Britain is still very much a society stratified by social class, and fashion is a significant feature of class distinctions.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Traditional theories of fashion place considerable emphasis on the relationship between fashion and class, suggesting that the fashion cycle is in fact motivated by the desire for social mobility. Contemporary authors have, however, tended to neglect the role that class plays, focusing

instead on sub-cultural dress, gender and race and exploring how fashion is used to create different social identities. Yet, at the same time many British sociologists and social commentators suggest that fashion is used to make class evaluations, although they do not fully explore just how this relationship operates. This research not only argues that fashion is an essential aspect of class distinctions and classification, it explores how class influences and informs differences in British women's consumption practices and attitudes and thus how class distinctions are made apparent through dress.

While traditional theories have faced valid criticisms in relation to their notion of emulation from commentators such as Campbell (1993; 2005 [1987]), Vickery (1993), Fine and Leopold (1993), Jones (1996) and Weatherill (1993), they nevertheless offer the most useful starting point of theories of fashion and class today. The fashion cycle has changed dramatically since the consumer revolution, however. The growth in designers, buyers, marketing and advertising agents, and increasing mass media coverage (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Blumer, 1981 [1969]; Crane, 1999b; Davis, 1994; King, 1981 [1963]), not to mention globalisation and the dramatic increase in the speed of production (Braham, [2003] 1997; Crane, 1999b; 2000), means that the fashion cycle today is far more complex and diverse than notions of emulation suggest. Fashion is more pluralised and democratised than it has been in the past, and innovations 'bubble up' and 'trickle across', just as much as they 'trickle down'. In this respect traditional trickle down theories do seem somewhat inadequate. But as chapter 7 demonstrates, fashion is still subject to imitation, and while fashion adoption may not be driven by emulation as these theories suggest, the argument that fashion is used as a means of union and segregation (Simmel, 2004 [1901]; Sombart, 2004 [1902]) is still relevant.

As the literature on subcultures shows, fashion provides an important means of classification and distinction (Polhemus, 1994). In the same way that it can distinguish an individual as a Mod, Rocker or Punk, it can also be used by others to evaluate that person's class status. Thus while fashion adoption may be driven by our desire for a particular social identity, character or taste, it nevertheless operates as a class marker. As Bourdieu (2005 [1984]: 2) argues, our tastes and our dispositions, whether in food, fashion or furniture, are class markers. Informed by 'conditions of existence' and social origins, they reflect differences in attitudes and perspectives, different cultural knowledge and priorities. As chapters 6 and 7 show, middle class and working class women have different notions of femininity, different perspectives on social audiences and social spaces, different attitudes towards fashion and different buying criteria. While women's knowledge and access to fashion might be much greater than it has been in past, these 'dispositions' mean that their fashion adoption and fashion practices still operate as a mode of class distinction. The fact that so many British sociologists such as Argle (1994) Barnard (2002

[1996]), Reid (1989), Southerton (2002) and Skeggs (1997) note the use of fashion in the making of class evaluation, suggests that in Britain at least, fashion is a significant and important aspect of class identity. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 demonstrate how this relationship operates.

CHAPTER 4

FASHION, FEMININITY & SPACE

As chapter 3 showed, the relationship between fashion and class is often discussed within the context of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The industrialisation of the 1800s cultivated new forms of trade and manufacturing and new consumption practices within Britain, and these changes had significant implications for the role of fashion. Fashion was now an increasingly important means of class distinction and was arguably used as a mechanism for upward social mobility (Simmel, 2004 [1901]; Tönnies, 2004 [1887]; Veblen, 1994 [1899]). Today fashion is still identified by social commentators as a way in which to classify and differentiate social class groups (Barnard, 2002 [1996]; Lynch and Strauss, 2007; Solomon and Rabolt, 2009 [2004]; Tyler, 2008), but as chapters 2 and 3 discussed, the contemporary relationship between fashion and class is not something which sociology has fully explored.

Industrialisation not only changed consumption in Britain. It generated a new social hierarchy with emerging middle- and working classes (Savage and Miles, 1994; Thompson, 1980 [1963]), new social spaces, new forms of public culture (Gunn, 2000; McDowell, 1999; Walkowitz, 1992) and a new gender divide (De Grazia, 1996: 15; Franscella and Frost, 1977; Luck, 1996; McDowell, 1999). Fashion became an important means of demarcation in relation to gender (Nava, 1996; Wilson, 2007 [1985]) and public and private space (Sennett, 2002 [1974]). In doing so it offered a further indication of social class, as notions of appropriate femininity were constructed within the middle class context (Finch, 1993; Skeggs, 1997), while the engagement in conspicuous leisure operated as a sign of wealth (Veblen, 1994 [1899]).

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the relationship between fashion and class by examining fashion's relationship with gender and space. It starts by examining the historical relationship between fashion, class and gender. Looking specifically at the nineteenth century, it focuses on the emergence of the new middle class, and their culture of respectability (Finch, 1993; Gunn, 2000; Skeggs, 1997), exploring how femininity was constructed within the context of the middle class habitus. Then, using the work of Skeggs (1997), the chapter evaluates the relevance of these arguments for today, arguing that class is still apparent in women's performances of femininity and that fashion is still used as a measure of respectability and consequently a means of class distinction.

The second half of the chapter examines the relationship between fashion, class and space. Continuing with the literature on the nineteenth century, it discusses fashion's role as a means

of class differentiation within the cosmopolitan environment of the city (Nava, 1996; Wilson, 1994 [1993]; 2007 [1985]) and explores the way in which fashion was used by the middle class to display their wealth in public spaces (Gunn, 2000). It then discusses how fashion today is still used to create a personal front, which differs depending on the social space and the social audience (Goffman, 1971; 1990[1959]; Tseëlon, 1995). It suggests that as with femininity, middle class and working class women have a different conception of public space, as demonstrated in chapter 6, and while middle class perspectives of space tend to be legitimised, working class perspectives are not (Foucault, 1986). As a result, fashion operates as a means of class distinction because it indicates differences in how space is perceived, and that women's dress is subsequently evaluated in terms of appropriateness.

4.1 INDUSTRIALISATION AND THE VICTORIAN MIDDLE CLASS

The Industrial Revolution took place in Britain between 1780 and 1830. During this period, and throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, Britain experienced significant changes not only in industry, but in terms of leisure, social hierarchy, social space, technology, communications and transport (Gunn, 2000), all of which had significant implications for the role of fashion. The development of the sewing machine (1851) and cutting machine (1858), combined with the growth in clothing factories, for instance, allowed for mass production of clothing, the creation of ready-to-wear collections, and the adoption of fashion across a much wider section of society (Craik, 1998 [1993]: 206; Wilson, 2007 [1985]: 75). In addition, developments in trade and communication meant that knowledge of fashion was far more widespread than it had been previously.

Moreover, the nineteenth-century industrial city created a new space in which to display fashion. As with Paris (Rocamora, 2009: 19), new spaces emerged which provided opportunities for the show of luxury, pleasure and consumption. The promenade, the concert hall, and later the department store, the arcade and the social club, offered opportunities for middle class individuals, and specifically middle class women, to exhibit their wealth and taste through dress (Gunn, 2000; Nava, 1996; Walkowitz, 1992; Veblen, 1994 [1899]). Fashion became a marker of respectability, and it was used by the middle class to evaluate social position. But the city was also a place of social conflict and segregation. While the middle class participated in increasing forms of conspicuous leisure and greater consumption, for the working class, industrialisation created a clear division between work and home, and an expansion of domestic forms of employment, alongside squalid living conditions and abject poverty (Nord, 1995; Walkowitz, 1982 [1980]; 1992; Savage and Miles, 1994).

4.1.1 THE CREATION OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

Historically, the emergence of the middle class has often been situated alongside industrialisation. Growth in the manufacturing industries in coal, iron, steel, cotton and wool, as well as the development of retail and transport sectors, specifically railways, gave rise to 'a new breed of self-made industrialist', who were actively involved in the process of production and came to form the 'core of an authentic British "middle class"' by the middle of the seventeenth century (Gunn, 2000: 10). Primarily composed of factory owners and professionals, the middle class also included yeomen, tradesmen, property owners, shopkeepers, bankers and merchants (Weatherill, 1993). Made up of such a diverse range of occupations, its members differed significantly in terms of wealth and income, religious identity and political affiliation, but were nevertheless unified through property ownership and more importantly culture, which served as a 'sphere of consensus and reconciliation' (Gunn, 2000: 24) and 'social collectivity' (Savage et al., 1992), bringing the middle class together and simultaneously setting them apart from other social classes.

4.1.2 THE MIDDLE CLASS CULTURE OF RESPECTABILITY

The middle class culture centred on the notion of 'respectability', which, in emphasising moral superiority and intellect (Gunn, 2007; Skeggs, 1997), intended to draw a distinction from both the 'dissolute and irresponsible aristocracy', and 'the urban poor, deemed feckless and atheistic' (Gunn, 2000: 15). It focused chiefly on the nature of the home and domesticity, creating 'domestic ideals', which paralleled cleanliness with decency (Finch, 1993) and drew sharp distinctions with the dangerous and 'sexual deviancy of the undeserving poor' (Skeggs, 1997: 46). 'Cleanliness was next to Godliness', and thus while middle class examples of hygiene worked to establish their moral authority, the working class or 'Great Unwashed', located primarily in urban slums, were conceptualised as filthy and diseased. 'Dark, dangerous and polluting' (Skeggs, 1997: 1), the working class posed a possible threat of 'infection to respectable society' (Walkowitz, 1992: 22), and therefore 'needed to be watched, restrained and "civilised"' (Storr, 2002: 22).

In the new urban environment, the domestic sphere had become a 'private' realm. By moving work outside the home into factories, industrialisation had created a division between the public world of work and private domestic spaces (Franscella and Frost, 1977; Valentine, 2001; McDowell, 1999). Although respectability was closely tied to the domestic ideal, then, evaluations of respectability were reliant on displays in the public sphere, and consequently judgements of respectability centred on an individual's public 'appearance and manner' (Finch, 1993; Nead, 1998; Skeggs, 1997). Fashion therefore played a significant role in the determining

of respectability, and the subsequent class position of an individual. Publicly visible, fashion operated as an obvious symbol or 'sign vehicle' (Goffman, 1990 [1959]: 13) for individuals' wealth and social superiority in public space. 'The cleanliness of garments, such as a gentleman's neckband for example, became a way of evaluating whether he was a member of the upper class, or the "Great Unwashed"' (Laver, 1969: 17; Sennett, 2002 [1974]: 166). And the dress and the role of women became ever more important, due to women's increasing association with domesticity and forms of consumption.

4.1.3 PRIVATE SPACE, GENDER & RESPECTABILITY

The segregation of public and private space had been accompanied by a corresponding gender divide (McDowell, 1999; Wilson, 2007 [1985]; Valentine, 2001). While production, primarily associated with 'public life', was seen as inherently suited to men, due to their practical and rational nature (De Grazia, 1996: 15; Luck, 1996; McDowell, 1999), consumption, which remained located within the home, or 'private' space, became the responsibility of women. Women were deemed to be 'naturally' more caring and nurturing due to their association with childbirth, and thus they were considered instinctively more suited to the domestic space. As respectability was so closely connected to the home, it became a concept strongly associated with the behaviour of women, particularly 'in relation to their role as wives and mothers' (Finch, 1993: 13; Nead, 1998; Walkowitz, 1992). Social superiority could be read from the ways in which women managed their house and family. '[F]lower pots, closed doors, lace curtains, scrubbed doorsteps, hanging birdcages, almost empty streets' were trademarks of respectable neighbourhoods (Walkowitz, 1992: 35). Housework became a 'moral undertaking', and 'having a non-working wife at home became the hallmark of respectability' (Valentine, 2001: 66). Children playing outside, on the other hand, 'women gossiping in the streets, broken windows', violence and intimidation became the symbols of the slums. Populated by the 'unrespectable' and undeserving poor (Walkowitz, 1992: 34-5), these were spaces where working class mothers had failed to effectively manage their husbands and children.

Today, this relationship between private space, gender and respectability still exists. Women continue to be associated primarily with the private space and forms of consumption (McDowell, 1999; 2006). The Office of National Statistics (2008) notes, for example, that although 'there has been a marked increase over the last three decades in the number of jobs in UK filled by women' almost fifty per cent of these posts are part-time. And there continues to be higher male employment overall, despite the fact that there are more women of working age within the population. Although there has been feminisation of the labour market (Devine, 1997; Bondi and Christie, 2000), the gender division in terms of space, with women taking

responsibility for the domestic sphere and child care, continues (McDowell, 1999; 2006). While men dominate in managerial and senior official positions, women continue to be employed in more 'feminine' 'caring' roles, within education, health and community and social services (Adkins, 1995; ONS, 2008). Consequently, although female employment has increased it appears that 'jobs are not gender neutral, rather they are created as appropriate for either men or women' (Craik, 1998 [1993]: 72) and while more women are in employment, they are still chiefly located within the domestic sphere. Moreover, women's respectability often ensues from their role as wives and mothers (Lawler, 2000; Skeggs, 1997), and, as chapter 8 demonstrates, this is often assessed on the basis of children's dress. While middle class mothering is seen as the right sort of caring (Skeggs, 1997), working class mothering is pathologised, and frequently portrayed as bad and insensitive (Lawler, 1999; Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989). Considered polluting, dirty, and irresponsible, working class women are often condemned as unfit parents (Tyler, 2009), and thus 'to be identified as a working class woman still risks associations with being a "slag" and/or bad mother' (Storr, 2002: 22). This, as chapter 6 and chapter 8 demonstrate, has important implications for middle class women's dress, as much of their fashion adoption is driven by a desire to distance themselves from working classness, while at the same time, it leads working class women to place increasing importance on their children's appearance in order to demonstrate that they are 'good' parents.

4.1.3.1 FASHION AS FEMININE

The gender division between private and public space, and production and consumption, during industrialisation had even further implications for fashion, as it had now 'become the office of the woman to consume vicariously for the head of the household' (Veblen, 1994 [1899]: 110) amongst the middle classes. The acquisition of commodities, used to assess the social status of the family (see chapter 3), was viewed more and more as women's work (De Grazia, 1996; Wilson, 2007 [1985]: 120), and as a form of consumption, fashion was deemed to be intrinsically feminine. '[S]hopping sprees', 'domestic display' and dressing up were now considered feminine pursuits (De Grazia, 1996: 1; Miller, 1998: 93; Nava, 1996: 46; Storr, 2002), and their negative connotations of extravagance and frivolity resulted from this relationship (Miller, 1998).

Already, during the eighteenth century fashion had become 'an important instrument' in marking out of gender (Wilson, 2007 [1985]: 12). Masculine and feminine clothing became increasingly different in relation to fabric and trim; and whilst men's dress was no less 'complex, demanding or uncomfortable' it had 'tended to be more subdued and abstract' than that of women (Hollander, 1980: 360) as men renounced fashion and 'abandoned [their] claim to be beautiful' (Fugel, 2004 [1930]: 104; Wilson, 1994 [1993]). Throughout the nineteenth century

this gender distinction became even more 'rigid' and exaggerated (Vinken, 2005: 11) and by the end of the nineteenth century fashion had become 'almost entirely' associated with women's clothing (Wilson, 1990: 2). Between 1830 and the 1840s, for example, masculine fashions became increasingly sober and 'drab' (Sennett, 2002 [1974]: 163), and while men 'carried this "uniform" on into the evening ... their womenfolk were brilliantly attired' (Wilson, 2007[1985]: 33-4).

> 'His' externally inconspicuous dark suit provides the ideal matt background before which 'she' can spring into life, with the brilliance of silk, the sparkle of jewels, the shimmer of naked skin, and the ivory of the décolleté. The affluence of the man, understated in charcoal grey cloth, is all the more impressive thanks to the jewel by his side, an object of display floating in silk and furs, hung with jewellery and dazzling in bright colours (Vinken, 2005: 5).

This relationship between fashion and gender distinction still exists in Britain today. There remain clear gender differences in terms of the clothes worn by men and women (Entwistle, 2004 [2000]; Tseëlon, 1995). The notion that women wear particular clothing such as dresses and skirts and that men do not, for instance, has stayed fairly constant, and although there are examples of cross dressing, this has not been adopted by mainstream British culture. Furthermore, Finkelstein (1996) argues that '[d]ifferences in appearance between men and women are still clear and well illustrated' by the fact that men can legitimately under-dress on a number of occasions, while women are generally obliged to 'dress up'. 'This is mainly because the serious work of men is understood to be their occupational rather than sartorial performance' (Finkelstein, 1996: 31) even though, in recent years, men have been encouraged to take more care with their appearance (Anderson, 2008). The term 'metrosexual', first identified in 1994 (Simpson, 1994), for example, refers to a heterosexual man who has a 'heightened aesthetic sense ... and who spends time and money on appearance and shopping' (Flocker, 2003 cited in Anderson, 2008). Also described as being more in tune with his 'feminine side', however, the metrosexual arguably continues to reinforce the notion that shopping, fashion and 'dressing up' are feminine pursuits, whilst highlighting a 'shift' in male practices.

The idea that consumption is something feminine also seems to be supported by the statistics on practice. Women are far more likely than men to spend their free time shopping and within the fashion and retail industries the number of females employed is far higher than that of males (ONS, 2008). As Finkelstein (1996) notes, it is still the case that 'it is mostly women who make clothes in factories, sell them through department stores and boutiques, and shop for clothes' (1996: 20). Today media advertising, magazine articles and television and cinema productions continue to focus on women as their main market for fashion items, often

promoting the look of Hollywood stars and providing tips and hints on what to wear and how to dress (MacDonald, 2004 [1995]: 76-7; Wolf, 1990). *Grazia, Look, Reveal, Now,* and most recently *The Stylist,* are all relatively new weekly fashion magazines, all aimed specifically at women. And, in addition, there has been a notable growth in the number of fashion programmes such as 'What Not to Wear', 'How to Look Good Naked', 'Gok's Fashion Fix' and 'Ten Years Younger' which centre, almost entirely, on the ways in which women dress (Palmer, 2004).

4.1.4 FASHION: WEALTH, RESPECTABILITY AND FEMININITY

By the mid-Victorian era, then, fashion was concerned with communicating three key social characteristics: wealth, respectability and femininity, all of which further operated as indicators of class identity. Middle classes fashions became increasingly impractical, in order to suggest that the wearer was wealthy enough not to have to work (Gronow, 1993; Nead, 1998; Wilson, 2007 [1985]). Bonnets, corsets, high heels and wide skirts demonstrated middle class women's 'abstinence from productive employment', as they restricted movement, thus making work almost physically impossible (Veblen, 1994 [1899]: 105). This provided a direct contrast to the dress of working class women, employed in factories or cotton mills for example, whose dress remained practical and simple, even when they were located in 'public' spaces. Indeed, Crane notes that working class women often wore trousers, particularly when they were employed in less visible locations such as coalmines, the seaside or remote countryside (2000: 119).

At the same time as communicating wealth, fashion, by indicating whether a woman worked or not, also conveyed respectability. 'The notion of respectability was defined for women in terms of dependency, delicacy' and physical fragility (Nead, 1998: 31), attributes which were reproduced in fashion through the use of lace frills and delicate fabrics. But participating in work suggested that a woman was 'self sufficient' and had 'no need for male protection' (Nead, 1998: 31). Thus not only did female employment suggest a lack of wealth, it also represented an 'unnatural independence' which was further viewed as a sign of 'boldness and sexual deviancy' leading to moral degradation (Nead, 1998: 28-9). Hence, 'special pains should be taken in the construction of women's dress, to impress upon the beholder the fact ... that the wearer does not and cannot habitually engage in useful work' (Veblen, 1994 [1899]: 110) not only in a bid to communicate her affluence, but equally her respectability.

Whilst working class women were conceptualised as hardworking, hardy, robust, dangerous and sexually deviant (Nead, 1998; Skeggs, 1997), respectable middle class women became the 'passive vehicles of display and objects of desire' (Craik, 1998 [1993]: 45). It became middle class women's 'social duty' to 'make a good show' (De Beauvoir, 1997 [1949]: 543) when occupying public spaces, and women were 'carefully scrutinised for a relationship between their

rank and their clothing' (Sennett, 2002 [1974]: 68). As dressing up formed an increasingly essential aspect of the middle class public feminine performance, women's bodies became a site 'on which feminine cultural ideas could be literally manufactured' (Betterton, 1987: 8). Their clothing, used to communicate a range of characteristics and meanings, formed the basis for judgements of morality and wealth (Craik, 1998 [1993]) and women became the increasing focus of female and male attention, as both the surveyor and surveyed (Berger, 1972).

This growing emphasis on women's public display and femininity was reflected in the substantial growth in beauty products and commodities aimed at feminine performance, and a quantitative increase in newspapers and magazines in which these products were advertised (MacDonald, 2004 [1995]: 73; Wolf, 1990). Articles on fashion and how to realise one's femininity, along with advertisements for corsets, hair dyes and cosmetics, became a frequent feature of newspapers and magazines such as *Tatler* (1830) and *The Lady* (1885) (Finch, 1993), while books on social etiquette, fertility, and domestic management emphasised women's 'duty' to look and 'be' feminine (MacDonald, 2004 [1995]), underlining the increasing middle class anxiety over social morality and public decency. Moreover, in a bid again to make a greater distinction from working class, the 'fetish of femininity' put emphasis on 'types of beauty' (Gunn, 2000: 69). Greater value was placed on authentic or natural beauty, over artificial forms (Lynch and Strauss, 2007: 107), which were considered to be more representative of 'streetwalkers' or 'prostitutes'.

4.1.5 THE PROSTITUTE

The prostitute was established as 'a stark contrast to domesticated feminine virtue ... she was the embodiment of the corporeal smells and animal passions that the rational bourgeois male had repudiated and that the virtuous woman ... had suppressed' (Walkowitz, 1992: 21). The focus of attention for a number of male flâneurs and social commentators (Nord, 1995; Walkowitz, 1992), she was considered a threat not only to class relations, but to 'national and imperial security' (Nead, 1998: 91) and by the 1850s had been identified as the 'Great Social Evil' of Victorian Britain (Walkowitz, 1982 [1980]: 32).

Crucially the prostitute played a central role in the middle class conceptualisation of the working class as contaminating and dangerous (Gunn, 2000; Skeggs, 1997; Nead, 1998; Walkowitz, 1992), alongside the formation of respectability, which led from the notion of 'purity at home' (Nead, 1998: 92). Set in complete contrast to middle class women (Lynch and Strauss, 2007), prostitutes were considered to be on the very fringes of morality, and the periphery of society. Often conceptualised in terms of health (Nead, 1998), they were considered to be a pollutant and were often portrayed as 'the conduit of infection to respectable society – a "plague

spot", pestilence, a sore' that needed to be cleansed from the city, and society at large (see for example the Acts of London) (Walkowitz, 1992: 22).

Like all women, prostitutes' respectability was evaluated on the basis of appearance and manner. Seen as examples of excess, in both their dress and their behaviour, they were described by flâneurs, social commentators and street philosophers[3] as 'painted creatures' whose clothing was 'gaudy' and 'seedy', and who exhibited an 'aggressive gaze, and provoking deportment' (Walkowitz, 1992: 21). Unlike her middle class counterparts, then, the prostitute's performance of femininity was considered artificial and inappropriate. Rather than being kind, caring, asexual and pure at heart, prostitutes were seemingly promiscuous, dirty, and dangerous: qualities which seem more recently to have been attributed to working class women in general (Lawler, 2005a).

4.1.6 FASHION: WEALTH, RESPECTABILITY AND FEMININITY TODAY

The notion that women should dress up and become objects of display is still relevant in Britain today. Wolf (1994), for example, is quite critical of the obligation placed upon women to look and be beautiful and several others note the way in which femininity is 'performed' by women through fashion (Evans and Thornton, 1989: 13; MacDonald, 2004). Indeed, chapter 6 discusses the way in which the notion of 'dressing up' is of primary importance for the participants of this research, and how fashion is fundamental to their performances of femininity. Moreover, the conceptualisation of working class women as pathological is still in evidence. McRobbie (2004), Lawler (1999) Skeggs (1997), Storr (2003) and Tyler (2010) all note the way in which working class women are portrayed as sexualised, threatening and dangerous. And whereas middle class performances have 'become the normative' (Skeggs, Wood and Thumin, 2007: 2), working class femininity is often constructed in negative and abject terms. Moreover, as Skeggs (2001; 2009) suggests, working class performances of femininity are further devalued by their continual association with excess. Big hair, short skirts and heavy make-up not only identify women as working class, as this research found, but are also viewed as representative of their social character, in the same way that they were seen as characteristic of the Victorian prostitute.

The growth of reality fashion programmes also bears an important similarity to publications of the nineteenth century, which encouraged a middle class performance of femininity. Palmer (2004) argues that programmes such as 'What Not to Wear' and 'Would Like to Meet' (WLTM) establish middle class taste as the norm, and focus on teaching working class women how to perform femininity in an appropriate manner. 'The subjects/victims ... are being taught to

[3] 'Street philosopher' was a nineteenth-century term for a society writer, almost like the gossip columnist of today.

create a self by learning middle classness' through the styles recommended by Trinny and Susannah (Palmer, 2004: 188), who provide the women with 'expert' guidance, in a similar way to the Victorian etiquette guide, in relation to femininity and respectability. Not only do these programmes demonstrate the continuing relationship between notions of femininity and social class, however; they also highlight the importance of fashion as a means of communicating these characteristics and the salience of fashion in class evaluations. As chapters 6 to 8 show, fashion operates as a clear means of class distinction and working class women, in particular, are often evaluated and positioned in terms of their dress.

4.2 LEGITIMATION OF MIDDLE CLASS CULTURE

The Victorian perception of, and commentary on, the working class demonstrates not only the way in which fashion was used as a means of classification but also how the concept of femininity was cultivated within a classed context. Respectability was constructed on the basis of legitimising middle class habits and practices, and thus it was used by the middle class as a means of distancing themselves from the 'lower orders'. Moreover, by constructing the concept of respectability around the notion of morality, it enabled the middle class to further legitimise their social superiority, as well as providing them with a unifying class identity (Gunn, 2000: 24).

Today respectability remains a significant aspect of class distinctions, particularly in relation to women's dress. As discussed in chapter 2 and chapter 5, in contemporary Britain class is increasingly articulated through notions of difference (Bottero, 2004; Southerton, 2002). Individuals tend to identify their class position by what they are not, and throughout this research there is evidence of the ways in which women situate their fashion practices and tastes in relation to others. Moreover, as chapter 6 notes, the need for class distancing appears to be most strongly articulated amongst middle class participants, who frequently cite working class practices or tastes as a point of distinction. Whereas they consider their middle class performances of femininity, perceptions of public space, and buying practices as normal, appropriate and respectable, they tend to classify working class practices as something 'other', and often consider the working class to be morally inferior as a consequence (Sayer, 2000; Sennett and Cobb, 1972).

This suggests therefore that today femininity continues to be structured within the context of a middle class habitus (Lawler, 2005a; Skeggs, 1997; Storr, 2003). As a result, it fails to 'fit' working class women because they have a different perception of what femininity is and how it should be performed. Indeed, in the discussion of dressing up in chapter 6, clear class differences are identified in relation to women's performance of femininity, as well as their

perception of public space. Moreover, as Bourdieu's (1989; 2005 [1984]) work suggests, it appears that middle class women are more able to identify working class women as 'different' because their position in the social hierarchy provides them with the 'code', or 'classificatory scheme' needed to understand the social meanings behind practices and tastes. Consequently their habitus not only provides a 'sense of one's place' but a 'sense of the place of others' (Bourdieu, 1989: 19), enabling them to distance themselves from others more easily.

4.2.1 HABITUS & LEGITIMATION OF CLASS PRACTICES

As noted in chapter 2, Bourdieu suggests that the way we perceive the social world is informed and influenced by our class location (2005 [1984]: 170). A product of 'conditions of existence' and personal experience, he argues that habitus is 'the site of our understandings of the world' which provides a 'kind of orientation to action and awareness' (Bourdieu, 2002: 261). So, for example, 'what the worker eats, and especially the way he eats it, the sport he practices and the way he practices' (2002: 272) are actions informed by his habitus, and which therefore demonstrate his social origins and educational background. In the same way, then, this research argues that habitus informs a woman's perception of femininity and the way in which she performs it; what she wears, how she wears it, and more importantly, when she chooses to wear it.

Bourdieu argues that habitus is not only concerned with individual behaviours, however. As a 'structuring structure' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 170), he claims that habitus produces 'common schemes of perception, conception and action' and a collective 'co-ordination of practice' (Bourdieu, 1990b: 283), which allows society to be divided up into different social classes. As well as providing a scheme of dispositions for the individual, habitus produces a hierarchy of social practices and perceptions, in which some are recognised while others are not (Bourdieu, 1989: 17). While the middle class's distance from necessity enables them to legitimise their habits and tastes, the working class operates as a 'foil' or 'negative reference point' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 57), providing the opportunity for distinction, or distance. This is evident in regard to femininity, for as Skeggs (1997) and Storr (2003) both note, working class performances are often sources of stigma, and tend not to be considered legitimate practice but are viewed instead as signs of sexual promiscuity and immorality. This is further demonstrated in this research, as discussed in chapter 6. Middle class women use working class dress as a means of classification and distinction, often citing working class women's dressing up as confirmation of them being 'slags' or 'tarts', while they consider their own practices to be quite normal and appropriate.

The notion that our own tastes are normal, and that others' tastes and practices are not, is also, according to Bourdieu, a product of our habitus. Arguing that our habitus 'generates and organize[s] our practices and representations without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends' (1990: 53), he suggests that it 'regulates' and 'collectively orchestrates' our practices and perceptions without the need for 'rules', and instead tends to make our dispositions 'appear as necessary, even natural' (53). Its invisibility comes from its 'regularity' and 'repetitiveness' (54). A product of our history and experiences, it operates 'as an internal law' which provides a sense of 'correctness' about our perceptions and tastes, by virtue of its 'continuity' (54). As a result, our practices and perceptions become 'second nature'; 'so deeply rooted within us' (56) that they are practised unconsciously and unquestioningly.

4.2.1.1 HABITUS & PERFORMATIVITY

The idea that women's performances of femininity are unconscious, or internalised, is in many respects what Butler (2006 [1990]) also suggests, when she argues that gender is performative. For Butler (2006 [1990]), as well as many other feminist authors (see Coward, 1984; Oakley, 1985 [1972]; Ortner and Whitehead, 1989), gender is not the product of an 'interior essence', but is an 'act' or 'constructed identity' which men and women perform (Butler, 2006 [1990]: 191-2). In fact, Butler argues that it is not only gender which is socially constructed but the concept of sex too, which she suggests is a 'gendered category, fully politically invested, naturalised but not natural' (153). Following the work of Monique Wittig (1984 cited in Butler, 2006 [1990]), she argues that the binary division between men and women is culturally imposed; for whether we define sex as 'natural, anatomical, chromosomal or hormonal' (153), in each case we find those who do not exhibit the necessarily characteristics but will still be defined as male or female. Thus, sex, she argues, is a division culturally 'constructed as gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all' (9).

In identifying both gender and sex as performative, Butler suggests that femininity is a 'set of meanings' and 'significations' which have been 'stylised' and legitimised through repetition, re-enactment, and re-experiencing (191). Gender, she claims, is a social 'expectation' (xv). 'Manufactured through a sustained set of acts' which are 'ritualised' and 'naturalised' (xv), femininity is a 'peformative accomplishment' which the social audience and social actor come to 'believe' (xv) and which therefore 'ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates' (192). Though 'being a woman is not something self-consciously engaged with', then, at the same time it is not an intrinsic part of an individual's being, but a surface signification which habitually 'becomes part of everyday practice' (Woodward, 2007: 140). Women develop a preoccupation with consumption, shopping and fashion; they learn to be narcissistic and they

learn to use fashion and dress to 'attract admiring glances' from both men and women (Berger, 1972; Laver, 1969: 8; Partington, 1992). But, crucially, as this research shows, the practices that women learn are classed, subjected to structural constraints (Bourdieu, 1989). A product of their social origins and of past experiences, the actions that they develop and repeat, the performances they give, are representative of their class location, and therefore operate as a means of class identification or distinction. Indeed, Skeggs challenges the notion that gender is purely performative or unconscious for this very reason, arguing that time and again research (Lawler, 2000; Reay, 1998 and Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989) has shown that performances of femininity and motherhood are 'not an unconscious pre-reflexive gendered experience based on mis-recognition, but a specifically classed-gendered experience, one of which they [white working class women] were highly critical and highly attuned; they strongly refused the perspectives of the powerful' (2004b: 35).

In this research both middle- and working class women appeared to be aware of the way in which their performances are classed, although as chapters 6, 7 and 8 demonstrate, it appears to be middle class performances, rather than working class performances, which are more often consciously constructed around the need for class distinction. In this sense, then, performances of femininity are not entirely performative or unconscious, and yet at the same time, the notion that women should 'dress up' and perform for public spaces seems widely accepted. While it is not an act which was necessarily unconscious, it is to a greater extent a notion which is unchallenged, and furthermore within class groups the way in which femininity is performed tends to be viewed as 'normal', right and correct. Moreover, as chapter 8 demonstrates, there do appear to be some fashion practices which operate as a means of class distinction which are perhaps 'non-conscious' (Bourdieu, 1990b). Looking specifically at the role of mothers, the chapter notes how mothers and daughters often shared tastes (Clarke and Miller, 2002; Woodward, 2007), and explores the lasting influence mothers have in relation to their daughter's habitus, in terms of dressing up, notions of looking good, and buying practices. It explore the way in which 'ritualised' fashion habits which mothers encourage can last long into adulthood and the extent to which they become non-conscious, noting also the difficulty this can then pose for those who have been upwardly socially mobile.

However, although the research does suggest that perceptions and actions within a class group are often very similar, this project does not intend to suggest that all women of the same social class possess exactly the same fashion tastes or practices. As Bourdieu (1990) himself notes, class is not the only factor in informing women's fashion practices or perceptions, and differences in individual experiences, as well as other aspects of identity, will inform or influence women's habits. As chapter 3 notes, the democratisation of fashion, the increased

affordability of clothing and the growing affluence of all social classes has made the appropriation of fashion less homogenous both within and between class groups. There is greater plurality in fashion (Crane, 2000), and in performances of femininity. Nevertheless it does appear that 'the closer people are in social space the more common properties they have' (Bourdieu, 1989: 16). As chapter 8 demonstrates, women within the same family tend to perpetuate similar views and dispositions towards fashion buying and dressing up, and moreover, as chapters 6 and 7 clearly show, there are key differences in women's attitudes and practices in relation to fashion, which correspond to differences in class location.

4.3 FASHION AND PUBLIC SPACES

However, it is not only in relation to femininity that habitus is important, but also in regard to women's perception of space; in the nineteenth century fashion was not only significant because of its relationship with gender and respectability, but because of its ability to differentiate between geographical and social spaces. Between 1801 and 1851 'the population of England and Wales nearly doubled' (Thrift, 1986: 280), as improvements in public health led to increases in birth rates and the lowering of death rates (Sennett, 2002 [1974]: 134). New cities developed, as international trade and industry expanded, and people migrated from rural areas into the city for work (Sennett, 2002 [1974]). Gunn (2000) notes, for example, that between 1801 and 1851 the population of Manchester increased from 75,000 to 303,000; and in the same period Birmingham's population rose from 75,000 to 247,000 and that of Leeds from 53,000 to 172,000. These new cities brought a mix of people together (Carr et al., 1993). The aristocracy, the new middle class and the working class all inhabited the same geographical and social space, and as a result the city became a place 'characterised by continuous flux and frequent encounters with strangers' (Nava, 1996: 39).

Cosmopolitan and diverse (Sennett, 2002 [1974]: 137), 'depersonalised' and 'anonymous', the city was a place where people 'pursued their business in silent isolation' (Gunn, 2000: 13). Individuals were progressively 'distanced' from each other, and the city became an 'alienating' space, characterised by 'distrust' and unfamiliarity (Simmel, 1971 [1903]). In this new urban environment, fashion became highly important, as it was the only mechanism for evaluating and placing people who were otherwise unknown. Though recognising people on the basis of dress 'was far from automatic' (Gunn 2007: 157), particularly as fashion became more democratised (Breward, 1995; Craik, 1998 [1993]; see chapter 3), clothes, as Thomas Carlyle notes, had 'unspeakable significance' as a means of identification. And small details such as the 'cut of a coat or the shape of a pairs of boots' (Gunn, 2007: 158), decorative lace frills, or a gentleman's buttons, became important markers of social standing (Sennett, 2002 [1974]: 162).

> It became essential to read character and proclivity from details that were immediately perceived, for in the metropolis, everyone was in disguise, incognito and yet at the same time an individual was more and more what he wore (Wilson, 2007 [1985]: 137).

In fact, Wilson (2007: 137) argues that fashion was a fundamental aspect of the newly developing city. Clothes operated as a 'mask' or 'armour' which shielded the individual from the constant gaze of the crowd, and allowed the 'urban bourgeoisie' to cope with the pace and turmoil of city life. A form of 'self-preservation', fashion enabled the individual to adopt what Simmel (1971 [1903]) terms a 'blasé attitude' towards the intensity of the metropolis, and consequently protected the individual from the constant observation of strangers.

At the same time, however, fashion as a 'mask' provided the opportunity for deception and impersonation. As Sennett comments, 'If the oil merchant's wife or anyone else could wear a *chemise de la reine*, if imitation was exact, how would people know whom they were dealing with?' (2002 [1974]: 69). Factory production and the increasing second-hand market meant that fashion was more accessible (Fine and Leopold, 1993). 'Many diverse segments of the cosmopolitan public began to take on a similar appearance' (Sennett 2002 [1974]: 20), and consequently there was a growing level of uncertainty over the genuineness of people's image and, thus, their class location. It was therefore increasingly important to play close attention to the detailing of people's garments, as individuals' class and wealth could still be deduced through 'miniaturisations' (166). Buttons, ribbons, the cut and the finishing of garments, provided clues as to the authenticity of the article, and consequently enabled others to act as if they 'knew who you were' (68) despite the increasing fluidity of the environment (Valentine, 2001), and the growing possibility of artifice. Moreover, it is argued that in the nineteenth century clothes were not only viewed as indicative of wealth, but were increasingly seen as representative of a person's moral 'character' (Sennett, 2002 [1974]: 72; Finkelstein, 1991). As already discussed, respectability was evaluated on the basis of appearance and manner, and thus details in dress not only provided clues as to the 'authenticity' of someone's wealth, but the 'authenticity' of the person, in terms of their true character and nature.

This relationship between appearance and authenticity of character is believed to be a product of both the cultural movement of romanticism (1790-1830), and the growing scientific discourse at this time (Entwistle, 2004 [2000]; Steele, 2010), both of which stressed a relationship between a person's visual image and their individual attributes or personal characteristics. According to Campbell (2005 [1987]), the Romantic theodicy placed 'primary emphasis' on creativity, and maintained that the divine was a supernatural force present throughout the natural world, but also contained within individual's 'unique and personalised spirit' (2005 [1987]: 182). Appearance was therefore concerned with expressing individuality,

as it was a means by which a person could convey their personality or 'genius', and clothing was therefore not only indicative of wealth, but representative of an individual's true nature or character (182). Moreover, Finkelstein (1991) argues that during the same period there was increased emphasis within the scientific community on the relationship between a person's physical attributes and their 'true nature'. 'Physiognomy was a means of calculating and understanding the individual from the visible; it assumed that the nature of human actions and intentions were recorded in the obvious signs of the face and body' (28). A person's outer appearance, then, was seen as symptomatic of their true nature and it was suggested that criminals and deviants could be identified just through the shape of their skull or the design or size of their features. Caricatures of various 'types' of person were developed on the basis of physical characteristics and there was a growing perception that appearance signified people's moral character.

Press articles from the late nineteenth century suggest, however, that it was not only physical characteristics which were employed in the creation of caricatures or stereotypes, but that fashion, too, was read as symbolic of people's attitudes and behaviours. Throughout the late 1800s street philosophers used fashion to distinguish between different 'social types' and newspapers, such as the *Owl* (1879) in Birmingham and the Yorkshire *Busy Bee* (1882), ran articles informing their readers of how to spot a 'swell' or 'masher', 'lady' or 'streetwalker' on the basis of gesture and style (Gunn, 2000: 69). Through these publications notions of middle class respectability were again reinforced, further demonstrating the way in which fashion was used to create distinctions, not only in terms of wealth, but in relation to moral character also.

4.3.1 FASHION, SPACE, ARTIFICE AND AUTHENTICITY TODAY

In the Victorian city then, fashion was a highly significant instrument in determining the class, wealth and respectability of an individual, in a space where one's knowledge of others' social and personal characteristics was otherwise limited. It provided a means of classification and distinction, and offered an immediate form of evaluation which enabled people to instantly locate strangers within a social hierarchy. Today, fashion continues to operate as a means of differentiation in a society which has become even more diverse and increasingly anonymous (Doyle, 2010). And despite the fact that fashion has become more democratised, as discussed in chapter 3, this research clearly demonstrates that fashion continues to be used by British women to evaluate and place strangers who they see and meet in the course of their everyday lives. As chapters 6 and 7 argue, subtle features of dress such as colour, cut, detailing and quality, continue to be employed by women in order to assess the class position of others, whilst these same aspects of their own dress simultaneously operate as a means of classification.

Contemporary dress may convey many aspects of an individual identity (Davis, 1994 [1992]; Woodward, 2007), but it nevertheless still provides a means of class identification and distinction amongst British women.

That is not to say, however, that fashion is never used to create a persona, or that appearances are never deceptive. Both Tseëlon (1995) and Vinken (2005) acknowledge, for example, that contemporary fashion is used by women as a 'mask' or costume in both their performances of femininity and public performances, and that fashion continues to afford individuals a protective shield, or 'front' which they can hide behind. And Woodward (2007: 84) similarly discusses the way in which women use fashion to 'construct' a 'natural' appearance, or 'idealised self'. Indeed, Goffman, as already noted, argues that clothing forms part of the 'expressive equipment' employed by individuals in the construction of their 'personal front'.

Used by individuals to foster a particular impression amongst a social audience (Goffman, 1990 [1959]: 34, 114), and employed by audiences to help define their expectations of an individual and situation (1), clothes, Goffman claims, 'tell us of the performer's social status' (34). They provide clues as to a person's conduct and they enable the 'unacquainted' to predict behaviour, on the basis of past experiences or stereotypes (1). Moreover, he suggests that because 'in our society, the character one performs and one's self are somewhat equated' (244), it is often perceived that the clothes that people wear are representative of their 'true' being, and thus their authenticity. Clothing is used not only to 'glean clues' in relation to an individual's social class, but 'his conception of self, his competence, [and] his trustworthiness' (1). This is particularly true in the instance of strangers, for 'where no prior information is possessed, it may be expected that the information gleaned during the interaction will be relatively crucial' and therefore it is likely that individuals will be eager to strictly maintain their social front 'when among persons new to them' (216).

Furthermore, conscious of the significance of one's public image, Goffman suggests that the performer who is 'dramatically prudent ... will adapt his performance to the information conditions under which it must be staged' (216). Aware that his, or her, clothing will create an impression or 'illusion' amongst the audience, he suggests that an individual will 'painstakingly fabricate' his, or her, image 'backstage', in order to accentuate particular characteristics or aspects which cultivate the desired image 'front stage', and simultaneously suppress those aspects which 'might otherwise discredit the fostered impression' (114). Thus, fashion is concerned with creating a public image or public performance for the 'benefit of other people' (28). Clothing is used, as part of performance, to create a 'social self' through the process of interaction with the audience. While it is seen to communicate an individual's inner essence, it is at the same time used by individuals to create a façade, in the knowledge that it will be read by

audiences as representative of social character and social class, and it is consequently adapted, depending how that audience is perceived.

Today, as chapter 6 demonstrates, the idea that women use fashion to construct or 'fabricate' a public image for a particular audience is still highly relevant. Women, as this research shows, are aware of the way in which fashion is read by others and, as a result, they adapt their clothing accordingly, in order to present an image which they believe will be favourable. Yet, the way in which audiences are conceived and thus what is considered to be appropriate dress for any particular audience differs significantly with social class. In fact, as chapter 6 shows, differences in audience perception and the perception of public space are key factors in class distinctions in dress, and thus what is considered appropriate or an acceptable 'standard' for one group is not necessarily the same for others. Moreover, women use fashion as a measure of moral character. As chapter 5 clearly demonstrates, they identify links between appearance and behaviour, and they assume actions, values and attitudes of the individuals or strangers simply on the basis of dress. As Finkelstein argues, it seems that in today's society 'personality and individuality are a function of our appearance and physical prowess' (1991: 7). Women still associate fashion characteristics, if not physical attributes, with a sense of self, and moreover they continue to use appearance as a measure of respectability.

4.4 A SPACE OF PUBLIC DISPLAY

In the nineteenth century the idea that public space was a 'stage' or theatre for social performances had significant implications for the design and form of the city. The new metropolis provided the perfect environment for middle class exhibition of wealth, respectability and social superiority. Public spaces were created with the aim of providing opportunities for social spectacle, and middle class culture was increasingly centred on 'outdoor' leisure pursuits and forms of public consumption (Walkowitz, 1992: 17). Yet at the same time the city was a space segregated by class. While the middle class participated in the leisure of the West End, the working class were chiefly located in the slums in the East. They engaged in different types of leisure, different cultural pursuits and different consumption practices (Jayne et al., 2006); distinctions which arguably still exist in Britain today (Savage et al., 1992).

4.4.1 ARCHITECTURE & LEISURE

The architecture of the city was used to create a space which would offer opportunities for visual spectacle. Wide pavements provided room for middle class women to display their pecuniary status and respectability, through their impractical and fashionable attire, while 'straight wide boulevards gave a pattern of regularity to the central area and a sense of

grandeur, enabling building and monuments to be visible from a distance' (Gunn, 2000: 47). As Sennett (2002 [1974]) and Goffman (1990 [1959]) suggest, the street became a place of performance, where individuals acted out social characters or roles. Regent Street, for example, even resembled an amphitheatre in its shape (Nord, 1995: 26). Parks and promenades provided large open spaces for events and exhibitions, and the 'West end of Mayfair and St. James' were now 'constructed of office buildings, shops, department stores and museums, ... music halls and restaurants' (Walkowitz, 1992: 24).

For the middle class, the public perception of both individual and collective displays was of paramount importance, as their social position was produced and reproduced through culture. It was vital therefore, that public performances demonstrated an image of wealth, authority and respectability, and consequently while clothing worn in the private space of the home was practical and simple (Sennett, 2002 [1974]: 97), public attire, particularly that of women, was purposefully conspicuous. Moreover, middle class leisure centred on visible types of consumption. Restaurants, social clubs, libraries, museum and concert halls (Gunn, 2000; Savage and Miles, 1994) all provided opportunities for public display, as did the Great Exhibition (1951) based at Crystal Palace. This was an opportunity for the middle class to make a 'dazzling' and 'exotic' display, with marble status, fountains, and huge entrances (Parker, 2003: 357), and was a clear demonstration of wealth and luxury.

4.4.1.1 THE DEPARTMENT STORE & ARCADE

Possibly the most significant spaces for middle class women however, were the department stores (Nava, 1996; Rappaport, 2001; Walkowitz, 1992) and arcades (Parker, 2003). The first department store in Britain was established in Manchester in 1836, but they became a more prominent feature of industrialised cities in Britain in the late 1800s and early twentieth century (Gunn, 2000: 29). Selfridges, for example, was opened in 1909. The space itself was used to demonstrate the authority and social status of the middle class. Their glass skylights, balconies, and grand doorknobs created a visual and imposing spectacle (Parker, 2003: 359), and the enclosed environment offered a sanctuary from the 'nuisances of the street' (Gunn, 2000: 49). Inside, elaborate interiors and lighting embodied all the aspects of middle class respectability, and goods were openly displayed to the public, providing an opportunity for middle class women to candidly demonstrate their wealth and consumption. 'Central to the iconography of consumer culture; it exemplified the ubiquity of the visual in the new "scopic regime"' (Nava, 1996: 46). Large single-pane windows drew individuals' attention to the shopping activity, and this was further enhanced by electric lighting from 1870 onwards.

Moreover, the department store was a gendered space. Monopolised by women in terms of both consumers and staff (Hollows, 2000; Rappaport, 2001 [2000]), it offered a welcoming environment (Nava, 1996: 48) that women could visit unaccompanied, and which therefore offered opportunities for 'unsupervised social encounters' (Nava, 1996: 53). Consequently, it was a key factor not only in the cultivation of women as fashion consumers, but the creation of shopping as a recreational activity, and a form of entertainment too, providing women with a leisure pursuit which they could carry out at least once a week (Rappaport, 2001 [2000]). More importantly, department stores helped to establish middle class women as the arbiters of taste, as it was these women who 'first encountered new fashions and domestic novelties and decided whether they were worth adopting' (Nava, 1996: 48). As a result middle class women became the most adept in fashion's class code, able to decode and encode images of class in dress.

4.5 FASHION, GENDER AND SPACE TODAY

In terms of fashion today, the chapter has already discussed how the relationship between fashion and women still exists, and how middle class fashion practice is legitimised in relation to femininity and respectability. Moreover, contemporary research suggests that fashion consumption is still viewed as a recreational activity of women (Chua, 1992; Miller, 1998; Solomon and Rabolt, 2009 [2004]), not only amongst the middle class, but, as this research demonstrates, amongst working class women too. But the literature on the Victorian city also raises questions over the need for public spectacle amongst the middle class, and their concern for self presentation, or social image in public spaces. Writing in *Distinction* (2005 [1984]) Bourdieu identifies a middle class 'disposition' towards 'pretension' or 'bluff', which he claims is adopted in an effort to possess distinction. Suggesting that the middle classes have far greater 'uncertainty and anxiety about belonging' (253), he argues that they are 'haunted' by the appearance that they offer to others and the judgements that are made of it (253). 'Everything predisposes him [the middle class man] to perceive the social world in terms of appearance' (254) and he is overly concerned with 'seeming' 'for others' (253), and providing a 'presentation of self' (Goffman, 1990 [1959]). By contrast, the working classes are far more concerned with 'being'. Their 'conditions of existence' cause them to be focused on practical urgencies and functionality, rather than creating and presenting an image for the benefit of others.

As discussed in chapter 2, Bourdieu does somewhat overstate the degree to which working class people are driven by a 'taste of necessity' (Rocamora, 2002). Fashion is more available to working class women today, and as Crane (2000), Partington (1992) and Skeggs (1997) note, working class women do engage in fashionable consumption. Nevertheless his work has some interesting implications in terms of the relationship between fashion, class and perceptions of

public space. Though he makes limited references to fashion and public space, Bourdieu's work implies that middle class women will be far more anxious than their working class counterparts with regard to clothing in public spaces. Middle class women will be more concerned than the working classes over the way that others view them, and eager to present themselves in a favourable, i.e. respectable, light. Moreover, Bourdieu's work also suggests that the way women view social space, whether they consider it a space for performance and thus a public space, will also be influenced by their class position. While middle class women are more likely to perceive any space with an audience as a public space, for working class women spaces with local audiences tend to be viewed as private. This difference in perception is evident through their fashion choices, for as Goffman (1990) argues, fashion forms part of an individual's 'personal front'.

Moreover, Tseëlon (1995) suggests that the more 'visible' a social space the greater the need for performance and dressing up. Following the work of Goffman (1990 [1959]), she defines public space as that which has a 'significant audience' (Tseëlon, 1995: 55), which is one 'whose opinion and judgement matter' to the individual; as opposed to an 'insignificant audience', who may still make judgements, but 'whose opinion and judgement do not matter' (55). Tseëlon argues that the presence of a 'significant audience' creates a less secure and less comfortable environment, where one feels 'on display, on show' and 'visible' (55), and consequently requires an individual to present a 'front' or image of themselves which will foster a 'good' impression amongst the 'observers' (Goffman, 1990 [1959]: 28). The more significant the audience, the more 'visible' individuals feel, and consequently the greater the level of effort (time) and care (worry) put into creating and maintaining the 'personal front' or character (Tseëlon, 1995: 55).

According to Tseëlon (1995), visibility is not solely determined by the audience, however. Like Goffman she acknowledges that the social setting; that is, the scene or stage where the 'act' is performed (Goffman, 1990 [1959]: 32), can also affect the need for a personal front, as can the occasion or situation. So, for example, she suggests that a meal in a restaurant with family is less public or visible than a church wedding or a day at the races, and a trip to the supermarket is again less visible than an outing to a restaurant. Moreover, this research suggests that visibility is further influenced by the temporal context. As chapter 6 discusses, social settings can become more or less public depending on the time of day or day of the week. Visibility, then, is a relational construct; the degree to which a space is 'visible' depends on the audience, the setting, the occasion and the time of day. And it also depends on how those factors are perceived, and subsequently performed, by the individual.

4.5.1 THE PERFORMANCE OF SPACE & CLASS

Space 'is a doing, in the same way that gender is a doing' (Gillian, 1999: 248). People make and 'define space' (Ardener, 1997: 3). Whether 'through materially embedded practices or through the social production of lived space, or as the result of particular versions of interrelated performances' (Massey, Allen and Sarre, 1999: 246) people create and recreate spaces; they shape the way we use space and how space is perceived. Spaces are 'not bounded, fixed or stable'; instead they are constituted through a process of interaction and narratives, and in relation to other locations 'elsewhere' (Valentine, 2001: 8). Thus, how public or how visible a space is, depends on what takes place there, who the audience is and how it relates or compares to other social spaces (Löw, 2006: 128). A kitchen at a dinner party could be considered the host's 'private space', for example. Backstage, it is the space where food is prepared and it is segregated from the 'front stage', by closing the door (Goffman, 1990 [1959]: 120). But, as Ardener argues, 'the entry of a stranger may change a private area into a public space' (1997: 2), so if a guest enters the kitchen it becomes a 'front region', a public space, which therefore requires a performance or 'personal front' from both the host and the guest.

Moreover, as Massey (1994) argues, society's perception of space relates to other social constructions, such as gender, or as this research suggests, social class. 'Culturally specific' and socially constructed, she claims that the content, characteristics and connotations of space, place and gender overlap and interplay with each other to create particular ways of thinking about, and performing in, social spaces (1994: 2). As a result space is 'constantly the site of social contest' as groups 'battle over the power to label space' (1994: 5) and impose distinctions such as public and private. A strategy for power, as Foucault (1986) suggests, space is used to reinforce political constructs or social hierarchies, by endorsing certain perceptions and performances, whilst labelling alternatives as abject and 'other' (Sibley, 1999).

As chapter 6 demonstrates, there clearly are class differences in the way in which women 'do' space. What constitutes public or private space differs between working class and middle class women, and as Bourdieu's (2005 [1984]) work suggests, middle class women are far more concerned with their public presentation, and far more likely to consider any social audience as a 'significant' one. This has important implications for fashion, because their perception of public spaces increases their need for a personal front, and therefore affects the way in which women choose to dress and present themselves in day-to-day contexts.

Moreover, this research also suggests that in the same way that middle class views of femininity are legitimised, so too are their perceptions of space. As Skeggs notes, 'only some forms of visual presence have legitimated value; others are considered illegitimate' (1999: 220), and while the middle class' position in the social hierarchy enables them to normalise their view of public

space, and appropriate dress, at the same time working class women are pathologised for wearing 'private' dress, in what the middle class deem to be 'public' spaces. For instance, Tesco is understood to have recently banned shoppers from entering the store in their nightwear, because it was considered 'offensive' and 'embarrassing' to others in the store (Hornby, 2010). While it had been regular attire for some of their working class customers, who did not perceive the space as public, when 'popping in' to buy a small number of items (Hornby, 2010), it was considered inappropriate by Tesco because, within the context of the middle class, it was deemed to be a public space. However, although these distinctions have been noted in the press, the relationship between fashion, class, and space has not been fully explored within sociology. Yet, as this research shows, these differences in women's perspective of public and private space are a highly important feature of class distinctions in fashion. Fashion is a key aspect of 'doing' space, and the wearing of 'private dress' in 'public spaces' is a crucial factor in middle class women's class evaluations and creating distance from working class women.

4.6 SEGREGATED SPACE

Not only are there class distinctions in terms of what constitutes 'public' space however, but public spaces are also subject to class divides. During the Victorian era, spaces such as the department store, the railway and the theatre, though public, retained social exclusivity because their entrance fees meant that they were often too expensive for the working classes to engage with. Culture was a commodity (Habermas, 2010: 37) which could be bought and sold, and consequently, although these places were public spaces, they were generally only accessible to the middle class. There were some examples of working class women entering these spaces. Prostitutes, for example, frequently occupied the streets of the West End (Walkowitz, 1992: 50), factory workers could be seen to move about the city, and 'women in business' who were those 'women in the tertiary sector of the economy, there to assist the large numbers of shopping ladies', were obviously situated within the middle class department store (1992: 24). But they were there in a working capacity, and not as consumers of culture or leisure. Entrance into these spaces as a consumer rather than worker, however, not only relied on economic capital, but cultural capital too. 'To visit the concert hall, art gallery, or restaurant it was not sufficient merely to be able to afford the experience, but to know the etiquette or "form" which dictated behaviour in those settings' (Gunn, 2000: 29), and thus it restricted working class access to these types of leisure.

Today, Savage et al. (1992: 108) argue that there are still these class divisions in terms of cultural practices, and thus social spaces. Those working in 'education, health, and welfare' are, for example, particularly high consumers of operas, plays, climbing, skating, tennis, classical

concerts, table tennis, contemporary dance, camping, rambling, yoga, museum, and galleries, and especially low consumers of fishing, champagne, vodka, whisky, gin, golf, snooker, bowls and rock concerts. They are more likely to enjoy sports such as yoga or polo (Hughson et al., 2005) and their children are more likely to be engaged in extra-curricular activities, such as altar serving, playing music instruments and sport (Freie, 2007).

In contrast to this the lifestyle 'choices' of the working class are 'extremely restricted' (Bondi and Christie, 2000: 338). There is 'enormous pressure' on all aspects of expenditure. 'Money for clothes, pocket money for children, trips out', is frequently all but non-existent, and this 'often served to exclude household members for everyday social activities' such as playing sport, visiting family and friends, or eating out (358). This has a significant impact on the working class use of space. They are predominantly restricted to the home, and public spaces are economically and temporally limited to places which can be afforded and visited on 'Friday nights' or weekends (339). This then has important implications for working class consumption of fashion, and their fashion taste, because as chapters 6 and 7 show, women's dress is informed by the social context. The time, place and audience affect the performance given and the need for a 'personal front' (Goffman, 1990 [1959]), and this will differ therefore between middle class and working class women.

4.6.1 RESIDENTIAL SPACE

Like public space, residential space was also divided along class lines. In the nineteenth century London was geographically split between rich and poor. The West End, seen as the home of leisure and consumption, was chiefly populated by the middle class. Improvements in transport had meant that the middle classes had been able to move out to the suburbs, commuting to work via the railway. Rather than a residential space, then, the West End became a place of spectacle and entertainment (Rappaport, 2001 [2000]: 4). By contrast the East End, which was the home of shipbuilding and industry, was populated by the poverty-stricken working class (Gunn, 2000; Nord, 1995; Walkowitz, 1992), immobile and unable to move away from the city. Overcrowded and unsanitary, the East End slums provided a direct contrast to the shopping and leisure of the West End (Gunn, 2000; Rappaport, 2001: 181) [2000]; Walkowitz, 1992). They were contextualised as a dark and threatening place, synonymous with the identity of the working class (Skeggs, 1997). A separate territory, the East End was characterised by danger and immorality, qualities which were seen to be embodied in the immodest and sexual dress of working class women.

Fashion was linked to this class segregation then, as it provided a means of locating people through their appearance and manner. For example, middle class philanthropists who entered

the East End slums, keen to help those in abject poverty, could be distinguish by their dress as not living in that location (Walkowitz, 1992). Similarly, on Friday and Saturday nights, working classes could be identified in the city centres, by their 'disgraceful' drunken scenes played out in the 'heart of the town' (Jayne et al., 2006: 62).

Today social classes are still geographically split. As Bourdieu notes, 'people who are close together in social space tend to find themselves, by choice or by necessity close to one another in geographic space' (1989: 16), while those who are distant from each other in social space ... tend to interact only briefly and intermittently.

> Flows of population and affluence into gentrified neighbourhoods, often adjacent to areas of great poverty, have produced a landscape of privilege and wealth, demarcated from poorer areas by walls and gates which sharpen the distinction between the 'haves' and 'have nots' (Bondi and Christie, 2000: 329).

Space is used as a strategy for power (Foucault, 1986). In the same way that gender divisions and patriarchal or heterosexual policies and structures work to reinforce each other, space, too, is concerned with maintaining hierarchical positions (Foucault, 1986; Gillian, 1999). Due to their distance from necessity, the middle class have the 'power to control space' and exclude 'others', who they deem to be 'threateningly different' (Sibley, 1999: 120-27). In the 'built environment', suburbs have 'provided a refuge for the middle class from the dirt and the disorder of industrial cities, and their working class inhabitants' (Valentine, 2001: 179; Sibley, 1991). Within these areas, 'white middle class residents have established "norms" or appropriate ways of behaving towards each other, and have little contact with "other" groups who are regarded as unpredictable and threatening' (Valentine, 2001: 179).

Thus while the 'common folk' have learnt to 'keep their common place', others have learnt to 'keep their distance', not only through social practices, but geographical structures (Bourdieu, 1989: 17). However, fashion is used to underpin these distinctions. It provides a way of geographically locating people, and thus conferring class status. Southerton's work (2002), for example, argues that individuals use fashion to judge residential locations, and to subsequently make class distinctions between 'us' and 'them'. Yet, this relationship between space, class and fashion has generally been overlooked. Though authors such as Southerton (2002) do make references to it, there is a lack of research which fully examines the way in which fashion is used to differentiate class and space, and how fashion is used to place individuals within classed geographical spaces.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The industrialisation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had significant implications for fashion in Britain, and consequently the relationship between fashion and class. The Industrial Revolution led to the development of a new class structure, and most importantly a new middle class, who employed fashion as a means of union and segregation (Simmel, 2004 [1901]). Fashion was a means of differentiating individuals' wealth (Veblen, 1994 [1899]), it was used to distinguish between public and private space (Sennett 2002 [1974]; Wilson, 2007 [1985]), and it was used to embody the concept of respectability (Finch, 1993). In communicating all of these divisions, fashion was a means of class distinction. It was a visual indication of an individual's economic status and moral values.

Today British fashion still has a relationship with class, through its association with gender, and space. It is the legacy of the Victorian period that fashion is still used as a means of public spectacle to communicate wealth and status, and to mark the difference between public and private space (Tseëlon, 1995). It is still considered something feminine and is employed in the performance of femininity (Evans and Thornton, 1989), and fashion is still used to evaluate individuals' respectability, and thus their moral status (Storr, 2002; Skeggs, 1997). All these aspects: space, gender and respectability are, however, classed. The way in which they are perceived and performed by the individual is informed by their 'class' habitus (Bourdieu, 1990b; Skeggs, 1997) and, more importantly, the way in which society perceives space, gender and respectability again demonstrates the legitimation of middle class views and practices (McRobbie, 2004; Skeggs et al., 2007; Skeggs, 1997).

While the literature from the Victorian period demonstrates the important links between fashion, class, gender and space, the significance of all four concepts of fashion today is something that contemporary authors have tended to overlook. Yet, recent research shows that there continues to be a link between class and the performance of femininity (Storr, 2003; Skeggs, 1997), class and space (McDowell, 2006; Bondi and Christie, 2000), and fashion and space (Tseëlon, 1992, 1995). Moreover, this research shows that there is a fundamental relationship between fashion, class, gender and space, and the way in which fashion operates as a marker of class is through its relationship to gender and space. Chapter 6 clearly demonstrates, for example, that fashion is used as means of class distinction through its relationship to the performance of femininity and public performance, and thus there is a link between all four concepts.

As Bourdieu (2005) argues, class shapes our dispositions and our individual perceptions of the world, and it also informs our collective views on what is appropriate or legitimate. In the Victorian period class influenced individual and societal views on gender, space and fashion.

The middle classes used fashion to establish their notion of respectability, and their perception of public and private space, and consequently fashion became representative of class, used to evaluate and place people. As chapters 6, 7 and 8 demonstrate, this is still true today. Women's fashion is used to mobilise class, and to evaluate others' class position, while at the same time it operates as a means of class identification and thus classifies even the classifier (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 6).

CHAPTER 5

METHODS & METHODOLOGY

As the focus of the research was to explore cultural understandings of class and the ways in which British women's fashion practices and attitudes act as modes of class distinction, a qualitative methodology seemed the most appropriate. Both detailed and in-depth, qualitative research is well suited to the study of individuals' thoughts and practices, as it allows the researcher to explore respondents' understandings and meanings, and the way in which individuals interpret the social world around them (Fielding, 1999a [1993]). Consequently, by using interviews and observations the research was able to examine the way in which women's individual fashion tastes, practices and discourse operate as a means of classification and in addition, to explore how British women use fashion in order to classify others.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline both the methods and methodology for this thesis. The chapter discusses how the research was carried out, how the sample was recruited and what methods were employed. The chapter explains the reasoning behind these decisions and evaluates the degree to which the research and sampling methods were successful or appropriate. In addition, in a bid towards reflexivity, it explores how my role within the research, my own experiences and attitudes, and my participants' perceptions of me, may have influenced the data collection and data analysis. It explores how I approached the matter of class and the discussion of fashion, and how these two subjects evoked very different reactions in the responses of participants. Moreover, in considering the effectiveness of the research methods, the chapter draws attention to the contribution that this study makes to the knowledge of fashion, class and gender in Britain today and further highlights some of the cultural issues that exist in relation to the discussion of these topics.

The chapter is divided into two sections, the first of which explores the research sample. It discusses the sample's composition, the way in which participants were recruited, and how this relates to the methodological approach. The second part of the chapter explores the methods used: interviews and observation. It discusses the planning and effectiveness of the interviews, and specifically examines the use of the words 'class' and 'fashion', as these were particularly significant in regard to the participants' reactions and responses. It then explores the process of observation, and the difficulties faced with using this method. Moreover, within this section there is also a discussion of the limitations of the research, the ethical considerations which

were made, and an acknowledgement of the ways in which my perspective, behaviours and language impacted on the research process, and ultimately the project's results.

5.1 THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Arber (1993 [1991]) argues that often qualitative research is based on the study of a small group of around 40 or so people. Citing Oakley's (1974) research, she suggests that 'important sociological work is often based on relatively small samples from one local area' and as the 'primary goal' in qualitative studies is often an 'understanding of the social processes', probability sampling is often 'unrealistic' and unnecessary (1993 [1991]: 73). Qualitative research is 'not an attempt to provide "categorical truths" ... but an attempt to raise questions' and possibilities (Silverman, 2010 [2000]: 36). It is about gaining 'thick description' (Seale, 1999); rich detailed data which has 'depth' and 'intensity' (Fielding, 1993a [1991]: 156), and which will provide a 'full and adequate knowledge of' the meanings people apply to their experiences and their patterns of behaviour (Fielding, 1993a [1991]). As a result a large representative sample is not generally necessary. And although this means that it is not possible to generalise on the basis of its results (Bryman, 2004: 99), it value lies in its 'authenticity' and 'trustworthiness' (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). Indeed, Guba and Lincoln argue that qualitative research is about generating findings that are 'worth paying attention to' (1985: 290). What is most important is that the research is 'credible' in terms of data interpretation and dependable in terms of quality of data collection.

In total, 53 women took part in this project.[4] All of the participants were interviewed, for at least an hour, and five were also observed clothes shopping, which lasted between three to six hours. Participants were aged between 18 and 70, with the average age being 38. The study focused specifically on women for two reasons. Firstly, as discussed in chapters 3 and 4, fashion has historically been commonly associated with women, and although in recent years there has been a slight shift in traditional gender roles, the notion that fashion is primarily a feminine pursuit generally remains. Secondly, what has been written about the contemporary relationship between fashion and class, as previously mentioned, tends to sit within the literature on subcultures, and as a result it generally centres on masculine fashions.

In total 35 women were middle class, 4 of whom described themselves as from 'working class backgrounds', and 18 were working class. Classifications were made on the basis of self-definition and demographic information including: housing, occupation, education, partner's occupation, and parents' occupations, which are traditionally used by government bodies and

[4] A individual description of all the participants can be found in Appendix 1, in addition to the information given here.

sociologists (e.g. Lawler, 2000; Skeggs et al., 2008; Walkerdine et al., 2001). Though efforts were made to recruit equal numbers of working class and middle class participants, the sample is disproportionately middle class. This is partly because women were not asked directly about their class location or occupation when they were recruited to the project. In hindsight, asking participants for their occupation before they were recruited to the project may have resulted in more balanced numbers.

As well as recruiting working class and middle class women, the research also intended to recruit a diverse range of ethnicities. In fact, participants were recruited from the Borough of Croydon specifically because it is so ethnically diverse. However, in the local areas where the participants were recruited, such as Fairfield and New Addington, between 70% and 90% of the adult population are white (ONS Census data, 2001), and therefore there is a much smaller ethnic minority population to sample from. As a result, just eight of the participants are of an ethnic minority background. One is Turkish, one Iranian, two of African origin, two of African-Caribbean origin, and two mixed race. All remaining participants are white.

The fact that the sample is disproportionally white does arguably raise issues in terms of representativeness, and the notion of 'white solipsism' (Rich, 1979: 306). Certainly the project does not represent the views of any Asian women, and its representation of black women is minimal. As a qualitative study however, the research does not aim to be representative. As already discussed, the aim of this research is to generate questions, thoughts and ideas (Silverman, 2010 [2000]) rather than generalisable results. Moreover, other projects such as that of Willis (1977) arguably present the views of just the white population, but are still seen as very valuable studies nonetheless (Devine and Heath, 1999: 22).

However, possibly because such a small number of women from ethnic minorities were interviewed, the study found few significant racial differences in the attitudes and practices of the participants. That is not to say that race is a topic which was avoided. Race was raised in a number of interviews, and particularly with black participants, who note how they look specifically for black magazines, and identify with black role models, such as Beyoncé. Moreover, their discussions also highlighted a difference in relation to class terms. Whereas white working class participants talk of other women being 'posh', black working class women talk more about 'rich' women. Generally, however, the attitudes, practices and tastes of women did not appear to differ particularly with race. Indeed, there appeared to be a much more significant distinction between classes than between races.

5.1.1 FINDING THE PARTICIPANTS

In terms of locating a sample, the aim was to find an area which has a mixed class population, and is within a reasonable travelling distance, as qualitative research can be time-consuming and labour intensive (Bryman, 2004; Ely et al., 1996 [1991]; Fielding, 1993a [1991]). Consequently the research project was situated within the London Borough of Croydon. Located 7 miles outside the centre of London, Croydon is the largest of the London boroughs and has a population of 340,000. Crucially for this project its population is not only diverse in terms of ethnic background but socio-economic locations. In fact, its composition of women in terms of socio-economic classification is comparable to that of England as a whole, although within the borough there are slightly higher numbers of women in lower managerial and professional occupations (+4.05%), intermediate occupations (+4.5%), and a lower number of women in semi-routine occupations (-2.63%) and routine sales occupations (-3.31%) compared with England as a whole (Census data, 2001, ONS).

In addition, central Croydon (Fairfield) is served by two shopping centres, which include high street chains, independent shops and three department stores. There is also a street market in central Croydon and another in New Addington. As the primary method of recruiting of participants was directly from shopping spaces, Croydon was a particularly suitable location. Moreover, within the borough there are high number, and a diverse range, of 'ladies only' clubs or associations, which meant that there would be other options in terms of participant recruitment if initial methods were unsuccessful.

5.2 METHODS OF RECRUITMENT

Hammersley and Atkinson (1996 [1983]) note that recruiting participants for qualitative research can often be complex. Although this type of research does not require a representative sample (1996 [1983]: 137), they warn that 'identifying and contacting interviewees may not be straightforward' (135). Therefore, a range of sampling methods may need to be employed in order to achieve the requisite numbers. In this study, three forms of sampling were employed with varying degrees of success.

5.2.1 SHOPPING CENTRES AND MARKETS

The first method of sampling was a relatively unconventional idea, which involved recruiting women directly, in a 'cold calling' type manner, from shopping centres and markets. It followed a similar pattern to the method used by Airey, Mckie and Backett-Milburn (2005), which recruited women from the St Enoch Centre in Glasgow. In their study, they had a stall with a promotional stand within the centre which operated on three separate days for 2-hour slots.

They asked women passing the stall if they would be interested in participating in focus groups on designated days and times. They also used promotional flyers to generate interest and inform passers-by about the project, and 'freepost postcards ... were attached to each flyer, on which women were invited to record their contact details if they wanted further information about the project' (2005: 4). Although they found the process 'emotionally demanding' as a 'proactive approach was required – boldly approaching people and offering them a flyer', the response rate was very favourable in comparison to other methods and it was 'reasonably straightforward' (2005: 5).

In this research project then, I decided to adopt a similar approach recruiting directly from each shopping centre and the market in New Addington. As New Addington[5] is a predominantly working class area I proposed that I could recruit a high number of working class participants from the market, whereas the shopping centres would provide a greater mix of middle- and working class participants. Gaining access to carry out the research was straightforward. I contacted the marketing department of each centre and the market manager for New Addington. I informed both about the project and how I proposed to recruit women, and neither had any objections.

Rather than having a stall, I simply stood in strategic locations within the two shopping centres and the market, armed with a clipboard, my University ID card and flyers which set out the details of the project, the participants' commitment and my contact details. Not having a stall meant that I was much more flexible, able to move my pitch to busier sections of the mall or market as necessary. I piloted the recruitment method in the first shopping centre, Centrale. This mall has two levels, but as most customers enter from the high street I positioned myself near the main entrance and exit point on the ground floor. Women were asked whether they would be interested in participating in the research project, they were given details about the subject matter, and what would be involved in terms of time and commitment. If they were interested in participating, they were asked to provide a name, telephone address or email address and postcode, and were informed that they would be contacted within the next week to discuss their participation further, and to arrange a time convenient to them to be interviewed.

Information about the research specifically avoided using the term 'class'. Class, as several authors note, is an emotive term because it is so associated with judgements of moral worth (Sennett and Cobb, 1972; Payne and Grew, 2005; Savage, 2000; Sayer, 2000). I did not want to discourage women from taking part, and I also did not want them to have any preconceived

[5] New Addington is one of the most deprived areas in Croydon. 55% of households are considered 'blue collar enterprise' and 25% of all households are classed as social dependents (Strategic Partnership, Croydon, 2009).

ideas about the judgements that might be made of them or the issues that would be discussed. So instead, the information sheet marketed the project as an enquiry into 'Women, Fashion and Taste', and further stated that the research would explore how women went about making their fashion choices and the relationship between 'fashion and social status'. It therefore gave sufficient insight into the aim of the project for the purposes of informed consent and did not mislead potential interviewees, but at the same time avoided using words which may have dissuaded some individuals from participating.

5.2.1.1 RESPONSE RATE & EVALUATION

The approach had a surprisingly good response rate. In fact, almost half (49%) of the women who took part in the study were recruited in this way; 13 of the 19 working class participants were sourced from New Addington market. In fact, although I thought I might have to visit the shopping malls several times, the response rate was so high it was only necessary to visit the alternative shopping mall (the Whitgift) on one occasion and the New Addington market on the two days on which it operates. In terms of initially gaining participants' details, women were generally very responsive. In the first recruitment session, for example, within the space of 2 hours 40 women had agreed to be contacted in the forthcoming week. Although only 17% actually proceeded to participate in the interview, this was largely because they had supplied email addresses, rather than telephone numbers which provide a more personal form of contact. Therefore, in following recruitment sessions women were only asked for telephone contacts.

There were some difficulties in using this method, however. As Airey et al. (2005) note, the approach does require a level of self-confidence in order to stop passers-by, and like many researchers I did initially experience some level of self doubt (Ely et al., 1991). Often, within the shopping centres, companies were marketing their products in a similar way, so I found it useful to start my pitch by informing prospective participants that I was not trying to sell a product. Moreover, I was aware of the potential for researcher bias in terms of the women I approached, and therefore I made a deliberate decision to talk to any woman who walked past me.

As Fielding (1993a [1991]) describes, a certain degree of 'front management' also took place. I was very aware of how potential subjects might 'construct' me as the interviewer or researcher (Joergenson, 1995 [1991]). Though there were some visible attributes which I was not able to control or adapt, such as race, age and gender (Oakley, 1979), I made a very deliberate decision over what to wear. Dress and personal appearance, as Arkesy and Knight (1999) note, can 'affect an interview, in the sense that the interviewee may be making judgments about the interviewer on the basis of what they can see' (1999: 104), but this is equally true when recruiting respondents. Aware that I was pitching my study as a research student, and that it

was linked to fashion, I thought it important to wear clothes which were smart, but casual, in a bid to be more approachable and not to appear as a 'fashion' expert.

The notion of expertise did arise in the course of the research, however. Though it mainly occurred within the context of the interview, it was an issue in terms of recruitment as well. Several women were put off by participating in a research project on fashion, claiming that they 'weren't fashionable' or 'knew nothing about fashion' and many women seemed to suggest that their opinions would not be of value. In her discussion of interviews, Jorgenson (1995 [1991]) notes that respondents can often have 'preconceptions about social science aims and research methodologies' and thus they make judgements about what you will be interested in, and what will be considered valuable information. In this research, these 'phenomenological definitions' of the research situation (1995 [1991]: 216) were apparent even in the recruitment stages. It was noticeable that these types of comments were far more prevalent when recruiting women in the shopping centres, where more middle class women were recruited, and therefore may represent middle class women's aversion to fashion, as discussed in chapter 7.

In addition, although the high response rate in terms of the collection of contact details was positive, I was also aware that I needed to follow up contact with participants within a week otherwise the women may have forgotten about the project or have lost interest. Yet, at the same time, not all the women recruited would follow through to an interview. This meant that in order to enlist the necessary numbers, repeat visits to the recruitment sites would have had to be made over a number of weeks, and if this had been my only method of recruitment it may have been quite time consuming.

5.2.2 SNOWBALLING

The second method of recruitment was snowballing; a technique which is often used in qualitative research (Arber, 1993 [1991]). The approach involves contacting a member of the population of interest and asking whether they know anyone else with the required characteristics, who can then subsequently be interviewed. It was intended that snowballing could be used in connection with those participants who had been recruited via the shopping centres and market, as well as independently through friends or colleagues.

5.2.2.1 RESPONSE RATE & EVALUATION

Initially snowballing was not very successful. From the first eight interviewees, only two more participants were sourced, although part of the reason for this was because I relied on participants to pass on my details to prospective respondents, who then had to make contact with me. Consequently, in subsequent interviews I ensured that I took the details of prospective

participants, which meant that the onus was on me to contact the potential interviewees rather than other way around, and from then on snowballing was more successful. Moreover, here email was more useful. I could contact the prospective participant, copying in the 'friend' who had recommended them, thus demonstrating the connection between us which helped to build rapport from the outset. In total 18 participants were recruited in this way; 6 women were snowballed from those participants recruited in shopping centres, and 7 were recruited through 5 participants identified via colleagues or friends.

Overall, snowballing was quite a useful method of recruitment; it accounts for over a third of the participants recruited. As Arber (1993 [1991]) notes, it is good way of gaining similar types of participants, and so in this case it was useful for recruiting women of the same class location. Significantly, however, nearly all the women who were recruited via the snowballing method (68%) were middle class. Working class participants were generally less able to suggest someone else who might be willing to participate. There was a concern, I think, amongst working class participants that they did not want to make a commitment on behalf of their friend, or to me, that they would not necessarily be able to maintain, even though it was stressed that their friend would not be under any obligation to take part. Moreover, as 12 of the snowballed participants originated from colleagues or friends, they were more likely to be middle class.

Where snowballing was successful, however, it had the added advantage of building rapport with participants because of the familiar reference point, in terms of their friend. Moreover, often when I asked participants if they could recommend a friend to take part, I suggested that if they could think of more than one person their friends could possibly be interviewed together. This had its benefits in terms of interviewing, for as Fielding (1993b [1991]) notes, group interviews can save on time and bring a new dynamic to the discussion, but it also helped in terms of recruiting women, as it participants appeared more comfortable with the suggestion that their friends could take part together.

5.2.3 SYSTEMATIC SELECTION

The third method of sampling that was employed was systematic selection sampling. This technique is often employed in qualitative research (Arber, 1994; Miller, 1998; Oakley, 1974), and involves recruiting participants from various organisations, such as resident associations, tennis clubs and women's groups. In this research it was a secondary form of recruitment, mainly because the shopping centres and snowballing methods had been so successful. Though I did contact of number of organisations within the Croydon area, only two groups were willing to participate: the Women's Institute (WI), and a nursery based in New Addington. As these

groups were located in areas which had different socio-economic status, they were thought to be useful in terms of recruiting both middle class and working class women.

5.2.3.1 RESPONSE RATE & EVALUATION

In total 5 women were recruited from the WI, all of whom were retired and middle class. I was invited to interview all 5 women simultaneously at the secretary's house, and although I had not planned to run group interviews or focus groups, a lot of material was gathered in that session and I was there for several hours. It was thought that the nursery in New Addington could provide some more working class participants as it runs an active Sure Start programme aimed at the mothers living in the deprived local area. However, it appeared that many of the mothers who attended the centre did not live locally, but in other, more wealthy sections of the Croydon borough. I attended the mother and toddler session on two occasions, but very few women were willing to take part. In total 4 women were recruited in this way, 3 of whom were working class, and 1 middle class.

Though systematic selection sampling is often employed in qualitative research with success (Oakley, 1974), it was the least productive of all the sampling methods in this study. Though the interview with the WI ladies was relatively easy to organise, my experience at the mother and toddler group was far less successful. The way in which the mother and toddler session was arranged made it difficult to speak to the mothers as a large group, and so I had to address each of the women separately. This meant that I often had to interrupt their individual conversations or 'play session', which I felt damaged rapport from the outset. In addition, the clientele was not as I had anticipated and thus it was not a particularly useful organisation for recruiting working class participants.

5.3 METHODS

The research used interview and observation in order to gather detailed and in-depth knowledge of women's practices, attitudes and values in regard to fashion (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994: 248). The purpose was to explore the way in which women's consumption habits and tastes operated as a means of classification, and to identify how women used fashion in order to classify or distance themselves from others. Through interview and observation the project analysed both discourse and practice, identifying class distinctions in terms of consumption habits and also exploring the way in which women used fashion to evaluate others. Thus, it not only demonstrated how taste in fashion 'functions as a marker of class' but further showed how fashion 'classifies the classifier' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 2, 6).

Qualitative methods have often been used in studies of class, particularly class and education. Willis' (1977) *Learning to Labour*, Lacy's (1970) *Hightown Grammar*, Mac an Ghaill (1994) *The Making of Men*, and Griffin (1985) *Typical Girls*, for example, all use ethnographic methods, primarily interviews and observations. This is because qualitative research allows the researcher to examine day-to-day occurrences, and thus to 'develop understandings of the symbolic meanings' behind individuals' unconscious and routine behaviours and interaction (Devine and Heath, 1999: 22). Moreover, qualitative research has the advantage of having a particularly flexible structure (Silverman, 2010 [2000]; Whyte, 1979), which not only enables the researcher to explore new ideas as they arise, and to understand the world from the participant's perspective (Hammersely and Atkinson, 1993 [1983]), but allows the research to be more reflexive and bend 'back on itself' (Mead, 1962). It therefore allows the researcher 'to be honest about one's own perspective' (Devine and Heath, 1999: 27) and the way it affects the data collection and interpretation.

5.3.1 INTERVIEWS

Interviews were the primary method of enquiry. All 53 women were interviewed for at least an hour, and in some cases interviews ran for over 90 minutes. Most of the women (34) were interviewed on a one-to-one basis, 10 were interviewed in pairs and the remainder in groups of 4 and 5. Not only were the group discussions quicker and cheaper to run but they allowed me to see how women interacted in relation to various topics, and so were very worthwhile. Moreover, as Fielding found in his group interviews, the 'women were prepared to share information of a remarkable emotional intensity' (1993b [1991]: 142) and appeared to gain confidence in their discussion when it was made clear that others had had similar experiences. Most of the interviews were tape recorded, although four of the recordings were of quite poor quality, which made transcribing impossible. In all cases however, field notes were taken and this meant that on those occasions where the recording was poor, useful information was still gathered. At the start of each interview participants were given an information sheet which set out the aims of the research, the details of their involvement, and how the security of their personal information, and anonymity, would be ensured. All participants in this research have been given pseudonyms and no identifying characteristics have been disclosed. Participants were then asked to sign a consent form which stated that they were willing to contribute to the research, and were aware that they were free to withdraw from the interview at any time.

All the interviews took at 'non-standardised' or semi-structured format[6] (Fielding, 1993b [1991]: 136) and centred on 4 key topics: self-image, shopping, fashion influences and class. The

[6] The interview schedule is included in Appendix 2

key objective was to make the interview as relaxed and conversational as possible, in order to put the participants at ease and to 'elicit rich, detailed material' (Loftlan, 1971: 76). Questioning was very open-ended, which provided space for participants to discuss their opinions and practices through stories and examples, and probes were kept as neutral as possible (Fielding, 1993b [1991]: 139-40). Most of the interviews took place in the participants' homes, which helped to promote a more relaxed atmosphere and a conversational style, and the flexibility of the non-standardised format allowed the discussion to veer down new avenues, or explore unexpected topics as and when they arose. For instance, one participant had recently got married and consequently much of the conversation centred on buying her wedding dress. Although the project was not looking specifically at wedding dresses the discussion was still useful in terms of her buying criteria, and her ideas about fashion, and the format allowed room for this discussion. Yet at the same time, the nature of interview also meant that 'special' or recurrent themes could be 'teased out' (Arksey and Knight, 1999: 101) and that contradictions or inconsistencies in descriptions or explanations could be identified and explored.

Ultimately effective qualitative research relies on the participant opening up to the researcher, and providing 'emotional' as well as 'physical' access. It is essential, then, that there is a good level of rapport (Rubin and Rubin, 1995: 12) and as this research was addressing the sensitive issue of class this was even more crucial. As discussed in chapter 2, many authors note that as much as class is a 'British obsession', it is also something of a taboo. Often the source of embarrassment, it is argued that individual discussions of class tend to be less personal, and more detached, firstly because it is not an innocent descriptive term, but has all sorts of connotations of moral worth and respectability attached to it (Sayer, 2002; Skeggs, 1997; Lawler, 2005a) and secondly because it is often about identifying difference (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]) and is therefore a concept often attributed to 'others' (Bottero, 2004; Savage, 2000). Moreover, this research suggests that fashion can be a sensitive topic for women to discuss. Even in the recruitment stages it was apparent that some women felt that 'fashion' was not something that they engaged with or had any knowledge of, even though they bought up-to-date clothing, and made decisions about what to wear based on the event or occasion. The sensitive nature of these topics therefore had significant implications for the format and running of the interview, and its subsequent success.

5.3.1.1 THE 'C' WORD

As well as acknowledging that the way we think about class has changed from occupational categories to forms of consumption, several 'modernist' class theorists such as Bottero (2004), Crompton (2008), Devine and Savage (2005 [2004]), Payne and Grew (2005) and Southerton (2002) argue that people today tend to talk about class in more indirect ways and in relation to

others. So, for example, words such as 'cheap', 'tacky', and 'posh' are used to discuss class but without actually using the 'C' word, and rather than identifying themselves within a class group, individuals tend to state what they are note, or describe themselves as 'ordinary' or 'normal' (Savage et al., 2001). This is not, however, because individuals believe that class inequalities are in decline (Reid, 1998 [1989]; Savage 2000). According to Savage et al. (2001), individuals are dubious about the notion of 'classlessness'. But at the same time they tend to see class as a political issue 'out there' rather than a personal attribute (Savage, 2000: 37, 117), and consequently are reluctant to discuss their own class location (Bottero, 2004: 998-9).

Moreover, as Sayer argues, talk of class raises 'issues of relative worth' (2002: 1.2) because as well as being an expression of one's economic position, it is an expression of cultural differences and values. Unsurprisingly, then, people are instinctively threatened by questions about class because they want to portray themselves in a positive light, although they are 'more prepared to reveal negative feelings if they can attribute them to other people' (Fielding, 1993b [1991]: 139). With this in mind, I decided to adopt a 'delayed and indirect' method of interviewing, as suggested by Payne and Grew (2005), which meant that class would be the last topic discussed in the interview, unless it was introduced by the participant earlier in the conversation.

5.3.1.2 DELAYED & INDIRECT APPROACH

The idea behind the delayed and indirect approach is that it provides participants with the opportunity to introduce the subject of class independent of the interviewer. Ideally the interviewer does not make any references to class whatsoever, even through 'class markers' such as income, education or housing. The intention is not to lead participants towards classed answers, but to wait and see whether they introduce the topic, either directly or indirectly through a variety of class terms, including words such as 'naff', 'tacky' or 'snob'. If any of these terms are used then the interviewer can explore them further, although it is still important 'not to do this in a manner that could be regarded as confrontational' (Arksey and Knight, 1999: 101) as this may cause a barrier to building rapport.

The delayed and indirect method worked well in this research and often participants discussed class, just as Payne and Grew suggest, 'without ever mentioning the words' (2005: 904). Various terms such as 'chav', 'cheap', 'hooker', 'pikey',[7] 'posh', 'rich', 'slag', 'sloaney', 'slut', 'snob', 'stuck up', 'well to do, 'well-off', 'tacky' and 'tarty' were employed, sometimes very early on the discussions. In fact, generally participants seemed quite at ease discussing class in this way, often using the terms to describe the fashion practices of others and thus as a point of distinction.

[7] 'Pikey' is slang term used to refer to Irish travellers, gypsies or working class individuals.

> Carol: My friend took me to one of those really scary shops where the door is locked ... and everything looks terribly posh and you get one-to-one attention. [Aged 56, Hospital Manager & part-time MA Student]
>
> Lisa: You can tell rich wives, from the poor ones, you can tell where they get their clothes from. It's all designer, it's not off the high street. [Aged 26, full-time Mother]
>
> Sally: When you are talking about the chavvy type people you just think, 'God I'm glad I'm not like that, and that my parent's brought me up better'. [Aged 27, IT Consultant]

Generally, there are more terms used to describe working class women than middle class women, and by and large class terms tend to be employed more by middle class participants, as a point of distinction. In fact there is almost an absence of class terms in the working class women's interviews, expect for a few references to 'posh' or 'rich' women. This follows Frazer's (1989 cited in Skeggs, 1997: 76-7) findings, which suggest that working class individuals display an 'unusual reluctance to speak' about class, because they find it 'ambiguous, vague and embarrassing', compared with middle class individuals who are 'well practiced' in the subject. However, a small number of working class women do make class references in relation to their own dress.

> Joy: Oh yeah, I think I was a bit of a pikey. Serious orange spray tan, big long talons ... [laughs]. [Aged 19, Fast Food Restaurant Worker (PT)]
>
> Ruth: I like tarty clothes sometimes, short, low and very tight! [laughs] [Aged 45, PA]

Joy and Ruth's laughter may indicate their uneasiness in discussing class, in the awareness that they were making derogatory comments and judgements of moral worth, albeit about themselves. Their comments demonstrate the awareness of the class evaluations that are made on the basis of their dress, but unlike Skeggs' participants (1997), they do not demonstrate a desire to dis-identify with working classness as a result.

Though middle class participants talk much more openly about class and the relationship between class and fashion, and frequently use clothing to talk about the working class, identifying them indirectly through their discussion of tracksuits and trainers, or gold hoop earrings, they nevertheless demonstrate some degree of uneasiness with the subject, aware that their remarks are often quite derogatory. This is clearly evident in Carly's interview, particularly when she reflects on some of the comments she has made. Again laughter indicates her discomfort and she notes, like many other middle class women, that her comments are quite snobby.

> Carly: Where I live there are a lot of council estates ... it's quite sad to see sometimes people who do wear really bad clothes you know, really cheap clothes, or things ... or they can't afford clothes ... I feel like a complete snob! [laughs] I feel like I've completely, sort of like slagged people off because of what they wear now. [Aged 21, Student]

Embarrassed by their own remarks, these middle class women will also often offer some sort of qualification or amendment to their earlier statements, as Chloe does, towards the end of their interview, in a bid to contextualise or justify their comments. Grace, for example, offers a caveat to her impending remarks, noting that her judgements are stereotypical, and that she is probably subject to class evaluations also.

> KA: Okay, I think that's probably about it, is there anything you want to add or clarify or ask me about?
> Chloe: Just that I'm not a bitch ... because it is quite a negative thing, isn't it, to go 'Oh my God what are they wearing?' and I wouldn't ever do it in a mean way, it's just kind of unfair to people. I don't ever do it, I just think, 'Oh my God!' ... I'm not out somewhere saying it, judging other people. [Aged 18, Student]

> Grace: It's so fraught with stereotypes isn't it, but I have to admit that when we drive to work, we pass a group of women, and it seems to be a uniform of pale grey sweatshirt-y tops and bottoms and tops are riding up, and there is usually a tattoo of something on their back, with their tits hanging out. And they are waiting for their money at the post office ... it is where we are going through a particularly deprived area. I wouldn't like to say a certain social class, but I think it's to do with certain economic reasons ... I mean they probably think that I look stuck up or something. [Aged 56, University Services Manager]

Though there were signs of embarrassment or awkwardness, the statements made by all the women were generally quite open and frank. Although I was surprised, I was also respectful of their honesty. Most of the literature on class talks of participants being vague, ambiguous, or reluctant to open up, and in fact many of my participants spoke quite candidly about the class judgements that they make, or how they felt positioned by class. I was aware that the degree to which participants are honest, however, is dependent on the relationship that they have with the researcher, and in order to maintain the level of rapport that I had assumed, it was crucial that I did not come across as disapproving or judgemental at these key moments.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1996 [1993]: 83) note that the value of 'sociability' should not be underestimated as it can be essential in setting the tone of the interview or observation, and I was conscious that striking the wrong attitude with participant at any point 'might well destroy

the possibility of ever learning about the observed participants and their perceptions' (Berg, 1998: 126). At these moments non-verbal signs became really significant. Smiles and nodding not only helped probe the interviewee for more information (Bernard, 1994; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003), but offered some reassurance that their honesty had not damaged their 'presentation of self' (Goffman, 1990 [1959]) and I often followed up with statements such as 'why do you think that?' to help continue the discussion.

Towards the latter stages of the interview I did ask participants more directly about their own class position. I wanted the respondents to self-define their class position, and although I had initially considered doing this via a questionnaire, when I trialled it in the early interviews I found it damaged rapport significantly because it was too impersonal. Moreover, the interviews had already covered the 'C' word, even if indirectly, so it seemed more appropriate to ask participants about their class position as part of the conversation. Though much of the recent research suggests that individuals are unsure of their class location (Savage, 2000; Savage et al., 2001), or find the subject complex or controversial (Bottero, 2004; Payne and Grew, 2005) most of the participants' answers were unambiguous. In contrast with Savage et al. (2001), no one described themselves as 'normal' or 'ordinary', although a few did use some moderating terms that Savage et al. (2001) identify such as 'I suppose' or 'I guess'. Amongst the working class participants, however, there was some uncertainty over their class location for three of the participants. Though the majority were able to classify themselves on the basis of their education, income and/or housing, as in Kelly's interview, Yvonne, Lisa and Trisha 'struggled to easily locate a class position' as Skeggs et al. (2008: 8) found, and instead chose to distance themselves from the middle class by commenting, for example, that they were not 'posh' or 'rich'.

> KA: If you had to put yourself in a class which would it be?
> Julia: Oh middle class.
> KA: Why do you say that?
> Julia: Possibly aspirations, ... wanting a child to go to university or having the kind of job or money that I'm earning puts me more in that bracket, ... the house, having been to university. [Aged 35, Business Analyst]

> Kelly: People like me, we live on council estates, with loads of kids and families.
> KA: So if I asked you what class you were, what would you say?
> Kelly: Working class. I think, yeah ... We're not poor, we're just, the money we have we live on it. We're alright, I can go out at weekends, my mum can go out, we can all do stuff but not every day. I do think that, some people who have loads of money and are quite

> posh ... when they see people like myself they turn their nose up a bit because they think we don't have much money. [Aged 18, Unemployed]

There was also less certainty in the responses of those who felt they had been socially mobile. For instance, Diane, Liz and Patricia all felt that they had come from 'working class backgrounds', referring to their parents' occupations or housing tenure, but now considered themselves to be middle class because they had moved into professional occupations or because they owned their own home. Viviana felt that because she was at university she was now middle class, even though her father was a lorry driver and her mother a dinner lady.

> Patricia: People define class differently. I would say I'm from a working class background, but it terms of my profession I might be seen as middle class. I think to a certain extent your profession, the job you are in and the money you've got now is how you define it. I suppose if you're talking about me from where I am now it's different to where I was growing up. And if you looked at my parents and what they had it would be different as well. [Aged 43, Teacher]

> Liz: I grew up in a very working class background. I then went to grammar school, so ... I mixed with a lot of middle class, what people would describe as middle class people who owned their own homes, and I used to babysit for people and then I worked for a family that had their own business, so my background became very middle class. Now I own my own house, I always owned my own properties, we have our own business ... I'm middle class. [Aged 41, Book-keeper]

Despite these examples of uncertainty, however, overall self-classification was much less awkward than I had anticipated. I think I was more apprehensive than some of the participants in asking that question, aware that the literature suggests it is such a sensitive and embarrassing issue. Perhaps because I left the direct discussion of this topic until late in the interview, it did not appear to have such a turbulent effect. In fact, greater embarrassment seemed to come from the women openly discussing the evaluations they made of others. But my hesitancy, and the fact that it was mentioned so late in the interview, did mean that I tended not to probe particularly when it came to the direct discussion of class. Having found out what their opinion was on their class location and how they defined it, I moved on to other topics. In hindsight, considering the responses were generally confident, I regret that I did not choose to pursue the issue further.

5.3.1.3 THE 'F' WORD

It was not just the matter of class which had to be carefully considered and had the potential to be a sensitive subject. Fashion too, proved to be a delicate subject, particularly amongst middle

class women, who, as the project later revealed, tended to be fashion adverse. As mentioned earlier, the difficulty of the 'F' word had already surfaced in the recruitment stages of the research. Whereas in New Addington market the fact that I was studying at the London College of Fashion seemed to attract participants, in the shopping centre, where a higher number of middle class women were recruited, the 'F' word was definitely a barrier to participation.

There appeared to be two key reasons for this. Firstly, the term 'fashion' led some women to particular assumptions as to what the project was about, and the types of participants it required. Prospective respondents, in excusing themselves from the project, often remarked that they 'knew nothing about fashion' and that therefore I 'wouldn't want to interview' them. Some women also suggested that their larger size meant that they were not 'fashionable'. In fact, Sarah, who did actually take part in the study, initially stated that 'you don't want big ladies in a project on fashion, do you?' so I often had to stress that I was looking for 'ordinary' women, and that I was interested to find out about their day-to-day decisions over what to wear, or what to buy. The second problem was that women seemed to presume that being a student at the London College of Fashion I was some sort of fashion expert. Rather than seeing me as a sociologist, several assumed that I was a design student or seamstress, who therefore had a wide knowledge of fashion designers and wanted to investigate their fashion knowledge. Again, prospective participants had reservations about the adequacy of their fashion expertise, and consequently declined to take part.

In her discussion of her interview technique Jorgenson argues that it is important to understand 'how respondents go about fashioning an identity for the interviewer' (1995 [1991]: 216) and how this can subsequently affect their reactions and responses. She notes that in her research into families, 'there was some acknowledgement of my role as "family expert", an authority on various aspects of family life' (219), which often meant that she was seen as a 'potential critic who would evaluate participants' responses with reference to some standard of what is "normal" or appropriate' (219). In some cases this had a significant impact on the interview discussion, as participants saw her not only as a source of information, but the judge of it too (Shotter, 1989).

Aware, then, that I might be seen as a fashion 'expert', due to my links to the London College of Fashion, I decided to introduce myself as a student from the University of the Arts, London. I made it clear that although my study was looking at fashion habits and tastes, I was a sociologist rather than a 'fashion' student, and I also made sure that my appearance was quite ordinary, again to play down the 'fashion' aspect of the research. Nevertheless, I was still seen by some participants as knowledgeable about fashion in the context of the interview. Kim, for example,

told me how she knew I was fashionable because of how I was dressed. And the ladies from the WI on a couple of occasions specifically asked me for explanations of particular fashion trends.

> Kim: Because when you first walked in I thought, she's got the purple top and she's got the purple shoes, the shoes match, she's all matching. And that's what I like. [Aged 33, full-time Mother]

> Norma: Oh you can answer something for me,
> KA: Yes?
> Norma: We went to the National the other weekend, and we saw a very good play ... and at the end when it came up with the credits one of the younger members of the cast, who was the hero I guess came out in his jeans, and the waist band of his underpants were slightly showing and I thought 'what a shame,' but apparently they were supposed to be like that ... is that right? [Aged 66, Retired]

Like Jorgenson (1995 [1991]), I found that often participants appealed to 'common experiences', and often I was asked for my opinion, or asked whether my practices were the same. So for example women remarked, 'do you do that?' or 'do you find that?' and this was particularly noticeable in my discussion with larger ladies because I am plus size too.

> Yvonne: We're a bit big, we're not going to be going around wearing so much of our flesh, ... you could be big but wear certain things that don't make you look slack and common ... like what you've got on now, you look good ... because you've got all this (points to waist and arms) that I've got. [Aged 47, Care Worker]

My responses to these questions and comments tended to be noncommittal, using words such as 'sometimes' or 'maybe', although I tried to not come across as dismissive, and in some situations I did openly agree with participants' comments about particular stores, magazines or catalogues. As Jorgenson argues, I think these moments enabled a more 'personal and reciprocal exchange than a strictly research relationship allows' (1995 [1991]: 221-2) and they helped aid rapport with my participants, which resulted in rich, emotional and honest data. As Hammersley and Atkinson argue, self-disclosure can be useful, although at the same time it can sometimes help to 'suppress' or 'play down' one's opinions or beliefs (1996 [1983]: 72). Similarly, I was also quite conscious to 'monitor' my speech and demeanour (87), balancing between relaxed and yet professional. In interview recordings one can hear my accent change to reflect, if ever so slightly, the participant who I am interviewing and I often used similar words or phrases to the participant. Again, this creation of 'different selves' helped bring about a more conversational type of interview, and build a more empathetic, friendly and trusting relationship. The fact that so many participants talked at length and quite candidly about some

of their fashion practices, their relationships with their mothers and daughters, and their fashion anxieties, is indicative of this.

5.3.2 OBSERVATION

The second method which was employed was observation, which took the form of both overt and covert observation. The overt observations were conducted with participants who had been interviewed. The initial research proposed that women who had taken part in interviews would then be asked if they were willing to be observed shopping for clothes at a date and time which would be convenient to them. In the interviews, however, the majority of women said that they went shopping alone, or if they did go shopping with someone it would be their mother as discussed in chapter 8, and that they did not like to shop with other people. Moreover, many of the women said they tended not to go on pre-planned excursions but shopped ad hoc, in their lunch hours or when they had unexpected free time, and therefore organising an observation would be problematic. Consequently very few participants were willing to take part, if for no other reason than difficulty in organising such an event. In total only five women were observed, all of whom were middle class. These shopping trips lasted between three and six hours and involved following the participant around various stores observing their behaviour and listening to their remarks such as 'I like this', or 'isn't that hideous'.

The purpose of the observation was to see how participants' practices compared to with their discussion of practice in the interview. As Alvesson and Sköldberg argue, 'people's capacity for describing their interior realities or external conditions cannot be taken for granted ... what people say in interviews ... can differ from what they "really" think, ... attitudes and behaviour may not always match each other very well', and there may be some conceptions or values which are 'not explicitly expressed at all' (2000: 201-2). Consequently, observations highlighted differences and similarities between discourse and practice, added depth to the interview discussion, and demonstrated how choices over different fashion items are made and what the buying criteria are.

5.3.2.1 OBSERVATION DIFFICULTIES

While this type of observation was useful, there were a number of difficulties. Practically, the observations went on for a number of hours, and therefore there was a large amount of information that needed to be recorded. This was done in the form of field notes, jotting down key words or phrases, shops we had visited, items bought and prices paid which were later used to help recount the events of the day (Berg, 1998). I tended to write these while the participants were queuing up to buy items, or for the changing room, or while they were waiting for the shop assistants to bring them various items. Despite making field notes, the observation still required

me to remember much of what had gone on and the discussions that had taken place, and as the observations had gone on for such a long time, I was aware that important information might have 'trickled away' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1996 [1983]: 179).

Moreover, in recording the events I was conscious that there was significant potential for researcher bias. As much as sociological research is about others, it is also very much about ourselves (Steier, 1995 [1991]), and often even the selection of a particular research topic reflects the attitudes, values and beliefs of the researcher (Berg, 1998; Rubin and Rubin, 1995). While researchers may have 'a sharpened perception' of the 'idiosyncratic' and 'mundane', at the same time 'we, too, have personal responses to what we see and what we hear' (Ely et al., 1991: 108). Research is in many respects 'me-search' (Ely et al., 1991: 127). This involves 'participating in the social world ... and reflecting on the products of that participation' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1996 [1983]: 16). What was remembered and recorded from the observation was dependent upon me, and in order for me to be reflexive it was vital that I acknowledged my own beliefs and 'presumption of understanding' (Ely et al., 1991: 125). Throughout the observation, in writing up and interpreting my field notes I noted my thoughts and opinions, in a bid to achieve 'intellectual honesty' and reflexivity (125).

Moreover, I also needed to acknowledge the degree to which I was part of the 'natural setting' (Fielding, 1993a [1991]), and that my presence affected the participants' actions and behaviours. As Alvesson and Sköldberg argue, 'the research process constitutes a (re)construction of the social reality in which researcher both interacts with the agents researched and ... creates images for themselves and for others' (2000: 6). Throughout the observation I interacted with the participants, often adopting the role of the 'acceptable incompetent' asking 'naive' question about their shopping practices, for example why they would shop in one place and not another, and what they liked or disliked about certain items (Fielding, 1993a [1991]: 158). In some situations, however, this undoubtedly led some participants to attempt to rationalise their actions, providing 'logical reasoning' for their routine or unconscious behaviours (Fielding, 1993b [1991]: 138).

As the observation continued, the relationship between myself and the participant became more reciprocal. I was asked for my opinion, and invited to 'shop with' the participant rather than simply observe. Though I tried to be as non-committal as possible, my interaction with the participant will have had some effect on their behaviours and actions that day. And whilst I did not encourage participants to go into any particular shop, look at any particular items or make any purchases, just my being there will have had some influence on them, particularly when you consider that most middle class women said that they normally shop alone. Fielding (1993b [1991]: 139) argues that in interviews 'people often avoid discussing aspects of their behaviour

or attitudes that are inconsistent with their preferred self-image'; so, for example, they may be over-polite, shy or anxious. This may have been the case in the observations too. Women may have been selective in terms of their shopping habits, for fear of being 'shown up'. Although the length of the observation would suggest that by the latter stages there would have been less image management taking place, the idea that participants may have been providing some level of personal front still needs to be considered. Nevertheless, the observations were very useful. They certainly provided highly detailed, in-depth information on middle class women's consumption habits, which could be used in conjunction with the interview data.

5.3.2.2 COVERT OBSERVATIONS

As so few women had been willing to take part in observations, I decided that another means of gathering observational data would have to be found. 'A covert approach is controversial' (Fielding, 1993a [1991]), but in this instance it was thought to be a suitable way of gaining information about women's general shopping habits without having the influence of a researcher, or the need to recruit more women to the research project. Consequently, I visited a number of clothing stores, chiefly those mentioned by the women in the interviews, and observed women shopping. Those observed were not informed that I was conducting the research, but as there was no interaction with 'participants' and no personal or demographic details were disclosed, there was no potential for 'harm' (Murphy and Dingwall, 2007) and therefore I felt that 'informed consent' was not necessary.

The observations were carried out over a bank holiday weekend and the weekdays following. I visited all the stores mentioned by the participants, as well as two supermarkets. The purpose of running observation over the weekend and during the week was that I could observe both 'ad hoc' type shopping which took place in lunch hours, for example, as well as 'free time' and 'planned' excursions. Recording these observations was actually much easier than it had been with the individual participants. I pretended to be browsing for clothes myself, picking up and carrying one or two items, as well as shopping bags, which I used as props, in my role as a customer (Goffman, 1993 [1959]). I used my mobile phone throughout to record information, pretending to make and receive calls while I was in store and in smaller stores I used the changing room as a place to record field notes, as the telephone conversations were too conspicuous. As a 'customer' I was able to get quite close to participants and listen in on their conversations whilst they were shopping or queuing for the cash desk or changing room. This allowed me to establish relationships between women, such as mother and daughter, identify the different types of discussions that took place in the decision making process of buying clothes, as well as observing shopping habits such comparing prices, checking washing labels,

holding items up to the window to see it in the 'natural light', feeling fabrics, and trying clothes on.

Again, reflexivity was highly important. What was observed, noted, recorded in these situations was solely my responsibility, and had the observations been carried out by someone else they may well have been interpreted differently (Baszanger and Dodier, 2004: 127). 'Neutrality is probably not a legitimate goal' (Rubin and Rubin, 1995:13), however. Our interpretations are 'shaped by prior cultural understandings' (Denzin, 1991: 68), and on reflection I was watching, to some extent, for actions and behaviours which would support the interview data. This may have meant that some shopping practices not previously discussed went unobserved, and I may have interpreted actions to fit the interview data, although when I entered each store I was looking for all the different forms of shopping which had been discussed, and not only the type of consumption which had been attributed to women who had openly used that store. So for example, in Hobbs, I was not only looking for women who took a lot of time in the store, and who tried items on; I was equally looking for women who looked at the price tag and soon bought the item thereafter.

As well as information on shopping habits this covert observation gave me a greater appreciation for the differences in the size and layout of various shops, as I was now trying to remain inconspicuous. This is not something that I had previously been conscious of, but I became acutely aware that some stores are much smaller and have much less stock. The size of store impacted on the amount of time I was able to spend there without raising suspicion amongst the customers. In Primark or department stores it was relatively easy to spend up to an hour observing women quite inconspicuously, whereas in Coast or Karen Millen it was much more difficult.

Although one could question whether the participants had a 'right' to know that they were taking part in the research, ethically the 'benefits outweigh the potential for harm' (Murphy and Dingwall, 1994: 340). These observations were highly beneficial. There were clear differences in the way that women shop for clothes which could only be observed in a 'natural environment' rather than the artificial situation of an overt observation. This is particularly true when you consider that the majority of women claim to shop alone. The observations add to the richness of the data, and the exploratory aspect of the research. I was able to examine in greater detail the differences in shopping practices, and although I was not able to verify the class of the women I was observing, I was nevertheless able to assess the degree to which shopping practices differed between different stores, and how this related to the interview data.

5.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Much of the data analysis took place alongside data collection. I took an 'iterative' approach, adopting a 'grounded theory' framework (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), where the theoretical arguments and conclusions arise out of the data, and both data collection and data analysis proceed in tandem. This approach means that the data analysis is able to inform the path of the research, and topics or issues which appear particularly relevant, interesting or important can be pursued as they arise.

Having conducted an interview, or carried out an observation, the recording was transcribed so that a process of 'coding' could take place (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). As Bryman (2000: 392) notes, in many ways coding is initially simply 'giving labels to component parts that seem to be of potential theoretical significance or that appear to be particularly salient', in order to help to compile and organise the data. As many of the interviews in this research ran for over an hour there was a substantial amount of data to explore, and as Bryman and Burgess (1994) explain, one of the difficulties of analysing qualitative data is the quantity of information that it presents. This initial coding provided me with a useful structure and a way of managing the volume of text the interviews had generated.

In the early stages of 'open coding' I looked for recurrent themes or terms in the data and compared these with the class positions of the various participants. Some of these themes I had anticipated from the literature such as dressing up, or looking good, but I needed to specifically explore how they related to social class. Using MS-OneNote I was able to search for keywords or phrases within the transcripts, and then draw up comparisons between working class and middle class participants. These themes were then explored in the following interviews, and observations, and subject to further analysis. So, for example, catalogues quickly appeared to be an important aspect of fashion consumption for working class women early on in the data collection process. By identifying it as a key theme in the initial stages I was able to incorporate questions relating to catalogues into the interview schedule and discussion, and explore how and why they were popular with some women and not with others. I could then compare and contrast their responses alongside other existing themes. This enabled me to develop more coherent concepts, and to explore and unpack the more complex relationships which were operating, whilst at the same time using the existing literature to help with my interpretation.

Using the computer programme had the advantage of reducing the chances of neglecting parts of a discussion, and therefore failing to acknowledge the variety of ways in which a concept might operate. Motherhood is a clear example of this. It was talked about in a range of contexts by the women and informed their fashion practices and attitudes in numerous ways. By

searching for it electronically I was able to identify every occasion on which it was used, and thus examine and interpret the variety of ways in which it was relevant. In addition, it helped me to be more reflexive and considered how my own attitudes and values, my social origins (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1994), may have led me to overlook occasions where these topics were discussed or neglected to explore the contradictions they presented.

Bernard and Ryan (2010) start their introduction to *Qualitative Analysis* by telling the researcher that 'research is not a linear process' (Bernard and Ryan, 2010: xvii), it is 'messy' and often requires restructuring and further data collection or analysis. In this research the data analysis was not straight forward. It was a process of interpretation and re-interpretation which occurred alongside the data collection, which has resulted in an honest account of the research data, and a thorough investigation of the relationship between fashion and class.

5.5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between fashion and class, by looking specifically at the class distinctions in women's fashion practices and the way in which women use fashion to make class evaluations. Its aim then, was to examine the 'symbolic meanings' that women attribute to fashion, and how fashion is used in the identification of 'others' and to 'classify the classifier' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 6).

Qualitative interviewing and observation provided the most suitable means of doing this, as it allows the researcher to go into the field and examine individuals' values and attitudes, their opinions and practices and thus how they construct social worlds. The interviews not only provided a detailed insight into women's attitudes towards fashion, and the links they make between fashion and class; they further demonstrate the relevance of class for British women, and the importance of fashion in terms of class evaluations. Though this relationship is often noted, rarely has it been explored within a contemporary, mainstream context. Yet the interview data clearly show that there are distinct differences in the fashion practices and fashion values of middle class and working class women, and furthermore that fashion is used as a key means of class evaluation by British women. By using both interview and observations, however, the research is able to demonstrate 'the relationship between attitudes and action' (Fielding, 1993b [1991]: 148). Observations have provided an even greater understanding of women's fashion consumption habits and tastes, and the combination of methods yielded a richer, deeper insight into the fashion–class relationship.

All research, however, 'tells a story about ourselves' (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: 3). The researcher is the 'primary research tool' (Ely et al., 1991: 108). The methods chosen and the

way in which they are used is dependent on the researcher, and so too is the interpretation of the data and its consequent results.

> How the researcher defines the domain of the problem and constructs the interview, how she presents herself to her informants, and how she receives the responses and judges their relevance to her research focus, all are elements which shape the nature of the 'data' being elicited (Jorgenson, 1995 [1991]: 210).

It is doubtful that any research is wholly value-neutral (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). We all take part in the social world, and thus this research will be influenced and informed by my participation in it. I have aimed throughout the research process to be reflexive and thus to acknowledge my preconceived notions of class and fashion formed through own personal experiences and my position within 'the microcosm of the academic field' of sociology (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 39). Throughout the interviews and observations I acknowledged my role in terms of the data produced and the interpretation of that data, I was conscious not to lead my participants to particular answers or behaviours and I aimed to observe actions as widely as possible. At the same time, however, my role within this research project allowed me to access the attitudes, opinions and ideas of my participants. Being a woman enabled me to build rapport with respondents, to empathise with them, to understand their experiences and their anxieties. It allowed interviews to be more conversational and relaxed, which in turn gave greater flexibility, enabling me to dig deeper and explore new avenues of enquiry. It also allowed me to observe women both overtly and covertly, to share in women's shopping experiences and to watch them from afar, but without raising suspicion. While this research is to some degree 'me-search', 'it is easy to overstate the problem of interviewer bias' (Fielding, 1993b [1991]: 32), and despite its limitations in terms of sample size and diversity it nevertheless provides an exploratory insight into the relationship between fashion and class in a mainstream British context, which has otherwise been ignored.

CHAPTER 6

DRESSING UP, PUBLIC SPACE & FEMININITY

'Dressing up' tends to be the aspect of fashion which women are most keen to discuss in their interviews. The term is often used to refer to the types of clothes that the women wear for particular social occasions such as birthday parties, weddings and other celebrations, or when attending particular venues such as bars, restaurants, pubs and nightclubs. These are places and events where participants feel it necessary to 'put more effort' into what they are wearing. They spend more time thinking about their outfit and are more likely to ask relatives and friends for advice.

For some women however, dressing up is not restricted to just these occasions. In fact, for middle class women dressing up is something that they engage with almost every day, or at least in any situation where there is an audience. These women talk about dressing up in the context of work, for the school run and the weekly shop, and although the form that their dressing up takes depends on the context: where they are going, who they are going to see, the time of day, and the day of the week, ultimately dressing up refers to almost any type of clothing that these women will allow others to see them in.

This is because dressing up has two key features. Firstly, it is about dressing for 'public' spaces, as opposed to 'private' ones, and is therefore concerned with being 'visible' (Tseëlon, 1995). Secondly it is about giving a feminine performance (Vinken, 2005), and therefore is not only concerned with being 'visible', but being 'seen', as De Beauvoir (1997 [1949]) suggests, as a woman, and an erotic object. The purpose of this chapter then, is to show is that dressing up is about public performance and feminine performance, and, more importantly, to demonstrate that both of these performances have a relationship with social class. Though previous authors have explored how dressing up relates to social spaces, social audiences, and femininity (Tseëlon, 1995; Woodward, 2007) they have often overlooked the important role that class plays. And while others have explored the relationship between public performance and social class (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]) or alternatively class, fashion and femininity (Skeggs, 1997; Storr, 2003; Tyler and Bennett, 2010), there is a lack of research which brings all four elements together. This chapter clearly demonstrates that it is the relationship between fashion, class, gender and space which is important in terms of women's dressing up practices and attitudes.

And, as this research explores the views of middle- and working class women, it is able to offer a comparison between them, and therefore highlight specific class distinctions in terms of women's dressing up, perceptions of femininity and perceptions of public and private space.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part explores the notion that dressing up is a performance. Though this is not a discussion which particularly explores class differences, it is nevertheless fundamental to the arguments surrounding the class distinctions in terms of dressing up for public space, and the performance of femininity. It looks at the relationship between dressing up and confidence, conspicuousness and looking good. It explores the effects that age and motherhood have on dressing up for women of all social classes, and the insecurity felt by working class women when dressing up for unfamiliar social events. The second section provides a more detailed discussion of difference, and looks at the relationship between dressing up and 'visibility'. It explores the way in which discussions about dressing up are indicative of the way in which women perceive social spaces, and thus their class position, and draws on the work of Bourdieu (2005 [1984]), Goffman (1990 [1959]) and Tseëlon (1995) to provide possible explanations for the differences in terms of attitude and practice. The third and final section looks at the relationship between dressing up and femininity. This section uses the work of Butler (2006 [1993]), Lawler (1999), Skeggs (1997; 2001) and Tyler (1998), to demonstrate how femininity is constructed and performed, how notions of femininity are classed and how class differences are made apparent through the discourse, and practice, of dressing up. It demonstrates therefore how the practice and discourse of dressing up operates as a means of class distinction on two levels, not only through the public performance but through feminine performances too.

6.1 THE DRESSING UP PERFORMANCE

When women are asked to discuss their views on fashion they often start by talking about dressing up. Women are keen to discuss how they go about deciding what to wear, whose advice they seek, and how they finally get ready. For some, the process of dressing up appears to be quite stressful. Veronica, for example, tells me that she has 'great difficulty' deciding what to wear when dressing up. It is something she says she 'often worries about', and we spend a large part of the interview talking about how she would dress up for work, or social events, and why it is such a concern for her. Yet for other women, dressing up is something that they immensely enjoy. It is an opportunity to 'take time' over their appearance, their hair, make-up and clothes, and it gives them a chance to make themselves look and feel 'special'.

As Vinken (2005) argues, the dressed body is about making a performance. Our clothes are the 'insignia by which we are read and come to read others' (Entwistle, 2005 [2001]: 47), and

fashion is about 'dressing for others to see' (Lynch and Strauss, 2007: 104). Dressing up, then, is about playing a part and putting on 'a show' (Goffman, 1990 [1959]: 28). It is about communicating an actor's social status and social role, and fostering impressions amongst the 'audience' about the actor's personality and character (1990 [1959]: 28-34). Consequently, as Skeggs notes, dressing up can be a 'site for pleasure' or 'a site of anxiety' (1997: 107) as women deliberate over the impression they want to give and attempt to negotiate the various expressions their appearance might create.

In this research the notion that dressing up is a performance is clearly demonstrated when middle class women talk about dressing up for work. As Entwistle (1997) argues, dress can be seen as an 'important aspect in the management and discipline of bodies within the work place' (1997: 316) and women are often consciously calculating of their 'self presentation at work in order to produce an image which shows ... commitment to the life (and lifestyle) of an executive' or professional (1997: 319). Fashion is then, a significant aspect of their performance, used to create a professional character and to create a good impression amongst colleagues. This is demonstrated quite clearly by Penny and by Julia, who tell me how clothes 'are good for you to hide behind'. Dressing up, says Penny, helps an individual 'play the part of a professional'.

> Penny: At work, you can wear whatever you want, but I decided to go in a bit smarter... so that they might think I've got more money, or that I am better at my work ... you've got to dress the part, so if I dress like an Art Director then I might get a job as an Art Director ... it's a very easy thing to do ... there are many ways to display confidence. [Aged 31, Art Director, Advertising]

At work, then, and in other social contexts too, as this chapter later shows, Penny's and Julia's clothing forms part of their 'personal front' (Goffman, 1990 [1959]: 32) or 'the performing self' (Featherstone, 1991: 187); used to cultivate particular expectations amongst the audience, and to help them play out their professional role. Moreover, as Penny notes, confidence plays an important role in making this performance and there is a significant relationship between dressing up, performance and self-belief.

6.1.1 CONFIDENT AND CONVINCING

In order for a performance to be successful, it needs to be convincing. An audience needs to believe what they see before them, and be 'taken in' by the character being performed. An actor needs to be confident and to have 'belief in the part one is playing' (1990 [1959]: 28). As Elizabeth explains, dressing up is not just about giving a performance. It is about delivering a self-assured act.

> Elizabeth: It doesn't matter what you look like as long as you feel confident because then you'll rock, and everyone will just, you know ... I have this client, and she is a big woman but my God she is the sexiest woman I've ever seen ... beautifully made up face, great hair, beautiful nails, great smile, fab swimsuit. And ... it's because she is happy and confident... [Aged 42, Designer]

For Elizabeth, her client looks 'sexy' and looks good, in part, because she is confident. Indeed, Elizabeth argues that her client's dressing up is successful because of her self-belief; her confidence is integral to providing a convincing performance and her clothes help to provide this. Moreover, Elizabeth's comments highlight the important cultural link often made between dressing up and confidence. Indeed, the use of the work 'rocks' draws attention to the influence of fashion magazines, such as *Grazia, Red* and *Vogue*, which continually encourage women to make associations between dressing up and being confident. Though Elizabeth's use of this word may be somewhat due to her being a designer, and her involvement with media and music celebrities, her comment nevertheless suggests that fashion magazines play an important role in formulating notions about dressing up.

In her article on *Vogue*, Borrelli (1997) argues that magazine language or '*Vogue* speak' (1997: 254) is used to 'help the reader to see' the clothes (255) and emphasise certain characteristics or trends. Metaphors, alliteration and references to popular culture are employed by editors to denote and connote the items depicted, in a way that Barthes (2006 [1977]) suggests, conjuring up notions of style, luxury and originality. In addition 'season specific' terms, such as 'edgy', 'eclectic' or 'grunge', used to describe particular styles, are often subsequently incorporated into both readers' language and popular terminology (256). As Ballaster et al. note, '[w]hen talking about magazines women endlessly and delightedly, parody and mimic them, displaying their own literacy in and mastery of, [their] generic conventions' (1993 [1991]: 35).

'Rocks' is a term often used by fashion magazines to describe outfits, designs and celebrities which they consider attractive. 'Angela rocks the Prada postcard shades!' (*Grazia*, 2 July 2010), is a small review of Prada sunglasses as worn by one of *Grazia*'s editors, in which they suggest that the glasses are 'surprisingly flattering'. In Elizabeth's interview it appears that she too uses 'rocks' to infer looking good or attractiveness, since in the example of her client, she further clarifies 'rocks' as looking sexy, beautiful, great and fabulous. Moreover Elizabeth attributes this attractiveness to her client's confidence, a link which *Grazia* also often alludes to. In fact, *Grazia, Red*, and *Vogue*[8] have all run articles on the importance of confidence in dressing up, with

[8] See for example *Vogue* October 2008, where journalist Phillip Morgan documents 'confidence-boosting products' available at everythingunderthedress.com or 'Glamorous Dresses Fit for any Red Carpets', where the Editor of *Red*, Hannah Rouch, comments: 'Carrying off a glamorous evening look is all about confidence'; available at: http://www.redonline.co.uk/fashion/editor-s-choice/dresses/evening-dresses Accessed 22 August 2011.

Cosmopolitan even suggesting that 'confidence' is just another accessory, like a clutch bag or high heels, which pulls together 'the perfect party outfit' (March 2010; November 2010). Seen to be an 'essential' aspect of women's dress, confidence is purported by these fashion magazines to make women more desirable and more attractive.

This link has also been identified within academic research (Judge, Hurst and Simon, 2009; Yarbrough, 2002). In their enquiry into levels of appearance, intelligence and income Judge et al. (2009) argue that those who are physically attractive have higher levels of self-confidence and financial success. Although we are 'uncomfortable with the advantages beauty confers', evidence suggests that the more attractive a person is, the higher their level of self-esteem and educational and financial achievement (2009: 752). Those who are attractive are more sociable, they receive more positive responses such as smiles, nods and touches when interacting with others, and they are often considered to be potential high-achievers, and more virtuous (Tolmach et al., 1984: 130; Chapkis, 1986). 'It is hardly astonishing ... that the attractive have more self-acceptance and more self-confidence than the unattractive' (Tolmach et al., 1984: 131) then, for their beauty arguably provides them with greater status (Webster and Driskel, 1983), as it is seen as representative of a 'host of other desirable qualities' (Kanazawa and Kovar, 2004: 228; Feingold, 1992). This is further demonstrated in advertisements for plastic surgery, which, according to Grogan (2008: 73), stress the 'improvement in confidence' that cosmetic surgery will bring.

What the magazines claim, however, is that you can be attractive by being confident, although it may be the case that many of their examples of confident women are actually examples of attractive women, such as actresses and models, who subsequently have high self-esteem. Either way, magazines create the notion amongst their readers, such as Elizabeth, that dressing up requires confidence, and that the enjoyment and success of dressing up is reliant, as Chapkis (1986: 180) suggests, on self-respect and self-assurance. Consequently it appears that women often perceive those who they consider to be dressed up as confident, self-assured, and convincing, and this may be due in part to the magazines that they are reading.

6.1.2 AGE, MOTHERHOOD & BODY IMAGE

Though confidence may be essential to a convincing performance, it seems that motherhood, aging, and gaining weight often affect women's self-esteem, and thus their ability to perform. Indeed, several of the women in this research in their mid- to late fifties find dressing up a source of anxiety. Whilst they enjoyed dressing up when they were younger they now feel much less sure of what to wear. They worry about what is 'appropriate' for their age and they feel

much more 'body conscious', aware that their shape and size have changed significantly over the years, as they have gained weight.

> Angie: When I was younger I was a size 10, and I would wear belly tops, and bikinis. But as you get older and you get fatter, you think 'Oh God, I look awful'. You know you have to look for something that would look not as revealing. At my age, I just think, 'No, I'll wear something that covers me up, or looks nice'. [Aged 54, full-time Mother]

> Carol: I hate shopping ... and I absolutely will not now use communal dressing rooms ... Because comparing myself to some nubile 18 year old, with tight little bum and no bosom, doesn't make me feel great. And whatever I put on it doesn't look good because you look across at someone else, ... and it's like you shouldn't be wearing clothes really, you should just be wearing a black sack. [Aged 56, Hospital Manager]

Motherhood appears to have a similar effect. Whilst some mothers say that dressing up is something that they really look forward to, because it is a 'rare' opportunity to reaffirm their individual identity, instead of being seen as 'just' a mother, at the same time they can often 'dread' dressing up because of the way motherhood has changed their body shape. Several talk about putting on weight and how this makes them feel like they have nothing suitable to wear, and in fact in Kim's case she tells me that she does not 'go out' as much as a result.

> Kim: If I was dressed up, it just gives me so much confidence, and I feel so much better about myself. It's for me, to feel good about myself. I look different, I feel different. Instead of being a mum, I'm me ... Just after I had him [her son] two years ago, I would have worn a skirt, or a dress, but after having the third one, who is now six months, I've put on weight. I used to be a size 8 and now I am size 12. I feel bigger and I don't like it, and people are saying to me, 'you have put on weight' and I lost some confidence because of that. So on the weekend I don't go out as much. [Aged 33 full-time Mother]

> Lucy: I actually dread dressing up now ... going out now for me is a complete nightmare because it just accentuates the fact that I have absolutely nothing that fits ... I mean my boobs are just ... over spilling. Thinking ahead of all the things I've got planned, I'm just like 'oh my God!' [Aged 30, Recruitment Consultant]

In talking about age and motherhood then, Carol, Kim and Lucy's comments demonstrate the importance of body image in terms of the dressing up performance, and how gaining weight can subsequently lower self-esteem and one's ability to perform. Their wardrobes have had to adapt to their new size and shape and there is greater anxiety over what to wear. This is shown again in the comments from Veronica, Sarah and Julia. Veronica, for instance, talks about putting on weight and how this makes her far less secure over what to wear for work, as well as for an

upcoming holiday. In fact, she suggests that her anxiety over clothes is so great she wishes she was not going on holiday, and further implies that people she is going with, the 'slim people', will not have this type of insecurity. Julia, too, spends time talking about dressing for work after her maternity leave. The break from work, and change in size due to her pregnancy, has shaken her confidence and she is therefore anxious to dress in a way which will create the 'right impression'.

> Veronica: I think I get very anxious ... especially connected with work. And I use clothes as a safety net, so there is a link there, feeling right in what you are doing and being dressed right ... That has really changed in the last few years, as I've got into my fifties ... you want to do anything you can to raise your confidence and your profile. So make-up, clothes, hair ... I think about it for a long time in advance ... It's like this holiday, I'm going with slim people and we are going to be on a beach, ... so I've had a complete nervous break-down buying things to wear, I don't do ... cropped trousers, t-shirts tend to be too tight around here [her midriff]. I wish I'd not said that I was going now. [Aged 55, HR Manager]
>
> Sarah: I put on a lot of weight, and so I'm finding it difficult, ... I mean every day you seem to feel different in your clothes whatever you wear, especially if you've put on weight, 'oh there's an extra pound there'... I never know what to wear, or what suits me. [Aged 52, Retired Police Officer]
>
> Julia: I'll probably think more about what I'm going to wear when I first meet somebody ... possibly some of it is confidence, the reason I comment on that is because ... I've just gone back to work, after having the baby. I've been off for a year and I kind of probably thought, 'What impression do I want to give?' [Aged 35, Business Analyst]

In her discussion of body image, Grogan (1998) argues that 'feeling slender and feeling confident ... [are] intrinsically linked' (1998: 50), and that women with higher self-esteem 'tend to be more satisfied with their bodies' (194). Her work suggests that women often feel that they would be more confident if they lost weight, and more importantly, that women tend to associate being fashionable with being slim. Like Veronica and Sarah, Grogan's participants felt that their clothes looked better when they were slimmer and further claimed that they would 'feel better' too. As Veronica remarks, there is a link between 'feeling right, and being dressed right', but gaining weight affects women's choice of clothes, and how their clothes look and fit. Gaining weight affects their ability to wear the 'right' clothes for a particular role or context; they feel less comfortable in their performance, less convinced in their own act, and subsequently less confident. As one of Grogan's participants, Jodie (aged 27) comments, if she lost weight she would 'completely change. My clothes, everything.' She would play a different

character, give a different performance. As Jodie puts it, she would 'be a different person' (1998: 50).

Moreover, Grogan notes that 'the physical changes associated with the after effects of pregnancy present particular concern' (1998: 53). Women view gaining weight as a result of pregnancy quite negatively, and consider their bodies less 'aesthetically pleasing' as a result (1998: 53). Though Julia does not suggest at any point in her interview that her body is less attractive as a result of her pregnancy, her anxiety over her work performance is due, in part, to a gain in weight after having her son, as well as time away from the workplace. Different 'stages' in women's lives often affect body shape, their weight and their confidence; they bring with them a change in women's roles and they require different performances. So, just as Julia's weight gain is due to pregnancy, Veronica attributes hers to the menopause. This 'change', she says, has brought questions over what to wear, and lowered her self-esteem. She is no longer the same Veronica; she cannot wear the same clothes, and she has found adapting to this new stage, and new performance, very difficult.

6.1.3 BEING CONFIDENT & BEING CONSPICUOUS

As discussions around dressing up continue they suggest that confidence is not only derived from wearing the 'appropriate' clothes for the part being played, and giving a *convincing* performance. Dressing up is also about giving a *conspicuous* performance. The clothes that are considered more 'dressed up' are 'bolder'; they are more colourful, more detailed and more revealing. In fact, there are many similarities between the clothes that participants describe as more 'dressy', and the items Veblen identifies as conspicuous, such as high heels, skirts, dresses and clothes that are tight fitting (1994 [1899]: 105).

Although participants do not always make a link between these items and wealth, as Veblen suggests, most women associate these items with being conspicuous and thus identify them as a sign of confidence. So, for instance, they often note how they perceive other women to be dressed up and confident because they are wearing clothes that 'draw attention'. Or when discussing their own dress they suggest, like Rachel, that they avoid bold colours or prints, because they do not feel confident enough to wear them.

In Carol's interview she suggests that this confidence may be linked to class position, remarking that confidence is a characteristic which some women are 'groomed' into. Her remarks represent a similar view to Bourdieu (2005 [1984]), who claims that the 'surest sign of legitimacy is self assurance' (253). Privileged classes, he argues, are secure in their position, they are 'sure of what they are', and this, he suggests, may present itself in the form of confidence or arrogance (92).

> Rachel: Alex [her friend] is more confident colour-wise, I wish I could wear more bright colours or more varied colours... If people wear a lot of colour ... they can look really good, and look confident. [Aged 32, Legal Secretary]
>
> Carol: I think if you've got loads of confidence you dress to be seen and if you aren't that sort of confident look-at-me type person you blend in, ... it's the way that it's worn the confidence and I'm not sure it's totally down to social class but it's more likely to come from someone with a higher social class because they are groomed into it. [Aged 56, ... Hospital Manager]

Dressing up is about making a *public* performance, and therefore is about wearing clothes that suit a particular role, and having confidence or self-belief in the part being performed. But as these comments demonstrate, it is also about being *conspicuous*. It is about creating, or drawing in, spectators, to watch that performance. As Carol remarks, confident women 'dress to be seen'. Dressing up is about wearing clothes that gain others' attention, and although some women, such as Rachel, suggest that they prefer to 'blend in', participants do nevertheless associate being dressed up with being conspicuous in relation to other women's dress. Moreover, women like Rachel often comment that if they 'had the confidence' they too would wear clothes that were more dressed up, and more conspicuous. This is perhaps most clearly illustrated by Rosie.

> Rosie: Depending on how confident I'm feeling I'll either go, 'Right sod it, I'm going to wear it anyway,' or 'no, no, no, people are going to laugh,' and then I'll change ... I'll put quite a lot of effort into my make-up if I'm going out, [and] things that people are drawn to. If you're wearing bright orange hot pants people are going to look down at your bottom ...
>
> I think it's probably a confidence thing ... if I saw ... like all these girls are in really short shorts and they've got lovely tanned, bronzed legs and high heels, I wouldn't be seen dead in them because I personally don't feel that I can pull them off ... when there's the other girls wearing them there's like a, 'Damn you! You can pull them off and you look good.' [Aged 23, Engineer]

Rosie makes the link between dressing up, being conspicuous, and being confident, not only in relation to her own dress but in reference to the dress of other women, so both as the 'surveyor' and the 'surveyed' (Berger, 1972). Depending on how confident she feels she will wear clothes that 'people are drawn to', and at the same time she, like Carol and Rachel, considers it inevitable that women who are conspicuously dressed will also be confident. Moreover, Rosie makes links between confidence, conspicuousness and looking good, which is yet another important aspect of the dressing up performance.

6.1.3.1 BEING CONSPICUOUS & LOOKING GOOD

Chapter 7 explores the notion of looking good in more detail and examines how class distinctions in regard to looking good inform differences in terms of women's buying criteria and consumption habits. But Rosie's comments here indicate that looking good can also result in a more confident and a more conspicuous performance. As Skeggs' (1997: 107) interviewee, Pam, comments 'If you know you look good you can do anything, you think I'm the most gorgeous, clever, wonderful person in this room. If you look bad, you just want to hide.' Skeggs goes on to argue that 'being seen not to look good is to be seen without confidence', and that 'Pam feels that her presence is eradicated if she does not look good' (1997: 107). But Pam's confidence, or lack of it, is only dependent on *her* perception of what looks good and what *she* thinks her audience will deem as looking good. It may well be the case that her audience has a different notion of looking good, and therefore may not agree with her, although they might still believe that she is confident. This is demonstrated in the comments here from Kim.

> Kim: I see these girls and they've got like pumps on, but they are luminous colours, and they've got those slouch things, the leg warmers, ... I mean everyone to their own if that's how they want to dress, if that's how they feel comfortable dressed you go for it, she's got to have a lot of confidence to wear that because that is drawing a lot of attention to yourself and I'm thinking, 'everyone is looking' but she just didn't care. [Aged 33, full-time Mother]

Kim identifies the girls as being dressed up. She describes them as wearing conspicuous, brightly coloured outfits, which 'draws a lot of attention', and as a result she believes the girls to be confident, and to have self-belief, because they are drawing spectators. Yet Kim (the audience) does not think that the girls (the actors) look good. A similar situation is demonstrated in the discussion below, between Emily and her friends, where again the girl (the actor), who they saw dressed in a conspicuous yellow jump-suit, in a local pub, is described as confident, but she is not considered by Emily (the audience) to look good.

> Emily: I look at people who stand out ... the girl who was in the yellow pants suit in the Slug and Lettuce (Pub)...
> Naomi: Which one?
> Sally: The yellow shorts?
> KA: Can you tell me about that?
> Naomi: It was like a jumpsuit but with shorts and short sleeves, an all-in-one, yellow ... kind of jump suit, did up to about mid-boob. She had horrific cellulite ... it didn't look good on her which is why it stood out ... that's what draws attention. I mean okay, if a really stunning girl with legs up to her arm pits and a lovely tan was wearing it, we

> would have gone, 'Yeah nice suit'. [Emily Aged 27, Marketing Consultant; Naomi Aged 25, IT Consultant; Sally Aged 27, IT Consultant]

In each case the actors may have had confidence because, like Skeggs's (1997) participant Pam describes, they felt they looked good. Moreover, the actors may also have thought that their audience would think they looked good, too, because they have assumed that their audience takes the same view as themselves. However, as these comments show, that is not necessarily the case. Looking good, as chapter 7 clearly demonstrates, is highly subjective. And decisions over whether an individual looks good or not are vastly dependent upon an individual's cultural capital, and class habitus. Yet an individual can still be perceived as confident by an audience, and still carry off a convincing performance, even if they are not considered to 'look good', which suggests that being confident is dependent upon the self-belief on the part of the actor, rather than the audience. It is important that the actor thinks she looks good.

> Norma: If you have confidence it actually doesn't matter ... people seem to be able to wear anything ... It's if *you* feel you look good, I really don't think someone's going to go 'urgh'... [Aged 66, Retired]

Moreover, these comments also suggest that there is a reciprocal relationship between conspicuousness and confidence. It is not just that dressing up inspires confidence, but that if you are confident and you have 'self-belief', you are more conspicuous, as Sally explains.

> Sally: if you dress in something that you feel comfortable in ... it makes you feel more confident in what you are wearing and you wear it better... so people notice you. [Aged 27, IT Consultant]

6.1.3.2 INSECURITY & BLENDING IN

However, while for some women dressing up gives them greater confidence, for others dressing up is a source of great anxiety precisely because they feel they lack confidence. As a result, they choose clothes that are 'appropriate' for the social context, but which are as 'inconspicuous' as possible, so as to 'blend in' and avoid attracting attention. Clarke and Miller (2002) argue that 'even where individuals are highly knowledgeable about matters of taste and clothing, they find the everyday encounters of aesthetic choice ostensibly fraught' (2002: 193). They claim that the roots of this anxiety lie not in power relations in the form of 'cultural capital' but rather in the increasing lack of a 'fashion authority', and an uncertainty about what is 'normative', on account of the growing individualisation of society and the democratisation of fashion (2002: 209-11). Yet the data from this research suggests that anxiety, or lack of confidence, though attributable

to motherhood or age, can also be closely linked to class because it is so associated with the woman's perception of the social space and social audience, and whether she is accustomed to that social space and thus whether she feels she is in a 'secure' or 'insecure' environment.

Tseëlon (1995) argues that 'in a secure environment one feels approved, accepted, loved, inconspicuous – in short, confident, and psychologically invisible', whereas in an 'insecure environment' one feels 'on display, on show' and as if one is 'being examined and measured' (1995: 56). Thus, an 'insecure environment' is one in which a woman lacks confidence, and consequently chooses to wear clothes that are more 'inconspicuous', allowing her to just 'blend in', as Rachel explains.

> Rachel: Sometimes you go out and you feel really uncomfortable. I bought a pair of silver shoes once, they are very nice, but I just felt like I was wearing silver shoes all night ... I'd never wear them again. ... I was really conscious of them, they stood out... I was thinking that everyone was looking at my shoes ... I wouldn't want to be the one that stands out, I'd rather look like everyone else and blend in. That is dreadful isn't it really. [Aged 32, Legal Secretary]

Women are much more likely to feel 'insecure' if they are not familiar with the social space or the audience, and are therefore unaware of what the protocols or 'standards' are. 'Dressed inappropriately for a situation, we feel vulnerable and embarrassed ... [because] of the shame of failing to meet the standards required of one by the moral order of the social space' (Entwistle, 2004 [2000]: 337-8). Whether an environment is familiar and secure or not is, however, related to class position, for, as Bourdieu (2005 [1984]: 172) argues, our cultural practices and pursuits, our lifestyle choices, such as where we go, what we eat, the clothes we wear, the books we read, are the product of our class location. Consequently when a woman is put in an environment which is unfamiliar to her, because it is not something akin to her habitus, she lacks confidence, and is more anxious about what to wear because she does not possess the right type of emotional and cultural awareness, or knowledge for that environment (Skeggs et al., 2007: 14).

This is clearly illustrated by Diane, who is a 41 and single mum of two, who describes herself as having a 'working class background'. Her job as a receptionist at a secondary school means that she is often invited on staff trips, and so she tells me how worried she had been about what to wear on a recent staff outing to the theatre.

> Diane: I find things like that [staff trips] really difficult to know what to wear ... so I tend to go boring, black and white or you know something really safe, ... things that are neutral-ish, you know, so it doesn't matter if the do is slightly posher...
>
> I went to go and see Lord of the Rings at the Theatre Royal, I agonised over what to wear for that, and so I had a black skirt, which is almost ankle length and it's just got a few round silver beads about 2 inches up from the hem, ... so I wore that with a dark top. And I felt smart enough to go but I thought I won't stand out, I won't look too over dressed, even if they all turned up in jeans, which half of them were, but I felt okay because we were out in London and I thought I looked tidy ... It's safe, it's completely neutral ... And I tend to carry jewellery in my pocket so that if I need to, then I can put something on ... because I'm a coward when it comes to dressing...
>
> I think if I went out to these things a lot more I probably wouldn't [worry] so much because I think you get in the habit of thinking, when you go out a lot more you kind of know what to wear, but I think because I don't go out that much I do worry a lot more, and I until I get there and I've blended in ... I do get stressed. [Aged 41, School Receptionist]

Diane is unsure of how to dress on these outings because they are unfamiliar to her. Due to her working class background she does not have the relevant 'cultural capital' to know what to wear or how 'dressed up' she should be. She does not have a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1990a). Instead, she uses clothes 'as armour against an uncomfortable situation' (Tseëlon, 1995: 61), choosing garments that she considers 'neutral' and 'safe' so as to 'blend in'. These clothes are chosen due to a lack of confidence, and yet at the same they give her enough confidence so that she 'feels okay'. Interestingly, she notes that many of the other staff members turned up in jeans, which Diane perceives to be more casual, less dressed up, which may indicate that the teachers on the trip perceive the context, the social space and audience, differently from Diane, possibly as a result of their differing class location and familiarity with the social space.

It is not just those who are in unfamiliar spaces who feel anxious and insecure, however. Middle class women often talk about their anxiety over dressing up, and wanting to 'blend in'. This has been demonstrated already, with the comments from Veronica, Carol and Rachel. The cause of this anxiety appears to lie with their wider perception of 'public' space and far greater concern with 'visibility' and how they might be perceived and judged by others.

6.2 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACE

One of the key findings of the research is that dressing up is indicative of class precisely because of the relationship with 'visibility' and 'public spaces'. Dressing up is concerned with giving a 'public' performance, and it therefore refers to those clothes which are going to be 'seen' by an audience that is 'significant', whose opinions and judgements matter (Tseëlon, 1995: 55). But what is considered public or private space is not the same across all social classes, and thus while weddings are considered an occasion to dress up by women of all classes, in the context of going shopping, or going to work, there is far less consistency. Consequently dressing up operates as a mode of distinction because it indicates whether a woman perceives a social space to be public or not, and whether she considers the audience to be significant.

6.2.1 MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN: BEING VISIBLE

In his work *Distinction* (2005 [1984]), Bourdieu argues that the middle class have a 'Berkeleian vision' of the social world, which centres on the way in which they are 'perceived to be' (2004 [1984]: 253). So it should come as little surprise that middle class women have a far wider definition of 'public' space and consider almost any audience to be 'significant'. As they are '[c]ommitted to the symbolic', and keen to present a social character which 'inspires confidence', Bourdieu suggests that the middle class are 'haunted by the appearance [they] offer to others and the judgement they make of it' (2005 [1984]: 253). As a result, any space with an audience becomes one in which they feel 'visible' and thus requires some consideration, or preparation, in relation to dress. They are, as Tseëlon (1992) would describe, far more 'self-conscious'; keen to manage the impression they give to others. Consequently they consider how their dress may affect the audience's perception of them, what negative judgements or conclusions their audience might make, and they alter their dress accordingly, so as to present a favourable image. For instance, Jane's concern here is that her Yoga class might not take her seriously if they see her wearing a Buddhist symbol around her neck. She says this is particularly true of audiences at 'health clubs' and thus, anticipating their possible reaction, she makes the conscious decision not to wear it on these occasions.

> Jane: The night before ... I will make sure that I've put ... cords out, and a belt and socks and stuff, and underwear, which isn't going to show through the clothes ... If I know I'm going somewhere where people might not like this [points to necklace] the little Om sign, it's safer to leave it off ... if you see a teacher with an Om sign ... they think, 'oh no this is going to be a wacko', [particularly] at health clubs ... they just want, 'look teach me how to do the bloody splits' ... I won't wear it, ... I would probably either take it off in the changing rooms, or not bother at all. [Aged 29, Lecturer & Yoga Instructor]

As Jane's comments also show, for middle class women dressing up not only takes place for weddings or birthdays, and nor is it confined to 'going out'. Instead, dressing up occurs in the context of work, restaurants, dinner at friends, pubs, shopping, and even within the confines of their own home. Although the level of dressing up differs for these various occasions and venues, as some situations are more 'visible' than others, all these spaces are in some sense considered public. Therefore, they are perceived to be spaces in which women need to give a particular 'impression' or at least 'maintain standards', as they may be subject to judgements by others whose opinions matter. As a result, even the school run or a trip to the supermarket becomes a space in which some middle class women feel 'visible' and thus feel a need to engage in some form of dressing up.

> Julia: We had a fun day recently [at her son's nursery], and it was a really hot day, now previously to that I was in the garden wearing a t-shirt top but it was like, just a sleeveless, I went and changed ... because I was specifically going somewhere like that I thought I'll probably dress a bit more conservative. [Aged 35, Business Analyst]

> Penny: Oh I think about what I'm wearing even if I'm going to the supermarket ... God I hate the thought of being seen by someone when I'm getting the shopping, in tracksuit bottoms and baseball cap! [Aged 31, Art Director, Advertising]

6.2.2 MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN: MAINTAINING STANDARDS & CLASS DISTINCTIONS

Moreover, for many middle class women some form of dressing up is even necessary when they are at home alone, and there is no audience, except themselves. Not only are they concerned that they might be 'caught out' by an unexpected caller, a neighbour or a friend; they create an 'unseen audience' or an 'imagined audience' (Goffman, 1990 [1959]: 87), or are themselves an audience to which they have to perform. We can see this more clearly when we look at Norma's comments below. Though initially she says that if she does not like what she sees in the mirror she will tell herself that 'no-one is looking', she then explains how she puts on make-up to make herself feel better. Norma operates as her own, or an imagined, audience and she makes judgements on her appearance accordingly.

> Norma: If I'm looking in the mirror and I'm not happy with myself and I just think, 'no one's looking', so if I've got to go out, I just think, 'no one's looking', and it's so easy to say, 'no-one's looking, I don't need to bother', ... but if you wake up in the morning and look in the mirror and think, 'oh you look awful', you put a bit of make-up on it makes your face more alive, and I'm not doing that for anyone else, I'm doing it for myself, it's to make yourself feel better about yourself. [Aged 66, Retired]

So concerned are they with 'seeming', as Bourdieu would argue (2005 [1984]: 200), it appears that middle class women are keen to 'maintain standards', or as Vinken (2005) might argue, their 'disguise' (2005: 28), almost all the time, while simultaneously concealing any backstage activities, for fear of being 'caught out', and several commented that they wore make-up even when they were home alone. Moreover, as Goffman identifies, participants 'forgo or conceal action ... inconsistent with standards' (1990 [1959]: 50) that they themselves set. These are often the moral standards of an 'idealised' or 'aspirational self' (Woodward, 2007: 88), which, based upon middle class values, then becomes the universally 'normal', 'good' and 'appropriate' stand for all (Savage, 2003: 536). Many acknowledge, for instance, that they have clothes which they will only wear in the house when they are completely on their own. More than just 'private' dress, this type of clothing could be considered 'secret' dress (Eicher, 2001). Only worn in private spaces, without even an imagined audience, this type of clothing can actually lead women to avoid social audiences entirely, because they feel too embarrassed to be seen by anyone else.

> Rachel: I do have stuff that I would be embarrassed to open the door in, but generally I try not to wear those clothes ... there are some things that I would wear in the house that I wouldn't go out in, like tracksuits and t-shirts, things that you shouldn't wear. [Aged 32, Legal Secretary]

> Jessica: I have clothes that I would only wear in the house and if I was wearing them and someone came to the door I just wouldn't answer it. [Aged 31, Civil Servant]

Moreover, several of the women describe the embarrassment they feel when they have 'got it wrong' and have been unable to 'correct' or 'conceal' 'mistakes' that they have made during 'the performance' (Goffman, 1990 [1959]: 52). For example, Lucy describes how she had worn a top for work that she later realised was too low cut, and how she has since 'vowed' to 'never wear it to work again'. Aware of the embarrassment caused when getting it wrong, and in their keenness to 'get it right', it appears that many middle class women will spend quite some time preparing what to wear and taking advice from relatives, particularly mothers, as shown in Chapter 8.

> Carol: If I'm inappropriately dressed, so if I've gone to lunch with a friend and everyone is dressed up and made up, and I'm not, then I would be very aware ... [when going shopping for holiday clothes] I went with a friend who's got really good taste. And actually she does it as a business, she is a personal shopper, but she is a really good mate, and so whenever I'm going to spend a lot on clothes I will phone her and say, 'Come with me', because I'm less likely to make a mistake. [Aged 56, Hospital Manager]

There is, as Bourdieu claims, a desire amongst middle class participants to be seen 'in a good light' (2005 [1984]: 253). For these women it seems that 'you are what you appear to be' (Palmer, 2005: 184) and therefore, as Goffman (1990 [1959]) notes, they are keen to hide or 'sacrifice' those clothes that they feel are at odds with the impression they are trying to give (1990 [1959]: 45) or the 'proper' standards they have set. The motivation for this, however, does not appear to follow Bourdieu's line of argument of aspiration, and upward social mobility, but instead seemed to be driven by a desire for class distinction . Bourdieu claims that the middle class' pretension is a product of their ambiguous position in the social hierarchy, and their desire to be upwardly mobile. He describes the middle class position as 'second in command' (254), a position which he argues 'predisposes' them to perceive the social world in terms of the symbolic and thus leads to 'bluff' or 'imitation' in an effort to 'appropriate the appearance, so as to have the reality' (253). Yet, the women interviewed seem less concerned with social mobility, and far more concerned with differentiating themselves from the working class. Much of their discussion about maintaining standards or 'being decent' is talked about in opposition to the dress of women who middle class participants perceive to be working class. Thus, rather than trying to aspire to an upper class position it appears that for middle class women the benefit or 'profit' (2005 [1984]: 202) of maintaining standards comes from a need to distance themselves from working class women who they identify through a perceived 'lack of effort'.

> Sarah: I just think when you go out you should look respectable, and some people don't notice that. They just put on these big jogging bottoms and big hunky sweatshirts, and they all look exactly the same. I like people to dress up. [Aged 52, Retired Police Officer]
>
> Liz: For example you do tend to know the people who are economically challenged by what they are wearing ... whether it's because they don't care how they look, or don't understand that you can get nice things in a cheap shop, ... it's tracksuits, sports clothes, leisure clothes. [Aged 41, Book-keeper]
>
> Chloe: I think there is a certain amount of class that people should have, like if girls are going about in tracksuit bottoms and trainers they just don't really match up to standards ... I just look down on them. I know it's really bad to think that but you see them and you think, 'oh they're pikeys'. [Aged 18, Student]

Possibly it is because of the judgements that middle class women make of working class women, and their 'commitment to the symbolic', that they have a far greater anxiety about the way in which others will perceive them. Certainly they do not want to be seen as working class. They are particularly aware of the working class connotations associated with wearing 'tracksuit

bottoms' and 'trainers' in public spaces, anywhere other than a gym, and feel that this type of dress is unsuitable for any other social space because it is too casual.

> Jane: You can tell working classes ... sportswear in the street, walking around town in your tracksuit bottoms, tracksuit bottoms and normal footwear ... for me, it's become associated with a certain underclass, it's chavvy ... And they don't seem to have a sense of what's formal, what's informal. I've been brought up better. I've been brought up to know that you don't wear sports clothes when you're going to the Opera... [Aged 29, Lecturer & Yoga Instructor]
>
> Kerry: I just don't wear flat shoes or trainers, unless I'm at the gym. [Aged 25, Marketing Consultant]

As Bocock (1998) and many other suggest (Bottero, 2004; Skeggs, 1997; Southerton, 2000), class is about demarcation and difference, rather than class consciousness, aspiration and upwards social mobility. These women are making distinctions between themselves and others on the basis of dress, and while middle class values and styles of clothing have become the social norm, and the accepted social 'standard', 'alternatives are negatively evaluated' (Skeggs, Wood and Thumin, 2007: 2). This is clearly demonstrated by Jane's comments above. While she feels that her code of dress is normal and correct, others' i.e., working class people's 'sense of what is formal or informal' is deemed unacceptable.

6.2.3 MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN: MAINTAINING STANDARDS AT WORK

While middle class women's motivation for dressing up is much more a desire for class distinction rather than upward social mobility, these women do nevertheless identify some financial 'profit' in 'making an effort', in reference to the workplace. Bourdieu argues that those classes who realise the benefit of 'self-presentation', and consequently make the 'investment of time, effort sacrifice and care', can reasonably expect to profit both materially and symbolically (2005 [1984]: 202). In a labour market where appearance is seen as a key part of the job, or correlated to performance, 'beauty and deportment most strongly contribute to occupational value' (202), and consequently middle class participants are all too aware of the importance of dressing up and maintaining standards in the workplace.

Unlike many of the working class participants, who are either full-time mothers or have to wear a uniform to work, the middle class participants often have to negotiate what is appropriate for work within the context of a dress code which many note is increasingly 'flexible'. Although it might be possible to wear jeans, or trainers, and stay within the confines of what is allowed, middle class women are keen to dress up for work, again in order to make a performance, and

create an impression or 'personal front' which in this 'setting' is 'smart' and 'professional' (Goffman, 1990 [1959]: 110). The comments made by Jane earlier, in reference to her Yoga class and Om sign necklace, demonstrate the importance for middle class women to dress appropriately in order to 'manage' the impression that their audience gains. Here, too, Faye talks about how dressing up for work is important in order to maintain a professional image.

> Faye: I'm in a professional job, I have to look reasonably smart and professional ... the one thing I make sure I don't do is slum it down. You will very, very rarely ever find me in work in jeans. You'll either see me in a suit, smart clothes or casual smart, but still fairly smart. [Aged 44, University Sponsorship Manager]

In complete contrast to Hill (2005), who suggests that 'even the workplace has become susceptible to the desire for casual dressing – with the spread of policies like "dress-down Fridays"', it seems that for middle class women there continues to be an 'internalised' 'code of dress' (Entwistle, 1997: 319) which insists that it is important to 'dress up' for work. So much so, in fact, that rather than 'dress down Friday' being seen as an occasion to dress more informally, 'dress down Friday' is actually considered by women to be a day when it is even more important to dress up, partly because one may be going out after work, but also because there are no limits on how dressed up one can be.

> Jessica: Dress down Fridays, they were actually dress up Fridays ... because we got the free rein to ... maybe wear boots that you wouldn't normally wear to work because they're too high to walk in, but you'd make the effort to actually walk in them on a Friday because you might be going out that night. [Aged 31, Civil Servant]

Instead of placing emphasis on 'comfort and informality', as Hill (2005: 72) suggests, for middle class women the workplace is again a public space in which their 'self-value' is determined in part by appearance. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain 'proper', i.e. middle class (Savage, 2003; Skeggs et al., 2007), standards of dress at work in order to present the 'right' image, although, as Veronica's comments below demonstrate, dress is also used at work to create distance, or distinction, from working class counterparts.

> Veronica: Sometimes I think unfavourable thoughts [about women at work] ... for example some of the office people ... I think dress quite badly. They wear trainers and fleeces ... and I think that is not really appropriate for the office ... And also they could look so much better. They could make more of themselves. Some of them are stunningly attractive and have really nice figures ... and I think 'ooh I'd really like to do you a make-over' ... they need something. [Aged 55, HR Manager]

Moreover, Veronica's remarks further highlight the middle class notion that working class women have the 'potential' or 'inner qualities', to achieve the 'proper' attire and 'proper' performance, given the 'right techniques, right psychology, ... and the right clothes' (Skeggs et al., 2007: 11). Rather than seeing working class women as having a differing idea of what is suitable for work, or what is an 'appropriate' performance, they perceive their own ideas as legitimate and the 'norm', and thus working class women as working outside that, and again failing to 'maintain standards'.

6.2.4 MIDDLE CLASS DRESSING UP & MOTHERHOOD

The notion that one should 'maintain standards', though apparent throughout all middle class interviews, is particularly noticeable in conversations with women who have children. Several middle class women commented how they felt it was important to continue 'making an effort' both at work and at home, despite the fact that they now had less time because they were looking after their children. This is another example, therefore, of how motherhood influences and informs the concept of dressing up.

> Elizabeth: At work ... I am trying to make an impression ... for client meetings, or I am just in the office. And then the only standard there is to try and keep it raised so that the others don't slack out completely. I think you have lead by example ... Your clients need to forget that actually what you're thinking about is your baby, you need to be completely focused on them, so I suppose a long black coat or something semi-fitted, but very smart and looking, something that makes you look more streamlined ... professional. [Aged 42, Designer]

> Julia: When you've been off work and you've got a baby ... comfort becomes vital, key. But I would still say I didn't want to lose my identity. I still wanted to dress up, ... I would still get up in the morning and get dressed I wouldn't stay in my pyjamas all day, and I'd still put a bit of make-up on, I didn't want to be a chavvy mum. [Aged 35, Business Analyst]

Remarks such as Elizabeth's and Julia's highlight two key aspects of dressing up in relation to motherhood and class. Firstly, they suggest that these women do not want to be identified simply as mothers, but that they continue to perform many different social roles. In fact, for Elizabeth it is vital that her social role as a mother is concealed entirely at work, as if it were a 'backstage' role, so that she can maintain a good relationship with her clients. Secondly, as Julia's comments demonstrate, the participants again want to distance themselves from the idea of a working class mother, who they perceive as failing to dress up and make a performance.

6.2.5 WORKING CLASS DRESSING UP & MOTHERHOOD

The comments of middle class women are markedly different to those made by working class women, many of whom see being a mother as their primary social role. In fact, for most of the working class women interviewed it is really only on Friday and Saturday evenings, or on their shopping trips to buy something for 'going out', that they see themselves in any social role other than a mother. Being a mother is a key aspect of their identity, and it has significant consequences for the ways in which they perceive social spaces and social audiences, and thus how they dress. So, for example, many working class women describe how their time is divided up between the week, when they are 'at home with the kids', and the weekend when they 'go out'. And unlike the middle class women, working class women tend not to see the need to 'dress up' during the week, because of their mothering commitments. For instance, Joy tells me 'because we are mums ... we don't have to get up every morning and spend two hours doing hair and make-up'. Rather the primary concern for these women is that their clothes are practical and functional, as Bourdieu would say 'realistic', because they are 'running around after the kids' and consequently, during the week, they give far greater priority to 'being' than 'seeming' (2005 [1984]: 200).

Moreover, their role as a mother has significant implications for the way in which they perceive social spaces. More concerned with 'being', they regard many of the spaces which middle class participants perceive to be 'public' as 'private' and often consider the audience insignificant, as they feel they will be identified as a mother and judged accordingly. So, for example, if they are going to the local shops, the market or seeing neighbours or friends they do not feel 'self-conscious' (Tseëlon, 1992) in the sense that they have to give a performance, and consequently it is necessary only to be 'clothed' rather than to 'dress up' (De Beauvoir, 1996 [1949]: 543), because they are visiting these spaces in their capacity as a mother.

> Joy: If I am with the baby and I'm looking ... bad, I think people look at me and think, 'Oh she looks awful, but she's got a baby', if I went somewhere without the baby I would be more self conscious, because they wouldn't know that I had a baby, ... so with the baby I have something to hide behind, I have an excuse. [Aged 19, Fast Food Restaurant Worker PT]

> Mandy: I think I'm more worried about what people think when I am out clubbing than what they do day-to-day, because you know I've got two kids, so you know if I look like crap, I've got an excuse ... [Aged 21, full-time Mother]

Skeggs (1997) argues that as her working class participants got older and had families, 'the space and time to act out femininity was more limited and trivialised in relation to their family

responsibilities and economic worries, and could barely be justified' (1997: 108). And similarly Coopley, O'Connell and Porter (2005: 99) suggest that life as a working class woman is 'as much time-constrained as it is cash constrained'. 'Looking after a husband and children, washing clothing, keeping the home clean and tidy and shopping around for the best bargains on a limited budget [are] time consuming activities' (2005: 99) and this implies that these women do not have time to dress up.

But whilst it may be true that 'family responsibilities' do leave less time for dressing up for working class women, there appears to be a clear difference in attitude which means that working class women feel that being identified as a mother lessens the obligation to make a performance, whereas for middle class women there is a continued desire to maintain particular 'standards' despite one's other social roles. In Skeggs et al.'s discussion of reality television, they argue that working class women adopt more 'traditional modes of femininity' which not only value 'good parenting' but place them in 'opposition to aspiration and social mobility' (2008: 13). 'Making maternal and domestic sacrifices for the family' are viewed as morally 'the right choice' (13) and perhaps similar attitudes exists in relation to dress too, so that working class women feel that time should be spent caring for the family, rather than dressing up.

6.2.6 WORKING CLASS LOCAL AUDIENCES & PRIVATE SPACE

The class difference in attitude regarding 'public' and 'private' space, however, is not something which is simply a consequence of motherhood; it is also a more general difference in attitude as to what is appropriate for certain social spaces. Goffman (1990 [1959]) in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, makes only a few class references, but he does note that 'in working-class *quartiers* in Paris in the early morning, women feel they have the right to extend the backstage to their circle of neighbouring shops, and they patter down for milk and fresh bread, wearing bedroom slippers, bathrobe, hair net and no make-up' (1990 [1959]: 128). Though only one of the women I interviewed, Becky, admitted to visiting her local newsagents in just her nightdress there was a general feeling amongst the working class participants that they did not need to dress up to visit their local shops, because they knew the people there. The audience was familiar and insignificant and thus they were 'invisible' (Tseëlon, 1995: 55).

> Kelly: If I'm going out I'll put effort in, but if I'm going just round here I'll just wear tracksuit bottoms and just a top ... because I know everyone and I know everyone's the same as me, because it's just a little area you don't get to see many people, so I wear just anything... [Aged 18, Unemployed]

> Trisha: Generally jeans and t-shirts during the day because I walk the dogs a lot there is no point in dressing up ... day-to-day, I like to dress up in the evenings, but be casual during the day. [Aged 43, full-time Mother]
>
> Yvonne: I'm a dressy person, but I have to be casual because I don't go nowhere really, you know ... I would wear like a jeans, jeans and t-shirt or a shirt ... I'm only getting dressed up if I'm going out. [Aged 47, Care Worker]

These women, 'unlike the middle classes, who have a degree of anxiety about external appearances' (Bourdieu, 2004 [1979]: 201), do not demonstrate the same level of concern about the audiences they may face locally, and furthermore do not appear to consider 'unseen' or 'imagined' audiences in relation to their everyday dress (Goffman, 1990 [1959]: 84). As Bourdieu (2004 [1979]: 200) identifies, working class women whilst 'at home', which includes not only their house but the surrounding area, are far less worried about creating an impression 'for others' and more concerned with 'being'. Unlike the middle classes they do not see any need to dress up, they generally have far less need for any pretence (Tyler and Bennett, 2010), and they are not concerned about being 'caught out', 'concealing activity' or 'maintaining standards'. Indeed, this difference in attitude was even apparent in interviews, with two of the participants carrying out the interview dressed in vest tops and pyjama bottoms. In fact, Lisa opened the front door dressed in a vest top and knickers. Consequently, their clothing, for what is considered 'private space', is, as Bourdieu suggests, practical, functional and cheap, and consists mainly of jeans, t-shirts, tracksuit bottoms and trainers bought either from Primark or local market stalls.

6.2.7 WORKING CLASS DRESSING UP & 'GOING OUT'

However, whilst Bourdieu's arguments appear relevant in terms of private dress, his notion that the working class is solely concerned with 'being' means that he neglects to explore the occasions on which this group of women dresses up. Although the women interviewed are chiefly occupied with 'being' during the week, with regard to the weekend they are far more concerned with dressing up and 'going out'. In the context of shopping, for example, the women describe how they see people that they do not know in larger towns, and thus they feel it is necessary to wear jeans, rather than tracksuits bottoms. Unlike their local market, the audience in Croydon or the West End is 'unfamiliar' and more 'significant', and thus it becomes a 'public' space. Consequently the participants describe how they are more concerned about how others will perceive them and how they do not want to be seen as 'someone who doesn't bother with themselves'.

> Angie: Well if I'm not going nowhere, then baggy t-shirts and ripped up trousers and things, if I'm doing the garden. If was going shopping then I'd do the same, but if I am going *out* shopping I put on some trousers and blouse ... I'd smarten up a bit to go to Croydon. [54, full-time Mother]
>
> Kelly: If I'm round here because I know everyone and I know everyone's the same as me, because it's just a little area you don't get to see many people, so I wear just anything, if I don't want to go out I'm just going down to the shop, but if I'm going out to Croydon or any other place I make sure I look good ... you don't know who you might see. [Aged 18, Unemployed]

However, for most of the working class women interviewed dressing up has quite clear temporal and spatial boundaries; and it is primarily related to 'going out' in the evenings, to nightclubs, bars and pubs. These spaces and venues, visited 'at night', are deemed 'public' spaces. The audience is highly 'significant' and thus it is important to 'look good', to give a performance, and to make the right impression. As Trisha comments, 'You go out to impress'. As Skeggs suggests, it seems that 'going out' is something that these women plan and look forward to (1997: 106) and the participants describe how immense effort is put into preparing for, and getting ready to, 'go out'. They will put on make-up, do their hair, paint or wear false fingernails and toenails. And they will wear clothes that are 'more revealing', 'smarter', detailed, colourful and conspicuous; significantly different from what they would wear every day. For working class women, it seems that dressing up is very much 'something special as compared to the ordinary' (Tseëlon, 1992: 506). In some cases the women told me it would take them up to 3 hours to get ready, and they would go shopping at least once a week to find something to wear.

> Joy: Normally ... I don't bother, so when I get dressed up people are like 'Wow!' [Aged 19, Fast Food Restaurant Worker PT]
>
> Kim: When I do dress up, when I do go out ... I do my hair and make-up ... the false nails go on, everything ... spray tan, hair extensions, false nails, false eye lashes... [Aged 33, full-time Mother]
>
> Kelly: If I know I'm going out the week before then I'll go out and buy new clothes ... I prefer to get ready on my own because I can't concentrate ... I'll think about how I'm doing my hair first and then everything has to follow that. [Aged 18, Unemployed]

As Skeggs (1997) found, 'going out gave them a reason for dressing up' (1997: 106), which they otherwise would not have, and while working class women may not dress up as frequently as middle class women, the public performance is no less important to them. The distinction between dressing up or not dressing up, private and public spaces, is more definite; it has much

clearer temporal and spatial boundaries, but dressing up still takes place and it still requires the women's time and 'effort', preparation and 'care', thought and 'consciousness' (Tseëlon, 1995: 55). In fact, in many respects because dressing up occurs much less frequently for these women, it requires much more time and more effort, and perhaps this too is part of the reason why it takes place much less often.

> Mandy: On a day-to-day basis I pick my clothes out just randomly, it takes me about half an hour. When I'm going out, on the other hand, it will take me about 2 hours to decide what I'm wearing, and that not like [including] having a bath, doing my make-up, ... that's just on choosing my clothes ... decide what goes with what, what shoes to wear, what bag to wear. [Aged 21, full-time Mother]

Whereas dressing up is almost a daily activity for middle class women, then, for working class women it is much more of an 'event', and therefore the planning and preparation that goes into dressing up is, as Skeggs notes, 'enormous' (1997: 106). Due to the responsibilities of family life, most working class women only 'go out' on a Friday and Saturday night, either for birthday parties, social club gatherings or drinks with friends. In most cases, they spend time leading up to the 'event' thinking about what they are going to wear, and often shopping for something new.

> Angie: I'm going to party soon at the end of the month ... I'm going to buy something new for that. Because that's a fortieth, and the friend that I'm going with has seen me in everything I go out in. So I'm going to look for something new. [Aged 54, full-time Mother]
>
> Lisa: If I've been told in advance that a special occasion is coming up, ... you know it's going to be expensive ... I'll save up so I can get a good outfit, and then I'll go shopping. But if it's just like going out, like a night out on the town, then I'll decide like the week before. [Aged 26, full-time Mother]
>
> Louisa: I've got my friend's fortieth coming up but also it's her son's naming day, so I have to find something that will do both, ... what I tend to do is buy stuff even when I've got nothing to go to, in the sale, ... then I know I've got something. [Aged 38, Nursery Nurse]

The remarks from Angie, Lisa and Louisa highlight two key issues in terms of dressing up and public performances, for working class women. Firstly, they reaffirm that instances of dressing up, and public performance, are much more of an 'occasion' for these women, such as a birthday party or a christening, rather than a general daily affair. Secondly, all the women note that it is important when dressing up to wear something that the audience has not seen them in before,

which often means buying something new, specifically for the occasion. In some respects this again relates to the notion of looking good, which for working class women, as discussed in chapter 7, is very much associated with wearing fashionable, 'up to date' trends. But it sits in contrast to middle class women who although they *may* buy new clothes when dressing up, as Veronica did for her holiday, or Elizabeth did for her birthday party, do not see new outfits as a requirement of dressing up.

> Mandy: I don't like to go to the same place wearing the same stuff that I've worn before ... Even though I may never see the same people there again, I always get that feeling that 'she wore that last time she was here', you know what I mean? So you know I always have to have something new ... [Aged 21, full-time Mother]

For Mandy there is much greater concern, or anxiety, over how the audience may view her in these spaces because they are 'public' environments. Even though she may never see the same people again, it is important for her to make a 'good impression' and she feels she will be judged negatively if her audience notices that she is not wearing something new. Although Tseëlon (1992) does not acknowledge the role of class, or any class differences, in her discussion of self presentation and dress, her conclusions regarding dress and self-consciousness seem particularly relevant here. 'Conscious attention to appearance', she argues, 'is a way of dealing with evaluation apprehension by generating the self-confidence needed to face stressful situations' (1992: 510). By wearing something new, Mandy feels that she looks good, and is therefore more confident in an environment in which she feels she will be more 'visible' and thus judged by others (Tseëlon, 1995).

Moreover, Tseëlon (1992) further suggests that 'attention to appearance' can be read as a 'sign of insecurity', which may also explain why working class women make such efforts over their appearance when dressing up; by wearing false eyelashes, spray tans and hair extensions for example. As discussed from the outset of this chapter, dressing up is not only concerned with a public performance, but it is a feminine performance too. And for working class women it seems that dressing up is motivated much more by a desire to be 'feminine' and to be an 'object of the gaze' (Berger, 1972), than is the case with their middle class counterparts. Yet, Skeggs (1997) argues that because femininity is a middle class construct, working class women are distanced from it, and thus although working class women may attempt to perform femininity, 'their mimicry is often not recognised as such' (106). Consequently they may feel more insecure about this aspect of their performance, particularly if it is their primary motivation for dressing up, which results in them placing even greater emphasis, and effort, on this aspect of their dress.

6.3 DRESSING UP: FEMININITY, RESPECTABILITY AND CLASS

For both middle class women and working class women, dressing up is about performing femininity, as well as making a public performance. Many of the clothes that women deem more conspicuous such as high heels, skirts and dresses, for example, are also regarded as more feminine. Clothes that are described as more revealing, tighter fitting, 'sparkly', 'fancy', 'elegant' are also often considered to be more 'girlie', 'pretty' and 'sexy'. Moreover, for many women the more 'visible' the occasion, the more feminine the performance needs to be. Consequently, weddings, which are highly 'visible' (Tseëlon, 1995: 57), are often considered an occasion when clothing must be both 'dressy', in the sense that they must be more conspicuous, and also dressy as in more feminine.

> Ruth: For weddings and things, obviously my whole wardrobe would be light, I'd tend to go for something more flowery ... and I would move heaven and earth to find a dress. I would definitely be looking for a dress ... I think dresses for me are far more dressy, so you know; I'd go the extra mile. [Aged 43, PA]

As well as being more conspicuous, feminine clothes, particularly high heels, are frequently considered to be less comfortable. As a result the act of dressing up not only requires more effort in terms of the time taken to get dressed (Tseëlon, 1995: 55), but also more physical effort to wear. Yet, like Miriam here, participants feel that in order to be 'feminine', this type of clothing is expected of them.

> Miriam: I like to be comfortable ... comfy jeans or trousers, something that you can like bend in and like sit in ... but if I was going out for dinner I would wear more uncomfortable ... it would probably be like a dress, or you know a skirt ... I'm not comfortable wearing skirts, so it was like, 'ooh that's really smart', because it was like an effort. [Aged 28, GP]

Although there is some consensus as to the type of clothes that are considered more, or less, feminine, notions of femininity and the way in which femininity is performed are clearly subject to class distinctions. As Skeggs (2001) argues, '[b]eing, becoming, practising and doing femininity are very different things for women of different classes' (Skeggs, 2001: 297). And while middle class notions of femininity are normalised and legitimised, working class femininity is considered 'inferior' (Lawler, 1999: 5), and 'read as a sign of moral worthlessness, of vanity, [and] of tastelessness' (Skeggs, 2001: 304).

As discussed in chapter 4, Butler (2006 [1990]) argues that femininity is a social construction, which has the appearance of reality only because it is 'naturalised' through the 'repetition' of bodily acts and customs (2006 [1990]: xv). Rather than being an 'internal feature' (Butler, 2006

[1990]: xv) then, femininity can be considered as a 'display' (Goffman, 2009 [1976]) or 'social front' (Goffman, 1990 [1959]), 'institutionalised in terms of the abstract stereotyped expectations' (Goffman, 1990 [1959]: 37) or 'conventionalised portrayals' of 'sex' (Goffman, 1979), which then becomes a '"collective representation" and a fact in its own right' (Goffman, 1990 [1959]: 37). According to Lawler (1999), Skeggs (1997; 2001), and Tyler and Bennett (2010), however, these 'conventionalised portrayals' or 'institutionalised' expectations of femininity are constructed within the context of the middle class habitus. Thus, it is a middle class notion of femininity which is 'recognised' as 'normal' and 'legitimate' (Lawler, 1999; Skeggs, 1997; 2001), whilst working class performances of femininity are considered 'unconvincing' (Skeggs, 2001: 298), 'abnormal' (Lawler, 1999: 5) and are ultimately pathologised (Lawler, 1999; 2005a; Skeggs, 1997; 2001; Tyler, 2008). In fact, rather than being considered feminine, Skeggs (2001: 99) argues that working class women are 'coded as the sexual and deviant other'; their performances considered 'excessive', 'vulgar', and 'potentially dangerous' (Skeggs, 1997; 2001; Tyler and Bennett, 2010; Tyler, 2008).

6.3.1 WORKING CLASS PERFORMANCE OF FEMININITY

For the working class women in this research, femininity is not something that they feel they need perform day-to-day. As already discussed, dressing up, for working class women, is mainly associated with 'going out' to nightclubs, bars and pubs, specifically on Friday and Saturday nights. Thus, rather than being something which they consider to be 'part of them', femininity is, as Skeggs (1997) argues, something which is 'put on' at the weekend. Dressing up is something 'special' for these women, rather than 'everyday', and it is 'used tactically to have a good time' (1997: 106).

> Kim: Of a weekend if I'm going out I'll wear the winkle picker boots or shoes, or high heels ... Friday and Saturday night ... if I was going out to a club or something then I would wear those shorts, tank-tops, shoes, ... it would have to be smart dress, more like suit trousers, I would possibly [wear jeans], if they were really nice jeans that I've just bought and I had a nice shirt to go with them, but not my everyday ... they'd have to be something new and something really, really nice. [Aged 33, full-time Mother]

> Mandy: Sometimes I wear, you know, trousers [as opposed to jeans] on a weekend, and I wouldn't wear them during the week because I'm just doing day-to-day stuff with the kids and that. But like I say on a weekend ... I want to feel a bit nice about myself rather than walking in jeans and t-shirt and shoes. [Aged 21, full-time Mother]

As Kim and Mandy suggest, these women have different clothes which they only wear when they are 'going out', rather than on a normal day during the week. In fact, as chapter 7 discusses,

many of these women buy new items to dress up in, for the forthcoming weekend. Moreover, as Kelly, Mandy and Trisha explain, for these women, femininity is a 'fun', recreational activity, which they perform as a group (Skeggs, 1997: 105). The women get ready together at each others' houses, they discuss what they wear, and they make a 'collective' decision about what is appropriate. Performing femininity, as Skeggs (1997) suggests, not only 'offers momentary respite' for these women from their weekly, and/or family, responsibilities, but they learn to 'pass' together (1997: 105). The feminine performance is a combined 'effort'. A product of shared 'interests and intimacy' (1997: 104), it provides these women with a sense of 'union' and belonging and, as Simmel (2004 [1901]: 209) suggests, a means of collective, rather than individual, responsibility with the subsequent benefit then of 'not standing alone'.

> Kelly: Sometimes I go to my friend's house and get ready and other times we just all go to my other friend's house. [Aged 18, Unemployed]
>
> Mandy: Yeah, always! I always ask, because you're girlfriends, yeah I ask my sister what she was going to be wearing that night ... she'll come round here ... she normally comes out with me, so it's the same with her, she'll ask me if what's she's wearing looks good and things like that and she does it for me as well. [Aged 21, full-time Mother]
>
> Trisha: It's like I was going out the other night and Charlotte [her daughter] and her girlfriend were here and I was in the bedroom getting ready, and I just go in and ask 'How does this look, does this look good?' And ... so they came into my room and were going through all my stuff, and they're like, 'Yeah that's good', 'No, no, wear this'. I was going to wear the jumper... and they were like, 'Yeah, yeah wear that one, but wear this belt with it', and wear this jewellery. [Aged 43, full-time Mother]

6.3.1.1 DRESSING UP & BEING DESIRABLE

Moreover, '[k]nowingly constructed' (Skeggs, 1997: 107) and 'consciously enacted' or performed, (Skeggs, 2001: 299), for these women, femininity is very much related to being the 'object of the gaze' (Berger, 1972). Often this is about being seen as a 'woman' as opposed to a 'mother', but also because for working class women 'going out' tends to be predominantly associated with finding a man. Skeggs (1997) argues that within working class cultures there is a stigma attached to being single. Being seen without a man is to be 'inadequate and undesirable' and there is a real and significant 'fear of being left on the shelf' (1997: 114). As a result, femininity, for working class women, is about being dressed so that one is considered 'desirable', and ultimately 'fancied' (1997: 111). The 'value in performing femininity' (1997: 111) comes, as Amber describes, from 'being noticed' and being admired by men. While friends can make these women 'feel good', validation that they are physically attractive can really only be confirmed by 'male approval' (1997: 112).

> Amber: If I was going out for a meal or something like that then I would wear something low cut, or a short skirt or something, boots ... If I went for a night down Tiger Tiger I would wear very tight tops, tight trousers, stiletto heels always. I suppose you go there to get noticed ... it's nice to think that I can still get noticed, you know? Because you go out with friends that are single, and you dress like them, so revealing clothes ... low tops short skirts ... It's nice, you know, to think you can still get a bloke. [Aged 29, Hospital Receptionist]

> Joy: Like if I was wearing a vest top I would want to wear a bra so that you could clearly see the straps, so if I wore a white top I'd wear a black bra, to draw attention to it ... but then that is fine, if you are young and single then why not? It's part of it, isn't it? Being out, being out on the pull. [Aged 19, Fast Food Restaurant Worker PT]

For these women, the primary purpose of dressing up and performing femininity is, then, to be 'chatted up' by a 'bloke' or 'fella'. Again it demonstrates how dressing up is about making a public performance, to a significant audience, whose opinions and 'validation' matter. As Skeggs (1997) argues, validation from men that they are 'desirable' gives these working class women 'confidence' and it is 'central to their sense of self' (1997: 111). It means that dressing up has been 'worth the effort'. Moreover, this desire to be seen as physically attractive has important implications for the way in which working class women dress. While Skeggs (1997: 110) argues that for 'working class women the sexual has to be disavowed', for many participants in this study there is an open acknowledgement that the clothes that they dress up in are more provocative and tend towards 'the excess' (Skeggs, 2001), not only in terms of short skirts, low tops and big hair, but as already noted, fake tan, false eyelashes, acrylic nails and hair extensions.

> Ruth: It tends to be a bit more revealing, show more arms and chest probably [laughs] and a bit, probably, shorter. I tend to have a bit more cleavage on show you know... [Aged 45, PA]

> Trisha: I'd wear three-quarter length trousers and like a raunchy top, like a v-neck, something sexy ... I like to feel good and I like to look sexy, but not tarty, just nice and attractive. [Aged 43, full-time Mother]

> Lisa: If I was going clubbing I'd wear a short skirt ... You want to look sexy but not look sleazy because obviously a girl with big boobs they're sort of like half hanging out ... you just think, 'no'. It just doesn't look right, it looks nasty. And it's cheapening her ... [Aged 26, full-time Mother]

Some, like Trisha and Lisa, do draw a distinction between 'sexy' and 'tarty'. They are aware of the relationship between femininity and respectability, and the links made between appearance and moral behaviour, or conduct (Finch, 1993; Lawler, 1999; 2005a; Skeggs, 1997; 2001; Tyler, 2008; Tyler and Bennett, 2010). As Lisa says, some women who dress inappropriately are considered 'cheap', and thus she is conscious of the class judgements that might be made of her if she does not perform femininity 'appropriately'.

Yet, despite their awareness of the class judgements surrounding femininity, working class women are never able to perform or 'display' femininity successfully or convincingly, because it is designed within the context of the middle class habitus (Skeggs, 1997: 100; Tyler and Bennett, 2010). As discussed in chapter 4, several sociologists argue that femininity is a middle class concept, which developed during the eighteenth century and was well established by the end of the Victorian era (Finch, 1993; Poovey, 1984; Skeggs, 1997). A particular type of womanhood, femininity was constructed on the basis of appearance and manner, and was used by the middle class as a means of verifying their respectability and thus distinguishing themselves from the sexual and deviant working class. A useful means of class evaluation, then, it suited the 'fragile' nature of non-working middle class women, and yet contrasted with the character of working class females who were considered independent (Davis, 1980), 'hardy and robust' (Skeggs, 1997: 99). Legitimised through books on social etiquette, and other forms of textual and later visual media (Skeggs, 2001), and most recently reality television shows such as 'What Not to Wear' (Palmer, 2004; Sherman, 2008), the concept of femininity has, however, created a lasting legacy for the way in which we view women, and how we judge social performances. While middle class appearances, and performances of femininity, are 'recognised' as legitimate and socially acceptable, working class notions of femininity are instead 'seen as a sign of sexual deviance' (Skeggs, 2001: 298) and are used as a means of class distinction.

6.3.2 MIDDLE CLASS FEMININITY & CLASS DISTINCTIONS

In contrast to working class women, middle class participants make clear distinctions between being 'feminine' and being overtly sexual. As Rosie comments, there is a 'fine line' between looking sexy and looking tarty, and consequently for middle class women it is important not to wear anything which is in excess, in order to maintain their respectability. Indeed, those considered to be dressed too provocatively run the risk of being labelled a 'hussy' or a 'hooker' and are certainly more likely to be considered working class.

> Rosie: I think there is a fine line between dressing up, ... and looking quite sexy, ... it's nice to feel sexy and it's nice to feel that you look good, ... but you just dress smart and

presentable you don't kind of wear anything too revealing, ... you don't want to look, you know, like a complete hussy. [Aged 23, Engineer]

Jessica: I mean there are definitely women at my work where you think 'Are you actually a hooker?'

Lucy: Yeah ... you just think, 'Oh my God!' I had one girl with a really well endowed chest and she would wear a bra and spaghetti top and she'd be walking round the office ... and you'd be like, 'Oh my God!' You know? 'Do you really think that is suitable?' I'd be hard pushed wearing that on holiday. [Lucy: Aged 31, HR Manager/Jessica: Aged 30 Civil Servant]

Similarly, 'chavs' and 'pikeys' are said to be identified by their 'short skirts' and 'low cut tops'. As Emily tells me, working class women are 'well known' for wearing 'black thongs' which are visible 'through their white trousers'; according to Miriam they are 'caked' in make-up, and Grace tells me they are often seen with 'their tits hanging out'. Terms such as 'tart', 'hooker', 'slag' and 'slut' are frequently used to describe working class performances of femininity. And again, they are employed by middle class women as a point of distinction and thereby establishing what they are not. Whilst middle class women may consider their own performances of femininity to be 'sexy', then, they are nevertheless 'respectable' because of their adherence to important social rules. So, wearing the right underwear and not having underwear showing, for example, or making sure that there is a balance of either a more revealing top, or a shorter skirt, but not both.

Jane: I hate these spaghetti strapped tops, with designer bras underneath. Underwear is key. Either don't wear a bra or get a strapless one, or those plastic things, but don't wear a white bra under a black strappy vest, it doesn't work. I'd always make sure I've got straps adequately hidden. And if I was going to go out, I'd make sure I had the underwear which would make the outer garment look good ... I have middle class values: the thing about foundations, getting it right from the beginning and spending the money on that. [Aged 29, Lecturer & Yoga Instructor]

Kerry: I notice women ... if they've got vast unbelievably, unfeasible amounts of flesh on display ... I don't understand how they can actually do that ... either boobs or legs, I think *both* is wrong. [Aged 25, Marketing]

Naomi: It's always nice to have a bit of cleavage but ...
Jenny: You can have tasteful cleavage,
Emily: Yeah you don't want everything hanging out.

Sally: You do cleavage, or legs, don't you

Emily: Yeah. Cleavage or legs ... not both

[Naomi Aged 25, IT Consultant; Jenny Aged 27, Accountant; Emily Aged 27, Marketing Consultant; Sally Aged 27, IT Consultant]

These middle class women feel that there are correct and incorrect ways of dressing and performing femininity and, more importantly, their remarks suggest that with these rules come moral judgements. Indeed, in Crossley's (1995) discussion of *Relations in Public* (1972) he suggests that Goffman links the adherence to social rules to judgements of morality. Looking specifically at Goffman's discussion of 'pedestrian behaviour', he argues that Goffman identifies not only an 'interaction order', but a moral order as well. Individuals in social situations and social spaces are required to adhere to 'specific rituals' and 'rules of behaviour' and by doing so they ensure that 'they are seen to be of "sound character" and "reasonable" competence' (1995: 139). Though Goffman focuses on types of movement, discussing the way in which pedestrians negotiate encounters on the street, his ideas, as Entwistle (2004 [2000]) notes, could equally be applied to types of dress, and are arguably demonstrated in the comments from Jane and others.

To be seen as a 'good person' women are required to follow the relevant (middle class) dress code and those who do not follow it are viewed as lacking in moral virtue. Hence working class women, identified by their failure to adhere to the 'proper standards', and a lack of self control (Skeggs, 2009), are referred to as tarts and hookers, deemed to be lacking in decency. Their dress, viewed as sexual rather than feminine, is taken as representative of their inner character or true nature, and therefore read as a lack of morality. So while middle class performances, deemed legitimate, are seen as 'good', working class performances are instead viewed as deviant and thus morally wrong.

6.3.3 MIDDLE CLASS PERFORMANCE OF FEMININITY & PUBLIC SPACES

Differences between middle class and working class women not only exist in relation to how they feel femininity should be performed, but when it should be performed too. Rather than femininity and dressing up being confined to 'going out' on the weekend, dressing up, for middle class women, occurs in almost any situation where an audience is present. Consequently, instead of simply performing femininity as part of the occasion, as working class women do (Skeggs, 1997: 106), femininity is performed almost constantly: at work, and at home, when going to lectures or on the school run. In fact, it is performed in any context in which dressing up takes place.

> Chloe: I think for lectures ... I've got little ballet pumps, with my skinny jeans or baggy jeans and a t-shirt, cardigan. I've got about a million colours of cardigans, like the one I'm wearing now. So I always put those on, and like big chunky necklaces ... I like belts as well actually, and red nail varnish ... You always dress up to make sure you look good. I literally just put on some lip gloss and eyeliner and I'm done. [Aged 18, Student]

One participant in particular, Faye, talks a lot about femininity and her dress at work. Employed to secure sponsorship for various university-based initiatives, she discusses how she uses her dress 'as a tool' in terms of career success, but, at the same time, remains within the 'boundaries of professionalism', and respectability. For Faye, her dress is a 'façade', or 'show' (De Beauvoir, 1996 [1949]: 543), used in order to become the 'object of the gaze' (Berger, 1972) and to get men's attention. But Faye argues that she does this in a 'subtle', rather than an excessive way, which means that, unlike other women, she retains her 'credibility'.

> Faye: I've got a muffin top, there is no denying it, but can you imagine if I turned up to a meeting with my muffin top showing over my trouser top, you know? A lot of it is about credibility... It's about what you show, 'less is actually more'. If you've got a very elegant soft flowy top on, a bit chiffony, and it's right down to your wrists and you've got long black trousers on and the button just by your bra, ... your cleavage, it's just undone ... that has more power than showing your midriff. I've started to be aware of how people interact with me, through my dress and that's quite important as a female trying to cut a career. Trying to actually understand it, how dressing for the right occasion ... the only way that I could achieve [successful meetings], remotely with men, is by dressing to get their attention. [Aged 44, University Sponsorship Manager]

For Faye dressing up and performing femininity is, in part, about being seen as 'an erotic object' (De Beauvoir, 1996 [1959]: 543); as she says, it is about being seen 'sexually', and getting the 'attention' of men. Yet, it is not about being 'desirable' or 'fancied' in the same way that it is for working class women, because the motivation behind it is not the desire to form an intimate or a romantic relationship. Rather, Faye knows that 'she is to be subjected to the cold appraisal of the male connoisseur and that her life prospects may depend on how she is seen' (Bartky, 1990: 38). Therefore, in order to get the men in the meeting to agree to various proposals, and so that she is not 'screwed over', Faye must internalise 'the male gaze' and perform femininity, in the hopes of manipulate the situation. Alternatively she runs the risk of 'the refusal of male patronage' (Bartky, 1990: 76).

Although Faye openly admits that she is using her dress to be sexually provocative, she argues that her form of femininity is acceptable, and more effective, because it is done 'subtly'. Her middle class notion of femininity, whilst a conscious 'production of appearance' (Vinken, 2005:

51), is 'legitimised' (Lawler, 1999) and is therefore considered appropriate and 'normal'. By contrast, working class performances in the workplace, as in other social contexts, are 'negatively evaluated, made visible and abject' (Skeggs, Wood and Thumin, 2007: 2). So, for example, whilst Faye's black high heels are considered appropriate in the workplace, Ruth describes how her red high heels were viewed as a bit 'racy'.

> Ruth: Normally my shoes aren't really very sensible, I tend to wear trousers but underneath they'll be these high heeled boots, or chunky wedges or something. I did ... come in one day and someone said, 'They're a bit racy aren't they?' but you get bored wearing the same, especially if you're wearing black at work. [Aged 45, PA]

While middle class performances of femininity are deemed acceptable, or rather 'respectable' (Skeggs, 1997; 2001), working class performances often fail, because they are produced from a different 'condition of existence' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 53). 'Femininity has never been easily accessible to working-class women' (Tyler and Bennett, 2010: 7) because they 'do not *know* the right things, they do not *value* the right things, they do not *want* the right things' (Lawler, 1999: 11). They have different set of classed 'dispositions' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 53), and thus an 'inability to properly inhabit a middle-class habitus' (Lawler, 1999: 15). As a result their performance of femininity will never meet the normative standards, because they do not possess the right kind of cultural capital, and furthermore they are unable to convert their cultural capital into 'symbolic capital'. They are not able to give a 'legitimate' performance.

> Jane: I'm more interested in looking at people and thinking, 'Why are you doing that? What are you trying to do?' You know? 'You don't have the body to have a pierced navel, and crop top and a white shirt loosely hanging. It doesn't work for you. What are you trying to buy into?' ... I would notice that they haven't got it quite right. It's attention to detail. And I also think as well, 'what lifestyle are you trying to buy into here?' [Aged 29, Lecturer & Yoga Instructor]

As Jane comment suggests, there are 'right' ways, legitimate ways, of dressing which working class women are unable to 'successfully' perform. While dress can operate as symbolic capital, communicating an individual's economic and cultural wealth, it can also identify those who do not have this 'feel for the game', because they fail to adhere to the unwritten rules and regularity of the feminine performance (Bourdieu, 1990a: 64), such as exposing your midriff when 'you don't have the body'. Indeed, these women do not possess the right habitus to know what the rules are. While chapter 7 further explores ideas about flattering clothing and the body, Jane's comments demonstrate that class cannot be simply purchased with commodities (Williams, 1987: 323). Rather it 'is performed, marked, written on minds and bodies' and 'we can "spot it a

mile off" even in the midst of our wish for it no longer to be there' (Walkerdine et al., 2001: 215).

6.4 CONCLUSION

Dressing up is a key concept when looking at class distinctions in fashion. A public performance and a performance of femininity, dressing up is about 'putting on a show' (De Beauvoir, 1996 [1949]: 543). It is about creating a public image or impression 'for the benefit of others' (Goffman, 1993 [1959]), and at the same time, it is about women dressing as an 'erotic object', to be attractive and desirable. But while there are some common understandings across the social classes as to what dressing up is, this chapter demonstrates that dressing up is a classed 'disposition' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]). It is a practice which highlights class difference in relation to perceptions of femininity, and public and private spaces, and furthermore it is a practice which is used as a means of class distinction and class evaluation.

As Tseëlon (1995) has identified, dressing up is a spectrum or continuum which differs with levels of 'visibility'. The more significant the audience is, and the more 'visible' the occasion, the greater the need to dress up. But the way in which women perceive social audiences depends very much on their class location, and there are clear differences in women's attitudes as to when dressing up is necessary or appropriate. For middle class women, other people's judgements and opinions are generally of much greater concern on a day-to-day basis. The 'anxious class', as Tony Blair once described them (Palmer, 2004: 173), have a far greater need for 'pretence' and are constantly aware of evaluations that might be made of them (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]). As a result they find some level of dressing up necessary in almost any social space, and even when they are home alone there is still a need to 'maintain standards'. In contrast, working class women have a much more 'relaxed' approach to local audiences. There is not the same level of concern over the judgements made by others. Partly because these audiences are familiar, but also because, for those women who are mothers, they feel they will be identified as such, and subsequently afforded some degree of understanding or leniency in terms of their 'standard' of dress.

That is not to say, however, that working class women never dress up. This chapter clearly demonstrates that dressing up is an important and regular activity for working class women, but that it is one which takes place within quite clear temporal and spatial boundaries: generally 'going out' on Friday and Saturday nights, to venues such as clubs and pubs. In many respects dressing up for these occasions is even more important to working class women because it takes places much less frequently, and this may also explain why it often involves more 'extreme' types of dress.

Moreover, using Tseëlon's (1992) work, it could be argued that working class women dress up much more because they have greater anxiety over how to dress up, and how to perform their femininity. Following the work of Lawler (1999), Skeggs (1997) and Tyler (2008), the research demonstrates how working class femininity tends to be 'misrecognised', read as overtly sexual. As a result, middle class women distance themselves from working class women through their feminine performance, deeming it 'tarty' and/or 'over the top'. As a result, dressing up not only mobilises class distinctions in regard to notions of public and private spaces, but what is appropriate in terms of feminine performance. Indeed, it is the form dressing up takes, as well as the how and where it takes place, which operates as a means of class distinction, and thus the relationship between class, fashion, gender and space which is important.

CHAPTER 7

LOOKING GOOD

During the frequent conversations about dressing up participants often noted their desire to 'look good'. Though closely related to the concept of performance or public space due to its association with dressing up, looking good is more concerned with matters of taste, and thus whilst it is a concept which was identified by all the participants, it is at the same time a notion which operates as an important means of class distinction. Most significantly, looking good exposes key differences in the women's attitudes towards 'fashion'. While middle class women associate looking good with wearing styles which are considered 'classic' rather than 'trendy', for working class participants looking good is primarily concerned with keeping up-to-date with the latest fashion trends and dressing fashionably. Moreover, as Bourdieu (2005 [1984]: 56) suggests, participants' tastes are often reaffirmed through their 'distaste', and consequently middle class discussions tend to focus more heavily on what does not look good and styles that they do not like, often attributing these styles to the working class.

Although 'looking good' is a notion which has been discussed in contemporary publications on fashion, such as Woodward's *Why Women Wear What they Wear* (2007), the way in which attitudes towards looking good operate as a mode of class distinction is not something which has been fully explored. Though Woodward (2007: 67) acknowledges that looking good is a matter of taste, her discussion of the concept focuses on looking good in terms of a 'personal aesthetic' and an 'individual style'. Using the work of Gell (1998) she explores how looking good is related to 'feeling right' and creating a type of self. But as her work does not centre on the notion of class, she does not examine the way in which generally held ideas on looking good are a point of class difference.

The importance of fashion for working class women is, however, picked up on by Skeggs (1997). Arguing that for working class women knowledge of fashion is a 'working class competence' and 'central to the women's sense of self' (1997: 104), she further notes that there is a relationship between anti-fashion and 'non-working-classness' and that 'clothing is used to convey a moral quality' (1997: 85). As her work focuses on the ideas and practices of working class women, she does not provide a contrast with the attitudes and values of the middle class, however, and therefore does not explore the strong sense of class distinction that exists within the middle class group that this research has found. Moreover, although Skeggs' work does suggest that attitudes towards fashion differ in relation to class, she does not fully examine the way in which

this difference manifests itself in terms of buying criteria and consumption practices for either class group. Thus while her work notes an important class distinction in terms of attitudes towards fashion, it does not extensively explore this disparity, or how these distinctions translate into differing consumption practices.

Moreover, while other authors such as Lurie (1992 [1981]) and Miller (1998) have acknowledged a middle class preference for conservative, 'simple', good quality items, they have nevertheless neglected to identify specific class differences in individuals' attitudes towards fashion per se, and unlike this research project, have further overlooked subsequent links to the concept of 'looking good'. In contrast, then, this research not only suggests that key class differences exist in relation to women's attitudes to fashion, but it further demonstrates how these differences form the basis of middle class and working class tastes, consumer practices and consequently their evaluations of what looks good.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to show how women's views on looking good differ significantly between class groups. It argues that despite fashion's apparent democratisation, attitudes towards fashion and fashion trends operate as an important means of class distinction, and that these attitudes have important implications for women's buying habits and practices. Consequently, it explores working class women's use of catalogues, as a form of fashion media as well as a fashion retailer. It demonstrates the frequency with which working class women go clothes shopping, and it provides a comparison with middle class practices and buying criteria, which focus more heavily on notions of quality, cut, and 'classic' styles. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part explores the middle class aversion to fashion, and their preference for 'classic tastes'. It explores how this is translated into buying practices, and how it is somewhat motivated by a desire to distance themselves from the working class. The second part looks more closely at the practices of working class women. It discusses their keen desire to be fashionable and the consequences this has in terms of buying criteria, and the purchasing of designer goods.

7.1 MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN: FASHION DISTASTE, CLASSIC TASTE

From the outset of the empirical research the middle class's 'aversion' to fashion, or fashion 'distaste', is evident. As discussed in chapter 5, in shopping centres, where more middle class participants tend to be recruited, women are often reluctant to take part when they hear the words 'fashion', or the 'London College of Fashion'. Though several women attribute this attitude to their age, suggesting, for example that they are 'too old for fashion', when conducting interviews it is clear that fashion 'distaste' is common to middle class women, whatever their age. So, for example, participants comment they are 'not interested in fashion', or that fashion is

not something which 'suits' them, and many qualify this by saying that they do not buy fashion magazines or watch fashion programmes.

> Patricia: I've never been one to wear something just because it is in fashion ... I don't deliberately buy fashion magazines as such, and I don't go out of my way to watch fashion programmes ... there is nothing worse than trying to stay trendy. [Aged 43, Teacher]

When I ask participants what they mean by fashion, they tell me that it is the 'trends' or 'fads' that are advertised in the shops, fashion magazines or on television shows. Though able to cite a number of 'fashions' such as Ugg boots, city shorts, and smock tops, they generally describe these in negative terms and consider them, like all trends, to be a product of a commercial industry, created to make individuals spend money. Consequently middle class women feel that they do not want to 'be duped' into spending money unnecessarily, in order to stay up-to-date; fashion trends are superficial and fickle, and thus should be avoided.

> Jessica: I am aware of the fashion, and I think it looks great on a very small number of people but I would never, ever, wear it myself. Like skinny jeans I would never wear because they wouldn't suit me. So I'm aware but I don't change anything, or follow it ... these things never last. [Aged 31, Civil Servant]

> Julia: I'm kind of cynical. Part of it [fashion] is a marketing ploy to get you to keep spending money ... but I won't think 'oh I'm going to be a slave to it. I must have that handbag, because it's obviously the latest "it" bag'. [Aged 35, Business Analyst]

Moreover, as Julia's remarks suggest, it appears that the importance for middle class women lies not in a knowledge of fashion trends, but in the knowledge that fashion is part of consumerism. They consider fashion wasteful, 'silly', 'vain', and 'indulgent', perhaps even a 'false need' which is created by the fashion industry (Marcuse, 2002 [1964]). On a shopping trip with one participant Hannah, aged 24, she makes this negative approach to fashion very apparent, particularly in the boutique section of Topshop. She is typically very scathing of those items which she perceived to be 'fashion trends', frequently commenting, for example, that leggings are 'dreadful', and that Ugg boots are 'hideous', and she tells me how 'ridiculous' it is that some people 'follow every passing trend'.

> Chloe: I'm not like one of those people who's a complete fashion victim who will go out and just buy and get decked out. [Aged 18, Student]

> Penny: Some people try a bit too hard, they are trying to be fashionable, and just not pulling it off. There is a difference between fashion and style. I have style, ... I don't look to the fashionable people I look to the stylish people, and with the stylish people it's

> choosing things that flatter your body shape ... People who follow them [fashion trends] ... they don't necessarily look good. [Aged 31, Art Director, Advertising]

Middle class women generally seem to take quite a traditional, and thus disapproving, attitude towards fashion, considering it to be trivial, foolish and short-lived. As a result, being fashionable tends to be seen in the context of the 'fashion victim' or 'fashion slave'; viewed as an unquestionable and irrational 'compulsion' to follow current fashion trends (Veblen, 1994 [1899]) 'despite their better judgement' (Bulmer, 1981 [1969]: 50), and thereby constituting 'a challenge to taste', which is instead driven by 'individual choice' (Sapir, 1981 [1931]: 23). Consequently, as Chloe and Penny's comments suggest, middle class women are keen to distance themselves from the idea that they 'blindly' consume. Rather, they see their consumption as more rational, and sensible (Clarke and Miller, 2002), level-headed or intelligent, involving some form of decision making process which enables them to 'choose' garments which are flattering and 'stylish', instead of being 'dictated to' by advertising and marketing groups.

7.1.1 'CHEAP & CHEERFUL'

The idea that fashion is 'faddy' or 'indulgent' is further related to the kudos middle class women feel when they have been able to buy something cheaply. So, for example, while dismissing fashionable trends, Emily is keen to tell me that a dress she wore the previous week cost her 'only £6.50'. Many describe how they avoid expensive fashion stores such as Oasis, or French Connection, opting instead for H&M, Marks and Spencer or supermarkets such as Asda, Tesco and Sainsbury. And several participants talk about how they are unwilling to 'pay over the odds', or how they want goods which are 'cheap and cheerful' and 'fit the bill'.

> Rosie: I do like it if I can find something cheap ... and I'll avoid things like Oasis upstairs in Dickens and Jones, ... because they are slightly more expensive and I resent having to pay a lot of money for things ... they're pretentious ... deemed as fashionable, 'that's what we should be wearing' ... I'm not really one for labels and stuff like that, so I avoid anywhere that's too expensive ... it doesn't appeal to me. [Aged 23, Engineer]

> Jane: I've looked at what's in the expensive stores and then gone round the corner to Primark, to see if they've got anything similar. So, for example, a Marks and Spencer's plain v-neck t-shirt for 10 quid, I'd maybe feel the quality of the fabric and look at the colour and think actually the Marks and Spencer's one is going to fade in 10 washes, that one's [the cheaper version] going to fade in 10 washes, that one's £2, I might as well just get the cheaper one. If it's comparable ... then I get them cheaply. [Aged 29, Lecturer & Yoga Instructor]

In many respects these comments suggest that middle class tastes are motivated by a need for practicality, quality and price; which goes against Veblen's assertion that middle class dress should demonstrate status through its impractical nature (1994 [1899]: 106) or indeed Bourdieu's claim that middle classes 'look for ... a fashionable and original garment' (2005 [1984]: 247). In fact it seems that middle class priorities are more akin to Bourdieu's 'taste of necessity', which he attributes to the working class. Arguing that the working class are limited in terms of both time and money, Bourdieu suggests that the working class chiefly look for 'value for money' in terms of their clothes and emphasis is placed on a 'pragmatic and functionalist aesthetic' (378). Consequently, he argues that the working class look for 'the proper thing and no more', and aim to buy goods that will last, but for as little as possible (379).

Yet, this notion seems to be more closely represented by the attitudes of the middle class participants. For instance, Elizabeth, Margaret, Carly and Sarah explicitly state that their clothes need to be practical and although it must be said that this need for practicality is not necessarily driven by their 'distance from necessity', there is nevertheless a desire for 'value for money'. As Miller et al. suggest, the middle class look for a 'sensible balance' between 'price, quality and taste' (1998: 150). In examining the mainly middle class practice of shopping in John Lewis, they argue that the middle class have an expectation of 'high quality functionalism', and are looking for good value, whilst avoiding items which are 'cheap' and thus of poor quality. Consequently, attitudes such as Rosie's are not uncommon. The buying of goods in supermarkets and high-street stores is a deliberate move in order to gain the best 'value for money', and furthermore many middle class women say that they buy their socks, knickers and pyjamas in Primark, precisely because they provide 'good' quality at a low price. This is also reflected in the observations, with some customers in Primark feeling the material of items, and looking at fabric labels and detailing of 'essential' garments, such as vest tops, t-shirts and socks before making purchases, or only buying 'basic' items.

> Faye: Primark is fantastic, and I have bought some of the most amazing linen shirts in there and if you select well, people would never ever know that it's from Primark. My gloves are Primark and they cost me eight quid ... they don't look cheap ... because of the stitching around the finger area ... the leather is actually quite thin and quite soft, ... it is a genuinely well made glove ... it looks quite expensive, ... people probably think it cost me £25 from Debenhams. [Aged 44, University Sponsorship Management]

Moreover, 'value for money' is given as one of the chief reasons why these same women also avoid designer labels, as they feel that individuals are paying 'just for the name' and that the quality is often lacking.

> Sarah: They think it's so much better, it isn't ... you could have a little Nike sign and that T-shirt is trebled in price because it's got the word Nike on it, and I've always tried to tell my children it doesn't mean anything ... it doesn't make any difference. They might as well go to Primark. And there are quite a few young people in Primark these days that are saying goodbye to the named products and going for those. [Aged 52, Retired Police Officer]

In many respect the thrifty nature of middle class participants represents something of the Protestant work ethic (Weber, 2003 [1958]) which calls on the middle classes to 'save all they can' despite their increasing wealth. These women make careful purchases and they spend time thinking about whether to buy an item or not. Alex, for example, makes a list when she goes shopping in an attempt to 'organise' herself so that she only buys those things which she needs. Jane suggests that she 'never' buys clothes that she will not get wear out of, and Elizabeth also says that she generally spends some time thinking about what an item 'would work with' before she makes a purchase, visiting the store and trying the item on, several times.

> Jane: I would never buy something which didn't go with everything else. It would have to be something you could wear many different times with many different things, or that, if it was long and you bought it for a wedding you could hack it off at the knee after a couple of weddings and then it would be, you've still got something. [Aged 29, Lecturer & Yoga Instructor]

> Elizabeth: I saw a shirt before Christmas and it is nice ... I still didn't buy it. It's not like it is expensive or anything, it is £85. But you know what, it's just, it's really good, but it's just not quite right. And even though it's the best I've seen and half of me says, 'buy it anyway', I won't buy it because it's not quite right. I know now, because I have tried it on like three or four times. There is nothing in my wardrobe that I haven't worn. [Aged 42, Designer]

Of course, that does not always mean that middle class women only buy what they need. Both Alex and Elizabeth admit that sometimes they 'fall in love' with an item and feel that they just 'have to have it'. Indeed, Alex tells me that despite the list, she still comes home with items that are not on it, and Elizabeth too tells me that she recently bought a dress, just because she 'really, really liked it'. As Campbell (2005 [1987]: 69) argues, modern consumption is in many respects hedonistic, filling a desire for pleasure and emotion rather than satisfying needs. Several women acknowledge for example, that they do engage in some degree of 'retail therapy', buying things to make themselves feel better even though they do not need them. But at the same time, even if Alex is buying things that she does not need, she will spend time deliberating the purchase, and there is a general sense amongst middle class women that they should think carefully before

buying items. Again this relates back to the notion of the fashion victim. Middle class women are keen to suggest that their purchases, even if they are impulsive, are still thought through, for as Grace tells me, 'you do not want to waste money', even on those purchases which are just some form of 'pick me up'.

> Alex: If I fall in love with something that I really think I shouldn't spend my money on I will wait until the end of the day, I'll walk around and then if I'm still in love with it at the end of the day then I'll go back and get it. [Aged 23, Events Organiser]
>
> Grace: It is about control. I've analysed it quite a lot over the years, because I tend to spend, I tend to buy clothes to cheer myself up, though if I'm going to do that I still want to make them work for me. So there are a lot of emotions going on ... but you don't waste money buying stuff that's the wrong colour. [Aged 57, University Services Manager]

This somewhat frugal attitude amongst the middle class is also demonstrated by the willingness of some women to mend and alter items rather than dispose of them. For instance several middle class women comment that they have their shoes re-heeled and moreover, Sarah, Faye and Jane note that because they are able to sew, they will adapt old clothing, or items passed on from family or bought cheaply in charity shops, rather than buy new things. Crucially however, it is because they deem these items to be expensive and of 'good quality', that they are worth repairing, and in fact one of the key priorities of middle class purchases is the quality of goods, as well as price. While it is important to be thrifty, at the same time 'a cheap coat makes a cheap man', and participants are keen to avoid items which are 'cheap and nasty' (Veblen, 1994 [1988]: 104). Thus, many of the middle class participants are of the opinion that some items, particularly winter coats and boots, warrant spending more money, in order to get an item which is 'fit for purpose'. When observing Emma, a journalist, aged 27, she tells me that she is 'willing to spend more' on the coat that she was about to buy, in order to get something 'that will last', although at the same time, she does not want to pay 'more' than she 'has to'.

> Penny: These are expensive boots, so I'll pay a lot of money on things that are going to last a long time, so boots or coats. I know they are going to last, I'm going to wear them until they fall apart, basically ... so I don't mind spending [on] those sorts of things. [Aged 31, Art Director, Advertising]
>
> Naomi: If it's something that I know I'm going to wear a lot of, ... then I'll probably spend a lot of money ... like work shoes, because I know I'll be spending five days a week in them. Whereas if there is a pair of shoes that I'll just be wearing a few times a year I won't bother to spend a lot of money on them because it's just a waste of money ... but if I'm buying a pair of work shoes, I want them to last a few years. [Aged 25, IT Consultant]

> Faye: I went maybe four years without a winter coat to save up, because I couldn't afford a good decent one, and I didn't buy one until I could afford a good decent one. [Aged 36, University Administrator]

While these women are keen to spend money in order to buy something of good quality that will last, at the same time they are also eager to demonstrate that their purchases are not wasteful. Unlike Veblen (1994 [1899]) suggests, they do not perceive 'wasteful' consumption as a sign of wealth and status, but rather something to be avoided. So much so in fact that Faye is willing to 'go without' until she is able to buy something suitable. And it seems that this aversion to 'fashion' and to 'waste' is not only a characteristic which operates as a means of class distinction; it is also motivated by the middle class desire to distance themselves from the working class.

7.1.2 FASHION & MIDDLE CLASS DISTINCTION

As Bourdieu argues, class 'aesthetics' are 'necessarily situated with respect to one another', and 'all the choices they produce are automatically associated with a distinction position ... even without any conscious intention ... or explicit pursuit of difference' (2005 [1984]: 246). Although middle class women do not tend to talk explicitly about class when they are recounting their attitudes towards fashion and the fashion industry, there appears to be a clear association made between being a 'fashion victim' and being working class. Indeed, far from having 'respectability' as Blumer (1981 [1969]: 50) suggests, following fashion is viewed with some distaste. For instance, using the phrase 'mutton dressed as lamb', some middle class participants comment how *they*, unlike an implied working class, are able to see fashion 'for what it really is'. And as Carly's comments below demonstrate, there is a sense amongst some middle class women that the working class do not have the right kind of knowledge when it comes to fashion, and are instead 'brainwashed' by the fashion industry and media.

> Carly: I see girls on the council estates walking around with their like puffer coats, they're supposed to keep you warm, but they're cropped and I don't understand that, if it's a coat why is it cropped? ... Obviously it's for fashion, not to keep warm ... and it's quite sad to see that because you think, 'well they don't know'. [Aged 21, Student]

The notion that fashion is fickle, and that those who follow it lack any sense of discretion provides further evidence of the middle class notion of respectability and moral superiority that Skeggs (1997) identifies in relation to femininity. Once again, middle class women see their practices as right and correct, while those who 'indulge' in fashion trends are seen to represent a lack of education or knowledge. It seems that in 'looking good', as with 'dressing up', 'the rules

of the game' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]) differ between classes and again what is considered legitimate practice is set within the context of the middle class.

Moreover, comments like Carly's further suggest that while middle class women often claim that their aversion to 'fashion' is the result of scepticism about the fashion industry and its commercialism, the association of fashionable trends and working classness may also be significant in motivating their fashion distaste. By avoiding those items which they perceive as 'faddy', middle class women consider themselves to be 'savvy' or shopping 'sensibly', but more importantly they may also be aiming to distance themselves from the working class who they perceive to be victims of the fashion industry. This may also explain why there is a keen desire amongst the women who are arguably upwardly socially mobile to assert they are not 'fashion slaves'. Patricia, Liz and Diane, for example, are all eager to dissociate from the idea of being a 'fashion victim'. While Liz remarks that she refuses to wear fashion 'for fashion's sake', Diane suggests that some women are simply a 'product' of fashion marketing, and that she, on the other hand, generally avoids fashion trends. Although this attitude may be due to their now middle class cultural perception of the fashion industry, it seems reasonable to suggest that it could also be driven by a desire to distance themselves from the working class, and thus their own class history.

> Diane: As with any fashion some look absolutely brilliant in it, just a few, but the majority actually don't look so good in it, they are just wearing it because that's the in thing to wear ... There is a woman who gets on my bus in the morning, ... but she is definitely a product of the fashion industry, a fashion victim, she is wearing what the industry tells her to wear, her hair changes and her jewellery changes, and her bags, and it's always the shapes that I've seen in my daughter's magazines, it must be the latest shape ... she always has the latest bags and whatever. [Aged 41, Receptionist]

7.1.3 'CLASSIC' TASTE

The desire to avoid fashionable trends is closely related to the middle class' discussions of 'classic' dress. This is a style of dress which middle class women consider different from 'fashion', and which is respectable, refined and tasteful. It is therefore a style which requires discretion, and thoughtful decision making when it comes to choosing from the abundance of items available on the high street. Consequently, 'classic' clothes are something that these women are very keen to adopt, because they feel they denote the right kind of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]). It demonstrates a particular attitude towards fashion and an exercising of taste. Indeed, in contrast to the working class participants, the majority of whom

never mention the word 'classic', nearly all of the middle class women talk about wearing or buying 'classic' styles, or 'classic' clothes in their discussions of looking good.

Generally considered 'smart' and 'formal', classic items tend to have two key characteristics. Firstly, they are discreet, which means that they tend to be dark or neutral in colour, plain in terms of pattern and design and subtle in terms of detail. Secondly they are generally considered to be unchanging or 'timeless'. As Arnold (2001) suggests, classic items are seen to have longevity which is why they are so often considered to contrast with 'fashion', which by its very nature is constantly changing (Bell, 1976 [1947]; Davis, 1994 [1992]).

> Rachel: I bought a coat recently, ... sort of classic again, that will last a good while I would think ... it's not too one season, ... if it's classic, kind of plain really, then ... the coat will just last for years. [Aged 32, Legal Secretary]

Instead of being 'conspicuously up to date', as Veblen suggests (1994 [1899]: 106), middle class women are keen to assert their status by adopting those styles which they feel are timeless and thus unchanging. In fact, rather than being fashionable, 'classic' items almost seem to be heralded as 'anti-fashion'. Though not a 'fixed mode of adornment' (1978: 13) or a traditional costume, many of the participants' 'classic' items have been in their wardrobes for ten or more years and even those items which are relatively new, such as Rachel's coat, are considered to be 'traditional' in style rather than 'fashionable' and expected to last for some time. Like 'anti-fashion' then, classic is a style which is generally considered 'unchanged and unchanging' (Polhemus and Procter 1978: 16). It demands 'nothing too old fashioned or too trendy' (1978: 69) and therefore, as Penny tells me, it is 'not going to go in and out of fashion' but instead transcends fashion tendencies.

> Patricia: I've got classic shoes that you know, I've had for years and I'm a great believer of if it still looks right, if it still looks classic, why throw it away? [Aged 43, Teacher]

> Norma: I've got a classic long black cashmere coat, it's beautiful and it must be 15 years old this coat, and I still wear it and it looks absolutely fabulous. [Aged 66, Retired]

Though seen as something different to fashion, classic items are arguably still a form of fashionable clothing, but are those items which are subject to subtle rather than dramatic changes and which are therefore seen to have longevity. The little black dress, for instance, is a timeless 'classic'. Although its form has changed since its incarnation in 1926 (Ludot, 2001; Mendes, 1999), those changes are seen as discreet enough to allow it to traverse the decades.

The notion of 'classic' is consequently well suited to the middle class. Firstly, because it compliments their fashion distaste, and secondly because it further supports their desire for quality, 'value for money' and preference for long-lasting goods. Moreover, the longevity of

'classic items' suggests a further link to 'natural' or 'authentic' materials, such as leather and cotton, as these materials are considered to be of a better 'standard' and 'feel nicer' than man-made alternatives such as polyester or plastics.

> Margaret: I don't like polyester, it's got a gritty feel, but if you feel cotton or linen it's sort of crisp ... I think you can feel quality, ... the fabric tells you the quality ... I mean a cheap chiffon dress, it feels horrible to wear ... I mean linen creases but it doesn't seem to spoil the look of it, but some materials seem to go out of shape so quickly, they're cheap, cheap fabrics. [45, Learning Support Assistant PT]

> Sarah: It's all to do with fabric, I mean I could feel one piece of fabric and say, 'that's not bad', and then I could feel something else and feel 'that's definitely good cotton in there', I can feel the difference ... nice good thick cotton ... will wash and wash. [Aged 52, Retired Police Officer]

> Miriam: It's the quality ... I feel the stuff and it's really, really nice to feel, I'm a very touchy person. I've got more expensive clothes and shoes and you feel that the quality is better ... so in a lot of places that I go to it's the quality that I am looking for. [Aged 28, GP]

In order to outlive the fashion season, classic items are generally plain and simple, so that they cannot be attributed to a specific trend or fashion era, and particular emphasis is placed on colour. Black, white and navy are all identified as classic colours, as well as muted greens or blues and other 'neutral' tones such as beige and brown, as Clarke and Miller (2002) argue. The only exception to this is red, which although 'bright' is still considered 'corporate' and 'conservative'. As Lurie (1992 [1981]: 157) suggests, the middle classes have a clear preference for dull 'unimaginative' colours, which allow them to 'keep a low profile' (Fischer-Mirkin, 1995: 19). These colours, as both Birren (1978) Grove-White (2001) and Miller (2004) note, are generally perceived as 'safe' and 'secure'. Considered 'pure and modest, natural and simple ... their classic look suggests a sense of elegance' (Garthe, 1995: 104) and thus provides the women with an air of 'sophistication' and respectability (Fisher-Mirkin, 1995), and as such clothes tend to 'blend effortlessly' (Garthe, 1995: 104) and 'go with everything', they also offer versatility and longevity, which corresponds with middle class frugality.

> Eva: I bought a cardigan last weekend. It is blacks, greys and whites. And I thought, 'Yes, it will go fantastically with black trousers for the winter.' I never buy anything, or I will take it back if I think, 'No, that's not going to go with that.' If it is an 'oddity', it's got to go back. [Aged 60, Retired/Music Tutor]

Moreover, the neutrality of these colours means that they fulfil a desire for subtlety, sobriety and discretion, which is keenly felt amongst middle class participants. As Kerry tells me, middle class women generally 'do not want to stand out', and consequently, as noted on observations, they tend to buy items which are either very dark: black, grey, or navy, or alternatively very pale. Black is particularly popular, as not only does it fulfil all the 'classic' criteria, but it is also, as others note, considered sophisticated and slimming (Clarke and Miller, 2002; Fisher-Mirkin, 1995; Miller, 2004; Mendes, 1999). Garments that are seen to be too bright or too sparkly are discarded as being 'too over the top' or 'too much', and big patterns or designs are also generally avoided. Moreover, on the rare occasions where designer items are bought, middle class women are keen that their logos or labels are discreet and therefore go unnoticed.

> Rachel: I had a pair of Gucci sunglasses and they had G's in little diamantes, but they were still quite discreet. But I was very conscious of them and I felt that everyone would see the G's ... It's not nice to be blatant. If you've got something nice, it's nice to have it, but you don't want to be, 'Look what I've got', and it wouldn't be so other people would notice, it's for you. [Aged 32, Legal Secretary]

The preference for modesty is even more apparent in regard to middle class jewellery, which rather than being 'blingy', tends to take the form of 'small pearl earrings', or simple pendants or chains, as they are delicate and 'low key'.

> Margaret: I do like to wear a necklace or earrings, but I would wear plain, a plain gold chain or necklace, although I have got a necklace which is stone which I've had for years, it's on a leather thong, but again it's got to be fairly low-key. [Aged 45, Learning Support Assistant PT]

> Julia: I'll wear sort of classic [jewellery]. It varies, but I've got a diamond cross necklace or pearl earrings so much more classic. [Aged 35, Business Analyst]

These items communicate their value, like other 'classic' garments, through their authenticity and 'good quality'. As Goffman (1990 [1959]) argues, modesty is seen as an expression of wealth and consequently, as Sennett suggests, 'attention to detail' and subtle differences operate as important class indicators (2002 [1974]: 162). Thus while the dark and neutral colours and subtle details of their dress allow these women to blend in and keep 'a low profile' (Fisher-Mirkin, 1995: 19), at the same time this 'classic' style provides a means of differentiation.

Indeed, in the course of middle class discussion there is often a contrast made between the subtle and discreet character of classic styles and the bright colours, cheap materials and 'blingy' conspicuous jewellery which they associate with working classness. 'Heavy' gold jewellery, specifically 'gold hoop' earrings (Tyler, 2008; Tyler and Bennett, 2010; Martin, 2009),

for example, are commonly used to identify working class women, and several talk about 'women on council estates' wearing 'harsh' colours and/or cheap materials. As McRobbie argues, 'the welfare-dependent, single maternity', is marked by her common and cheap dress, her gold hoop earring, and a 'child in a buggy' (2004: 102).

> Carol: Classical dressing, it's less showy, it's definitely less bling. If I saw someone in heavy duty bling I would, even if it was expensive bling, designer bling, I would put them into a lower bracket mentally than if someone had classic. [Aged 56, Hospital Manager]
>
> Naomi: I wouldn't want to look chavvy ... with some enormous clown hanging off a necklace, big gold earrings. [Aged 25, IT Consultant]
>
> Jessica: For example, I bought pair of really bright pink tracksuit bottoms [only to be worn in 'private spaces'] with 'love' written across the arse, now a council estate woman would go out in them. [Aged 31, Civil Servant]
>
> Chloe: It's just all like teenagers with babies from like different dads, and they walk around pushing their buggies, and do you know like those trousers, they're like of a really, really tight material, like nylon, they wear trousers like that, with the big nylon roll neck jumpers, ... with big gold hoops. It's just that look, is Addington market. [Aged 18, Student]

Moreover, this association between bright colours or cheap materials and working classness is also made evident by some women when talking about their concerns regarding their own dress, specifically Grace, who tells me how she worried that wearing bright colours would make her look like an 'over-aged tart'.

> Grace: One of my colleagues ... said, 'You're very brave'. And I said, 'Well, why?', and she said, 'because of those really bright colours that you are wearing', and [I was wearing] a lot of fuchsia and pink, the fuchsia is a colour that suits me but I did feel, 'Oh God I look like some over-aged tart or something!' [Aged 56, University Services Manager]

Grace's comments along with those of Naomi, Jessica and others, clearly demonstrate the way in which fashion is used as a means of union and isolation. As Bourdieu (2005 [1984]) and Simmel (2004 [1901]) suggest, differences in taste allow these women to differentiate themselves from others, while at the same time their own preferences work to classify them as belonging to a particular group. The ability to note and understand what is being 'signified' is dependent on one's knowledge of 'the stylistic properties', however (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 2). Thus, while middle class women perceive their choice of clothing and accessories as 'classic' or modest, and value the authenticity of the goods, it may be the case, as Miller et al. (1998: 150) suggest, that

those in other classes simply perceive it as boring or 'dull', as they do not have the 'access to power' or knowledge to recognise its symbolic value (Skeggs, 1997: 87).

Moreover, by suggesting that 'nylon roll neck jumpers' and nylon trousers are a sign of promiscuity Chloe's comments highlight an important link between quality and moral character. In his discussion of art, Bourdieu argues that 'the quality of the person ... is affirmed in the capacity to appropriate an object of quality' (2005 [1984]: 281), and here too, in relation to fashion it seems that 'clothing is used to indicate social worth' (Barnard, 2002 [1996]: 61). As a result the wearing of low cost materials or counterfeit or imitation goods is not only perceived as a sign of working class status, but a further lack of morality. Internal character is judged on the basis of the external appearance (Finkelstein, 1991; Sennett, 2002 [1974]), as discussed in chapter 4, and therefore a lack of authenticity is often read as a lack of decency as well as a lack of wealth, as Veblen suggests (1994 [1899]: 104). Consequently, fake Louis Vuitton bags or fake Prada tops are not just seen by middle class women as a sign of being 'poor', as Miriam tells me, but of 'broken homes' or sexual deviance, as Kerry, Hannah and Carly explain.

> Kerry: You don't want to look pikey.
> Hannah: Yeah all that fake stuff.
> Kerry: Fake stuff with massive logos across it,
> Hannah: Yeah and you just think if it is Prada, it's not going to say Prada in pink, diamante letters across your boobs is it? ... By pikey I would be talking about someone wearing something ...
> Kerry: Far, far too tight. A crop top ...
> Hannah: A crop top and trousers or a skirt that shows your g-string. You'll see them ... in a tiny little strappy top, with gold hanging off their neck and ears. Whereas, posh people, they are groomed slightly better and more demure in their appearance, and it may well be, proper Prada but it's not blingy across their boobs. [Kerry Aged 25, Marketing Consultant; Hannah Aged 25, Legal Secretary]

> Carly: If you can't afford something you just you shouldn't mimic it ... because obviously Louis Vuitton is very expensive because it caters for a particular class of people, people who are quite well off, whereas people who live on a council estate, you know, come from a broken home, they try and dress in Burberry and Louis Vuitton. I just don't think they can pull it off. I just don't think people should wear things like that because if they can't afford it, then they shouldn't. [Aged 21, Student]

7.1.3.1 A FLATTERING FIT

Moreover, it is not just the authenticity of items which is used to make moral judgements. The way in which clothes fit and flatter the body is equally important. Middle class women often consider that working class women wear clothes that are too tight, and which show too much flesh or the wrong parts of their bodies, such as their breasts, midriff or 'muffin top', and while this is related to dressing up and the performance of femininity, as discussed in chapter 6, it is also an important element of 'looking good'.

In his discussion of class and food, Bourdieu argues that the body is a 'social product' which is 'sign-bearing and sign wearing' (2005 [1984]: 192), and thus the way in which it physically moves, its size and shape operates as a means of class distinction (193). Whereas middle class individuals move in a more delicate way and are much quieter and more reserved (191-2), the working class tend to be louder and bolder, making large gestures or much more noise, 'as if to amplify to the utmost an experience' (192). This, as already discussed, can also be seen in relation to dress. While middle class classic styles and colours tend to be more subdued, working class women are identified by their more conspicuous, garish and arguably vulgar attire. But in addition, middle class women are keen to wear clothes that they believe fit them well, and therefore disguise and cover their bodies, particularly the less attractive 'bulgy' parts, while at the same time, they often identify working class women as wearing clothes which they consider unflattering, because they reveal 'unfit' or 'fat' bodies.

> Veronica: Increasingly I'll see something that I think will be flattering, because I have put on weight, since I've hit my fifties and therefore I try to buy things that flatter my shape, that is really important to me, to camouflage and disguise my shape, disguise my bulging bits. [Aged 55, HR Manager]
>
> Sarah: Evans used to have lovely elegant dresses. I like elegant dresses, I like an A-line. For me that hides my stomach. [Aged 52, Retired Police Officer]
>
> Emily: It's people who try to fit themselves into a size 8 when they're actually a size 12 and they really shouldn't ... or the girl in the Slug and Lettuce that time... the cellulite was horrific.
> Naomi: You need to think does it fit me, does it suit my figure?
> Emily: [unlike a Chav] I wouldn't go out in a crop top with my belly hanging out and I would always buy a jumper which was the right length, as opposed to a jumper which finished about two inches short of my jeans so that my stomach was hanging over the top of my jeans. [Emily Aged 27, Marketing; Naomi Aged 25, IT Consultant]

As discuss in chapter 6, the working class is frequently associated with 'excess' and a lack of 'discipline and self control', and consequently working class individuals are often portrayed as fat and 'excrescent' (Martin, 2009; Munt, 2000; Skeggs, 1997; 2004; 2009). Their bodies, 'commonly perceived as the most natural expression of innermost nature' are used 'as an index of moral uprightness' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 193) and therefore are seen as indicative of lack of respectability, self-governance and restraint (Skeggs, 2004a). Consequently, as Emily suggests, they are often are considered to have their stomachs 'hanging' over their jeans, or 'their boobs spilling out'; signs which are also often interpreted as indications of sexual deviance.

> Jane: Slutty ... is too much midriff. If you've got somebody who, and they've got stretch marks and muffin tops all coming out, I think, 'oh please don't do that'. [Aged 29, Lecturer & Yoga Instructor]

In this research, however, the emphasis is not so much on working class women being specifically overweight, but wearing clothes which fail to disguise this. Indeed, many of the middle class women surveyed feel that they too are 'fat', but they nevertheless still consider themselves to be respectable, because they wear clothes which hide this characteristic.

Moreover, this distinction between flattering and unflattering dress again relates to the notion of classic dress and quality, as those clothes which are considered to be of good quality, and classic styles, are also seen to be 'better cut' and more flattering. In fact, many of the middle class women note that better quality items are often a more 'generous' fit, and that as a result they can buy items in smaller dresses sizes than usual. Poor quality garments on the other hand, or 'fashionable' clothes, are often viewed as unflattering, because they do not fit as well, and thus as Faye and Penny suggest, inadvertently display parts of women's bodies which they feel they should have covered, or do not make the most of their shape.

> Geraldine: Well I've found I'm either a 14, a 12 or a 10 depending on how much I've spent, so if it is really cheap I'll be a 14, if its medium I'll be a 12, if they're terribly expensive I'll be a 10. [Aged 65, Retired]

> Carol: I've just bought a really nice skirt which was eighty quid, and that felt that was a lot for a skirt, but I bought it at the same time as the one reduced to £12, so I sort of thought, two skirts for £90. And then I took the £12 one back because it looked awful ... It just didn't look right. There was nothing about it which flattered any part of me, and it was a size 18 whereas the posh one, the expensive one was a 14. [Aged 56, Hospital Manager]

> Faye: I have to buy classic clothes. For example, I cannot buy trousers that sit on the hip which I know are very fashionable because my body shape will not allow me to ... I don't expose my stomach. I don't wear hipsters, trousers on the hips because I don't want my muffin top hanging over ... I don't want to wear something that is ill-fitting and looks cheap. [Aged 44, University Sponsorship Manager]

> Penny: I've always tried to stay reasonably classic with the cuts. I still stick to certain styles or shapes that would suit me ... So last year the trapeze coats were all in. They're not flattering to anyone, quite frankly, so I wouldn't go and buy that. I didn't have a summer jacket for the whole season because I refused to buy a trapeze coat ... whereas this season there's blazer jackets or, you know more classic cuts and more tailored jackets. [Aged 31, Art Director, Advertising]

Rather than referring to one single feature of dress, then, these comments demonstrate that 'classic' is determined on the basis of the cut, shape and fit, as well as colour, quality and style. Yet, the most important aspect of classic dress seems to be the contrast that is made to the cheap, conspicuous, 'unflattering' clothing that middle class women associate with the working class, and which the middle class therefore perceive to be 'fashion' rather than classic.

7.2 WORKING CLASS WOMEN: BEING FASHIONABLE

While for middle class women looking good is about dressing 'classically', for working class women it is quite the opposite. Looking good is about being 'fashionable' and 'trendy'; a heavy investment which involves buying fashion magazines, watching fashion programmes and shopping for new clothes, almost every week. Consequently, unlike the middle class women, working class participants are keen to tell me how they have taken note of the fashion items on 'GMTV', 'This Morning', 'How to Look Good Naked' and 'Gok's Fashion Fix', and rather than shying away from fashion trends they are eager to display their knowledge of the latest styles, designers and colours.

> Ruth: *Now, Heat, You, Grazia*, we tend to get them all at some point ... I'll definitely see something in a magazine and then go and find it in the shops ... keeping up to date as possible ... it's important to look good. You know? I like to be fashionable. [Aged 45, PA]

> Judy: I'll see a fashion item and then I'll go and put it together. 'GMTV' is really good, they are always showing you things that you can wear, and they do a lot of fashion things in Croydon in the Whitgift Centre, fashion shows and so on. [Aged 60, Hairdresser]

Just as Skeggs (1997: 85, 104) suggests, clothing or rather fashion is a form of 'cultural capital' for these women, and knowledge of fashion is therefore held in high esteem. As a result, working class women are keen to learn about new fashion trends from friends and relations who they consider to be fashionably dressed, and thus 'recognise' as having a cultural knowledge of fashion. Indeed, rather than perceiving those who follow fashion as 'fashion victims' or 'fashion slaves', who indiscriminately adopt fashion trends, dressing fashionably amongst their peers operates as a form of 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu, 1986) for these women, and it is therefore seen to demonstrate an individual's understanding of fashion and a level of expertise.

> Mandy: I look at what my sister is wearing, and I'll say, 'that's nice, what are you wearing?' and she'll tell me, 'it's a new trend'. And I'll say, 'that's nice I might get myself one' ... and I do look at what other people are wearing ... and if they're wearing something that's nice, or new, I'm like, 'oh I like that', and I'll get an idea of what they're wearing to go and buy something just like it ... [Aged 21, full-time Mother]

For working class women 'looking good', as Skeggs suggests, involves 'dedication, commitment, labour, [and] knowledge' and there is a significant fear about 'getting behind, or not having the right knowledge, or getting it wrong' (1997: 104). It therefore requires these women to study fashion media, and to pay attention to the new items in high street shops and markets, as well as observing other women and what they are wearing in terms of new looks or trends. During observations amongst market stalls and low-end independent stores, such as Krisp in Croydon, I often heard women telling each other what programmes they had seen particular items on, or which garments were indicative of new trends, or 'in' this season. There is a clear desire amongst these women to continually update their own wardrobes, and in fact, the majority of working class women interviewed in this research go shopping every week 'for something new', often to 'go out in' as discussed in chapter 6, but also to find out what 'the latest fashion' is in terms of other women's dress (Crane, 1999b).

> Trisha: I go to the market every week, my friend owns a stall there, so I'll see what she's got new in ... I'll go and buy something new, whatever the latest look is ... [Aged 43, full-time Mother]

> Anon: That's that nautical look isn't it? I saw it on 'This Morning'.

Moreover, looking good is not just about wearing fashionable items per se, but carrying off 'the look' in its entirety, as any given look requires all the elements; not just clothes but accessories too. It is key, then, that all aspects of dress are considered, as in order to 'look good' a women needs to have the complete package, and, crucially, all the items need to match. Consequently

several interviewees note how they will buy an entire outfit at any one time, and often place particular emphasis on the colour coordination of shoes, tops, jewellery, bags and even hair clips.

> Kim: The top, the trousers, the shoes, the hair, the bangle, the bag ... it all has to match, I'll buy the entire outfit. [Aged 33, full-time Mother]
>
> Amber: Everything has to be matching ... I wear boots and skirts, probably with like this roll top, and then I'll match the top and the shoes ... yellow top with, yellow shoes... [Aged 29, Hospital Receptionist]
>
> Lisa: You have to coordinate your colours and keep your colours together... [Aged 27, full-time Mother]
>
> Jazz: I do coordinate a lot, even sometimes down to the underwear and socks, even when I'm going to work. [Aged 36, Cleaner]

Unlike with middle class women, their choice of colours is varied. Rather than sticking to neutral or sober tones, working class women are keen to adopt bright colours, such as pink, blue, green, and particularly those colours which are considered on trend that season, and they are much more willing to wear patterns or prints too.

> Judy: I always know exactly the colour, I always know what I'm looking for, it depends on what's in that season [Aged 60, Hairdresser]

7.2.1 CATALOGUES & COPYING

The fundamental difference in working class women's attitude to fashion has significant implications in terms of their buying criteria and shopping practices. Firstly there is far greater emphasis amongst working class women on the use of catalogues. Most of the women interviewed receive Littlewoods, Additions, Great Universal, Gratton, Next, or La Redoute, or more often, a combination of these. The reason for using catalogues is partly because of the credit that is offered, as Clarke (1998) and Coopey et al. (2005) suggest. By allowing customers to pay for items over a number of weeks, fashion catalogues let the women purchase items that they may otherwise not be able to afford and thus enable them to budget for clothes for themselves and their children. Moreover, for those participants who wear larger dress sizes, catalogues offer them a choice of clothing that is not available on the high street. Purchasing goods via mail order also provides women with the convenience of items being sent straight to their door, and consequently gives them time to think about what they might wear to any given occasion, some time in advance.

Joy: I love the Next Directory because I can control it you know, I can buy something and I can pay £10 next week, whereas if I go shopping, you have to pay straight away, you know. [Aged 19, Fast Food Restaurant Worker]

Mandy: Yeah, mainly for the kids if I run out of money and they need something desperately I can get it ... and I thought I need a new pair of shoes to go out in, it was just as easy to order something off it. [Aged 21, full-time Mother]

Yvonne: I tend to go in for the catalogues ... I mean I don't like to be running round the shops like, 'oh God, I've got somewhere to go'. [Aged 47, Care Worker]

The use of catalogues is not strictly limited to economic reasons, or convenience, however. Indeed, unlike Clarke's participants who saw the Argos catalogue as an inexpensive way to buy presents or toys (1998), many women in this study note that although they receive catalogues they do not purchase from them, because they are aware that similar goods are available more cheaply on the high street or in the market. Rather, as Becky suggests, women browse the catalogues for ideas and inspiration. Like magazines, catalogues are used as a form of fashion knowledge and fashion media. And thus, rather than being evidence of a 'low investment in clothing', as Bourdieu (2005 [1984]: 378) suggests, their use indicates an enthusiasm for fashion, as they offer women a clear and convenient way of learning about 'what's going on' (Clarke and Miller, 2002: 202), forthcoming trends and how to 'put things together'. If the Argos catalogue operates as a 'shop window' and a fantasy shopping space where children can get ideas for Christmas and birthday presents (Clarke, 1998: 89) it seems the fashion catalogues operate as a fashion catwalk, style guide or fashion bible, from which the women can get ideas for outfits, copy the images and recreate styles:

Becky: I was looking through the catalogue because ... I wanted ideas, it was for a specific occasion, but another reason I buy from catalogues is because they do the buy now pay later option ... and I can spread the payment out every month. [Aged 29, Nurse]

Yvonne: The dress I've got for the Christening [from the catalogue] ... it's a purple dress right, so I put it together with the silver shoes like in the picture, and I've got a little top to go over it ... I wanted that [points to the image] but they didn't have it, so they are going to send me something else, if they don't have it they phone you back to tell you they've got something similar to what you were looking for ... [Aged 47, Care Worker]

Though emulation of the upper classes in the way that Simmel (2004 [1901]) or Veblen (1994 [1899]) describe is not apparent, imitation of fashionable styles is evident, motivated not necessarily by 'invidious comparisons', but rather by a taste and appreciation for fashion and a desire for symbolic capital. As Casey argues, working class women look 'for cultural items which

they imagine will bring them status as *working class women*' (2008: 41) rather than seeking to achieve the lifestyle of the middle class. These women use fashion catalogues in order to keep 'up to date' with the latest designs. Indeed, their use is a 'calculated act' by working class women, in order to make sure they are 'in style' (Blumer, 1981 [1969]: 50). A source of knowledge, they help them to create looks which are 'on trend', providing images which can be copied and offering ideas and examples of how to 'look good'.

But it is not only catalogues which are a source of inspiration and subject to imitation. '[W]hat people wear on the street' and what is advertised in stores, as Crane (1999b: 547) argues, are important sources of information too. More so in fact than A-List celebrities, as Finkelstein (1996) and Crane (1999b) suggest. Rather, the people that women witness in their everyday lives offer examples of how to dress, and stores too provide women with knowledge about what is currently in vogue. By shopping regularly working class women are able to keep abreast of what is new in store and at the same time look at how other women are dressed, often asking them where they bought items, with the sole intention of replicating their look.

> Mandy: The majority of the time, yeah, see what they're [women day-to-day] are wearing and ideas things for me to buy. I do look at what other people are wearing ... I'm like, 'Oh I like that', and I'll buy not the exact same thing but get an idea of what they're wearing to go and buy something just like it. [Aged 21, full-time Mother]

> Angie: Well I might see someone in the street ... and I might like their skirt and think, 'I'll get that', and then the next time I go shopping it'll go through my mind 'I want that'. [Aged 54, full-time Mother]

> Lisa: Yeah, because sometimes you'll be out and you'll think, 'Oh, she's got a top where did she get that from?' Like I've seen a girl with a really, really nice top out before, and I said, 'where did you get your top from?' and she goes 'Primark' ... so I could get one too. [Aged 26, full-time Mother]

While the practice of looking at other women's dress does occur amongst the middle class, they tend to focus on styles or outfits that they would not wear, rather than seeing other women as a source of information about fashion and how to dress. Furthermore, very few middle class women said that they would ask strangers where they bought items, and yet within the working class it appears to be quite a common practice. If these women admire someone else's style they do not hesitate to ask where the items were bought, so that they can imitate it.

7.2.2 DISPOSABLE FASHION & DESIGNER LABELS

Because working class women are so much more fashion conscious and keen to stay up-to-date, they are all too aware that fashion changes rapidly (Rutter and Bryce, 2008) and therefore it is important for working class women to be able to buy things cheaply. Unlike the middle class who place emphasis on quality and 'value for money', then, working class women are aware that 'trends don't last long' and so it is not as important that their clothes last, as they will soon be 'out of fashion' anyway. Consequently, although the women are fully aware that they could spend more money on an item and buy something of better quality, it seems that in many respects 'calculability' has entered the fashion market and therefore 'quantity not quality' is generally their primary concern (Ritzer, 2004).

> Kelly: My dad always says ... 'if you buy a ten pound pair of shoes you're only going to get ten pound wear out of them' and I think that is true because when I've bought them before they've only lasted like three weeks. Whereas when I spend like forty pounds on shoes they last ages. But I do think, yeah, how they last is different and all that, but at the end of the day they're shoes, they all do the same thing ... and the fashions don't last all that long. [Aged 18, Unemployed]

> Angie: Well I've only spent a fiver on that top so that's not really a problem if that shrinks. I'm not spending very much. I'm washing those two t-shirts now. If they both shrink today I'm not bothered. It doesn't matter really. [Aged 54, full-time Mother]

With fashion changing so quickly it does not warrant individuals spending more money than is necessary to get 'the look', and working class women are much more of the opinion that 'fashion is disposable'. Consequently, as Angie's quote demonstrates, they are less concerned with buying clothes that have longevity and that will last a long time. In fact, they quite frequently 'throw clothes out', because they are no longer 'trendy', even though, as in Mandy's case, they might have never been worn.

> Mandy: I just like shoes, I've got over 100 pairs of shoes, and I've just got rid of a load ... I got rid of two black sacks full of shoes, ... ones that I've had for quite a while, ones that I've never worn and now would never wear again ... because they're not fashionable any more. The shoes I get now have to be, like the shoes I see up the market I know that they are in fashion, so people are wearing them or whatever, so I'd go and buy them. [Aged 21, full-time Mother]

Although some such as Bourdieu (2005 [1984]) may argue that the buying of cheap goods is due to economic reasons, and an inability of the working class to afford items of good quality, it appears that the desire for cheap goods is not wholly driven by their financial position. There is

no doubt that these women would be less able to continually update their wardrobes if they were to buy more expensive items. As Jazz tells me, the most she has spent on a pair of jeans is around £50, because she cannot afford any more. But at the same time there is a general consensus that 'you don't have to spend money to look good'; rather, fashion is affordable and 'disposable' (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009; Shields, 2008) and therefore there is 'no need to spend more money than you have to'.

> Ruth: You can buy, especially these days with places like Primark you can buy fashion and dispose of it really quickly ... you can stay ahead of the game really. [Aged 45, PA]

As a result shops such as Primark are particular popular amongst the working class participants, but for different reasons to those put forward by their middle class counterparts. Rather than offering 'value for money' in terms of 'cheap and cheerful' basic items, Primark is seen as somewhere that offers fashionable clothing at low cost, and thus allows women, whatever their income, to look good.

> Kim: Nine times out of 10 you go to Primark and there is something new that's come out and that is what everyone's wearing to that club ... sometimes we see things in River Island, and then we'll see the same thing but it will be cheaper. Sometimes you know, you're watching telly, and they say there is this dress but they have it in Primark, so that's the dress you're going to go and get, you're not going to go and get the Kate Moss dress which is £120, when you can get a Primark dress which looks the same. [Aged 33, full-time Mother]

As Kim's comment suggests, then, for these women looking good is about 'looking fashionable', and therefore importance is placed on buying clothes that are up-to-date, and buying them cheaply. Although this may be driven in part by economics, it is also representative of these women's attitude towards fashion, and the pace at which fashion changes.

7.2.2.1 SPECIAL OCCASIONS & DESIGNER LABELS

There are two key instances, however, where working class women are generally willing to spend more money on items; and they are wedding outfits and designer labels. As discussed in chapter 6, weddings are seen as primary occasions on which to dress up, and as Tseëlon suggests, they are at the top of the visibility scale (1995). On these 'special' occasions it is important not only to look good, but to 'look your best', and as a result working class women are willing to spend more in order to wear something 'nicer'.

> Natasha: I probably would go, I'd look in Oasis, if I was going to a wedding and wanted something really nice, and I probably would be spending more money. [Aged 18, Student]

Ruth: If it was a wedding, I'd go to Debenhams, Alders, places like that. Yeah, so, nicer places maybe, spend a bit more money. Only because I want to get what I wanted, I want a dress so I'd have to spend a bit more to get exactly what I wanted ... then I need a matching handbag and I've gone to every shop to get one. [Aged 45, PA]

Angie: My daughter got married a few years ago so I went to Anne Harvey for my wedding outfit; it was the only place I could get one. They are expensive, but it came in at £160 for the 3 pieces. I'd been everywhere looking ... I wanted a skirt. I been to the West End, to the Anne Harvey there, I'd been to Evans. I'd been to wedding shops but they do suits and outfits to rent but none of them were my size. So yeah, it was a bit of a drop. I've still got it, Christ it cost enough! But it's screwed up into the wardrobe and I don't think I'll ever wear it again. I don't think I ever have since the wedding actually. And the hat, that just went to Oxfam. [Aged 54, full-time Mother]

Moreover, having spent more money on these outfits, working class women are less likely to throw these items away and instead they constitute something of a financial investment. At the same time, however, women often comment, like Angie here, that they are unlikely to wear these outfits again. In fact many note that having bought an expensive outfit for a wedding it has then sat in their wardrobes ever since. This is either because they have not had an occasion to wear it again, or if they have, they have chosen instead to buy something new. As chapter 6 discussed, wearing new clothes is a key aspect of dressing up for working class women, and they are eager not to be seen in outfits that they have worn before, apart from the fact that in order to 'look good' they are likely to want to wear something more up-to-date.

The other occasion where working class women are willing to spend more money is when buying designer items. Several participants, for example, tell me that they will spend 'a bit more money' in order to purchase Tiffany jewellery, or designer sunglasses from eBay, or alternatively how they will look for designer clothing in department stores such as Alders, Debenhams or House of Fraser.

Jazz: I've always liked the Playboy design. I just love the Playboy bunny and their clothes, they're quality stuff ... I'm such a bargain hunter and I like to get stuff cheap. I think the most I ever spent on a pair of Playboy jeans was £46 in the sale. So everything I normally get is in the sale. [Aged 36, Cleaner]

Louisa: Generally a lot of my stuff comes from Debenhams because they've got all the designers at Debenhams and I do like them, I buy a lot of stuff from the Designers at Debenhams ranges ... but I would only ever go in the sale. [Aged 38, Nursery Nurse]

Unable to afford these items at the full retail price, these women look for items on the internet and in sales in order to buy them more cheaply, although at the same time they still spend relatively much more than they would on a day-to-day purchase. The most notable example of this is Mandy, who tells me that she spent £200 on a Louis Vuitton handbag which, touted as 'limited edition', she believes to be 'authentic', although unfortunately it is more than likely to be a counterfeit.

> Mandy: I notice the designer labels like the Chanel and Gucci and Armani, and D&G are the ones that stand out, Christian Dior is another one I like ... I've got a limited edition Louis Vuitton bag.
>
> KA: Where did you get that from?
>
> Mandy: The market actually, the lady up there she was selling all these bags, and there was only ever 10 made, and I got one and it was the tag on it was £500. It's still in the dust bag that I bought it in. It cost £200, but it's a nice bag and I've never seen anyone with it ... but it stays in the cupboard with the rest of the bags that I don't ever use hardly ... I don't want to hurt it, it cost me so much money ... that is the first time I'd ever spent that amount of money on a bag ... but then it's worth it because it was a must have. But on a normal day I've got a bag up there it cost me £3 from Asda ... I would never spend that amount of money on a bag to go out with. [Aged 21, full-time Mother]

In some respects the spending of large sums of money on what is believed to be a designer item, goes against some of the more typical features of working class consumer practices. These are not items which women are intending to dispose of quickly, and unlike most of their purchases they tend to be seen as goods which are of good quality, and which therefore have longevity. And yet at the same time, the fact that working class women are willing to spend large sums of money, and thus invest in designer goods, or what they perceive to be designer goods, in many ways simply reaffirms the 'cultural capital' which they place on having knowledge of fashion and the subsequently 'symbolic capital' which comes with owning fashionable items (Bourdieu, 1986). The motivation behind Mandy's purchase, for example, is not functional or practical. And though the bag may be of good quality, this is not the primary reason for buying it. Rather, the Louis Vuitton bag is a 'must have'; she believes it to be a designer item and 'limited edition'. Its value stems from its conspicuous fashion label, its designer status, exclusivity, and the belief in its authenticity, which offer her 'a reassuring sense of fashion security' (Fisher-Mirkin, 1995: 136). Because the bag is such a large financial investment for her, however, she does not want to risk damaging it or harming it. It stays in its dust cover and like the participants' more expensive wedding outfits, it is very rarely used. But even though it is not an item that she is generally seen with, Mandy's friends know that she owns it, and believe it to be an authentic item too, and

thus within her 'reference group' it has brought her social status (Sproles, 1985), operating as a form of symbolic capital.

Mandy is not the only one to spend money on designer items, however. Lisa too buys sunglasses and clothes from eBay, because she feels she wants to have those items which are considered fashionable, and wants to wear designer labels advertised in magazines, catalogues and stores.

> Lisa: I get stuff from eBay ... I get all my designer glasses from there because they are cheaper ... like I've a Rocawear top and stuff like that. I've got bags, glasses, ... Whenever you go shopping designer stuff is always advertised so if I've seen like Chanel glasses, I look to see if they've [eBay] got something. Because it's like the high street stuff it's just all copies of the designer stuff, everything is just like a copy, copy, copy, you just know what's going on. [Aged 26, full-time Mother]

Unlike Mandy, however, Lisa wears these items regularly, and she notes how friends and strangers comment on them, asking her where she bought them from. Again then, these items bring Lisa fashion kudos, they are a style which 'generate[s] admiration and signal desirability' (Skeggs, 1997: 104), and thus operate for her as a form of symbolic capital amongst her peers.

7.2.3 TASTE OF NECESSITY & DEMOCRATISATION

Not only does the working class notion of 'looking good' present a vast contrast to the practices and preferences of middle class participants, it also sits in contradiction to Bourdieu's notion of 'taste for necessity' (2005 [1984]). As already noted in chapter 2, Bourdieu suggests that the working class have a pragmatic and functional approach to clothing, and as with their taste in food, he suggests that the emphasis lies in fulfilling purely basic needs. However, whilst evidence does support his assertion that working class people 'buy their clothes in the market, by post or in "popular" department stores' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 378), in the context of 'looking good' the suggestion that working class dress is 'simple' and 'modest' and chiefly concerned with what is 'practical' and 'needed in order to "get by"' is far less convincing.

As discussed in chapter 3, the democratisation of fashion, the speed at which it is produced and the reduction in clothing costs has meant that fashion has become far more widely accessible to all class groups (Crane, 2000). It has therefore become something which working classes can appropriate (Partington, 1992), and more importantly appears to be a cultural pursuit which they are keen to adopt. Moreover, in recent years fashion has become an increasingly 'disposable' commodity. Today, shops such as Primark and Matalan and supermarkets such as Asda and Tesco produce clothes intended to be worn on fewer than 10 occasions (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009), which are therefore marketed at very low prices. As a result, despite their

economic position working class women are much more able to buy fashionable clothes and readily update their wardrobes, and thus it seems that their priorities in terms of clothing have broadened, and their tastes have changed. That is not to say that their economic position is not still influential. As already discussed, working class women are still less able to afford expensive clothing, and even when they do look to buy more expensive goods they still have to find ways of obtaining them more cheaply, by using eBay, sales and market traders. But, at the same time, rather than simply looking for clothing that will allow them to 'get by' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 378), when dressing up, and in the context of 'looking good', they are keen to be seen as fashionable. Working class consumption is driven not wholly by economics but by a taste for fashion too. Having a knowledge of fashion trends, brands and designers is desirable and to be seen wearing the latest looks that are being marketed in high street stores is admired.

7.2.4 DEMOCRATISATION & DISTINCTION

In terms of the relationship between fashion and class, then, democratisation has had a significant impact. As chapter 3 demonstrates, it is no longer possible to effectively argue that fashion is the innovation of the upper classes, that it trickles down the hierarchy or that it fuels fashion change (Crane, 1999a; 2000; Davis, 1994 [1992]; Polhemus, 1994). Middle class women are no longer looking to establish their status through impractical and conspicuous items, as Veblen (1994 [1899]) suggests, and the working class is no longer driven by practicality. But more importantly, it seems that the democratisation of fashion has had a significant effect on working class women's perceptions and their ideas on fashion and class. While some working class women still make associations between what women wear and class status, others appear to believe that today's fashion is less of a class indicator.

Several of the working class women in this research, for example, suggest that nowadays, particularly with places such as Primark, money is not a barrier to 'looking good' and looking nice. Indeed, they argue that fashionable styles and even designer labels are accessible to everyone, which means that it is much more difficult to tell a person's social class just by what they are wearing.

> Ruth: You can have taste whether you've got money or not. I think it's very difficult. I think you can't tell class [through clothes] so much over the last twenty years. [Aged 45, PA]
>
> Judy: You can't tell if someone lives on a council estate. Especially, the styles are so different, and you don't have to wear clothes that are so suitable for your age so much. [Aged 60, Hairdresser]

> Kelly: It depends really ... because I could go into Croydon and buy a £10 dress and look as good as someone else who spent £500 on a dress, it just depends on the girl. Do you know what I mean? If I saw someone and I'd think, 'oh they're posh, they live in a big house' but then they could actually be the same and live on an estate with loads of kids, how my family lives. [Aged 18, Unemployed]

> Yvonne: You can look nice, even if it's cheap ... My daughter you can put her in a rice bag and she would look expensive, you know? My daughter came here and she had this very lovely dress and I said to her, 'you look nice, you look rich man', and she said 'yeah I know, people think I'm rich but I ain't got no money in my purse mum'. People who look good, it's how they wear certain things, and ... how they put things together. Because you can get an expensive top or bottom and put it with a cheap one and it can look good, you know what I mean? [Aged 47, Care Worker]

On the one hand the notion that fashion does not communicate class may well represent a 'refusal to be fixed or measured' by their own fashion tastes and practices (Skeggs, 1997: 75). As Skeggs' work suggests, it may be that these working class women do not want to imply that their fashion choices operate as a means of classification, and by suggesting that it is no longer possible to identify class on the basis of dress, they are 'protecting and distancing' themselves 'from the pathological and worthless' connotations of working classness (1997: 86). Indeed, in another part of the interview, Kelly tells me for example that she can identify 'posh boys' in the nightclubs, or female businesswomen, by their clothes.

Alternatively, it may be the case that these women feel that today's fashion market allows individuals of all classes to wear fashionable styles, and thus enables women, including themselves, to appropriate looks which are common within all sections of society. Indeed many magazine articles and media programmes are based on this premise, offering women ideas on how to recreate expensive looks on a budget, which can still pass as designer (e.g. ASOS, *Look Magazine* – 'Catwalk Copy Alert', Channel 4's 'Gok's Fashion Fix') and thus suggesting that fashion does not operate as an obvious means of classification, even though for middle class women it clearly does.

Yet, for most working class participants fashion operates as a means of class distinction. Certainly, they are able to identify other women as 'posh' on the basis of their dress, and moreover, for some they feel that their own dress, particularly the wearing of imitations, identifies them as working class.

> Amber: I think I judge people, so people must judge me the same way. I don't do it to be nasty, but you look don't you. I worked in Chelsea and, you know, everybody is in suits

> and designer clothing. So, you get to know Jane Shilton handbags, you can just tell. I see that side with the patients and the private sector. To me it's a lot, to them it's nothing. It's like Mama and Papas prams... and if you take an interest in fashion you know ... I'm interested in fashion so I know the names and I can see them on other people, but I can't afford to buy the same things, you know. So you spend within your budget. [Aged 29, Hospital Receptionist]
>
> Joy: It's like tomorrow I've got to meet a friend who went to uni, and I'm like shall I just cancel because I've nothing to wear you know. I really do think 'shall I just make an excuse?' It's sad isn't it? Because even if I do make an effort you do feel, you're walking down the street with this girl and she just looks amazing ... and they'll think I'm her maid! ... You can see the Ugg at the back of the boot, [laughs] whereas mine say Ella on the back! ... Like I do scrimp and save, but then everyone has to start somewhere. [Aged 19, Fast Food Restaurant Worker]

Indeed, whilst democratisation has made some working class women, such as Judy, feel that class is a less defining feature of fashion, for others such as Amber, Lisa and Jackie, the increased awareness and availability of fashion, particularly of designer labels, has actually made the class distinctions more apparent to them. Media and catalogue coverage of the most desirable brands or garments has made these women more able to classify others, as they are able to identify where other women's clothes have been bought, and subsequently estimate how much they cost. Consequently for these women fashion operates as a sign of classification and distinction, just as it does for middle class participants. They are able to identify middle or upper class women based on their dress, using labels and styles as indicators of wealth. Those such as Joy feel their own clothes, particularly fake designer labels and low cost brands, are used by others to classify and judge them in the same way.

7.3 CONCLUSION

Often discussed in the context of dressing up, 'looking good' is a key concept in regard to British women's fashion tastes, and it has significant implications in terms of their buying practices. Moreover, it operates as an important means of class distinction, highlighting crucial class differences in women's attitudes to fashion, quality and cost, which results in very different buying criteria and consumption patterns. Crucially, while middle class women are keen to avoid fashion trends, taking a more traditional view which sees fashion as irrational and indulgent, for working class women knowledge of fashion, as Skeggs (1997) suggests, is a form of cultural capital, and consequently working class women are willing to invest heavily in fashionable styles and fashion knowledge.

Within the middle class there appears to be an 'aversion' to fashion, or fashion distaste (Polhemus and Procter, 1978). Many middle class women view fashion simply as 'faddy' and fickle, a commercial industry created in order to make women spend money. Rather than be fooled into buying items unnecessarily, these women opt for 'classic' styles which they feel demonstrate a judgement of taste and which therefore transcend fashion tendencies (Sapir, 1981 [1931]). The opting for 'classic' styles has some fundamental implications. It means that middle class dress is modest and sober, colours are neutral, patterns are simple and plain and, as Miller (1998) suggests, emphasis is placed on quality, practicality and longevity. As a result the middle class taste in some respects represents something more akin to a 'taste of necessity', which Bourdieu (2005 [1979) associates with the working class, in the sense that it prioritises 'value for money' and functionality.

Though middle class women's taste for classic clothing is said to be motivated by fashion distaste, it seems that it is also driven by a desire for class distinction. Identifying working class women on the basis of conspicuous dress, heavy jewellery and poor quality clothing, they aim to distance themselves from the working class by opting for a more 'dominant aesthetic' (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]: 249). Moreover, not only does this distance them from working class women, it also operates as a sign of moral respectability. Their good quality and authentic clothing signifies the genuineness and strength of their personality and character (Finkelstein, 1991) through its modest subtlety (Goffman, 1993 [1959]; Sennett, 2002 [1974]), which further sits in opposition to the poor materials and conspicuous dress which they associate with working class women, and which they see as indicative of their broken homes and sexual promiscuity.

However, while middle class women are eager to avoid fashion, for working class women fashionable dressing is fundamental to looking good, and rather than seeing fashion as something foolish, knowledge of fashion trends and designer labels operates as a form of cultural capital. In fact, their attitude presents a total contrast to middle class participants. Consequently, rather than opting for 'classic' styles, the wearing of fashionable trends and designer labels carries social status and thus operates amongst working class women as a form of symbolic capital. Keen to update their wardrobes regularly with the latest fashion styles, they make use of catalogues, magazines and television programmes as a source of inspiration and information. Using them to recreate styles, they imitate the images and fashion trends that are presented, and look to buy similar items more cheaply in markets and on the high street.

To suggest, then, as Bourdieu (2005 [1984]) does, that working class women only buy what is necessary, seems somewhat outdated. Although their consumption is driven somewhat by their economic position, working class women are keen to engage with fashion, and to be fashionable,

while at the same time the democratisation of fashion and development of fast fashion has made fashion trends much more widely available. Today's British fashion is much more disposable, women are able to update their wardrobes cheaply and frequently, and consequently within the working class there appears to be a real enthusiasm for fashion and an embracing of the 'Primark effect' (Shields, 2008). This interest in fashion is further demonstrated by the consumption of designer goods. Though not able to afford these items at full cost, they are nevertheless eager to purchase garments in department store sales, or those touted as authentic in markets and on auction websites, in order to have what is most up-to-date and desirable.

Indeed, it seems that the democratisation of fashion has had a really significant impact on the relationship between fashion and class, not only because it has allowed working class women to participate much more in fashionable consumption but also because it has impacted on the way in which women perceive fashion as a means of class distinction. Whereas for middle class women, fashion and its adoption clearly operates as a symbol of working class status, for some working class women their ability to participate in fashion and the availability of fashion means that it no longer operates as a means of class distinction. Yet at the same time for some, the increased awareness of fashion brands and labels, and knowledge of fashion, such as where items are sold and how much they cost means that fashion is an increasing sign of wealth and status. Rather than working to damage class distinction, then, for these women democratisation has made others' class position more obvious and indeed their own class location more overt.

What the concept of looking good demonstrates is that the nature of fashion has changed considerably since Bourdieu was writing, and that fashion adoption and fashion tastes amongst British women today do not necessarily operate in the way he suggested. Moreover, though emulation may not be a key feature of the fashion cycle as Simmel (2004 [1901]) and Veblen (1994 [1899]) suggest, it seems that imitation of fashionable styles is an important aspect of the fashion system, particular amongst working class women. But most importantly, despite democratisation, fashion still operates as a means of class distinction. In fact in many respects the increasing democratisation enables class distinction, as it allows middle class women to identify working class women through their fashion adoption, and it allows working class women to evaluate their wealth, or lack of it, in relation to others.

CHAPTER 8

MOTHERS, THE PURVEYORS OF CLASSED PRACTICES

Being a mother is an important aspect of identity for many of the women in this research. Over two-thirds of the women in this study are mothers, and they often talk about how being a mother influences and affects their fashion practice. In chapter 6, for example, I discussed how being identified as a 'mother' has consequences in terms of women's perceptions of social audiences and their definition of public space, but both being a mother, and having a mother, have many other implications in terms of women's fashion practices and fashion tastes. Indeed, nearly all of the participants discuss how their mothers have influenced their shopping or clothing practices. Most discuss how they prefer to shop with mothers, daughters, or sisters, rather than friends because they have 'shared tastes', and women also tend to suggest that it is their mothers, daughters and/or sisters who give them the most open and honest fashion advice.

Mothers are, as many authors suggest (Boyd, 1989; Chodorow, 1978; Dally, 1976; Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1982; 1993; Fischer, 1981; Young and Willmott, 1957), an important influence in their daughters' lives. Women learn 'how to be women' by following the practices of their mothers (De Beauvoir, 1996 [1949]; Woertman, 1993: 57) and as Bourdieu (2005 [1984]) argues, our tastes in clothing, food and furniture are heavily dependent on our social origins and 'early learning', because they are not practices which are supported by the education system. Women's fashion practices and fashion tastes are, then, likely to be influenced by the lessons and guidance that come from their mothers. But the practices, dispositions and tastes which mothers encourage, such as using catalogues, or prioritising quality or cost, depend on their class location, as do their notions of femininity and public and private space.

Moreover, evidence from this research also suggests that there are clear class differences in the ways in which mothers influence their daughters' practice. While middle class mothers tend to operate as gatekeepers, vetoing particular items that they perceive to be working class markers, working class mothers appear to make more 'collective decisions' with their daughters about what to wear or what to buy. Indeed, some working class mothers in this project even share clothing, handbags and shoes with their daughters. And while working class women regularly

shop with their mothers, daughters and/or sisters, middle class women tend to seek the advice and reassurance of their mothers only when lacking in confidence.

The aim of this chapter, then, is to demonstrate the significance of mothers in cultivating classed practices and attitudes amongst their daughters, in relation to fashion. Using interview and observational data, the chapter shows the class differences in the way in which mothers educate their daughters about fashion tastes and consumption practices. It explores how mothers cultivate class attitudes and class evaluation, notions of femininity and respectability, and moreover, how these 'lessons' remain with women long after their childhood. The second half of the chapter looks more closely at the notion of 'shared tastes' and 'shared habitus'. It discusses the close emotional and classed relationship that exists between mothers and daughters. It explores the way in which both working- and middle class mothers and daughters seek advice and reassurance from each other, in order to provide the security of 'not standing alone' (Simmel, 2004 [1901]: 290). And it examines the notion that mothers and daughters, unlike friends, provide the 'truthful' 'honest' advice due to their mutual experiences and shared understandings.

8.1 MATERNAL RESPONSIBILITIES

In talking about their mothers or their experience of motherhood, many of the participants in the research, both middle- and working class, acknowledge the sense of responsibility that they feel mothers have in regard to children's appearance. Mothers play an important role in teaching sons or daughters about how to dress and how to shop. Certainly they have been identified as a significant influence in terms of consumption habits (Ward, 1974), and as Rawlins argues, mothers are generally considered 'accountable for the clothes their children wear' (2006: 360). Moreover, it appears from this research that mothers are seen as responsible for their children's appearance not only as infants or young children but even as teenagers or young adults, and are seen as an important source of fashion guidance and advice.

> Ruth: I do see youngsters in ... short skirts, or leggings and they are far too big for that style. And ... I wish their mum would have said to them, 'Don't do that, that's not a good look for you'. I will tell Melissa ... I'll tell her that, 'That's not her colour', or 'it doesn't show off her shape'. [Aged 45, PA]

> Trisha: I give her [daughter] advice ... It's difficult though because Charlotte [her daughter] is only thirteen years old, going on seventeen, so you have to be careful of what I would call the raunchiness and sexiness ..., do you understand what I mean? You hear all these stories these girls snatched and taken away and you think, 'What was they wearing? Were they being tempted?' [Aged 43, full-time Mother]

Moreover, the comments from Ruth and others imply that by failing to offer advice, mothers are neglecting their responsibilities and Ruth is keen to note that she does tell her daughter what does and does not suit her, in order to clarify that she fulfils her motherly role. As Collett (2005) argues, not only are mothers 'in most cultures ... held accountable for the care and emotional development of their children', they are also 'seen as ultimately responsible for the way their children turn out' (2005: 328) and thus the way that they are dressed. Despite their increasing employment, women continue to be the chief 'carers' within families (De Vault, 1991; Jenkins, 2004; Bond and Sales, 2001; Walkerdine et al., 2001), and as a result, the food and clothing of the household tends to be viewed as a mother's responsibility. Although they may have less autonomy over their children's clothes as they move into adolescence (Ganetz, 1995; Simpson and Douglas, 1998), mothers are still the main purchasers of children's clothing (Miller, 1998; Woodward, 2007) and have an important influence over babies and pre-teens in regard to buying practices (Arcana, 1979; Carlson et al., 1990; Harper et al., 2003) and fashion choices.

As a result children's dress is often used to judge whether a mother is 'good' or 'bad'. Indeed, Clarke (2004) argues that the consumption of food, clothing and toys is a fundamental aspect both in the construction of motherhood and the politics of mothering. Material items are used to create social identities, for both the mother and child, and mothers are judged in relation to each other on the basis of their children's commodities and dress. Being perceived as a 'good mother' relies on having 'the "right" baby monitor, an "ethical" toy' or indeed 'a "pretty" dress' (2004: 71) and children's clothes, as Jane's comments here demonstrate, are used to judge the level of care mothers give to their children.

> Jane: To me ... you see little kids, they haven't got a pair of shoes, they've only got a pair of trainers. Little girls in ... trainers and dresses. I think if you're going to put her in a little dress ... then go to Clarks, get her feet properly measured. I mean, we had three pairs of Clarks shoes every year ... My mum was such a terrible snob, she'd see the mothers buying the shoes off the shelf and trying them on their children and saying 'that'll do'. She'd say, 'they're going to have bunions, they're going to have terrible feet when they're older'. And actually she was probably right. And again I associate it with a fairly middle class upbringing that certain people make sure that their kids, I suppose it's about looking after [yourself/ your children]. And that's what I think about class and fashion ... The [middle class] people that look at whether it's actually doing your body any harm. [Aged 29, Lecturer & Yoga Instructor]

As well as emphasising again the association between wearing trainers and working classness, Jane's remarks highlight two key issues. Firstly, they demonstrate how children's clothing is seen as the responsibility of the mother, and deemed representative of her wider attitudes and

practices in regard to mothering. By purchasing Clarks shoes for her and her sister, Jane feels that her mother demonstrated she was a 'good' parent, who cared for her children's long-term health and looked after their needs, unlike working class mothers who in purchasing shoes 'off the shelf' posed a risk to their children's wellbeing, in terms of suffering 'terrible feet' and bunions later in life. Secondly, Jane's remarks also suggest that notions of mothering, like femininity, are classed, and while middle class practices are seen as 'right' and legitimate, working class practices are deemed 'abject' and 'wrong'.

Writing about class and 'good' mothering, Lawler (2000) argues that 'whether it is read as "democratic", as "sensitive" or as "natural", the type of mothering associated with white middle class women is marked as "normal", with any deviation from this norm constructed as pathological' (2000: 80). Consequently, while good mothering is said to be determined simply on the basis of a child's needs, 'which suggests a rather minimal level of adequacy', it is the practice of the middle class which 'becomes the norm against which others are measured; and it is also the norm to which working class people are supposed to aspire' (2000: 79; Walkerdine and Lucey, 2001). Thus, it is the middle class notions of mothering which are deemed to be legitimate, and while middle class attitudes and practices towards mothering and consumption are seen to satisfy children's needs, working class practices such as buying shoes 'off the shelf' or letting their children wear trainers is deemed indicative of their supposed 'carelessness, irresponsibility and selfishness' (Gillies, 2007: 27) with regard to their children.

8.1.1 GOOD MOTHERING

In this research most mothers, again both middle- and working class, appeared to be aware of the way in which children's dress is viewed as representative of a mother's status as a 'good' or 'bad' parent. In one interview for example, a middle class participant, Jessica, feels she has to make me aware that her son is in an 'emergency outfit' (a baby-grow), and not in clothes that what he would normally wear, and her friend Lucy too explains that her daughter is in a sleep suit only 'for practicality, because we went swimming today'. Indeed, making sure that their children are well dressed is evidently important to a number of women in this research, but the way in which children's clothing is seen to communicate good parenting appears to differ to some extent with social class. While middle class women are keen to ensure that their children's clothes meet the 'proper' middle class standards, for working class women their children's dress demonstrates the way in which their children's needs come before their own, and is also used as a way of protecting their children from the stigma of working classness.

As noted in chapter 6, working class women often view personal sacrifices for the sake of the children and the household as part of their role as a 'good' parent (Skeggs et al., 2008), and thus

as Casey (2008), Charles and Kerr (1988) and Lawler (2000) argue, many of the working class women in this project seemed to suggest that a 'good' mother is selfless, and puts the needs of the family before her own (Lawler, 2000: 153). Consequently, while some forfeit fashion purchases for themselves for the benefit of their children, others view purchases for their children as equally, if not more, important than those made for themselves. So for instance, Joy used clothing vouchers given to her for a Christmas present to buy clothes for her son, whilst Kim will always buy something for her children, even if she does not buy anything for herself. Although this may then mean, as Joy says, that she 'looks bad' while her son 'looks good', it is important to her that her son is well dressed and thus demonstrates, in her mind, that she is a 'good mother'.

> Louisa: I go to Next and Debenhams because I can kit the kids out so cheaply in the sale and it's really nice quality stuff. I don't like buying shit ... I like to put the kids in stuff that's nice ... I want to people to look at my kids and think they are really nicely, tastefully dressed you know? [Aged 38, Nursery Nurse]

> Joy: I'll look bad ... but he'll look good ... But don't you find that you take much more pleasure in picking clothes for them [their children], rather than you? I love his [her son's] clothes, but mine I don't bother with ... I asked for Next vouchers and GAP vouchers for Christmas and I was determined to spend them on myself and I spent them all on him. [Aged 19, Fast Food Restaurant Worker]

> Kim: We go shopping every week, it's for the kids, we go to Primark and buy something for the kids every week, but on the weeks when we're going out we will go and buy something, to go out in. [Aged 33, full-time Mother]

Moreover, while the working class women in this research, like that of Casey's (2008: 65), do not present a strong 'desire to "escape" their class position' when discussing their own dress or class location, they do appear to demonstrate a greater desire for their children to be seen as respectable, and not working class. Louisa remarks, for instance, that she wants others to think that her children look 'tasteful', while Diane says that she does not want others to think that her daughters were poor. By buying 'better quality' or designer items, these mothers hope to 'protect' their children from the 'pathological and worthless' connotations of working classness (Skeggs, 1997: 86) and subsequently 'improve their lives' (82), just in same way that Liz said she did when her daughters were younger.

> Diane: When I've not had a lot of money I didn't want anyone to look at the girls and think we were poor. [Aged 41, Receptionist]

> Liz: I mean again, ... because I didn't have much money I would actually, I had to support us completely on my own, it meant that I went to Quality Seconds and whatever was cheap. And I used to get some lovely things, because at the same time that I might buy clothes from the cheaper shops, but I will get the good quality clothes from the cheaper shops, because it's cheap I'm not just buying it. You can look and see, 'Well actually that doesn't look as if it's come from a cheap shop' so that's alright, you know? Whereas, if it looks particularly rubbishy you don't get it. So I could still be well dressed, but via cheap shops and the same with the girls. [Aged 41, Book-Keeper]

Furthermore, Collett (2005) argues that children can be used as 'props' or 'associates' in regard to a mother's moral character and 'self presentation'. Using the work of Goffman (1990 [1963]), who suggests that an individual tends to be judged 'socially by the company he is in' (1990 [1963]: 104), she argues that children can operate to 'influence the perception of the adults associated with them' (2005: 331), and consequently, in the case of women, help to 'verify their identities as "good mothers"' (2005: 332). It may then be the case, as Kuhn (1995) suggests, that working class women feel that their children's dress is a 'reflection on them', as a good parent (2005: 337) who is providing the 'proper care' (1995: 54), which subsequently lessens the need for them to dress up and 'look good' on a day-to-day basis, as discussed in chapter 6.

The relationship between children's dress and parental status is not only evident in the discussions with working class women, however. Amongst middle class women too, there is evidence to suggest that mothers view their children as a form of 'associate', and that they feel their child's appearance has some bearing on others' perception of them.

> Carol: Whatever the occasion that you go to ... you are dressed accordingly as a child. I remember as a small child ... we had a private dentist then, we weren't top notch, we were sort of middle class but for some reason we went to this private dentist and my mother made me wear white gloves and my posh coat to go to this dentist ... when we went to the doctor I went in whatever I was wearing but I had to dress up to go to the dentist ... it's that sort of appropriate behaviour. [Aged 56, Hospital Manager]

Carol's comments highlight the 'impression management' that took place on the part of her mother when they visited the dentist. As a private, rather than NHS, practice, her mother considered the dentist to be a middle class space, and it was important to her that Carol was dressed 'appropriately' in order to assert that their family were of the right social class and status for that service. Carol's remarks suggest, then, that children's dress is not only used to affirm mothers as good parents, as Collett (2005) argues, but to establish the social class of the parent and the child. Indeed, this appears to be an explicitly important aspect of children's dress for many middle class mothers, and it is evident in women's discussions about mothers' advice.

8.2 MIDDLE CLASS MOTHERS: MAINTAINING STANDARDS & CLASS DISTINCTIONS

In his discussion of parental values, Kohn (1959) argues that while working class parents place greater emphasis on notions of respectability, middle class parents' primary concern is to encourage the 'internalised standards of conduct' (1959: 337). As a result middle class parents, and mothers in particular, pay great attention to aspects of consideration and self control, and are keen to ensure that their children learn the importance of 'maintaining standards'. Although Kohn's (1959) work is more than 50 years old, and despite the fact that it does not discuss fashion at all, his conclusions are still relevant to this research; not only because he identifies the importance of mothers in teaching children attitudes and practices, but also because his work implies that middle class mothers are eager for their children to recognise class distinctions in practices and tastes, and thus to maintain the recognised 'middle class' standards. Indeed, this research suggests that middle class mothers are chiefly concerned with encouraging their daughters to maintain standards of respectability, and to distance themselves from working class practices and tastes, and they do so not only for the benefit of their child, but themselves as well.

Although Martens et al. (2004) suggest that it 'might be a prosaic point' to argue that 'children can act as symbolic representations of their parent's cultural orientations and attitudes' (2004: 164) in regard to this research it is highly relevant, as much of the middle class mother's teaching comes from a concern that their child's dress should work to affirm their own middle class status. As Miller (1997) argues, middle class mothers have 'considerable concern that the material culture associated with their children should represent' their own tastes and 'stylistic aspirations' (1997: 36), and they are, as chapter 6 demonstrates, very much aware of the 'symbolic capital' that clothes have (Bourdieu, 1990b). Clothes are a way in which economic and cultural capital is recognised and as an 'associate' (Goffman, 1963) a child's clothes are just as important in terms of 'presentation of self' (Goffman, 1990 [1959]) and potential profit (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]) as their own. Consequently, middle class women are keen to ensure that their children's clothing distances both their child, and subsequently themselves, from any form of working class connotations. Not only is it important for their daughters that they are not deemed a 'Chav', for example; it is equally important for themselves.

This is somewhat illustrated in Lucy and Jessica's comments below. In discussing Daniella Westbrook, a former 'Eastenders' star and celebrity, who famously dressed herself and her children in matching Burberry outfits, Lucy and Jessica indicate the association they make between mother's and children's dress. This is further demonstrated when they move on to compare Lucy's practice of dressing her daughter and herself in 'matching' North Face fleeces.

Lucy: Like chavs might do the same as us they might spend money on their babies but in a completely different way. What I consider to be nice isn't necessarily expensive, whereas they might put the baby in a label and be like, 'Yeah the baby's got all Burberry on' ... But it is taste isn't it?

Jessica: I've just got that image of that girl out of 'Eastenders',

KA: Daniella Westbrook?

Jessica: Yeah, when she was all Burberry-ed up and so was the baby.

Lucy: It's funny though I've got a North Face fleece and she got a North Face fleece, and we go out like Mum and daughter.

Jessica: That's different though. It's not the same as being all Burberry...

[Lucy Aged 30, Recruitment Consultant; Jessica Aged 31, Civil Servant]

Not only is the child's dress, in both instances, seen as representative of the mother's taste, but Lucy and Jessica's' comments also demonstrate an awareness of the 'symbolic value' that their children's clothes carry, and the way in which children's dress is read in terms of their class position, just as their own dress is. While the North Face fleece is considered tasteful, and middle class, the wearing of overt designer labels, specifically Burberry, due to its relationship with the Chav phenomenon (Tyler, 2008; Martin, 2009), is symbolic of working classness. As a result, Westbrook's decision to dress her children in Burberry is seen as indicative of her working class status; while matching North Face fleeces are seen as an example of 'cultural capital', the matching Burberry outfits are considered 'tacky' and 'tasteless'.

In conversations, particularly with 'new' mothers, it appears that it is not only clothing which carries 'symbolic capital'. Buggies, toys and changing bags are also identified as objects which are used by middle class women to evaluate class position, and mothers are keen to ensure that their children have all the necessary items to confer their middle class status. It seems that children's clothing and products are clearly read as indicative of parents' class location, and for middle class women this appears to be their primary concern. Thus, while working class women might be eager to ensure that their children's dress shows them to be a 'good' mother, for middle class women the priority is to be seen as middle class, as it is already accepted that 'middle class' mothers are good parents (Lawler, 2000).

8.2.1 GATEKEEPING

Moreover, the desire for their children to distance themselves from working classness, and to 'maintain standards' has significant implications for the way in which middle class mothers teach their daughters about fashion, and more specifically what not to wear. In interviews, middle class women often talk about their mothers operating as gatekeepers, controlling what

they could wear as girls, and teenagers, and discouraging them from wearing particular types of dress or specific items.

> Chloe: Whatever I wore, it was because she'd [her mother] chosen it or she'd help me choose it, and she'll always be the one to say, 'oh you can't wear that, you can't do this, you can't do that', and I think I've kind of learnt from her. [Aged 18, Student]

The idea that mothers act as gatekeepers in regard to fashion is not unexpected. As already discussed, the literature on gender and consumer research often argues that as the primary household consumers (Miller, 1998) mothers are a 'pervasive and important influence' in children's fashion choices (Aldous, 1974 cited in Carlson et al., 1990; Martens et al., 2004). What these authors neglected to explore, however, is the way in which mothers' gate-keeping is closely linked to notions of social class. Data from this research suggests that class is a key feature of middle class mothers' discussions of fashion and that gate-keeping is a significant way in which mothers encourage their daughters to distance themselves from the working class.

It is particularly noticeable, for instance, that in middle class participants' interviews examples of their mothers' gate-keeping are often accompanied by class references. It seems that middle class mothers exercise a clear desire for distinction from the working class, and consequently veto items of clothing which they believe to be indicative of working class status. So for example, Jane and Rosie note that their mothers would not allow them to wear trainers, because of the working class connotations, and Chloe says she would not wear tracksuit bottoms, because of the associations they have with the Addington Council Estate, something her mother had explicitly taught her.

> Chloe: I won't look like a tramp ... I'm not the kind of person who would wear tracksuit bottoms, and I don't wear trainers, I just can't do it because I think my mum never let us wear any of those clothes ... she thinks we look like the girls from Addington market, ... my mum used to work up there ... so I've got quite a biased view of there ... It's just all like teenagers with babies from like different dads, and they walk around pushing their buggies. [Aged 18, Student]

Elizabeth too, in a discussion about shoes, explains how her mother would not allow her to wear white stilettos, because of the 'Essex girl' connotation. And Hannah also alludes to the fact that her mother would suggest to her that wearing stilettos and short skirts would give the impression that she was not respectable.

> Elizabeth: White stilettos might have been deemed Essex girl ... There are certain things that my mother would absolutely not let us have, like my mother would never ever let

> me have a pair of white stilettos and so still to this day I've never owned a pair. [Aged 42, Designer]
>
> Hannah: It's the way you present yourself ... in a pair of stilettos, and a short skirt ... like my mother will say 'you should look nice and presentable', you know? There is a line of looking good and looking like a bit of a tart, especially on like a Saturday night, in somewhere like Chicago's ... you can show that you've been brought up well. [Aged 25, Legal Secretary]

The term 'Essex Girl' is used to refer to stereotypical working class woman (Skeggs, 2005; Lawler, 2005a). '[P]ortrayed as loud, stupid, coarse and sometimes menacing' (Gillies, 2007: 26), today the Essex girl is more commonly termed a 'Chavette', who is said to 'drink too much alcohol, wear vulgar and revealing clothes and have little self control' (2007: 26). The Essex Girl is, however, typically identified by her white stiletto shoes, rather than trainers or large gold hoop earrings (Tyler, 2008), hence Elizabeth, who comes from an 'upper-middle class' family, was not allowed to wear them.

This type of class-centred gate-keeping is not only apparent when women talk about their own childhood. It is also demonstrated by some middle class mothers, in the way they go about dressing their children or 'helping' them with their choice of outfit. For instance, Rachel tells me that she has given her daughter a bit more autonomy over what she wears, but at the same time maintains some degree of control, as she will not let her daughter wear anything 'too raunchy', because it displays the wrong type of femininity.

> Rachel: In the last eight months she has wanted to choose her own clothes. Sometimes I help, but generally, as I've tended to choose ... stuff for her [in the past], she [her daughter] has quite good taste ... But I don't want the girls to wear things that are too old for them, you know, 5 is a strange age, they are still quite girly, I don't want them in anything too raunchy. Siobhan will wear a lot of jeans, combats, and denim skirts... [Aged 32, Legal Secretary]

By not allowing their daughters to wear items that are too 'raunchy', sexy or 'slutty', and by using terms like 'Essex Girl', middle class mothers are explicitly educating their daughters about the relationship between fashion and class. They are teaching their daughters about the links society makes between particular items of clothing, or styles of dress, and class status, and they are also cultivating class evaluations of dress and practices in relation to other women which stay with them well into their adulthood. As Elizabeth says, she has subsequently 'never' owned a pair of white stilettos, because of the Essex Girl connotations, despite the fact that 'three years ago that Christian Louboutin was doing white patent stilettos and every A-lister was trying to

get a pair'. Moreover, by vetoing particular garments, mothers are encouraging their daughters to distance and differentiate themselves from working class women, while at the same time emphasising the relationship between appearance and respectability; the importance of 'maintaining standards' or 'being presentable'.

8.2.2 LESSONS IN CLOTHES SHOPPING

Gate-keeping is not the only way in which middle class mothers ensure that their children are dressed in appropriate middle class fashions, however. As Martens et al. (2004) note, parents also influence their children's consumption by actively 'cultivating ways of consuming', and this has 'significant implications for how children develop an everyday understanding of the process of shopping, purchase and consumption of goods' (166). Though their research does not look specifically at classed practices or the role of the mothers per se, they argue that parents teach their children important 'lessons', such as the importance of 'saving to purchase desired goods' (166), which are carried through into adulthood and, as this research suggests, may well be passed onto younger generations.

In this research there is clear evidence of middle class mothers actively teaching their daughters about consumption practices. When out shopping, mothers instruct their daughters about what to look for in terms of style and they clearly outline priorities or criteria for making purchases. This is evident not just in the interviews, but from the observations too, and in a range of high street stores middle class mothers can be found educating their daughters about the various merits of particular items. As chapters 6 and 7 have already shown, however, what is considered important in terms of dress differs significantly between classes. And while middle class mothers are keen for their daughters to avoid 'fads' or trends, and tend to emphasise the need for quality, working class mothers tend to look for more fashionable garments at low cost.

> Sarah: It's all to do with fabric, I mean I could feel one piece of fabric and say, 'that's not bad' and then I could feel something else and feel 'that's definitely good cotton in there' ... And I say to my girls, 'that won't wash and it'll come up like a scrumpled mess ... a nice good thick cotton ... will wash and wash'. [Aged 52, former Police Officer]

> Carly: I pay attention to the quality of the clothing, because ... I know that if it is better quality it will last longer ... My mum's really good when it comes to shopping, because she will hardly buy anything for herself but when she does she's always been very picky, and she will pick things up and rather than try them on she'll feel them, and look underneath at the label to see what material it's made from and things like that. I think I've kind of picked up on that. [Aged 21, Student]

As I discussed in chapter 7, quality is a high priority for middle class women (Miller, 1998), and as Entwistle (2004 [2000]: 50) notes, it is reflected not only in the amount spent, but the fabrics used. Indeed, Sarah and Carly's remarks indicate that fabric is a key aspect of middle class mothers' teachings about fashion. And while Sarah makes sure that she shows her daughters how to compare the quality of the fabric and garments, Carly also suggests that she has learnt how to evaluate the quality of clothing by watching her mother's practice of checking the stitching, labels and fabric. Moreover, these types of practices were also evident in the observations. In H&M, Oasis, Hobbs and Karen Millen, for example, mothers are likely to be heard asking their daughters about the quality, versatility and longevity of the items. Questions such as: 'how much do you think you will wear it?', 'what will you wear it with?', 'what is it made out of?' are raised as a matter of course, while in Marks and Spencer, and particularly within the special collections, mothers will often advise their daughters to 'try it on' and 'make sure it fits' before making a purchase.

Through shopping conversations, as well as through imitation and observation, these mothers are informing and influencing their daughters' ideas, practices and tastes in fashion, and orientating them towards middle class practices. But while sociologists and psychoanalysts have acknowledged the role of mothers in terms of daughters' career paths, sex-role attitudes and behaviours, and eating habits (Boyd, 1989; Paff-Ogle and Damhorst, 2003), the role that mothers play in terms of cultivating classed practices in relation to fashion has been somewhat overlooked. In their discussion of consumption, for instance, Martens et al. (2004; 156) acknowledge that the children–parent relationship is not something that has been extensively explored, and in terms of fashion, the literature is somewhat limited (Kestler, 2010). Yet, Carly clearly notes that she has learnt to value quality in fashion by following the example of her mother, and so too it seems have Margaret and Elizabeth.

> Margaret: My mother always insisted on buying clothes of good quality and that has stuck with me ... you can feel the quality in the material. [Aged 45, Learning Support Assistant PT]
>
> Elizabeth: I will never buy a cheap coat, I want it to fit perfectly, and I want to know that I'll have it for twenty years. If I was to go and buy a camel cashmere wrap type coat I would want to get twenty years out of it. My mum has a coat like that. [Aged 42, Designer]

Indeed, as Kestler (2010) argues, mothers appear to be a valuable source of practical fashion information for daughters on how to go about making fashion purchases. They are therefore an important influence in generating classed practices and attitudes which, as Elizabeth and Margaret both suggest, 'stick' with women long into their adulthood.

8.3 WORKING CLASS MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS: COLLECTIVE CONSUMPTION

The idea that mothers cultivate classed practices through actively engaging in their children's consumer purchases and fashion tastes is even more evident when looking at working class women, however. As I discussed in chapter 6 with respect to femininity, for working class women 'dressing up' is a fun activity which takes place 'collectively' (Skeggs, 1997: 105) as part of a group, and it appears that buying clothes and learning about fashion is also something which working class women look forward to and tend to do together (1997: 101-2).

> Angie: Oh we're shopping mad, we went to Belfast for 2 days and all we did was shop ... when she [her daughter] comes to stay we're always in Croydon, in the shops, we love to shop ... She used to live by East Croydon train station and she had a flat up there, so we used to shop. I'd meet her in the mornings and we'd shop all day long. [Aged 54, full-time Mother]

Although shopping may have been considered a mostly middle class leisure pursuit in the nineteenth century (Rappaport, 2000), it has arguably become a much more typical cultural practice since the 1980s (Abbott and Sapsford, 2003 [2001]: 24) and nearly all the working class women in this research talked about shopping with mothers, daughters and/or sister on a regular basis. However, for working class women, as discussed in chapter 7, the buying criteria are significantly different from those of middle class women. Whereas middle class mothers tend to place emphasis on quality, for working class mothers the priority is to be fashionable, and items are bought as cheaply as possible (Miller, 1997). This is demonstrated not only in the comments from participants, but from the observations too. Whereas mothers in H&M or French Connection are keen for their daughters to learn the importance of checking fabrics and stitching, mothers in Primark or New Look are much more likely to be found telling their daughters that they can 'buy the same thing cheaper down the market' or that particular items are this season's 'new trend' and that they had seen similar items on 'GMTV' or 'This Morning' or in fashion magazines or catalogues.

Moreover, rather than working class mothers acting as gatekeepers, vetoing their daughters' choice of items or providing instruction on these trips, it seems that they place much greater emphasis on *encouraging* their daughters to look good and letting their daughters lead the decision making.

> Trisha: I say, [to her daughter] 'come on let's go shopping' ... so she's in training, I try to encourage her about what would look good and what wouldn't look good. [Aged 43, full-time Mother]

> Louisa: I do live my passion through my daughter. Because she is very much, she didn't want it too girly and pink, so she had creams and browns and blues ... and it was totally her. [Aged 38, Nursery Nurse]
>
> Ruth: I'll tell her that, 'That's not your colour' or 'it doesn't show off your shape' ... She's got a skirt, it's denim but it's got stars on the back, and so she said 'What colours will go with my skirt?' she's already started to say 'oh does that match?' [Aged 45, PA]

In Lawler's (2000) discussion of 'girls growing up', she explores the relationship between regulation and autonomy, and the idea that mothers are keen to let their daughters 'be themselves' (2000: 76). While Kellmer-Pringle (1986) argues that working class mothers are 'authoritarian' and tend to provide 'non-verbal forms of prohibition and punishment' rather than communicate with their children (1986: 50), Lawler suggests that in her research both working and middle class mothers were eager to provide their daughters with some level of autonomy and the freedom of 'self-regulation' (2000: 82). Though none of the participants in this research used the phrase 'letting her be herself', working class mothers did appear keen to let even their young daughters (aged 7 and over) lead the decision making in relation to the colour and style of their dress. In fact, rather than an authoritarian style of mothering, which Kellmer-Pringle (1986) and Everingham (1994) claim is more akin to the working classes, the working class mothers in this research appear to take a more 'democratic', and arguably middle class, approach to their children's dress, which involves discussion and collective decision making over what to wear or what to buy.

8.3.1 SHARING CLOTHES, JEWELLERY & CATALOGUES

This shared practice or 'collective' consumption between mothers, daughters and sisters does not only exist in relation to shopping, however. Working class mothers are implicitly involved in their daughters' consumption and understanding of fashion in many different ways. As I discussed in chapter 6, working class mothers often involve their daughters in their dressing up, asking them for advice. But they also share clothes and jewellery; they watch fashion programmes like 'Project Catwalk', 'How to Look Good Naked', 'Britain's Next Top Model' and 'Ten Years Younger' together and they read each others' fashion magazines.

> Becky: I use my mum's catalogues, she gets the Next Directory and I get Littlewoods and we both just swap. [Aged 29, Nurse]
>
> Trisha: Like my daughter, she is only 13 but we share clothes, except for trousers maybe, not that she is big, but I am small, so we share. [Aged 43, full-time Mother]

> Jazz: Sometimes I will see something and I really like it and I buy it. And then I might get it home and say 'Jade, do you want this?' Jade, my daughter's got so many clothes ... I don't buy her stuff she just lands up with half the stuff I've bought for myself. It's like I bought this little black cardigan thing in the market and it's quite nice, it's quite dressy, but she's got that as well. [Aged 36, Cleaner]

For working class daughters then, mothers are crucial in cultivating attitudes about how to dress and how to go about buying clothes. But unlike with middle class parents, the practice of learning appears to be more of a mutual, 'democratic' nature. Daughters learn practices and attitudes from shopping or consuming images or media together with their mothers, and as a result they generate a shared notion as to what looks good or not.

In her discussion of femininity Skeggs (1997) argues that working class women's 'knowledge of femininity' is an 'amalgamation' of textual sources such as magazines and advertisements and 'local knowledge' from friends (1997: 103), but it may be that for younger women it is mothers who provide more local knowledge, and who help their daughters to decode media images and texts. For example, Ruth tells me how she and her daughter read magazines together. They like to see what is in fashion, and what the celebrities are wearing, 'especially when they get it wrong', and they tend to be in agreement as to what looks good or not. They both feel, for instance, that the 'Sex and the City' characters 'look dreadful'. Moreover, Ruth is keen to explain to her daughter that many of the images have been airbrushed so that she understands that the images are not 'natural' and that in reality 'everyone has a blemish' and that women do not look that 'perfect'.

The way in which working class mothers cultivate fashion knowledge and tastes amongst their daughters, through shared practices and discussion, is also demonstrated by Yvonne and her ten-year-old daughter Keisha and their use of catalogues. Yvonne buys the majority of her clothes either from catalogues or the market because the clothes are fashionable, she can buy them in bigger sizes and they allow her to spread the cost. Keisha is obviously very aware of her mother's use of catalogues. She looks through them with her mother helping Yvonne to select items, as well as choosing items for herself. Keisha knows the names of all catalogues that her mother receives, and she claims the La Redoute catalogue as her own. She browses for new fashion styles, and items she might like her mother to buy for her, and discusses the merits of various looks.

> Yvonne: Most of the time I'm browsing ... but if I see something and I put it by for that perfect time ... just in case I've got somewhere to go ... at the end of the month I'm going to a Christening ... so I've ordered my stuff from the catalogue so I've got it in advance.
> Keisha: She's got this beautiful dress out of here, [shows me a dress in Fiftyplus]

Yvonne: It's from this one, FiftyPlus.

Keisha: With polka dots ... Mummy, I was looking in this catalogue, and they had these [points to a coat].

Yvonne: Yeah I get ideas from the catalogue, mainly from the catalogue.

Keisha: She [Yvonne] gets Fiftyplus, Littlewoods, Ambrose Wilson ... and this is my catalogue [La Redoute] ... This is one of her dresses, and you've got 18 but you thought it looked big...

Yvonne: I like La Redoute because they always have deals; they are always giving you something like...

Keisha: Mum is going to buy me a coat and you get the camera free...

[Aged 47, Care worker]

Yvonne teaches her daughter about the benefit of catalogues through her own shopping practice, and by encouraging Keisha to use the catalogues too. They look through the catalogues together, and offer each other advice as to what they should buy or what has to be sent back. Moreover, using the La Redoute catalogue, Keisha is now carrying out the same practices that she sees her mother perform. She browses it for ideas and to find things that she might like to wear, and she looks at the special offers that are available. Oakley argues that because children want to be like their parents they are motivated to act like them and consequently 'imitate' the relevant items of behaviour 'at first unconsciously and later consciously' (1985 [1972]: 179). Though her work does not explore the area of fashion consumption, it seems possible that Keisha's imitation of her mother's practice is driven by a desire to be like her, as well as to consciously aid her mother in finding suitable garments which will make her look good.

8.4 ACQUIRING FASHION HABITUS

Whether middle class or working class, it seems that mothers are highly significant in the cultivation of knowledge, perceptions and actions in relation to fashion amongst their daughters, and are therefore central figures in the development of their fashion habitus. As I discussed in chapter 4, Bourdieu (1990b) defines habitus as 'a system of durable, transposable dispositions ... which generate and organise practices and representations' (1990b: 52), as well as schemes of perceptions (2005 [1984]: 171). Thus, it is our habitus which enables us to produce tastes and 'classifiable practices and works' (2005 [1984]: 170) that then operate as 'distinctive signs' of class positions (174-5), and further enables us 'to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products' in relation to others (170). As a result, the habitus is a 'structuring structure' and a 'structured structure' (170), which orientates individual practice

and at the same time provides a means of classification and differentiation between class groups.

Moreover, Entwistle (2009) and Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) argue that within certain fields such as dance, acting and fashion our knowledge or 'capital' is actually 'worn on the body' and articulated through a 'bodily habitus' (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006: 746). Exhibited through the clothes we wear and the way we move, our 'fashion habitus' (Entwistle, 2009: 114) is a physical and aesthetic practice, which makes our tastes instantly apparent and which therefore allows others to evaluate and place us, as Veblen suggests, 'at first glance' (1994 [1899]: 103). Consequently, our 'fashion habitus' is concerned with displaying the 'right' kind of fashion knowledge and tastes, and making sure that our 'body actually looks like it belongs' (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006: 746) within the social context.

A 'product of history', Bourdieu argues that our habitus is developed or 'acquired' (1990b: 54) through our past experiences and early learning (2005 [1984]: 78), which suggests that it is somewhat reliant upon the teaching of practices and attitudes that come from our parents. Indeed, Bourdieu himself identifies the transmission of cultural capital as specifically dependent upon a mother's free time (1986: 253), and in his discussion on food, he also suggests that it is those tastes learnt as an infant which are the 'most indelible' (2005 [1984]: 79). Mothers are the parents who spend most time on childcare, and thus the parent who is 'most directly involved in the generation of cultural capital' (Reay, 2004: 59). Yet surprisingly 'no application of Bourdieu's theory has been made with respect to children's consumption' (Martens et al., 2004: 163), and instead 'the intergenerational transfer of capital and internalisation of habitus are assumed to occur through conceptually vague processes of socialisation' (2004: 163). This is despite the fact that both psychologists and sociologists have recognised an important relationship between mothers and daughters for some time.

Since the 1950s many psychoanalysts and sociologists have acknowledged an important link between mothers and daughters (e.g. Boyd, 1989; Chodorow, 1978; Dally, 1976; Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1982; 1993; Fischer, 1981; Orbach and Eichenbaum, 1993; Young and Willmott, 1957), and it is frequently argued that women learn 'how to be women' and 'how to be mothers' by following the practices of their mothers (De Beauvoir, 1996 [1949]; Woertman, 1993: 57). While some authors note an increased conflict between mothers and daughters during adolescence, it is generally argued that the 'acrimony' between them is reduced as daughters reach adulthood, and certainly when women become mothers themselves the intimacy between them is often resumed (Boyd, 1989; Fischer, 1981; Hirsch, 1981; Young and Wilmott, 1957). For psychoanalytic theorists, this closeness is said to be the result of 'unconscious internalization of maternal values and behaviours' (Boyd, 1989: 291), while social learning theorists have argued

that girls learn 'to mother, and to be like their mothers', through a process of imitation, praise and reward (Boyd, 1989: 291).

Moreover, within sociology the relationship between mothers, daughters and fashion practices has not gone unnoticed either. Theories of gender, and consumer, socialisation have frequently observed how significant parents, and more specifically mothers, are in the teaching of 'consumption-related skills, knowledge and attitudes' (Ward, 1974: 1). More recently, several authors have suggested that mothers and daughters share fashion and clothing tastes (Barnes and Eicher, 1998 [1992]; Clarke and Miller, 2002; Grove-White, 2001; Miller, 1997; Woodward, 2007) and research has also shown that women commonly shop with their mothers and/or daughters, rather than friends (Klepp and Storm Mathisen, 2005; Rawlins, 2006). But while the significance of mothers in terms of women's values, consumer behaviours and fashion practices seems to have been acknowledged (Clarke and Miller, 2002; Miller, 1996; Woodward, 2007), the importance of mothers in passing on and reproducing *classed* practice and tastes appears to have been largely ignored. Although some, such as Clarke and Miller (2002), do note the relevance of habitus, they choose instead to explore the notion of anxiety, arguing, as I discuss in chapter 6, that it is a more important factor in women's fashion choices.

Yet Bourdieu (2005 [1984]) claims that 'nothing perhaps more directly depends on early learning, ... than the dispositions and knowledge that are invested in clothing, furnishing cooking and more precisely the way in which clothes, furniture and food are bought' (2005 [1984]: 78). As Martens et al. (2004) argue, the 'parent–child relationship must take centre stage in accounts of why children consume in the way that they do' (2004: 163). They 'clearly represent a young child's most significant influence' (166) in terms of consumption, and moreover their role in cultivated class disposition 'may offer fundamental insights into the reproduction of structural differences' (167). That is not to suggest that the habitus is utterly determined by parental input. As Lawler (2004) notes, the habitus is not a 'straightforward reproduction' of history; it is a 'generative' process, which adapts to the changes and developments in the social world (2004: 112). But at the same time, and in regard to fashion consumption, it seems that the notion that 'what we learn is what our mothers do' (Arcana, 1979: 13) is particularly prevalent. As this chapter has already shown, whether it is through gate-keeping or through lessons in buying criteria or collective discussions over purchases and fashion media, mothers orientate their daughters' practices. They cultivate dispositions which not only structure their individual practice, but act as a means of classification within the wider social context.

8.4.1 UNCONSCIOUS OR CONSCIOUS PRACTICE

As well as being a product of 'early learning', Bourdieu maintains that our habitus 'tends to perpetuate itself ... by reactivation in similarly structured practices' (1990b: 54). As a result, it 'ensures the active presence of past experience' in terms of our orientations, and more importantly provides 'continuity and regularity' to our thoughts and actions. So much so in fact, that these perceptions and actions become embodied practice; 'internalised as second nature and so forgotten history' (1990b: 56). As a result, our habitus is able to 'regulate' our actions, but without 'consciously aiming at ends' or being 'in any way the product of obedience to rules' (1990b: 53). Instead, our motivations appear to be 'objective', and our actions 'necessary', 'natural', and 'correct', or more simply, 'common sense' (1990b: 58). Much of what we do is 'unconscious', and in fact, according to Bourdieu (1990b), the only time that practices or perceptions are accompanied by a 'strategic calculation' is when they are 'immediately inscribed in the present' and thus have not been experienced before (1990b: 53).

Consequently, though participants are able to recollect stories of their mother's practices in the context of the interview, it does not mean that in their everyday lives they are as 'vividly aware' of their actions or mother's influence (Bourdieu, 1990b: 56). As I discussed in chapter 5, qualitative research is about eliciting individuals' narratives (Silverman, 2004) and therefore it requires participants to be reflective, and consider and recall their attitudes and practices (Finlay and Gough, 2003). Thus, though middle class participants may suggest that they 'consciously' avoid wearing white stilettos because of the Essex Girl connotation and because their mothers forbid them, in practice it may not be such a 'strategic' decision, but an orientation which to a greater extent is 'second nature'. As Bourdieu argues, in terms of gestures and utterances the body does not 'memorise the past, it enacts the past, bringing it back to life' (1990b: 70). Practices and perceptions are internalised; they are not simply what 'one has, but what one is' (1990b: 70) and therefore they may be so deeply embodied that they are not consciously made.

In fact, it may only be because I asked the participants about their practices that they recalled what they do, or the events that took place with their mothers. Indeed, some participants in the course of the interview did say that they were 'trying to think of examples' or that the interview had made them 'think about what they do', whereas in everyday life these practices might just be matter of course. Even in observations it is difficult to assess to what degree women perform actions consciously or not, because they are aware that they are being observed and trying to provide explanations for their practice and decision making. In fact throughout my observation with interviewed participants, women provided justifications and explanations as to why they

were shopping in certain places or buying particular items, but it is not clear whether they would normally make all these considerations.

Nevertheless, the interviews and observations do demonstrate how women perceive and explain their own practice, and it is evident that participants tend to see their own practices as 'normal' or 'correct', which may suggest that the principles of habitus have been somewhat internalised. There is little doubt, for example, in Jessica or Lucy's mind that Daniella Westbrook's choice of coordinated Burberry outfits is 'wrong' or that North Face fleeces are correct and Carly, Margaret and Elizabeth are equally confident that quality is a highly important aspect of clothing. The particular lessons that these women have learnt from their mothers have arguably significantly structured their practices. And consequently their history, as Bourdieu suggests, operates as a degree of 'unconscious' regulation while appearing to operate as a form of autonomy (1990b: 56).

As well as suggesting that our habitus produces 'unconscious' practices, however, Bourdieu also maintains that the habitus, particularly in relation to clothes, is cultivated 'without any expressed intention to teach' (2005 [1984]: 78). Yet, in this chapter examples have already been given which show how mothers purposefully teach their daughters about fashion, in a bid to form class distinctions, and here too Chloe and Diane suggest that at times mothers' advice or education is quite deliberate.

> Chloe: Like at the weekend, I'd go shopping with the girls and ... then I'd come home and my mum would say, 'You didn't choose that, did you?' And I'm like, 'No' and she's like, 'take it back'. So actually my mum's got a big influence ... and if she didn't like anything I'd brought back, she'd make me go and change it and tell me what to buy. [Aged 18, Student]

> Diane: My daughter is 16, but although she likes fashion I've taught her not to follow fashions just for the sake of it. Often I say to her, 'Can you iron that please!' [laughs] But generally I think she has quite a good sense of what is right for her and her age, and she does keep herself covered. I've got nothing against other people uncovering their midriff, but I don't like seeing, ... I don't know it's just me, but if she did that, you know? There have been a couple of times where I've said to her, 'Do you realise that those trousers don't stay up!' [Aged 41, Receptionist]

At the same time, however, it seems that to a greater extent mothers teach their daughters about fashion unintentionally, just simply through their own performances, practice and consumption. As the discussion around 'collective consumption' demonstrates, by involving their daughters in their own practices, mothers may well encourage particular perceptions or

attitudes without deliberately educating their daughters. Rather, some aspects of fashion consumption, such as using catalogues or reading fashion magazines, are learnt implicitly, through imitation and observation of mothers, as De Beauvoir (1996 [1959]: 310) and Oakley (1985 [1972]: 179) suggest.

> Gemma: I used to watch my mum get ready to go out, and whenever she was going out she'd paint her nails, so I think of that when I'm going out, I have to make sure I paint my nails... [Aged 28, Retail Assistant]

> Angie: I love junk jewellery ... I love big hoops, the big earrings. If I need a pair of earrings I go over there [to the market] and get a pair. Suzanne's just the same, she's got a lot of jewellery, she's got more jewellery than me ... she wears a lot of junk as well. [Aged 54, full-time Mother]

Moreover, particularly as fashion habitus is a bodily practice, it is even more likely that it is taught implicitly. Mothers are constantly teaching their daughters just through doing and being, and this is further highlighted when looking at the practices that women have learnt from their mothers as children, and continue with even today.

8.5 LESSONS THAT LAST A LIFETIME

The extent of a mother's influence, and their involvement in cultivating women's fashion habitus is clearly demonstrated when participants talk about the practices that have 'stayed with them' since their childhood. Bourdieu argues that one of the characteristics of classed dispositions is that they are difficult to change, in part because those dispositions which develop during the 'early years of life' are so 'deeply rooted within us' (Jenkins, 1992: 72). It seems that mothers' teachings about fashion can have 'long-lasting' (Bourdieu, 2002: 43) effects on their daughters' attitudes, actions and tastes and, like Louisa and Diane, several of the women in this study commented on the way they continue with practices that their mothers taught them long into their adulthood.

> Louisa: I tend to wear flat pumps out and I do like my ankle straps, but I think that's a childhood thing. My mum always used to put me in black patent ankle straps, and that has stayed with me. [Aged 38, Nursery Nurse]

> Diane: It's taken me a long time to grow up when it comes to clothes, I was pretty much one of those who ... my mother used to dress me and I carried on wearing those sorts of things even after I left home, ... it was only when my older daughter said, 'Mum you shouldn't wear things like that' ... I just suddenly went to buy something, I picked up a skirt, and thought, 'I've been wearing this shape since I was about 14' ... So then it was a

> case of trying to pick up what I liked, ... it was a complete change and I'm still searching. [Aged 41, Receptionist]

Louisa and Diane's comments demonstrate that mothers are 'an extremely important influence' on a girl's life (Rawlins, 2006: 368), and that the lessons learnt in childhood can have lasting implications. Within other areas of sociology and psychology the association between childhood and adult behaviours and practices has been well documented. For example it is often argued that individuals' food practices and anti-social behaviour are linked to their childhood experiences, and that social relationships can be significantly influenced by childhood events, such as parental divorce (Gilles, 2007; McLeod and Almazan, 2003). Within the literature of fashion, however, few have explored the links between childhood teachings and adult practices. Rather, the research that has been carried out has tended to focus on the issues surrounding teenagers' struggle for autonomy (e.g. Rawlins, 2006; Klepp and Storm-Mathisen, 2005), or the influence of magazines, subcultures and peers (Abbott and Sapsford, 2003 [2001]).

Yet, Louisa and Diane seem to suggest that mothers can also present a significant and long-term influence in relation to women's fashion tastes, and they are not the only participants to so. In the course of a discussion with ladies from the WI, attention turns to the practices that their mothers have taught them and in particular the notion of 'keeping for best'. This is the idea that newly bought items should not be worn immediately, but should initially be kept for special occasions. Though it had been a point of frustration as children, it appears that this is something which some of them still practice today and consequently have 'never changed'.

> Bridget: Do you remember 'best'? ... You'd buy clothes ... and they would stay in the wardrobe ... When I was growing up, my mother would say 'I should keep it for best'.
> Caroline: I think that was particularly a war time thing.
> Bridget: Absolutely.
> Geraldine: You had something and you'd keep it apart, you'd only wear it on certain days.
> Bridget: Yes, like Sunday best.
> Geraldine: And you'd pull it out of the wardrobe and you know your mother would say, 'keep that for best!' By the time you could wear it any old time you were sick of it. [laughs]
> Anne: Sometimes I feel like a child because I've bought new clothes and then not worn them. Some things never change!
> Bridget: I can remember something that I'd bought ... I'd leave it out so that when I woke up in the morning it would be the first thing I'd see.

[Caroline Aged 63, Retired; Bridget Aged 65, Retired; Geraldine Aged 65, Retired; Anne Aged 63, Retired]

Just as the comments from Louisa and Diane demonstrate, the remarks from the WI ladies highlight the way in which some childhood practices continue into adulthood and the durability of the habitus. But the discussions from all three interviews again raise questions over the unconscious or conscious nature of practices. For instance, it is only when Diana's daughter told her that she 'shouldn't wear' a particular style that she 'realised' she had been wearing the same 'shape' since she was 14. And again, with the WI it was a sudden recollection of the past that brought to light their current practice of 'keeping for best'. This suggests that from day to day, those practices which have been taught from early childhood are internalised and unconscious. While they might not be totally unconscious in the sense that they can be recalled in the context of an interview, they are not generally thought of or questioned in relation to everyday practice. Rather women's actions and works are 'immediately intelligible and foreseeable' (Bourdieu, 1990b: 58). They represent an 'intrinsic feature of the self' (Lawler, 2000: 114) and hence are in large part 'taken for granted' (Bourdieu, 1990b: 58).

8.5.1 BODY IMAGE

However, there is one topic relating to fashion where women appear to be much more conscious of their early learning and history and, more specifically, the influence that their mothers have had on them, both in their early childhood and throughout their teenage years; and that is the concept of body image. In talking about body shape, and more specifically being overweight, participants seem all too aware of the impact their mothers have had on their perceptions and notions of self-confidence. And they often suggest that the mother's comments to them have had quite negative consequences.

Authors on body image, such as Benedikt et al. (1998: 53) note that there is a close relationship between mother and daughters in terms of body dissatisfaction, and they suggest that daughters often copy behaviours that their mothers model. Indeed, within the literature of eating disorders, the role that mothers play in cultivating issues around food and/or obesity appear to be considered highly significant both within the popular press and academic papers (e.g. Pike, 1991; Waterhouse, 1998; Weiner, 2007). However, this research also suggests that a mother's role in relation to body image has further implications for women's dress, and that women's fashion choices are governed to some extent by the comments made to them while they were growing up, about their size and shape.

Liz, aged 41 and a book-keeper, exemplifies this most clearly. Criticised for being overweight throughout her childhood and adolescence, she reveals that her mother's concern over her own

body image has had a lasting effect on her. She tells me that her brothers used to call her 'fatty' and her mother, though 'constantly on a diet' would make derogatory comments about other women who were overweight. This, Liz says, has caused her to have greater anxiety over her size in her adolescence and it still affects the way she perceives her own, and other women's dress, today.

> Liz: If ever I put on weight nobody tends to notice because I will wear the clothes that suit the size I've become as opposed to still wearing the same old things and you've got rolls coming out here, there and everywhere [laughs]. So, you know you dress according to your size and your shape. And not everybody does that, not everybody has the idea to work that one out.
>
> I went through puberty becoming quite chubby ... and I had three brothers that used to say, 'oh fatty'. I've always been very conscious of not wanting to be fat ... So, I might say, 'oh God I'm feeling fat', and I might have only put a couple of pound on, whereas somebody else would be looking at me and think, 'I'd love to be your size' but it's all relative. And if my clothes don't fit, then I'm not the size that I'm happy being. It doesn't matter which end of the fat scale you are, if you're not comfortable in what you're wearing then you have an issue with your size.
>
> It goes back to the criticism as a child. I grew up with my mum looking at other people and laughing. She was always having a problem with her weight, she was constantly on a diet, and moaning about how big she was, but she would criticise other people, and how they looked, ... 'look at that fat arse over there' ... So, you have got this subconscious, not wanting people to look at you and say things about you behind your back. [Aged 41, Book-keeper]

Though Liz says that the issue of her weight is 'subconscious', it is nevertheless a topic that she raises throughout the interview and it is seems to be something which constantly affects how she dresses and whether she feels she 'looks good' or not. Though it may not always be on her mind, her perception of body image is not totally 'unconscious' either. At times when her clothes do not fit, for example, she is likely to be conscious of her childhood experience and she clearly links her concern over her weight to her brothers' remarks, and her mother's conversations. Moreover, Liz's comments also suggest that mothers can educate their daughters about body image or fashion inadvertently through the comments they make in relation to other people. For it is her mother's remarks about other women, as well as the comments from her brothers, which she says have affected her attitudes on being 'fat' and the way she sees herself.

The idea that the things that mothers do and say, even if said in relation to others, can have a long-lasting and conscious impact on their daughters' perception of body image and consequently their thoughts on dress, is also demonstrated when participants talk about their own experiences of motherhood. Aware of the ways in which their mothers have influenced them, they talk about how they do not want to 'pass on' the same issues to their daughters.

> Diane: I don't want to give her [daughter] a complex and I feel that I grew up with a complex. There is a phrase in my head which can't be moved, which is 'people your size don't wear things like that', and I never wanted her to grow up with that, I wanted her to feel that she could experiment. As I say, I think when she was little, from what I put her in she has picked that up. I think she generally looks great. [Aged 41, Receptionist]

Mindful of the long-term effects that her mother's teaching had on her, Diane is keen not to let the same situation arise with her daughter, and thus as Lawler identifies there is a 'desire to mother unlike her own mother' and to 'do things differently' (2000: 83-4). But despite their awareness, it seems for some mothers cultivating negative feelings or 'hang ups' amongst their daughters cannot be helped because it is something which occurs unconsciously a result of their own practice and their own habitus, rather than actions directed at their children.

> Jazz: Jade [her daughter] she can get away with wearing a lot of things, but I think I've given her my complex. I don't like showing my legs and she's exactly the same. She don't like showing her shoulders and so we've very similar, in a lot of ways. We've got the same hang ups about our bodies. But I try and say to her, 'You're young. You haven't got milk bottle legs, so why would you worry about showing your legs?' But I really don't like my legs. The last time I wore a skirt it was my Grandad's funeral, because I knew he'd laugh seeing me in a skirt; and that's the only time that I wore a skirt. Other than when I got married, and that was 14 years ago. My mum made me wear them when I was younger and I had to wear them, but not through choice. But now, no. Never. [Aged 36, Cleaner]

Jazz's comments again highlight a crucial point: that although mothers may be conscious of the ways in which their own mothers influenced them, and are keen therefore not to repeat the same scenario with their daughters, it may still be the case that similar 'complexes' arise. Despite a mother's efforts, 'Every mother contains her daughter within herself and every daughter, her mother' (Jung and Kerenyi, 1969 cited in Hirsch, 1981: 209). This is because, as discussed earlier, some practices are learnt implicitly through observation and 'collective' consumption. While Jazz may try to encourage Jade not to worry about her legs, Jade has witnessed her mother's practice and anxiety, and has arguably developed similar 'hang ups' as a

result. Once again, then, Jazz's discussion highlights the unintentional transmission of perceptions of actions between mothers and daughters, and exemplifies the way in which fashion habitus is an unconscious 'bodily' action, and a way of being (Entwistle, 2009: 41).

8.5.2 DISRUPTED HABITUS

Though Jazz's discussion does not refer directly to class, the idea that our habitus is durable and exhibited unconsciously through our bodily practices is highly relevant to a discussion of class distinctions, particularly in respect of those who have been socially mobile. Bourdieu (1990b; 2005 [1984]) argues that habitus not only structures our practice but also provides a system of classification, as dispositions and tastes operate as markers of social status, and therefore offer a way of dividing people up into 'logical classes' (2005 [1984]: 170). When a person has been socially mobile, however, the habitus is 'subject to disruption' (Lawler, 2000: 113), and while new practices may be acquired, an individual's tastes, consumption and bodily practice may still largely be informed by old habits and class history, especially those which are unconscious. Moreover, an individual's 'capacity for practical anticipation of "upcoming" future contained in present' is inhibited, and so too is their 'feel for the game' (1990b: 66).

This 'disrupted habitus' is demonstrated to some extent by Diane, who, as discussed in chapter 6 finds dressing up for work outings to the theatre stressful because she is unsure of what to wear. Coming from a working class background it is not a venue that she would normally frequent, and therefore she is unfamiliar with the dress code. It is also clearly exemplified by Liz. As discussed in chapter 5, Liz was one of the few participants who identified herself as being socially mobile. She grew up on a council estate and both her parents worked on the market. But now that she owns her own house, with her husband, she considers herself middle class. In terms of fashion, Liz demonstrates a mix of middle class and working class tastes and practices. In the extract below this 'disruption' in Liz's fashion habitus is evident.

> Liz: Having grown up in a poor background, I always have had to find everything in the sale. I don't tend to spend a lot of money on clothes, I prefer bargains ... I will be influenced by fashion but I make my choice over whether I like it. You know, I'm not a fashion victim, I am to a certain extent because I like to look trendy I suppose, and I like to look fashionable ... I try and be classically fashionable if that makes sense, I tend to choose things that aren't outrageously fashionable. [Aged 41, Book-keeper]

While she has adopted some middle class traits, or dispositions, some of her working class consumption practices have been difficult to shake. So for example, Liz looks for neutral colours: blues, blacks and browns. She talks about 'classic' clothing, and she distances herself from working class women, which is more in tune with her middle class status. Yet at the same time,

she notes how many of her buying practices related to her working class background. She continues to buy her clothes from the market, for example, and seeks to buy clothes as cheaply as possible. In much of her interview she describes how she likes to 'look fashionable', which is more a working class trait, although she tells me that she is not a 'fashion victim', which is a term more readily used by middle class participants.

Just as Lawler argues, then, while women, like Liz, who have been upwardly socially mobile 'might be able to "pass" as middle class ... there remains with the self, a continual reminder that the habitus claimed is not one which can fully inhabited, that dispositions implied (by the habitus) are not fully possessed' (2000: 114). Instead, these women have a 'disrupted habitus' (114), one that to some degree fits their new class position, but not completely, which again suggests that women's early cultural practices, and thus their mothers' teachings, are difficult to escape.

8.6 SHOPPING TOGETHER & SHARED TASTES

As well as discussing the way in which mothers have informed their fashion practices, participants also spent time talk about shopping with their mother and/or daughters. Like many other social studies (Klepp and Storm Mathisen, 2005; Kestler, 2010; Rawlins, 2006; Miller, 1997; Woodward, 2007) this research has found that mothers and daughters are women's most preferred shopping partners, and that second to mothers and/or daughters are women's sisters or aunts. These are the individuals women feel that they can most trust to give good, honest advice. They provide reassurance regarding purchases and outfits; they offer sought-after respect and more importantly they have similar fashion knowledge and the benefit of 'shared tastes'. Though other authors have noted that mothers and daughters have 'similar tastes in clothing' (Clarke and Miller, 2002: 199), the borrowing of items (Woodward, 2007: 103) and shopping together (Miller, 1998; Kestler, 2010; Klepp and Storm Mathisen, 2005), few have discussed this in relation to social class. Yet it seems that there are clear class differences in terms of the shopping practices of middle class and working class mothers and daughters, and more importantly, that class and 'fashion habitus' are fundamental to an understanding of their 'shared tastes'.

8.6.1 WORKING CLASS WOMEN: SHOPPING TOGETHER & HONEST ADVICE

As this chapter has already discussed, working class mothers and daughters tend to collectively consume when it comes to fashion and clothing and they often make mutual decisions over purchases and outfits. Unsurprisingly, then, they tend to shop together, often as a leisure pursuit or in preparation for 'going out', and because they tend to live close to one another this is fairly

easy to arrange. So, for instance, Kim says that she goes shopping with her sister 'every Wednesday' either to buy something for their children, or to 'go out' in, and similarly Trisha, Jazz and Jackie all talk about shopping weekly with their daughters.

> Kim: I see her [sister] every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, but we go to Croydon every Wednesday without fail.
>
> KA: To go shopping?
>
> Kim: Every week. [Aged 33, full-time Mother]

As Skeggs (1997: 103) suggests, shopping for these women is a 'regular recreational pursuit and a site of pleasure'. They enjoy shopping, buying clothes for their children and finding something new to dress up in. Moreover, they enjoy shopping together, with their mothers, their daughters and sisters. And they do so primarily because they feel that these individuals give them important, truthful opinions on prospective purchases. Mothers, daughters, sisters are a key source of reassurance for these women. As Clarke and Miller suggest, they act as an 'external "other" against which choices might be judged' (2002: 200) and consequently even if they are 'brutal' in their honesty, it is nevertheless appreciated.

> Kelly: Yes, every time I get ready I come down and I ask my mum, and she won't lie if I look bad, she won't lie about it. I'd rather her tell me if I look bad, rather than me going out in it. [Aged 18, Unemployed]
>
> Mandy: She's the one [her sister] that I take [shopping] with me ... because I know that she won't lie to me. Whereas one of my friends would probably say to me, 'yeah that looks nice', and make me go out looking like an elephant or something ... Whereas my sister will tell me the truth. If it looks horrible she'll say 'that don't suit you, take it off'. So that's why she's the best one to take shopping. [Aged 21, full-time Mother]
>
> Kim: She'll [her sister] always say if that 'really don't look right', and I won't be offended. Because some people can say, 'what have you got on?' And you think, 'what's wrong with it?' And you feel quite offended the way that said it. But ... if she says that, you don't get offended ... You know I'd rather she'd tell me that I look stupid, yeah. [Aged 33, full-time Mother]

Not only do Mandy and Kim's comments suggest, once again, that the performance of femininity for working class women is a 'collective' one; they further highlight how these performances rely upon the input of mothers, daughters and sisters. Instead of making decisions alone, these women seek encouragement and support from their family over their dressing up choices. Indeed, as Solomon and Rabolt suggest, working class participants 'depend heavily on relatives for emotional support' (2009 [2004]: 257), but rather than looking to husbands, boyfriends or

partners, as Clarke and Miller (2002) or Woodward (2007) suggest, for these women it is only their mothers, daughters and sisters who they feel that they can trust to give the most truthful, reliable advice. Moreover, whereas friends' opinions are questionable, mother, daughters and sisters are seen to have the 'right' knowledge as to what suits them in terms of colour and shape. The women have faith in their judgement, and they follow their suggestions.

> Natasha: I had to find a dress for a party ... I think me and mum went round all the shops trying to find a nice dress ... I wanted to wear something nice, something new ... so I ... went [shopping] with my Mum, because I think Mum know places to go. I like to know her opinion, so I often take her with me for stuff like that ... she tells me the truth. [Aged 18, Student]

8.6.1.1 LOVE & HABITUS

The confidence that working class women have in their mother's opinion may simply be a result of the love, and the physical, social and emotional closeness that exists between them (Rich, 1995 [1986]; Lawler, 2000: 3). As Miller suggests, shopping is one of the chief ways in which women's 'care, concern, obligation' and 'responsibility' toward their family is manifested and reproduced (1998: 18) and it is the primary 'means by which relationships of love and care are constituted by practice' (18). Women show their love of their husbands and children through shopping. They make consumer choices over food and clothing which they feel will be beneficial to them, and at the same time they attempt to fulfil the desires and preferences of the household, in order to provide them with things that they will like. In a similar way, then, mothers, daughters and sisters may provide opinions as to what 'looks good' as an 'act of love'. While their remarks may not always be flattering, the women are willing to receive them because they know they are made in their best interests.

But daughters may also be more willing to accept their mothers' comments and visa versa, because they share the same fashion capital and fashion habitus, and thus the same perspective of what 'looks good'. Having obtained their knowledge of fashion from their mothers, as the chapter has already shown, mothers and daughters present women with the opinions and practices closest to their own, and with which they consequently are most comfortable and most familiar. As Bourdieu argues, their habitus provides them with a common 'sense' of place' (2005 [1984]: 466) and 'a kind of affinity or style ... immediate recognisable' (2005: 44) and 'mutually intelligible' (1990b: 58). They therefore trust their mother's opinion because it is representative of their own, based on a common 'code' or understanding of how one should dress.

In many respect this is what Clarke and Miller (2002) identify, although they do not attribute this to habitus, but to a 'supportive relationship' in relation to fashion anxiety. They note, for

example, the way in which mothers and daughters are 'regularly drawn to identical garments as potential purchases and pre-empt each other's preferences in matters of style' (2002: 199). They argue that they have similar likes and dislikes, a 'joint taste' (199), and even when living apart, still seek each other's approval on prospective purchases and outfits. However, that is not to say that mothers and daughters always agree. As others have identified, Bourdieu's theory is in many respects overly deterministic (Jenkins, 1992), and as Woodward found, some women in this research still 'assert their autonomy through their clothing choices' (2007: 102). But at the same time there is, amongst working class participants in particular, a strong sense of dependence on mothers in terms of fashion purchases, due in part to their common scheme and perceptions, dispositions and bodily practice, and perhaps as a consequence of the 'collective consumption' which takes places as daughters grow up.

8.7 MIDDLE CLASS INDEPENDENT & PRIVATE CONSUMPTION

While working class women are keen to shop with their mothers, daughters or sisters, middle class women tend much more to shop alone. For middle class women shopping is either a 'focused' activity, and one which requires concentration, or more often it is carried out ad hoc, on the 'spur of the moment' in a free lunch hour or afternoon. Though some women may go on 'shopping trips' with friends, it seems that very little shopping actually takes place on these occasions, as women are more concerned with 'catching up' than making purchases.

> Penny: If I go shopping with friends then it's more of a catch up really ... you have some lunch, wander round the shops, I don't really look, and don't really end up buying much, it's about finding out what they've been up to. [Aged 31, Advertising Art Director]
>
> Rachel: I tend to go on my own. I do like shopping with friends but for the chatting, it's social, you get some lunch you know ... it is more of a social thing. [Aged 32, Legal Secretary]
>
> Alex: I like shopping with friends but only if I'm not looking for anything in particular because that way you can go out and have lunch. But if I am shopping for something in particular then it's more of a necessity, and I want to be more focused. [Aged 23, Events Organiser]

It seems that middle class women do not seek reassurances from their family to the same extent as working class women. Confident in their own fashion knowledge, they are generally keen to make decisions over purchases and outfits independently, without even seeking the advice of shop assistants, as Chua's (1992) work might suggest. Rather, shopping is a private affair. Though it may be something these women do 'constantly' in their free time, it is not a

recreational activity in the same way that it is for working class women, but is instead something which they do when they have short periods of time on their own.

> Rosie: Generally I'll wander round the shops most lunch times. [Aged 23, Engineer]
>
> Veronica: Most days I am just too busy, so I won't even go out to lunch. But if I go out at lunch time I wander through Marks and Spencer's because it's on the doorstep. [Aged 58, HR Manager]
>
> Julia: I probably shop on my own more than I go with friends, possibly because I'll go out on a lunch time and have a quick look round the shops, or I've bought things from Tesco's and Sainsbury's when I've been doing my food shop. [Aged 35, Business Analyst]

8.7.1 THE NEED FOR REASSURANCE

Having said this, there are occasions where middle class women do seek reassurance in relation to fashion. As discussed in chapter 6, public performances require confidence in order to be convincing. Some decisions over what to wear, as Clarke and Miller (2002), Chua (1992) and Woodward (2007) argue, are indeed a source of much anxiety, especially when women are dressing up for more public spaces or when they have entered a new 'stage' in their life. 'Dressing ... involves fundamental cultural competences' (Woodward, 2007: 28), and with women's 'multiple overlapping roles', they are faced with 'many possibilities' and clothing options (2007: 32). As a result, fashion decisions can be a 'risky' business, particularly as the wrong decision can result in 'sustained embarrassment' (Chau, 1992: 116). In these situations, then, such as buying outfits for proms, weddings, or when returning to work from maternity leave, middle class women seek the advice of others in order to regain their self-confidence, and like their working class counterparts they tend to turn to mothers, daughters or sisters.

Similar to working class women, middle class participants suggest that this is because their mothers and daughters 'know what suits them' and have 'similar tastes'. Again, their shared habitus means that they have a mutual understanding of what 'looks good', and mothers pose the added advantage, as Klepp and Storm Mathisen (2005) suggest, of often paying for items.

> Lucy: I'll go on my own, but quite often I'll go with my mum and she'll end up paying for stuff. She is so patient she will literally traipse around all the shops until we've found an outfit, like for this wedding ... I can find a dress for £100 and she'll pay for it, but otherwise yeah I'll go shopping on my own. [Aged 30, Recruitment Consultant]
>
> Jessica: When I go shopping with her she is really good, she is very patient with me, and she'll say 'Well what about this?' and you can guarantee actually that the dress that my

> mum will pick up will be quite a good one. And she is quite good actually she will say, 'I can just take that in', or 'put a stitch there'. [Aged 31, Civil Servant]

Unlike friends, the participants feel that mothers are there to help and assist as much as they can, sometimes even offering to alter garments and, for older participants, whose mothers have passed away, there is a greater reliance on daughters to offer this same kind of guidance. Though some do use personal shoppers, they tend to be those women who do not have daughters and therefore lack this type of family support.

> Carly: I like shopping with my mum ... she is easy to shop with ... she's quite a trendy mum so she usually knows what's in and what's not, and she will be honest with me. If I tried something on she would like, 'That really doesn't suit you'. Or ... if we were out shopping she'll be like, 'Well where do you want to go first?' [Aged 21, Student]
>
> Geraldine: Because I've lost confidence and I need somebody to say, 'Yes that suits you'. I don't buy things if they are uncomfortable, but I don't buy clothes just for comfort.
> Norma: You dress in something that makes you feel good.
> Geraldine: Yes, I haven't got the confidence ... That's why I like going with Jo (daughter) because she will ...
> Norma: She'll be honest with you.
> Geraldine: She'll say 'No mum'.
> [Geraldine Aged 65, Retired; Norma Aged 66, Retired]

Again, mothers, daughters and sisters, as Carly and Geraldine suggest, are considered to give the most honest and trustworthy advice. Much more so than shop assistants or friends, for example, who according to Norma will 'always say it looks great, even if you have a bucket on your head!' But more importantly, shopping together means that these women are 'freed from the worry of choosing' (Simmel, 2004 [1901]: 290]) or making a decision alone, and consequently wearing clothes which might cause embarrassment or make them stand out. It enables them to share the burden of finding something to wear, and at the same time it provides them with reassurance over their decisions and much greater confidence as a result.

That is not to say, however, that in these situations these women relinquish total responsibility over their fashion choices. Though there is not the same degree of 'acrimony' as perhaps found in other research projects (e.g. Simpson and Douglas, 1998 or Skeggs, 1997), participants are keen to retain some degree of autonomy over their purchases. As much as they appreciate their mothers' or daughters' comments, as Lucy explains she 'doesn't always listen'. Moreover, for some there is a 'fear' of becoming too much like their mother (Lawler, 2000: 61) and while women are keen to seek their mother's or daughter's advice at times of insecurity, at the same

time there is a definite desire to maintain some level of distance or differentiation. This is partly because, as Anne says, they are of different ages, and so do not want to dress older or younger than their years. But it could also be due to their need for individuality and independence.

> Jessica: There is a fear that you know, I could end up wearing something the same the same as my mother ... that would be awful. [Aged 31, Civil Servant]
>
> Jane: Sometimes I think I am turning into my mother! The way I fix things, like sewing on buttons, or mending. [Aged 29, Lecturer & Yoga Instructor]
>
> Anne: My mother will say, 'Ooh that's nice. Where did you get that?' And I'm like, 'Okay, it's from wherever'. But then she'll want the same thing! So I think, 'Do I look like I'm eighty?' if my mother is wanting to wear the same things as me? [Aged 63, Retired]

8.7.2 FRIENDS: CRITICAL CHALLENGES

Although some may have a fear of becoming too much like their mother, generally mothers', daughters' and sisters' advice is sought after and well received. The same cannot be said for friends, however. While mothers and daughters are seen to give honest opinions, and views that participants generally tend to agree with, they find it much more difficult to accept the comments and guidance that comes from friends. Unlike mothers, daughters and sisters, it appears that friends do not always share the same tastes. They shop in different places and have differing budgets. Though women may go shopping with friends, they tell me that they feel awkward or uncomfortable shopping around them, conscious that they might be taking too long or shopping in places which are seen as below par.

> Patricia: I'm the sort of person will shop on my own, because I don't want to reciprocate by having to go shopping with somebody else, for what they want. And also I know that I take a lot of time to get things and I wouldn't want ... I like the freedom to shop: where you want to go to several different shops and then come back to the first one. [Aged 43, Teacher]
>
> Alex: I get quite bored quite quickly so I can only do a half day of intensive shopping ... I have one friend who is very high maintenance. In fact, she is a bit of an anomaly, because she'll spend huge amounts of money on stuff but then on the other hand she'll buy a lot of stuff from Primark. [Aged 23, Events Organiser]
>
> Margaret: I don't have any friends with my particular figure. They all seem to be shorter and slimmer than me ... I need things in larger sizes, but it's so difficult to find them ... I go to Bon Marche because I've found their sizes are quite good, in that they are quite

> generous, because it's my thighs, they are quite generous for that. [Aged 45, Learning Support Assistant PT]

Unlike family members, then, friends might not necessarily share the same habitus or fashion knowledge because they might come from different social classes, and have different social backgrounds and experiences. Whereas mothers and daughters have similar ideas as to what looks good, and what is important in terms of buying criteria, friends pose a challenge to women's attitudes and practices, which is perhaps why women tend to avoid shopping with them. In fact, Bourdieu argues that

> Through the systematic 'choices' it makes amongst places, events and people that might be frequented, the habitus tends to protect itself from crises and critical challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible, that is, a relatively constant universe of situations tending to reinforce its dispositions (1990b: 60).

As a result, the habitus leads individuals to 'non-consciously' avoid those people, places and events which will pose a challenge to their perspectives and dispositions, either through practical and economic means, such as class or geographical segregation, or through 'strategic intention (such as the avoidance of "bad company")' (1990b: 61).

It may be then, that women 'non-consciously' find ways of avoiding shopping with their friends, because they pose a challenge to their habitus, and on the occasions when they do shop together they find it difficult to accept their friends' opinions because they are at odds with their own dispositions and perspectives. This is demonstrated by Miriam and even more so by Carol, both of whom find it impossible to follow their friends' advice, not because they do not trust them, but because it sits in opposition to their own thoughts and ideas.

> Miriam: I don't always listen. I do ask their opinion on stuff, but if I really like something and *I* think it suits me, then I'll buy it. But it's more the opposite way around, because they'll say, 'That looks really nice, that looks fine', and I'll say, 'But no, look at it. Look at that bit of it. It's not right.' I kind of know what looks right, what will look good on me. [Aged 28, GP]

> Carol: My friend Fran ... I trust her, but she has much more expensive taste than me. She came from a family where looks were very important ... so I think she was probably brought up with good taste, she was always dressed in very smart clothes. Her mother would not consider buying from Marks and Spencer's [unlike Carol's] ... They were quite wealthy, and that was how she was brought up. So we have very different budgets. I remember going shopping with her once and trying on a camisole and she said, 'you ought to get that, because it's one of those useful bits of equipment', and I said, 'okay,

> yes'. And I looked down at the price and it was seventy quid! And I said to her, 'I can get one of these for three quid'. And she said, 'Yes, but that one will always bounce back, it's such good quality'. But no way is something that you're going to see that much of [indicates size of small area] is worth seventy quid! I'd rather buy 10 cheap ones for thirty quid and chuck them away. [Aged 56, Hospital Manager]

Miriam and Carol's comments once again demonstrate the durability of the habitus and its strength of influence. Though friends may offer advice in good faith, women face great difficulty in accepting their practices and their perceptions, because they differ from their own. Fran for example is from a different social class to Carol. She has had a different upbringing and has been taught different fashion practices and attitudes as a result. Though Carol appreciates Fran's comments and enjoys their shopping trips on a social level, in terms of buying items she wrestles with herself over Fran's advice, finding herself spending 'loads of money' on 'seriously expensive' garments which she otherwise would not purchase. Drawing on Bourdieu's arguments, it seems that fashion practices and perception are deep rooted, and embodied within us, and though women may become more aware of their attitudes and actions, by contrasting them with friends, they still tend to see their own as right and correct. That is not to say that women never follow their friends' suggestions, but certainly they seem to be uncomfortable when they do.

8.8 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, though many sociologists note the importance of the relationship between mothers and daughters in terms of gender and consumer socialisation, and the way in which mothers and daughters share tastes in fashion, few if any acknowledge the way in which this relationship helps to reproduce classed practices in terms of fashion and dress. Yet this research suggests that mothers play a significant role in terms of reproducing class practices and tastes amongst both working class and middle class women. From infancy mothers are a key influence in their daughters' fashion habits and clothing tastes, and despite other influences such as the media or friends, it seems that mothers continue to be an important and persuasive influence well into adulthood.

Mothers are fundamental to the production of women's fashion habitus. Inadvertently, through their own practices, and comments and the decisions they make in terms of their own clothes and on behalf of their children, they transpose fashion practices and tastes which operate as markers of class. Notions of dressing up and looking good, as discussed in chapters 6 and 7, are not homogenous, or neutral. They are subject to class distinctions, and mothers are highly significant in forming women's ideas on how they are performed. Moreover, the way in which

mothers cultivate these practices is subject to class distinctions too. While middle class mothers are keen to educate their daughters through gate-keeping and lessons in fashion buying, working class women teach their daughters through collective practice, and by engaging with their children's fashion consumption.

Furthermore, mothers continue to be a source of comfort and reassurance over fashion purchases and prospective outfits well into their daughters' adulthood. They provide guidance and advice, which often corresponds with their daughters' opinions, having passed on many of their own attitudes and practices to their daughters as they were growing up. Moreover, as women get older they are able to reciprocate this process, offering their mothers similar support, which again fits with their parent's own thoughts and feelings. More importantly, unlike friends, mothers, daughter and sisters are seen to give the most honest and trustworthy advice. They demonstrate their love and care for each other through shopping, and strive to assist in ways that are most beneficial to each other (Miller, 1998). But in addition, having a similar habitus means that they do not pose a critical challenge to women's fashion practices, but are much more closely harmonised in their dispositions and perspective, which subsequently allows women to relax, and shop 'properly'.

For working class women 'shopping together' with mothers, daughter and/or sisters is a typical way in which they spend their leisure time, and it is closely linked to their collective performance of femininity. They look to each other to help find outfits to go out in, or to make purchases for their children. Making sure their children are dressed appropriately is highly important. They are keen for their children to be seen as respectable and thus for them to be viewed as good mothers. For middle class women children's dress is also important in terms of establishing their own class position and, in the same way that they worry over their own public performance, they also have concerns over the appearance of their children and how this might reflect upon them.

Though the idea that mothers are key to women's socialisation, that mothers and daughters share tastes, or that they shop together is not new (see for example Clarke and Miller, 2002; De Beauvoir, 1996 [1949]; Oakley, 1982 [1979]; Rawlins, 2006; Woodward, 2007), previous research has overlooked the importance of class in forming these links between mothers' and daughters' practices and perceptions. As Martens et al. (2004) identify, habitus is a crucially important concept in understanding children's and parents' consumption, but it is also fundamental to explanations of mothers' and daughters' shopping habits and views and attitudes in relation to fashion.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Though some authors argue that age (Crane, 2000) or identity (Woodward, 2007) are key factors in determining women's fashion consumption, or that the notion of class is outdated (Beck, 1992; Pakulski and Waters, 1996), this project argues that class is still salient within the U.K, and more importantly that it has a strong and significant relationship with fashion. Indeed, this research suggests that despite the democratisation of fashion (Braham, 2003 [1997]; Crane, 1999b; 2000; Davis, 1994 [1992]), class is a fundamental influence in the fashion practices and attitudes of British women today, and, moreover, fashion is used by British women to evaluate the class position of others.

As chapters 6 and 7 discuss, fashion is employed by British women to classify others, while at the same time their own fashion choices operate as a means of class identification. Taken as an immediate visual symbol of social status and prestige (Goffman, 1951; 1990 [1963]; Veblen, 1994 [1899]), women's fashion choices are used to evaluate and locate their position in the class hierarchy, and are often subsequently read as indicative of moral character. Indeed, fashion forms an important part of the pathologisation of working class women, used to create the image of sexual deviancy and a lack of decency, while at the same time it provides middle class women with a means of establishing their respectability.

Moreover, as chapters 7 and 8 discuss, there are clear class differences in women's shopping habits and buying criteria, and while working class women are keen to engage with fashion and trends, middle class women are much more fashion averse. They perceive fashion as trivial, fickle, and something associated with the working class, and thus opt instead for those items which they perceive to be 'classic'. As a result fashion, as Simmel (2004 [1901]) argues, operates as a means of union and segregation. It offers a way of distinguishing between 'us and them' (Southerton, 2002) and is, as this research shows, often used by middle class women as a point of distinction. Indeed, particularly for middle class women, fashion is an important way in which they distance themselves from the working class, and as chapter 7 shows, their desire for differentiation has significant implications in terms of fashion practices and attitudes.

The notion that fashion and dress are used in class evaluation is not particularly new. Many sociologists note that class judgements are made on the basis of clothing (e.g. Argyle, 1994; Barnard, 2002 [1996]; Giddens, 1991; Lurie, 1992 [1981]; Reid, 1998; Tyler and Bennett, 2010) and, as discussed in chapter 2, within the literature on subcultures authors often acknowledge

the link between fashion and class (Hebdige, 2006 [1979]; Clarke et al., 1976]. Yet, within the context of mainstream society few contemporary authors have explored how the relationship between fashion and class operates, and while some discuss which aspects of fashion work to denote particular class status (Lurie, 1981; Solomon and Rabolt, 2009 [2004]) they still tend to neglect the attitudes and values that motivate differences in fashion adoption. Indeed, it seems that while all manner of other consumption practices from music (Bennett et al., 2010) to gardening (Taylor, 2008) have been examined in terms of social class, the fundamentally important role that class plays in influencing and informing women's fashion practices, and the way in which fashion is used to classify women, has been overlooked.

In contrast then, this research provides a detailed account of class distinctions in fashion. Building on the ideas put forward in the work of Bourdieu (2005 [1984]), Miller (2008) and Skeggs (1997), and using the work of Goffman (1990 [1959]), Entwistle and Rocamora (2006), Martens et al. (2004), Tseëlon (1992; 1995), and Woodward (2007) who make important contributions to field of fashion and space, but who often overlook the aspect of class, this research emphasises the salience of class for women and fashion in British society. It demonstrates how significant class differences in women's perceptions of femininity, space and fashion influence and inform their day-to-day fashion choices and fashion consumption. It highlights the way in which fashion is used to talk about class and to draw class divisions; and it illustrates the durability of class practices (Bourdieu, 2005 [1984]), and the difficulties this can pose for those who are socially mobile (Lawler, 2000).

Moreover, in light of the work of modernist class theorists (e.g. Crompton, 2008; Devine and Savage, 2005; Skeggs, 2004), who suggest that today class distinctions are drawn on patterns of consumption rather than occupation and that class is more concerned with difference than class identity (Bottero, 2004; Savage, 2000; Southerton, 2002), this research makes an important contribution to the class debate. It demonstrates, within the field of fashion, how patterns of consumption are used by women to evaluate class position and how middle class fashion consumption is often driven by a desire for difference.

9.1 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

I first developed the idea for this research project around 8 years ago. Since then, I have learnt more about research practices and more about myself. In chapter 5, I note how Ely et al. (1996 [1991]: 124) suggest that research is in fact 'me-search', and that as well as honing practical skills, social research provides us with opportunities to learn something about ourselves as well as those we are researching. In Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody's (2001) research, for example, they discuss the way in which their own class background and experience of educational

success initially triggered feelings of envy towards the middle class participants, and how these emotions helped them to understand and 'examine the psychic aspects of the lives' of the middle class girls (2001: 84).

In this research I often found myself questioning to what extent my fashion practices were representative of my own class location, and in what ways my own experiences had been similar or different to my participants. The conversations about the role of mothers in particular highlighted the impact that my mother has had on me and the degree to which her 'lessons' have unknowingly informed my fashion choice and fashion attitudes. Liz's discussion about her mother and body image, above all, focused attention on the lasting influence my mother has had on my body image and clothing habits and tastes, and this was not something that I had anticipated. Like Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, I found the experience emotional, but I was nevertheless able to use my own subjectivity and experience to empathise and understand the experience of the participants. My own experience enabled me to explore the 'unconscious' nature of habitus, and the extent to which mothers influence their daughters' actions in the long term.

Moreover, talking to women who are plus size or those, like Liz, who are keen to stay slim, further highlighted the way in which my own body image and body size influences and affects my consumption practices. It seems for me, and for my participants, there is an important link between body image and fashion consumption which could be further explored. Gaining weight as a result of pregnancy, the menopause or other factors has significant implications for the ways in which women in this research feel about dressing up and buying clothes. While this may not be a relationship which differs with class particularly, it is nevertheless an area which is worthy of further consideration; not only in terms of the relationship between fashion and the body, but also in terms of the links between fashion and performance, and the different 'stages' or spaces in women's lives, such as motherhood.

Indeed, I had not anticipated the extent to which motherhood would feature in this research, but it appears to be a crucial factor in terms of women's fashion practices and the relationship between fashion and class, and fashion and space, as chapters 6 and 8 demonstrate. There is definitely the potential to further explore this relationship, looking at the way in which women perceive social spaces in terms of public or private in relation to their children, for example, and identifying the degree to which it is the same as the parent. So, for example, is the school playground a public space for children and/or parents? At children's parties is it necessary for mothers to dress up too? Are there important class differences in mothers' attitudes towards children's public and private spaces? As this project demonstrates, there is a fundamentally

important link between fashion, space and class, and it is an association which could be examined further.

In terms of the practical process of researching and carrying out interviews in particular, as Martha Graham famously said about dance techniques, 'We learn by practice', and it seems that within sociology this is also true. The best way to harness research skills is to carry out empirical investigations, and this study has definitely taught me a number of valuable lessons. I have learnt, for example, just how crucial organisation is in every aspect of the research process, and how important it is to note things down. I have improved my interviewing skills and observations techniques. I have developed an ability to 'think on my feet' and ask improvised question, and I have found new ways of recording information during observations, such as using my mobile phone. Moreover, I have learnt that while the literature may suggest that individuals will be reluctant to discuss certain issues, this will not always be the case. As I discussed in chapter 5, my research participants talked candidly about their fashion experiences and attitudes, and most were open about the class judgements that they make or feel others may make about them. Building rapport with participants was vital however, and sociability came in many different guises, from accepting offers of cups of tea to keeping young children entertained while women completed consent forms or parts of the discussion.

In addition I have learnt that individuals can be quite disinclined to take part in observations, particularly perhaps when they do not form part of an ethnographic study. Certainly, in this project, as I discussed in chapter 5, few women were willing to be observed shopping for clothes and in other projects too authors have noted a reluctance when it comes to observations (e.g. Skeggs et al., 2007). Consequently, in future research I may well adopt alternative strategies, such as running observations in public spaces as I did in this project, finding opportunities for more ethnographic research or making greater use of visual material and documents, such as photos or social networking sites as evidence of practice, and as form of observation. Furthermore, I have learnt that traditional forms of sampling do not always provide the best results and that new and innovative ways of recruiting participants are worthy of investigation. Certainly, in this research recruiting participants directly from shopping centres and markets worked well, and could be adapted to suit other research projects too.

9.2 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Overall this research makes important contributions to the literature on fashion, class and gender, and to the discussion of Bourdieu's work, and it does this in two ways. Firstly it builds on the work of previous sociologists such as Clarke (1998), Clarke and Miller (2002), Miller, et al. (1998) and Tseëlon (1995) and Woodward (2007), highlighting the importance of class

within their finding and discussions and providing a new perspective on their work. Many of the conclusions from this project have similarities with earlier research. Tseëlon's (1995) notion of significant and insignificant audiences, for example, is clearly evident in this research as demonstrated in chapter 6, while Clarke's idea that catalogues provide individuals with opportunities for a form of window shopping is evident in chapter 7. What this thesis does, and which these previous works have neglected to do however, is highlight the importance of class in relation to these theoretical ideas and demonstrate the class distinctions that exist in relations to individuals' practices. As this research shows, class is still a key factor in women's consumption practices and tastes, and it is an important aspect of individuals' evaluations of others. Moreover, and in reference to the work of Miller et al. (1998) and Rabolt and Solomon (2009 [2004]), this project demonstrates how theories of class and consumption can be applied more specifically to fashion consumption and fashion practices. It explores how notions of 'classic' or attitudes towards quality or value for money are made evident specifically in women's clothes shopping, and it provides greater depth of understanding to the arguments that other sociologists have previously made.

Secondly, the thesis has provided two areas of new knowledge: in terms of the relationship between fashion, class and perceptions of public space and in relation to mothers and daughters' shared tastes and class habitus. As discussed in chapter 6, there appears to be clear and significant class differences in women's attitudes to what constitutes public space and this has important implications for how they perceive appropriate dress. While middle class women feel the need to dress up to some degree for any social space, including the confines of their own home, for working class women local spaces are not places in which dressing up is important. Moreover, as chapter 6 shows, motherhood and how women perceive their role as a mother has a particularly important part to play in the way women dress, and in their evaluations of others. While for working class women motherhood excuses the need for public performance, for middle class women it is essential to 'maintain standards' whatever their social role. Though the wearing of 'inappropriate' clothes in public places in being increasingly noted, particularly in the popular press (Wallop, 2011), there have been few sociological discussions of this phenomena, and certainly the idea that class differences in women's perceptions of space motivates these fashion practices and distinctions has not been discussed. This research however, clearly suggests that class plays a key role in relation to these distinctions in dress and difference in attitude, and this relationship between fashion, space and class is an definitely area which could be further explored.

In addition, the data on mothers and daughters provides a further perspective on Bourdieu's notion of habitus, and highlights the important role mothers play in cultivating classed practices

amongst their daughters in relation to fashion. In exploring the way in which mothers teach their daughters about fashion it has uncovered significant class distinctions in practices and attitudes and further provides a much deeper understanding of shared tastes and shopping habits that mothers and daughters often present. As Martens, et al. (2004) argue, the role of parents in cultivating habitus and consumer practices has been rather overlooked by sociology. This research goes some way then, to providing evidence for the significant role mothers play in relation to fashion consumption, tastes and attitudes.

In conclusion this thesis clearly shows that class is still a very relevant concept in Britain and that fashion is one of the key ways in which women evaluate the class locations of individuals, whilst their own tastes and practices simultaneously operate as a means of classification for others. It demonstrates how class influences and informs women's perceptions and ideas on fashion, their notions of femininity, and their practices of dressing up. It explores how class affects women's buying criteria, their shopping habits and their perceptions of public space, and it examines how these classed attitudes and dispositions are passed down through mothers' teachings and ways of being. In doing so, it demonstrates that although class may not be the only factor in determining British women's fashion practices and tastes, it is nevertheless an important aspect of fashion practices and tastes, and is one that should not be ignored. The concept of class is still salient in British society, and moreover, its relationship with fashion is just as significant.

APPENDIX 1

Alex (Shopping - Interviewed)

Aged 23, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Working in events, Alex has graduated from university in the last 2 years and has recently started a new job in London as an Events Organiser for a charitable organisation. She is currently living with her parents, both professionals, in their privately owned detached house in Surrey. She has one younger sister, who is currently at university.

Amber (Nursery - Interviewed)

Aged 29, White, self-defined as Working Class

Amber lives with her partner in a council house in Croydon with their 4-month-old baby. She left school aged 16 with some GCSEs, and having had a number of short-term jobs in retail in and around London, and is now working at the local hospital on the reception desk. She is currently on her maternity leave. Her partner is a painter and decorator.

Angie (Shopping - Interviewed)

Aged 54, White, self-defined as Working Class

Angie is divorced with 3 children: a daughter who is in her thirties, married and living in Ireland, and two teenagers, a boy and girl, who are living with her. She lives in a council property in New Addington, and has been a full-time mother since the birth of her first daughter.

Anne (Women's Institute - Interviewed)

Aged 63, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Anne is retired and lives with her husband, also retired, in their privately owned home in Selsdon. She had been a legal secretary for her husband's legal firm, and now works voluntarily for the National Trust. She has two grown-up children, who have both been to university and are now married with children.

Becky (Shopping -Interviewed)

Aged 29, White, self-defined as Working Class

Becky lives with her partner, who is a mechanic working for a local garage. They live in a privately rented flat in Surrey. She left school at 16 with some GCSEs and has recently completed her training as a nurse at a local college, whilst working as a cashier in a local supermarket. Becky considered her parents also to be working class.

Bridget (Women's Institute – Interviewed)

Aged 65, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Bridget lives with her husband in a privately owned house in Purley. She has two grown up children, both married with children and working in professional occupations. Her husband worked in engineering and she was a school teacher before they both retired.

Carly (Shopping – Interviewed)

Aged 21, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Carly is a university student, studying for a degree in Art and Design. She is living in private rented accommodation in Wimbledon with 4 other students. Her mother is an Estate Agent and her father is a Clinical Psychologist and they own their own home in Hertfordshire.

Carol (Snowballed – Interviewed)

Aged 56, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Carol lives in a privately owned, detached house in Wimbledon, with her husband and three sons, two of which are at university and one who has recently completed a graduate degree. She went to a grammar school, completed her A levels and went to university. Having worked as a hospital manager at the local PCT for several years she has decided to study for a second degree in Psychology part-time because she finds the subject interesting.

Caroline (Women's Institute – Interviewed)

Aged 63, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Caroline is married and lives with her husband, a lawyer, in their privately owned house in Purley. She has two grown up children. Caroline went to a grammar school and to university, and worked as a teacher until fairly recently.

Chloe (Snowballed – Interviewed)

Aged 18, White, self-defined as Middle Class.

Chloe is a university student who is living at home with her parents and brother in their privately owned house in Purley. Her mother works as a Counsellor and father is a property developer and landlord, as well as running his own building firm.

Diane (Shopping – Interviewed)

Aged 41, Afro-Caribbean, self-defined as Middle Class from a Working Class background

Diane is single, and lives in her privately owned flat in Croydon with her two teenage daughters. She has worked as a receptionist at a local secondary school for the last 5 years. Previously she worked as a dinner lady, and classroom assistant part time. She left school at 16. She came from a single-parent family in South London.

Elizabeth (Snowballed – Interviewed)

Aged 42, White, self-defined as (upper) Middle Class

Elizabeth lives in Kensington in a privately owned town house, with her husband and twins aged 9 months. Elizabeth attended a boarding school and then studied for a university degree. She now owns her own design company and works as a guest lecturer. Both of her parents were professionals and her husband is the owner and manager of a national chain of estate agents.

Emily (Shopping – Interviewed)

Aged 27, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Emily is renting a privately owned property with her fiancé in Surrey. She is working in marketing, having been to university. She grew up with her father, who owns his own antiques business, in a privately owned house in Surrey.

Emma (Snowballed – Interviewed & Observed)

Aged 27, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Emma is single and lives in a privately rented flat with 2 other professionals. She is working as a journalist in London. She attended a convent and then went onto university, after which she completed a graduate qualification in journalism. Her parents divorced when she was in her late teens. Her father works as a medical consultant in a private hospital and her mother was a military nurse.

Eva (Shopping – Interviewed)

Aged 60, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Eva lives with her husband in their privately owned detached property in Purley. Her husband worked as a Senior Civil Servant, and Eva previously worked as a music teacher. She now tutors privately. Both she and her husband went to university. She has 3 grown-up children, who have all been to university and are now living away from home.

Faye (Snowballed– Interviewed)

Aged 44, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Faye is divorced, and lives in Brighton in a privately owned house. She does not have any children. Having been to a grammar school, she studied for a university degree and now works as a University Sponsorship Manager, identifying and working with business to encourage extra funding.

Gemma (Shopping – Interviewed)

Aged 28, White, self-defined as Working Class

Gemma works as a Retail Assistant. She lives in a shared-ownership property, in Croydon, with her husband and their 2 children, aged 6 and 2. She had left school at 16. Her husband is a bus driver.

Geraldine (Women's Institute – Interviewed)

Aged 65, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Widowed, Geraldine lives in a privately own property in Selsdon. She cares for her elderly mother and has one son. Her husband had been an Accountant, and Geraldine had been a full-time mother.

Grace (Snowballed – Interviewed)

Aged 56, White, Self-defined as Middle Class

Grace is married and lives with her husband, and his elderly mother, in their privately owned home in Surrey. She went to university and studied English and, having worked as a Teacher and then Lecturer, went on to management. Her husband works as an Accountant.

Hannah (Snowballed – Interviewed & Observed)

Aged 25, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Hannah is single and lives with her parents in their privately owned 3-bed house in Surrey. She is saving up to buy her own house. Her father is an Insurance Broker and her mother is a Book-keeper for an interior design company. Hannah studied up to A-level and had then trained as a legal secretary at a local FE College.

Jane (Shopping – Interviewed)

Aged 29, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Jane lives with a long-term partner and works as an English Lecturer and Yoga Instructor. She studied for an English degree and then an MA, also studying yoga part time. She is also working as a property developer, and is currently living in her own privately owned house. She described her parents and her sister, who is married with children, as professionals.

Jazz (Shopping – Interviewed)

Aged 36, Mixed race, self-defined as Working Class

Jazz is single and works as a cleaner. She lives with her two daughters aged 15 and 12 in a council property in New Addington. She grew up with her mother in a council home also in New Addington, and did not stay on at school after 16.

Jenny (Snowballed – Interviewed)

Aged 27, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Jenny works as an Accountant and is living with her partner, also an Accountant, in a privately owned flat. She went to university. Her mother was a full-time mother and her father an IT consultant, and they owned their own home.

Jessica (Snowballed – Interviewed)

Aged 31, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Jessica is a Civil Servant and her husband works in IT. They live in their privately owned house in Middlesex, with their 10-month old son. Jessica is currently on maternity leave. Both she and her husband went to university. Her mother and father both work as professionals.

Joy (Nursery – Interviewed)

Aged 19, White, self-defined as Working Class

Joy is single and is living in a council flat in Norwood with her 12-month-old son. Joy stayed on at school after 16, but did not complete her A-levels. She worked in a fast-food restaurant part time, and as a local Avon representative. Until the age of 17 she had lived with her parents, and her two sisters, who were still at school. Her parents had bought their council home. Her father is a delivery driver and her mother does not work.

Judy (Snowballed – Interviewed)

Aged 60, White, self-defined as Working Class

Judy is divorced and lives in a council flat on the New Addington Estate. She works as a hairdresser. She grew up in the Midlands, on a council estate with both of her parents. She left school at 16, and started working as a hairdresser. Her father had been employed as a factory worker and she describes both her parents as working class.

Julia (Shopping – Interviewed & Observed)

Aged 35, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Julia lives with her husband and her 9-month-old son in their privately owned house in Norbury. She studied for a degree at university, where she met her husband. She now works as a business analyst in a telecommunications firm, in Central London. Her husband also works for a telecommunications firm as an IT Consultant. She describes both her parents as professional and middle class.

Kelly (Shopping – Interviewed)

Aged 18, White, self-defined as Working Class

Single and unemployed, Kelly lives with her mum, sister and her sister's newborn baby in a council house in Coulsdon. Her mother grew up on the council estate and Kelly's grandmother still lives there. Her father is a builder, living in a different part of Croydon in a privately owned flat. She said that she had wanted to go to college but did not think she would get in as she did not have any GCSEs, and is currently looking for work.

Kerry (Shopping – Interviewed & Observed)

Aged 25, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Kerry lives with her parents in their privately own detached house in Surrey. Both her parents worked as psychiatric nurses. Kerry had stayed on at school and completed her A-levels and then studied for a degree at university. She now works as a marketing assistant in Surrey.

Though she felt that her grandparents were working class, she described her parents as lower middle class and herself as middle class.

Kim (Shopping - Interviewed)

Aged 33, White, self-defined as Working Class

A full-time mother, Kim lives with her partner and their three boys aged between 7 and 6 months. They are currently living in a 2-bed council house in New Addington. Kim was brought up by her aunt, and has always lived on the New Addington Estate. She did not stay on at school and has not worked since having her first son. Her partner is also unemployed.

Lisa (Shopping - Interviewed)

Aged 26, Mixed race, defined as Working Class

Lisa lives in a council house in New Addington. She has three boys, two of whom are under 5 and one who is 6 years old. Lisa grew up with her mother, brother and sister in a council home in South London. She stayed on at school until she was 16, and then worked as a sales assistant for a short time, but has not worked since the birth of her firs son. Lisa was one of the few participants who did not self-define her class location. When I asked her about class, she said that she was sophisticated, and later said that she was not rich. But she did not specify which class she belonged to.

Liz (Shopping - Interviewed)

Aged 41, White, self-defined as Middle Class from a Working Class background

Liz is married with 2 teenage daughters, one living with her and the other living with her ex-husband. Liz lives with her husband in a privately owned property in Selsdon. Her husband is an IT Consultant, and she works as a Book-keeper. Liz described herself as from a 'working class background'. She had grown up on a council estate but then went to a grammar school. She did not go to university but worked as an administrator in London, and then worked for her ex-husband in his legal firm.

Louisa (Nursery - Interviewed)

Aged 38, White, self-defined as Working Class

Louisa works as a nursery nurse in New Addington. Having grown up on the New Addington Estate, she moved to Addiscombe and lives with her husband and their three children in a house in which they have shared ownership with a housing association. Her husband works as a painter and decorator. She stayed on at school until she was 16, and went to college to study for a vocational qualification in nursery nursing.

Lucy (Snowballed - Interviewed)

Aged 30, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Lucy works as a Recruitment Consultant for a London firm. She lives with her husband, an IT Consultant, and their 8-month-old daughter in a privately owned house in Middlesex. She described her parents as middle class.

Mabel (Snowballed – Interviewed)

Aged 70, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Mabel is widowed, and is living in a privately owned property in South Croydon with her youngest of her two sons. She did not go to university, but worked in administration before she became a full-time mother. She now works part time for Mori. Her husband was an Army Officer.

Mandy (Shopping – Interviewed)

Aged 21 White, self-defined as Working Class

Mandy is single and has two children, both under 2 years old. She lives in a council property on the New Addington Estate. She worked as a catering assistant for a short time after she left school but gave up work to be a full-time mother after her first child was born. She grew up in a council property in New Addington, with her sister and mother, both of whom still live on the estate and do not work. Her boyfriend, who does not live with her, works as a 'handy man'.

Margaret (Shopping – Interviewed)

Aged 45, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Margaret works part-time as a learning support assistant at a local primary school and cares for her mother. She went to university, and worked as a Civil Servant before she had her children, when she became a full-time mother. She lives with her husband and two children, who are both still at school, in a privately owned house in Surrey. Her husband is an Accountant. She described her parents as middle class.

Miriam (Snowballed – Interviewed & Observed)

Aged 28, Iranian, self-defined as Middle Class

Miriam is working as GP in London. She lives with her husband, a Consultant, in their privately owned flat in Borough. Both she and her husband were privately educated and went to university. Her father was a professional, and her mother had been a full-time mother.

Naomi (Snowballed – Interviewed)

Aged 25, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Naomi is privately renting with 2 other professionals in Surrey and works as an IT Consultant. She went to university. Her parents owned their own property, and were professionals. She defined her parents as middle class.

Natasha (Shopping– Interviewed)

Aged 18, Afro-Caribbean, self-defined as Working Class

Natasha is a student at university, currently living in halls of residence. Her mother is a single parent and carer in a nursing home and lives in her own flat, with Natasha's sister, in East London. Natasha defined herself as working class, although she feels that once she had her degree she would be 'upper' working class.

Norma (Women's Institute - Interviewed)

Aged 66, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Norma lives with her husband in a privately owned house in Purley. Her husband was an Army Officer, but is now retired, and Norma is a housewife. Norma has two grown-up children, both married, who attended university.

Pat (Nursery - Interviewed)

Aged 43, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Pat works as a Library Manager. She lives with her husband in Croydon, in their privately owned house. Her husband is self-employed and owns a number of businesses across London. Pat went to university, and described her parents as both middle class.

Patricia (Shopping - Interviewed)

Aged 43, African, self-defined as Middle Class from a Working Class background

Patricia is living with her long-term partner and teenage son in a privately owned house in Croydon. Her partner runs his own electrical firm. Patricia was brought up in the Midlands; she went to a grammar school and, having completed her A-levels, carried out her teaching training at university in London. She described her parents as working class, neither having been to university and living in council properties.

Penny (Snowballed - Interviewed)

Aged 30, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Penny is married to a banker who works in central London. She lives with her husband in their London flat. Privately educated, Penny attended university and after completing a graduate degree, studied for a Masters. She is currently working freelance as an Art Director. Her father worked as an IT Consultant and her mother was a full-time mother who now works part time.

Rachel (Shopping - Interviewed)

Aged 32, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Rachel is living in a privately owned house in Surrey, with her two daughters aged 5 and 7. She trained to be a legal secretary and was working in Surrey for an insurance firm. Her parents had owned their own house. Her mother was a housewife and her father worked in various form of employment.

Rosie (Shopping - Interviewed)

Aged 23, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Rosie is working as an engineer, and currently living with her parents and younger brother in a privately owned property in Surrey. She went to university. Her mother worked as a Nurse and her father worked in IT. She defined them as professional and middle class.

Ruth (Shopping - Interviewed)

Aged 45, White, self-defined as Working Class

Ruth is divorced and lives in a privately owned house which she had previously owned with her husband. She now lives with her only daughter, aged 15. She grew up living in council homes in New Addington and left school at 16. She initially worked in secretarial posts, and 'worked her way up'. She is now employed as a PA for a small recruitment firm in Surrey, and though she owns her own property still defines herself as working class.

Sally (Snowballed - Interviewed)

Aged 27, White, self-defined as Middle Class

Sally works as an IT Consultant. She rents a property privately, with other professionals, in Surrey. She went to university, and defined her parents as professional and middle class.

Sarah (Shopping - Interviewed)

Aged 52, White, self-defined as Middle class

Married to a civil servant, Sarah is a former police officer who gave up work following an injury. She has four daughters, one at university and three who are still at school. Sarah owns her own house with her husband in South Croydon. She was brought up in South London, where she was privately educated until the age of 18. She felt that her parents and extended family were also middle class.

Trisha (Shopping - Interviewed)

Aged 43, White, defined as Working Class

Trisha is single and lives with her two teenage children in a council property in New Addington. She is a full-time mother and has not worked since the birth of her eldest child, now 16. She is receiving benefit money. She grew up on the New Addington Estate and both her parents still live there. Trisha left school at 16 and did not go to university. Trisha did not self-define her class location, however. When I asked her about class she said that she liked to dress 'classy' but was reluctant to locate her class position.

Viviana (Snowballed - Interviewed)

Aged 21, Turkish, self-defined as Middle Class from a Working Class background

Viviana is a student at university. She completed her A-levels and having worked at the local leisure centre for a short period decided to pursue a degree. She defined herself as middle class as her parents owned their own property, and she would now have a degree, but felt that she was from a working class background as neither parent had been to university and her father worked as a van driver. Her mother did not work.

Yvonne (Shopping - Interviewed)

Aged 47, African, defined as Working Class

Yvonne is single and lives in a council flat in New Addington with her 10-year-old daughter Keisha. She has two older daughters, in their early twenties, who do not live with her. She recently moved to New Addington from Merton. Yvonne left school at 16, and is currently working as a care worker in a nursing home. At the time of the interview she was on sick leave due to a back injury. She had come to Britain from Ghana with her mother in the 1970s, and her mother had since returned to Ghana.

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

PREAMBLE

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself, where you live, work etc.

SELF IMAGE

- What do you tend to wear on a daily basis either at work or at home?
  - How do you decide?
  - Is it different for work/college/home/days of the week? How?

- Can you tell me about the last time you went out to a party, or social event, what did you wear, and how did you decide what to wear?
  - Did you ask anyone else what they were going to wear?
  - Did you go out shopping to buy something specifically for that occasion?

- Have you ever been out somewhere and felt 'wrongly' or inappropriately dressed?
  - Do you ever worry about 'getting it wrong'?
  - Have you ever looked at other women and thought they were 'wrongly' dressed? Can you tell me about that?

- Do you ever find yourself admiring or questioning what other women are wearing?
  - All the time/ in particular places?
  - Can you give me any examples of that?

SHOPPING

- Where do you usually buy your clothes from?
  - What is about those places that you like?
  - How often would you say you go clothing shopping?
  - Do you tend to save up to buy something?
  - Do you buy things on credit, or on store cards?
  - Do you use catalogues? Why/Why not? Which catalogues do you use?

- Are they any stores or places that you particularly avoid? Why?
- What about for special occasions: weddings, Christmas, etc. Do you shopping habits change at all?

- So, how did you decide what to buy? Can you talk me through your purchases?
  - Are they features in other women's dress that you notice?

- Do you tend to shop on your own or with other people (e.g. mothers/daughters/friends)?
  - Why/Why not?

- Would you ask for anyone else's opinion on something before or after you'd bought it? E.g. shop assistant, relative, friend, partner?
- Do you ever have other people (friend, relative, and strangers) comment or compliment on the way you dress or particularly outfits?
- Do you ever comment or compliment others on their dress – who/where?

INFLUENCES

- Do you think you're influenced by fashion trends at all?
  - Do you read any fashion magazines
  - Do you watch any television fashion features or fashion programmes?

- Have you ever tried to copy a particular style from a magazine, advert, television, or a celebrity look?
  - Who/What/How?

CLASS

- Do you think the way women dress says anything about them – can you read anything from the clothes they wear?
  - What sort of things does their dress communicate?

- Do you think you can tell what class a woman is by her dress?
  - Can you think of any examples where you have thought that?
  - What is it about their dress which indicated their class?

- What class would you say you belong to?
  - How do you define class?
  - Do you think someone would be able to tell that from the way that you dress?

- Is class something that you think about when you get dressed for work/college/social occasions? Or when you buy clothes
  - Why is it/Why isn't it?
  - How has it affected your decisions?

FINISH OFF

- Is there anything you've thought of while we've been talking, that you want to add?
- Any questions you want to ask?
- Thank you.

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