MUNDANE FASHION:

WOMEN, CLOTHES AND EMOTIONAL DURABILITY

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2019

School of Art, Design and Architecture, University of Huddersfield

Volume 1 of 2

ABSTRACT

This research investigates emotional durability of clothing through the lens of a designer-maker practice. The current discourse on fashion futures urgently recognizes that a deeper understanding of the behavioural drivers behind long-term use of clothing is critical in order to move beyond symptom-based solutions to fashion and sustainability such as closed loop recycling and technological innovation. A considerable body of work exists on design strategies for emotional durability. However, empirical evidence that examines their relationship to users' everyday experiences with clothing is missing.

I set to remedy this gap through my own designer-maker practice that investigated women's routine relationships with the clothes in their wardrobes. Focusing specifically on what matters in everyday use, I examine the possible applications of emotionally durable design in fashion design and making. This approach challenges the imperative of disposability in fashion and foregrounds instead a long-term value-creation enabled through the continuous use of familiar clothes.

The thesis structure has three interrelated elements that outline the linear narrative of the research as well as the conceptual and methodological developments. The first part of the thesis outlines the global challenges in fashion production and consumption. The second part introduces and applies ethnographic methods to understanding the sensory wardrobe, and the third concluding stage includes the findings and practical application in the *One Thing Collection*. Conceptually, the thesis moves from comprehending the macro towards a practical application in the micro.

The methodology employs a combination of practical explorations through designer-maker practice with in-depth wardrobe conversations. Adopting methods from narrative enquiry and sensory ethnography, ten women aged between 29-69 were interviewed in their homes. Rich imagery of clothes in use and extended excerpts of wardrobe conversations are essential components of the thesis ethos, these became framed as individual portraits of each of the women. It is stressed that these portraits are significant to the research findings presented in the thesis; the portraits are presented in the Appendices as the nature of sensory ethnography results in details of visual and textual data beyond the confines of the thesis.

The findings show that designable characteristics of garments such as shape, style, fit, colour, material, details, or easy care are all significant in contributing to a garment's emotional durability. However, a truly long-lasting relationship with a piece of clothing results from a complex dynamic between its design, the mode of its acquisition, expectations, fluctuation of personal circumstances, and each woman's perspective on the relationship between continuity and change. The key insights are articulated through the four themes identified in thematic cross-case analysis of the wardrobe conversations: (1) Enablers, (2) Sensory experiences, (3) Longing and Belonging, and lastly (4) Layering. Each theme is also interpreted through the process of making a corresponding everyday garment that captures the essence of the women's narratives.

This research contributes to the current discourse on emotional durability in fashion design and making and provides new contextual data on user experience of clothing; [See Chapter 7.3 Contribution to knowledge summarized, p. 300]. The research demonstrates that fashion design for emotional durability requires an empathic approach that readily embraces the complexity of everyday life as an opportunity, rather than a hindrance to creative expression. These conclusions are also now embodied in my studio practice with future development of the *One Thing Collection* that resulted from this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of figures

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List of tables

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank:

The University of Huddersfield for providing the funding that enabled this research.

Professor Alison Goodrum for her invaluable support and inspiration at a key stage of this research journey.

Dr. Tatyana Karpenko-Seccombe and Dr. Elizabeth Caldwell for helping me to figure out how to write about it in a way that felt most true to the topic.

Professor Nicole Pohl for having been a true mentor to me for the last nine years.

I would also like to thank my partner Steve, for his infinite support, encouragement and understanding during these four years. I want to thank my family in Slovakia, who trusted that all the time I spent researching, sewing, and writing abroad, instead of being home with them, will be worth it. I want to thank Deirdre and Sophie who became my second family in the UK and whose support helped me to get to the finishing line.

I am immensely grateful to Golraz, Hanka, Julie, Tanya, Louise, Emma, Kathryn, Annabelle, Mary, and Nicola, without whose generosity and trust with sharing their wardrobe stories this research would not be possible. I am also grateful to all the clients of my studio, especially Tanya, who inspired me to venture on this long but fascinating journey.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my grandfather Andrej, who passed to me the curiosity and the courage to dare to do what I love, and to my grandmother Milada, who would be immensely proud that I keep doing it.

Six years ago, at the airport in my hometown in Slovakia, I noticed a strikingly looking woman, probably in her early sixties, sitting a few seats away from me as we were both waiting to board the same flight to London. She was on her phone but must have noticed me because she smiled, and so I smiled back. Later, as we both joined the queue for the inevitable luggage check, popular with low-cost airlines, I was making sure not to lose sight of her. There was something about this woman that attracted me and made me curious. I passed through the luggage check first and then noticed that the stranger I wanted to keep my eye on was stopped by the airline staff. They insisted that her suitcase was bigger than their standard allowed size and so she was only let through after a young man gentlemanly offered to put some of her things in his luggage for the journey.

This seemingly insignificant episode marked the beginning of an exceptionally inspiring personal and professional relationship that has lasted since. The memory of my first encounter with Tanya is important for this thesis because I still remember very vividly the way she, despite all the airport rush and the impatient gaze of the airline staff, carefully re-folded a blue jacket when moving a part of her possessions into the young man's luggage. Her beautiful earrings (adaptations of Henri Matisse's cut-outs of birds) aptly complemented the way in which she handled the things in her suitcase. All that I witnessed during this chance encounter seemed to suggest that each piece in this woman's wardrobe had been chosen for a reason and was well loved and cared for. I was interested in Tanya, because she seemed to be exactly the kind of woman that I have always hoped to design for.

Now, a few years later, the navy jacket I remember Tanya re-folding the day we first met is hanging in my studio. Since then, I learned that the jacket used to belong to her daughter but was later 'handed down' to Tanya. It is now well over fifteen years old, still perfectly wearable, and Tanya would like to have another one just like that in another colour. She says it is difficult to find a jacket that would fit and suit her in the same way as this one. She would buy another one from the original producer, but the style is no longer available.

Tanya's struggle to re-buy a piece of clothing that worked well for her is not unusual. Over the last eight years of running my slow fashion studio, I heard a few similar stories from many other clients. A few of them had a piece of clothing they liked and wore out, but to their disappointment they later

found that a replacement was no longer available in the market. Similarly, Skjold (2014), who explored everyday sartorial practices in Denmark, notes the frustration of her informant Torben who tried to replace his favourite green shirt but found that it was impossible to find one just like it (p. 70). The participants of the international Local Wisdom project that culminated in Fletcher's *Craft of Use* (2016), shared similar experiences: "I'm actually just going to have to go to a tailor with this coat and ask her to recreate it in another fabric of her choice", says a participant from New York about a loved coat which is now "absolutely shot" (p. 164).

About a month after our first brief airport meeting, Tanya visited me in my Oxfordshire studio and brought two dresses which she hoped could get a second lease of life [Figures 1.1 & 1.2]. Both were over twenty years old and she said she loved them. She also liked the ever more prominent holes which reminded her of all the years she lived through wearing them. In Tanya's eyes, the value of these dresses did not depreciate because of the obvious wear and tear. On the contrary, the holes were there "to authenticate" (Woodward, 2007, p. 55) that the dresses were much "worn and loved" (Ibid).

Figure 1.1 Tanya's repaired dress with inserted front panel

At the same time, she felt that wearing clothes full of holes is perhaps less socially acceptable at her age and so she gave me a free hand in repairing or altering the dresses in any way I liked. Later, I heard that Tanya received many compliments on her 'new dresses' and I have repaired many more for her and other clients since.

Figure 1.2 Tanya's repaired dress with side patches over worn seams

All these cherished clothes I have worked on over the years re-shaped my practice in two respects. Firstly, they shifted my focus from solely making new clothes to working with those that already exist, much in the way described by Gill & Lopes (2011), for whom the next challenge in sustainable design practices is "in terms of a negotiation with those things already in existence and a sensitization to their potential wear ability" (p. 312-313). Secondly, the continuous satisfaction and pleasure that these garments have brought to their owners aroused my curiosity in whether such long-term relationships with clothes could be fostered through design and making. This led to my decision to embark on this research.

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The aim of this study, focused in the UK, is to identify how the concept of emotional durability can be applied in fashion design and making to reflect women's experiences with clothing.

In the currently dominant model of fashion production and consumption, designers and makers are pushed to meet increasingly faster trend turnarounds, sometimes left with the pressure of only twenty-five minutes to produce a design (Rissanen, 2016). Fashion users, on the other hand, face frustration with low quality garments (Niinimäki, 2014; McLaren et al., 2015; MISTRA Future Fashion, 2017 (7), House of Commons, 2019) and homogenous styles (Connor-Crabb, 2017; Townsend et al., 2017, 2019), often trapped in what Chapman calls "endless cycles of desire and disappointment" (2015 [2005], p. 21).

As a result, large quantities of fully functional clothes are routinely discarded in the UK and worldwide (WRAP, 2017a; Global Fashion Agenda & Boston Consulting Group, 2017; European Parliament, 2019). Just half of these are collected for reuse and recycling (European Parliament, 2019) and only a small fraction can be recycled into new clothes because of issues with material quality and technology (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017; WRAP, 2019). It is clear that the current situation is not sustainable, and that fashion future must be radically different. The United Nations Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action (2018) stresses that the fashion industry "needs to embrace a deeper, more systemic change". The urgency of this transformation is also recognized by the Fashion Pact initiated by the French president Emanuel Macron ahead of the G7 summit in Biarritz in August 2019 (Fashion United, 2019).

Over the past two decades, the alarming social and environmental consequences of the current model of fashion production and consumption received considerable scholarly attention (Alwood et al. 2006; Fletcher & Grose, 2011; Black, 2011 [2008]; WRAP, 2012; Fletcher & Tham, 2016; Gardetti & Torres, 2017 [2013]; Niinimäki, 2018). Research has shown that consumption patterns associated with fast fashion can reduce active lifetime of a garment to less than a season (WRAP, 2013). It is estimated that the number of times a piece of clothing gets used decreased by 36% worldwide over the last two decades (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017, p. 19).

Yet, a substantial body of evidence also confirms that people often wear clothes for a long time and form deep attachments to some garments (Solomon, 1986; Schultz Kleine, Kleine III and Allen, 1995; Heti, Julavits & Shapton, 2014; Skjold, 2014; Fletcher, 2016). Empirical studies conducted by Skjold (2014), Holgar (forthcoming 2019) or Valle-Noronha (forthcoming 2019) prove that despite the seemingly overpowering presence of fast and disposable fashion scenarios, there is also a parallel world in which clothes get the chance to transform from a product into a process (Fletcher, 2016, p.1). A world where they are appreciated for the layers of meaning and emotion accumulated through time and repeated use.

A growing body of research now recognizes that a deeper understanding of behavioural drivers behind fashion consumption and premature disposal of garments is needed to move beyond the symptom-based, material focused solutions to sustainability such as closed-loop recycling or technological innovation (Chapman, 2015 [2005]; Niinimäki, 2013, 2014; Skjold, 2014; Fletcher, 2016; Gwodz et al. 2017; Bruggeman, 2018; von Busch, 2018c). My research contributes to this effort by drawing on a combination of methods from sensory and visual ethnography alongside practical explorations through my designer-maker practice.

During the initial stages of the research I became wholly immersed in the 'global' aspects of the research problem; within the breadth and depth of what is to be done. It is in this context the research started to orientate into a more traditional theoretical approach, only for the practice of sensory ethnography and fashion studio practice to take shape upon this initial contextual foundation during the middle and latter part of the research process. This is also reflected in transitions between the language of theory and everyday language of users, to enable continuous mutual dialogue and knowledge sharing.

Wardrobe conversations with women aged between 29-69 accompanied by "making, observing and describing" (Ingold, 2011, p. 2) constituted my research methodology. The conversations took place in my interviewees' homes in several location across the UK and focused on narratives around the clothes women selected from their wardrobes as our conversations progressed. While the thesis is largely textual, my tacit knowledge of making clothes provided me with a lens through which to interrogate, distil and interpret the questions, answers, and new paths for exploration that emerged over the course this research journey.

Throughout the thesis I use the term *mundane fashion* to refer to women's everyday experiences with the clothes they own. It is however important to stress that 'mundane' is here by no means seen as 'trivial', rather, it refers to that which is often overlooked - the way a woman's relationship with a piece of clothing develops over time, once she brings it home and wears it on a more or less regular basis. By drawing attention to considerations linked to everyday use, *mundane fashion* echoes Fletcher's point that the current business model encourages designers to imagine fashion objects that will sell but not those that will stand the test of use (2016, p. 117). With the origin of 'mundane' in the Old French 'mondain' and late Latin 'mundanus', both meaning 'world', *mundane fashion* also serves as a metaphor for a holistic understanding of fashion and its implications on individual, social and environmental levels. In line with the approach adopted by Buckley and Clark (2017), through this thesis I aim to contest the dominant fashion business model "by understanding fashion as a manifestation of routine daily lives that remains with people over time" (p.4).

In one of the most evocative accounts of human experience of making and wearing clothes, the acclaimed documentary Notebooks on Cities of Clothes (1990), the director Wim Wenders describes his first reaction as he was approached with the project brief: "The world of fashion? I'm interested in the world, not fashion." This remark is important to this study because it captures the essence of my own philosophy in embarking on this project as both a researcher and a maker. In this thesis, 'fashion' and 'the world' are not seen as separate entities. *Mundane fashion* is a part of the whole, it only exists in the relationship to the people who wear it and to the world and the environment they live in.

This research has three objectives:

1. To critically review relevant emotional design theories and explore the possibilities of their practical application in fashion design and making.

2. To identify how the different ways in which women experience and engage with fashion affect the emotional durability of clothing.

3. To create a series of garments that reflect women's experiences with emotionally durable clothing and propose new ways of extending emotional durability by design and making.

The thesis is interwoven with images and extended excerpts from women's wardrobe narratives [in Italics]. A strong focus on the voices of the women I spoke to is also reflected in my approach to articulating the findings. These are captured through an illustrated written analysis, women's' wardrobe narratives, and garments that I made in response to each of the four empirical themes that emerged from my research.

A NOTE ON THE THESIS STRUCTURE

The thesis is structured in three parts that outline a linear approach on the movement from a contextual 'global' understanding of the research problem, through to the practices of ethnography and fashion design and making. The thesis structure is visualised in Table 1.1 [p.21].

Thesis Part One:

The first part introduces the key theories and concepts on fashion, clothing, physical and emotional durability in design that informed my approach and helped to build the foundations for this study. This contextual foundation serves as a larger backdrop to negotiating the research problem in the second and final applied part of the research. Chapter 3.5 [p.80] Research in practice: Temporary design responses is the key link between the first part and the rest of the thesis; parts two and three. The designs in this section are presented as an impression of the first, exploratory stage of my research that trials the design and thinking through making. The research problem here is how absorbing the contextual foundation and design for longevity can be applied in the move from theory to practice.

Thesis Part Two:

The second part introduces and applies sensory ethnography during a series of wardrobe conversations. The second part is concerned with the philosophical underpinnings of this research and my research methodology, with emphasis upon ethnographic practices. It details the overall research design and explains how the approach I have chosen reflects the aim and objectives of this research. Here I also clarify how my role of researcher-practitioner played out during this research, how the experience from my practice informed various stages of the research process. Chapter 5 Wardrobe conversations [p. 124] then focuses on the process of preparation and conducting my

fieldwork. It looks at the ethical concerns linked to this research and reflects on the process of interviewing women in their homes. The second part of the chapter explains how the material collected during the fieldwork was analysed.

Thesis Part Three:

The third part of the thesis is composed of two chapters that look back on the learnings and the questions that emerged from this research journey and offer a look forward towards expanding this work further. Chapter 6 [p. 160] articulates my research findings, by first discussing the four themes that emerged from my analysis and continues by their practical interpretation through the concept of the *One Thing Collection*. This is seen both as a logical development of my practice through this research and as a conclusion to this project that also extends this study into the future. Chapter 7 offers a retrospective look on the thesis, summarizes the key insights [See Chapter 7.3 Contribution to knowledge summarized p. 300] and suggests avenues for future development of this research.

A key aspect of the thesis is the status and location of the Appendices. My concern is that the Appendices are not seen as supplementary material but are read as a vital source of information to provide the rich 'thick description' necessary for comprehending the depth and significance of the research findings. A note here is on the generosity of each woman in participating in an intimate study of their wardrobes. It is equally worth noting the richness and breadth of the visual material presented in the portraits of each woman that hung on my studio wall throughout two-thirds of the study [see Chapter 5.3, p. 141, Figure 5.4].

Table 1 on the next page illustrates the structure of the thesis and clarifies how each chapter contributes to the research aim through three research objectives.

Part One CONTEXT	**Chapter 1.** IS THIS FASHION AND DOES IT MATTER?	**OBJECTIVE 1** Global Context To critically review relevant emotional design theories and explore the possibilities of their practical application in fashion design and making.
	Chapter 2. FASHION, CLOTHING, DURABILITY	
	Chapter 3. EMOTIONALLY DURABLE DESIGN	
Part Two METHODOLOGY	**Chapter 4.** SENSORY WARDROBE	**OBJECTIVE 2** Ethnographic Methods To identify how the different ways in which women experience and engage with fashion affect the emotional durability of clothing.
Part Two PROJECT	**Chapter 5.** WARDROBE CONVERSATIONS	
Part Three FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION	**Chapter 6.** WARDROBE NARRATIVES	**OBJECTIVE 3** Fashion Design and Making To create a series of garments that reflect women's experiences with emotionally durable clothing and propose new ways of extending emotional durability by design and making.
	Chapter 7. CONCLUSION	

Table 1.1 Thesis structure

PART ONE

1 IS THIS FASHION AND DOES IT MATTER?

My background

Fashion, clothing, and everyday life

Design for change – Human perspectives on fashion

Consumption and material culture

In this chapter, divided into four sections, I discuss the key theories and concepts that underpinned my research. In the first section, I introduce my background and include reflections on how my professional experience and my role of researcher-practitioner informed the research process. I also explain how the principles of reflexivity have been applied throughout my research. Following on from there, I continue with an overview of definitions and approaches to the complex and often overlapping concepts of fashion and clothing. I also clarify my own approach to fashion in the context of everyday life and my focus on users' everyday experiences with clothing. Section three then explains how my research fits in with some of the latest research that calls for a human perspective on fashion, namely the visions outlined in two recent publications Dissolving the Ego of Fashion (Bruggeman, 2018) and Vital Vogue - A Biosocial Perspective on Fashion (von Busch, 2018a). The section also positions my research in the context of Kate Fletcher's plea for 'post-growth fashion' introduced in her *Craft of Use* (2016). In the concluding section, I consider the relationship between consumption and material culture and explain how blurring the distinction between the two is unhelpful for the current efforts to negotiate more sustainable futures.

1.1 MY BACKGROUND – REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

As I outlined in the Prologue [p. 13], my research interest in clothes whose appeal lasts well beyond the first few months or even years, has emerged from my designer-maker practice. It has particularly developed over the last eight years of my conversations with the clients of my slow fashion studio MISENSE by Mila B. In my practice I make one-off pieces and bespoke garments, united by the ideas of durability, versatility, and easy care. Provenance is critical in my sourcing. I use end of line fabrics, quality vintage materials and haberdashery, and fabrics produced in the UK and Europe wherever possible. Repair and alteration services are also essential for my studio's ethos, and as I explained earlier, in the recent years these have been a significant part of my commissions. Although I happily take repair commissions for menswear when the opportunity arises, the focus of my practice and my key skills are in womenswear.

The day to day operation of my studio reflects my designer-maker philosophy in which personal contact with clients is at the core of all my work on both new and repaired or altered pieces. I started my practice with initial training in ethnography and cultural theory, which led me to a long-term focus on craft, activism, and socially responsible design. My later professional involvement in

a *Design for All* consultancy only further contributed to my strong belief that designers and makers need to work closely with users and develop a deep understanding of users' everyday practices. In this respect, I fully identify myself with Norman's (2004) claim that "designers who believe they do not need to watch the people who use their products are a major source of the many poor designs that confront us" (p.74).

Each of my studio commissions starts with an informal discussion during which I try to learn as much as possible about my client's lifestyle, the kind of clothes they feel comfortable wearing and their expectations of the garment I will be making or repairing/altering for them. I have found that these discussions become even more enlightening if they can take place in my clients' homes. Zygmunt Baumann defined home as "the place where nothing needs to be proved and defended, as everything is just there, obvious, familiar" (cited in Malicki, 2014, p. 4). In line with this, I have found that being at home helps clients to feel less self-conscious, less pressed for time and much more empowered to explain what they truly want in terms of style, fabric choice and fit. The home environment seems to be more conducive to discussions of ideas and possible alternatives, it gives me the valuable context of the rest of their possessions (Miller, 2008; Woodward, 2007) and it also helps my clients to better imagine any new garments in relation to their whole wardrobes and the clothes they already own (see also Skjold, 2014). All this gives me invaluable information as well as inspiration for my work.

Over the years of conversations with my clients, I have heard numerous stories of clothes that looked exciting in a shop but somehow did not meet the same high expectations when they were brought back home. Many of them get worn once, or never at all, some are discarded straight away, others are kept for months or even years before they eventually end up in a charity shop or a landfill (see also Woodward, 2007; WRAP, 2013). What concerns me then is that these "failed relationships" (Chapman, 2015 [2005], p. 24) not only waste the natural and human resources that were invested in the production of these clothes but they also seem to perpetuate people's dissatisfaction, anxiety and frustration with the current fashion market (Woodward, 2007; WRAP, 2013; Twigger-Hollroyd, 2014; Skjold, 2014; Niinimäki, 2014).

The overriding ambition of my studio has therefore been to offer a more user-focused alternative to mainstream fashion, with an approach that is informed by my clients' everyday experiences and needs. I aim to design versatile garments that will be worn and enjoyed for a long time. The care and

the attention to detail I invest in this process (Sennett, 2009) makes me want to create a piece that my customers will not want to throw away (Maclachlan, 2011). In the words of British potter Edmund de Waal, "you must hope, if you make things as I do, that they can make their way in the world and have some longevity" (2010, p. 232).

A NOTE ON REFLEXIVITY

Jane Elliot (2005) notes that qualitative researchers committed to research that aims to contribute to positive societal change often consider explicit reflexive approach to their research in order to address the issues of validity (p. 154). She argues:

> While acknowledging that all research accounts will be partial and will be shaped by the intellectual biography of the author, there is a desire to make those accounts as informative as possible and to provide insights into the means and circumstances of their production. An approach to conducting and writing up research which makes clear the perspective of the author and describes the practicalities of how the research has been conducted is therefore advocated. (p. 155)

In line with this view, in the writing up of my thesis I choose to fully acknowledge and reflect on the ways in which my personal and professional background have shaped first my overall perspective and later the progress and the decisions I made at different stages of this research. Such approach corresponds with the widely discussed "reflexive turn" in anthropology (Aul Davies, 2008 [1998]; Bromley & Carter, 2001; May & Perry, 2011; Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2018 [2009]) that questions claims to objective truth and unbiased accounts in research. As Robert Murphy comments in his brilliant auto-ethnographic study *The Body Silent* (1990)*,* subjective elements are inevitably present in "all research by humans on humans" (p. 177). For this reason, he argues:

> Our need to reduce all our data to a tidy system is just as much an attempt to cope with the sensory chaos of a world we do not fully understand as an exercise in science. And it is subject to the same errors and uncertainties. (Ibid, p. 176)

As I made clear in the Prologue [p. 13], my decision to embark on this research was inspired by the experiences of the people I met through my designer-maker practice, especially the unusually

stimulating relationship I developed with one of my clients, Tanya. In addition to this, I am conscious that my attitudes to the topic I decided to study here, were also shaped by my own upbringing.

I have now lived in the UK for nine years, but I originally come from Slovakia where I lived until the age of twenty before moving to Prague, Czech Republic to study. Czechoslovakia split when I was fourteen and until I was ten it was still a country under a communist regime. While my parents' income was average and we lived in the capital, my childhood memories certainly do not include overabundance of clothing. Most of what we wore seemed to be brown and grey, as the choice of colours and styles was limited. Therefore, I have fond recollections of Sunday afternoon visits to my mum's best friend house. Her family in Switzerland used to hand down clothes to her children, and when they too grew out of them, these clothes were handed down further to my brother and me. I especially remember a turquoise summer dress with a broderie anglaise collar, that I could not wait for my friend to grow out of. I thought this was the most beautiful dress I had ever seen, and I used every opportunity to wear it when it finally came to me. I feel these experiences deserve a mention here because they no doubt influenced my relationship to fashion and clothes in more than one way. What is perhaps most important in the context of this research, is that they taught me not to take clothes for granted.

1.2 FASHION, CLOTHING AND EVERYDAY LIFE

FASHION AND CLOTHING

Fashion is difficult to pin down in a single definition that would embrace the full scope of its varied meanings and manifestations. As the fashion historian Elizabeth Wilson comments, "fashion is coherent in its ambiguity" (2003, p. 9). The same seems to apply to the distinction between "fashion" and "clothing". Although the two terms have many overlapping connotations they cannot be used interchangeably. The typical delineation between the two is well described by Loschek (2009), who notes:

> On the one hand, clothing is very concrete; a product that apparently surrounds us all the time, one that permanently contains us. On the other hand, however, fashion is extremely

abstract, since it is negotiated within the society. The aforementioned social constructs are what makes clothing into fashion. (p.10)

This understanding implies that clothing tends to be understood through its material qualities, as fiber and cloth, used to cover our bodies. However, body covering has never been the sole purpose of clothing. This is reflected in Steele's remark that any attempts to understand clothing as purely functional "fall short of being able to explain what clothing means to the people who wear it and to others who see it" (2010, p. xvii). Fashion then, being widely seen as symbolic and communicative, an "aesthetic medium for the expression of ideas, desires and beliefs circulating in society" (Wilson, 2003, p. 9), seems to provide a cultural context for wearing clothing. As Kawamura (2004) notes then "trying to define a particular item of clothing as fashion is futile because fashion is not a material product but a symbolic product which has no content substance by/in itself" (p. 2).

DRESS AND STYLE

The matters of fashion terminology get further complicated when the terms 'dress' and 'style' come into the equation. A good example is Wilson's definition of fashion as "dress in which the key feature is rapid and continual changing of styles" (2003, p. 3). The term 'dress', is particularly favoured by scholars that arrive at study of fashion from ethnographic and anthropological perspectives. Defined from this viewpoint by Eicher & Roach-Higgins (1992), dress is "an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body" (cited in Foster & Johnson, 2007, p. 2). This means that the term 'dress' embraces items that may not easily sit within the western concept of 'fashion' and so provides a more inclusive perspective on what people around the world wear on everyday basis.

Tulloch (2010) then builds on this effort as she highlights that the western understanding of the terms 'style-fashion-dress', which are often used interchangeably, does not apply universally. When used in this format, "style-fashion-dress" as a term, Tulloch argues, "constitutes a system of concepts that signifies the multitude of meanings and frameworks that are always "whole-and-part" of dress studies. " (2010, p. 275). While she does not further elaborate on the definitions of 'fashion' or 'dress', I find her understanding of the term 'style' particularly relevant for my own research. To explain what she means by style, Tulloch uses an example of her own scarf, "a treasured personal fashion accessory" (p. 276), which she had worn and appropriated for different purposes over the period of twenty years. In this context then, Tulloch views style "as agency - in the construction of

self through the assemblage of garments, accessories, and beauty regimes that may, or may not, be "in fashion" at the time of use" (Ibid).

This understanding of style is akin to the views of Barthes (2013) who saw the difference between 'style' and 'fashion' in speed, style being characterized by much slower cycles of change. However, in the context of my research, it is Tulloch's perspective that especially resonates. Her view of 'style as agency' highlights users' active role in digesting, appropriating and quite possibly even redefining 'fashion' through their everyday 'clothing'.

STYLE NARRATIVES

Related to this, Tulloch also introduces what she calls "style narratives", which, she says, enable "to expound an aspect of autobiography of oneself through the clothing choices an individual makes" (Ibid). Similar take on narratives through material objects and clothing is adopted in ethnographic and anthropological studies such as for example Hoskin's *Biographical objects* (1998), in which six women and men talk about their lives in connection to significant objects. Woodward's *Why Women Wear What They Wear* (2007) famously examined how women express their individual and social identities through their wardrobes. More recent examples include studies by Dankl (2011), Sadkowska (2016) and Skjold (2014). With their respective focuses on ageing (Dankl and Sadkowska) and daily decisions about dressing (Skjold), the authors explored how people's life narratives unfold through their wardrobes [see Chapter 4.3, p. 108]. The concept of style narratives is especially relevant for my project because it helps to capture women's everyday experiences through their own words, as the examples from my research will demonstrate.

My conversations with women confirm that despite the omnipresence of fashion in our contemporary society, people who go about their busy daily lives do not always preoccupy themselves with its latest quirks. This is well illustrated on an excerpt from one of my interviews:

> *I mean I'm influenced by what other people are wearing. In fact, actually, you know that yellow skirt? I was looking for something like that. And I, actually, I said that about something else - haven't I? That I was - when I've seen somebody else? So, I suppose, that's following fashion in a way. Although, I've just gone: oh, that looks great on that person! Irrespective of whether it's particularly fashionable at the time. And sometimes - I NEVER buy magazines,*

normally. But you know, if you're going to have your hair cut and looking at the magazines and looking in Vogue. I DO like looking at what's in Vogue. (Emma 962-974)

Emma's words reflect the views of many of my other interviewees. Most women I talked to also admit to the joy of flicking through and odd fashion magazine at hairdresser's, or on a long flight, and they also mention scrolling through Instagram or fashion blogs in the evening, when children are in bed. At the same time, it is important to note that some of their most valued (and still worn) items of clothing are often many years old and so rarely in line with current trends. Most women also agree that they used to be much more interested in keeping up with fashion when they were younger. Again, Julie's description of putting on her tight jeans resonates throughout other interviews:

I'm finding that now I REALLY REALLY love wearing things that feel nice and are super-comfortable. Whereas when I was young, you know, in those days we'd lay on the bed for half an hour tryin' get our jeans zip up and then couldn't move afterwards. But that's what we did and that's how we wore our jeans and things like that. (Julie 569-572)

It is clear from these excerpts that 'fashion' provides an important point of reference for my interviewees and cannot be denied its role in shaping their experiences with the clothes they wear (although the degree of its influence may change over time as we have seen). At the same time, like Skjold, I also believe that fashion is not "the only cultural script at play in people's dress practice" (2014, p. 16). The fluidity of women's everyday experience with clothes, described by Buckley and Clark as a "synthesis of new and old, bold and mundane" (2017, p. 9), is in many ways much better captured through Tulloch's (2010) concept of "style narratives"

FASHION AND EVERYDAY LIFE

As I explained earlier in this section, 'fashion' and 'clothing' are terms with complex meanings and while it is important to acknowledge that they should not be used as synonyms, they also cannot be entirely dissociated from each other. This is well explained by Barnard (2002), who notes that 'fashion' and 'clothing' are in fact often used in mutual relationship because they define each other. What is also significant for this research, is the connection between the 'everyday' ('ordinary') and the 'special' ('extraordinary'), also implied in the understanding of the relationship between 'clothing' and 'fashion'. As Barnard also argues:

Clothing sounds like, or has connotations of, the sort of thing one wears every day and is mundane, fashion connotes glamour and sounds somehow special and different from clothing. However, if fashion is what people wear to go about their everyday lives (…) than fashion has to include what we would usually want to call clothing or 'what people wear'.(2007, pp.3-4)

Strikingly, all the women that took part in my research spoke about 'clothes' and most of them never mentioned 'fashion', until I directly asked about their views on it in the final part of our conversation. It is for this reason that I resolved to use the terms 'clothing' and 'clothes' throughout this thesis. Nevertheless, as I explained in my Introduction [p. 16], I also chose to introduce the term *mundane fashion*, to emphasize the focus of this research on that which is often overlooked - the use stage of clothing. In their recent *Fashion and Everyday Life*, Buckley and Clark (2017) state that it is "the embodied ordinariness and everydayness of fashion (…) neither the wilfully 'unfashionable' nor obsessively 'in' fashion, but rather fashion as seen in day-to-day lives" (p.11) that interests them. I fully share this fascination with the rich and often complicated relationships between women and the clothes they wear when they go about their everyday lives. Through my thesis I set to extend the current understanding of such relationships through the lens of *mundane fashion*.

1.3   DESIGN FOR CHANGE – HUMAN PERSPECTIVES ON FASHION

DESIGN FOR CHANGE

Since the rapid boost of production that was enabled by the industrial revolution, and the negative impacts that soon became palpable on individual, social and environmental levels, the need to rethink the ways in which we make and consume everyday goods has become increasingly urgent. Among the first to highlight the critical role that design has to play in this process was the poet, designer, and political activist William Morris (1824-1896). Morris strongly believed in design as a tool for social change and in his numerous public lectures he emphasized the responsibility that each of us, as individuals - designers, makers, or users - carry in this process. Characteristic of Morris's views is his lecture *At a Picture Show* (1884), in which he urges his audience to be perceptive to the natural world, to the way we engage with it, and also to always staying alert to the fact that we all have an active role to play in the world. Therefore, we should "take a deep and thoughtful interest

in life (…) and not be merely drifted helplessly hither and thither by the force of circumstances, as we too often are" (1936 [1884]).

Almost a century later, the designer and educator Victor Papanek 1923-1998) published his famous *Design for the Real World. Human Ecology and Social Change* (1971). The book has since become one of the key texts of design scholarship, with translations to twenty-three languages and numerous re-editions worldwide. Papanek, like Morris, was a strong advocate of socially responsible design and the book is his guide to how design can help tackle the most pressing environmental and social issues. What I find particularly pertinent for my research, is Papanek's description of what he calls 'Our Kleenex Culture'. By normalizing the mindset of disposability, Papanek claims, this culture not only has dire consequences for the environment and social justice, but it may also negatively affect our personal relationships. He argues:

> Throwing away furniture, transportation vehicles, clothing, and appliances may soon lead us to feel that marriages (and other personal relationships) are throwaway items as well, and that on a global scale, countries and, indeed, entire subcontinents are disposable like Kleenex. That which we throw away, we fail to value. When we design and plan things to be discarded, we exercise insufficient care in design. (Papanek, 1985 [1971], p. 87)

This is important for my research, because what Papanek highlights here is essentially a lack of care for our immediate surroundings, starting with things we use on everyday basis. In this way, his view echoes Morris's point that we should all take an active interest in the world around us and embrace the responsibility for our actions rather than just being "drifted helplessly hither and thither (1936 [1884], p. 409). Showing care in our everyday lives includes close attention and concern for the things we surround ourselves with and so recognizing their wider implications for the environment and people worldwide. As I will show throughout this thesis, care is critical in extending active lifetimes of everyday objects, including clothing. Moreover, exercising care in what we buy (or make), and how we use it, not only potentially promotes more sustainable consumption habits, but also encourages deep feelings of satisfaction and pleasure through repeated use of such things.

Satisfaction and pleasure derived from long-term relationship with designed objects is widely addressed in the work of the Dutch engineer, design critic and educator Ed van Hinte, who is possibly best known for his association with the initiative Eternally Yours (now defunct). Eternally Yours was

started in mid-1990s to advance research in product lifetime extension. It was motivated by the belief that the reason so many current products end up in landfill far too quickly is what van Hinte refers to as a "lack of psychological lifespan" (1997, p. 19). As he explains:

> We can only make products survive year after year if we realize that they are used and cared for by people who see them, feel them, understand them and dream about them. Products must have the material ability as well as the immaterial opportunity to age in a dignified way. (Ibid)

Van Hinte's approach, with its focus on the role of designers in extending the time for which people use and enjoy their products, links to Morris's and Papanek's emphasis on the potential of design to positively affect social and environmental change. At the same time, the quote above calls attention to another crucial aspect of socially responsible design - the recognition that our everyday interaction with designed objects is an intricate mixture of multi-sensory perceptions, including both tangible ('material') and intangible ('immaterial') experiences and expectations. This inevitably results in challenges for designers at all stages of their work. As Manzini (2017) puts it, "if you put a human being at the centre, you cannot escape complexity". However, he also argues that complexity is in fact good and designers should be ready to embrace it (Ibid).

It is in this wider context of design that acknowledges the impact of our everyday decisions as designers, makers and users of products, with all the inherent complexity of placing human beings at the centre, that I wish to position my research. With its aim "to identify how the concept of emotional durability can be applied in fashion design and making to reflect women's experiences with clothing" my study has strong links to sustainable design theory and clothing longevity research. Despite this, I chose not to frame my thesis in the context of sustainable design. This decision is motivated by my strong belief that design cannot dissociate itself from its wider implications on individual, social and environmental levels.

Just like the obscure fair-trade shelf in a supermarket, with a handful of products that painfully draw attention to the origin of the remainder of the offerings, the sole existence of the term sustainable design exposes the alarming fact that most products that we design, make and use on everyday basis still do not, by any stretch of imagination, put the environment and people first. From this point of

view, while I deeply recognize the relevance and necessity of continuous discourse on sustainable design (and indeed sustainable fashion), I also fully subscribe to Chapman's (2015 [2005]) view that:

> (…) by failing to understand the actual drivers underpinning the human consumption and waste of goods, sustainable design resigns itself to a peripheral activity, rather than the central pioneer of positive social change that it potentially could be. (p.15)

In line with Chapman and some of the latest research presented in the special issue 'Utopia and Fashion' (Burcikova, 2018), I support the view that the transformative potential of sustainable design is undermined by a myriad of primarily symptom based "eco-modernist" (Brooks et al., 2018, p. 483) and "less bad" (Rissanen, 2018, p. 531) approaches such as closed-loop recycling. These scenarios are generally focused on material aspects of products (including clothing) and hence do not give due consideration to the complex issues of human-product interaction discussed earlier in this section. Moreover, as Brooks et al. (2018) also point out, such approaches are underpinned by a flawed logic that does little to challenge the politics and business interests that are at the root of the environmental crisis (see also Walker, 2017). As a result, what they offer are technocentric "magic bullets", promising that business will carry on as usual and the planet will be saved (Ibid). The same point is echoed by Von Busch (2018a), who argues that "most approaches to sustainability in fashion never ask what is really to be sustained in the first place, instead an anti-social model keeps reproducing itself, but now draped in eco-cotton" (2018a, p. 79).

To reiterate then, I locate my research within the scope of thinking that acknowledges the need for a holistic perspective on design, a perspective that embraces the complexity of design's impact on individual, social and environmental levels and considers the role of human agency throughout the lifetime of designed objects. As a result, my research is underpinned by a triad of concerns:

1. Focus on the human dimension of fashion through understanding user needs and expectations.

2. Identifying effective ways of extending the emotional durability of clothing through design.

3. Imagining alternatives to the status quo and promoting a parallel economy of fashion production through micro-business models.

Here I will explain how these concerns relate to the current research focused on rethinking fashion futures.

HUMAN PERSPECTIVES ON FASHION

Post-growth Fashion

Kate Fletcher (2016), one of the key figures in the current sustainable fashion research, introduces her concept of "post-growth fashion" within the wider call for post-growth futures, that stems from a deep concern for the social and environmental consequences of uninhabited growth within the finite resources of our planet. Post-growth theories acknowledge the benefits of economic growth; however, they argue that beyond certain point growth is detrimental to both human well-being and the environment. Post-growth economists therefore argue for fostering economic practices that allow prosperity without continuous exponential growth. This line of thinking in economics was pioneered by Fritz Schumacher (1911-1977), the author of *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* (1973) and a friend and close collaborator of the previously mentioned Victor Papanek. Schumacher was an outspoken proponent of human scale economy and his legacy is continued by organizations such as Practical Action, Schumacher College, or The New Economics Foundation, among others. More recently, the post-growth economy scenarios have been advocated and further developed by Peter Victor in *Managing without Growth: Slower by Design, Not Disaster* (2019 [2008]) and Tim Jackson *Prosperity Without Growth: Foundations for the Economy of Tomorrow* (2017 [2009])*. Like the holistic approaches to design discussed earlier in this chapter, both post-growth economics and post-growth fashion draw attention to the fact that neither economy nor fashion exist as isolated systems, outside the environmental limits and without a connection to people, and so they need to give due consideration to either in the future. The philosophy of my own studio, a micro-enterprise, also stems from this line of thinking.

Fletcher's vision of post-growth fashion is best explained through the portraits of people photographed in a garment of their choice, each accompanied by a story linked to the garment, all presented in her *Craft of Use: Post-growth fashion* (2016). Craft of use, Fletcher argues, "starts with

people" (2016, p. 272) and "recognises that sustainability flows not from elemental compounds, but from synthesis, from what human and non-human *actants* do together" (Ibid, p. 271). What particularly resonates in the context of my research, are Fletcher's points that craft of use sees the practice of using garments in a mutual relationship with the practice of making them (ibid) and, importantly, that it also "roams free from the expectations, ambitions and priorities of the 'current condition' in order to exercise its fashion intelligence in a broader field" (Ibid, p. 272).

Dissolving the Ego of Fashion

It is especially these last two statements that provide a link between Fletcher's thinking and the work of Pascale Gatzen, who stands behind the development of an alternative fashion curriculum at the Parsons School of Design, New York. Gatzen, like Fletcher, puts special emphasis on craft. This is evidenced in her own design practice as a co-founder of a weaving cooperative Friends of Light, based in Hudson Valley, USA. Recently, Gatzen has also developed a new curriculum for the Fashion Design Master's programme at ArtEZ University of the Arts in Arnhem, Netherlands. Her fashion philosophy, like that of Fletcher, is focused on rethinking fashion in a way that prioritizes people over profits:

> Choices are made because they yield the biggest profit margins, not because they make us happier. How you dress is about how you position yourself in the world. How do we take fashion back into our own hands and make it a catalyst for social change? (Gatzen, 2018, cited in Bollier, 2018)

Gatzen also points out that conventional fashion education invariably builds on a disconnect between design and making. In contrast to this, she encourages her students to "design through making", because she believes that it is crucial that students become familiar with a process in which they need to negotiate "the dynamic relationship between materials, ideas and the sensibility that emerges from their bodies and hands" (Gatzen, 2018, cited in Bollier, 2018). This is important for my research as the same mindset underpins my own practice as a designer-maker. The process described by Gatzen, deeply rooted in a mutually nourishing relationships between materials, concepts, makers' tacit knowledge, their multi-sensory sensibilities and, I would add, people they design-make for, weaves through this thesis in a close connection with the wider critical discussion and the wardrobe narratives collected during my field research.

Gatzen's thinking falls into the wider context of the vision and the research of the Fashion Professorship at ArtEZ introduced recently in Danielle Bruggeman's *Dissolving the Ego of Fashion. Engaging with Human Matters* (2018). Here, Bruggeman argues that:

> In its current state of being, fashion is exploited as the supreme expression of consumer culture and the capitalist system. It is a system that incessantly forms, shapes and (re)constructs itself; it creates its own 'I'. In this sense, fashion has an Ego, which is an illusionary construction of I. (…) In a society with many urgent socio-cultural, political and environmental challenges, fashion is thus always engaged with its own Ego-creation: it is a constant redefinition of what it is and what it means. (Ibid, p. 7)

The Ego of fashion, Bruggeman also says, is supported by the glamorous runways, the ideas of star designers and the seducing desires linked to money, visuals, and excess (Ibid). All of this, she continues, "often denies the subjective dimension and lived experiences of the human beings who actually wear and/or make clothes" (iIbid, p. 7-8). The vision of ArtEZ presented in *Dissolving the Ego of Fashion* is therefore led by a strong emphasis on the need for both critical thinking and critical design practices that will help envision fashion futures in which material objects can be experienced "in a more human way" (Ibid, p. 9).

Vital Vogue

Also in line with this mindset is Von Busch's proposal to re-imagine fashion in a richer way that would drift away from thinking about individual garments and to instead re-conceptualise fashion in terms of energies and sensibilities (2018b). "What if designers think of fashion as *intimacy*? What way could designers open emotional and sensorial closeness to their users? What form of intimacy with materials, processes and others can designers curate?", Von Busch teases in his *Vital Vogue. A Biosocial Perspective on Fashion.* (2018a, p. 81). However, he also acknowledges that this process would involve an "explicit unlearning of fashion-as-we-know-it" because the omnipresence of fashion makes it almost impossible for most to imagine how the future of fashion could radically differ from the deceptive familiarity of the current scenario (Ibid, p. 83). My research sets out to contribute to this process of 'unlearning of fashion-as-we-know-it' by using the lens of *mundane fashion*, focused on women's everyday relationships with clothes that rarely make it to catwalks.

What all the thinkers discussed in this section have in common, is their recognition that material objects (clothing included) are integral to the way we experience the world around us. Therefore, despite the urgent need for nurturing more sustainable, more human alternatives to the current fashion consumption, viewing our relationship with material world as inherently negative is unhelpful. In fact, as Bruggeman puts it, in the holistic vision of the future "matter deserves to matter more" (Bruggeman, 2018, p.9). The next section will address in more detail why this is necessary.

1.4 CONSUMPTION AND MATERIAL CULTURE

THE CHALLENGE OF EFFICIENCY

Despite improved efficiency in water use and reduced carbon emissions, the continuous growth in quantity of sold clothing means that the savings made are lost (House of Commons, 2019, p. 37). For example, in the thirty years between 1980 and 2010 the fashion industry reported a 30% decrease in resources used per unit, yet by 2007 the number of new garments sold raised to more than two times (Grose, 2015, cited in Fletcher, 2016, p. 22). Drucker's (1963) famous comment that "there is surely nothing quite so useless as doing with great efficiency what should not be done at all" irresistibly springs to mind here. Nevertheless, the fact is that the combination of growing efficiency of production with raising levels of disposable income in the countries of the global north, and later in the emerging economies of South Asia, enabled raising levels of fashion consumption throughout the twentieth century. But it was the rise of inexpensive fast fashion in the last twenty-thirty years that increasingly allowed people of all incomes to "regularly and routinely consume and discard clothing" (Buckley & Clark, p.8). The statistics cited above is a clear indication that purely technological solutions to resource efficiency are insignificant as long as the market demand and consumer expectations continue to grow . Such concerns have been voiced by researchers from a range of disciplines for many years now (Jackson, 2005; Princen et al. 2002; Chapman, 2005 [2015]; Brooks et al. 2018), recently also in the report for the European Commission written by Centre for Sustainable Fashion, London College of Fashion (European Commission, 2019). The core issue that links all these studies is well summed up by Chapman, who comments that in the technology-driven scenario, "consumers continue wastefully on, but do so, now, with recycled materials instead of virgin ones" (2015 [2005], p. 15). What seems to be clear is that technological innovation must go

hand in hand with tackling overconsumption. However, the latter seems to be much more difficult to address.

FACING CONSUMPTION

The critique of excess connected to materialistic values, referred to as pleonexia, goes back as far as Plato (The Republic, Book I), Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics) and the Greek New Testament (Gospel, St. Paul's Epistles) (Hammond, 2009). Later, in Leviathan, Thomas Hobbes refers to Greek understanding of pleonexia as a violation of modesty through desiring more than one's share (2018 [1651], p. 143). Rousseau criticized early industrial society for manufacturing "artificial needs", Marx fiercely opposed the "fetishism of commodities", William Morris viewed his time as "the Age of makeshift" in which "we know of many and many things which we ought to have and cannot, and not liking to sit down under the lack pure and simple, we get a makeshift instead of it" (1936 [1894]). Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1995 [1899]) later famously introduced the term "conspicuous consumption" that became widely influential throughout the twentieth century.

The contemporary critique of overconsumption is largely connected to the acute awareness that the social and environmental costs of low-price goods consumed in the global north are largely "outsourced" to the countries of the global south. These countries often provide cheap labour and generally still lack the strict environmental standards for production as well as sufficient protection of workers' rights and issues of health and safety. This was sadly highlighted by the collapse of the Rana Plaza building, Bangladesh, in April 2013, in which one thousand one hundred thirty-four workers who produced clothing for international high street brands were killed and hundreds more were left with debilitating injuries.

An important contribution to this line of critique is the body of research that shows a low correlation of ever-growing material satisfaction with happiness and wellbeing (Scitovsky, 1992 [1976]; Pugno, 2016). Many researchers also point out that wider human needs, as theorized for example by Max-Neef, Elizalde & Hopenhayn (1991), cannot all be satisfied by material consumption. Indeed, some may even be violated by attempts to satisfy them in purely material ways (Kasser, 2002; Jackson & Marks, 1999; Diener, Ng, Harter & Arora, 2010). As Jackson well sums up, such critiques of modern consumption are united by the belief that:

In pursuit of an inappropriate concept of progress, we are not only damaging our environment but also degrading our own psychological and social well-being. (…) That environmental damage is an external cost of a misguided and unsuccessful attempt to achieve human well-being is tragic. Consumer society, in this view, appears to be in the grip of a kind of social pathology. (2005, p. 25)

While this line of thinking no doubt raises a number of valid points that particularly resonate in the context of fast fashion, it is also important to recognize that voices calling for "voluntary simplicity" (Elgin, 1993), "downshifting" (Schor, 1998) or, with a wide popular appeal, for "decluttering" (Wallman, 2013; Kondo, 2014), invariably come from the position of plenty/abundance, without any real experience of alternatives. In short, it may be 'fun' to try and live with less when this is not a necessity forced on one by circumstances. As Miller points out, "not having things is no evidence that you don't want them" (2009, p. 5). From this point of view, calls for a better life with fewer possessions could be seen at best as just another fad of wealthy consumption and at worst as "naive, absurd and moralistic" (Jackson et al., 2004). The latter, especially, is confirmed by the long history of failed utopian experiments that were fuelled by similar motivations.

MATERIAL CULTURE

While I fully acknowledge the complexity of the consumption debate, it is beyond the scope of this study to critically address all its facets as discussed by philosophers, cultural theorists, economists, sociologists, and psychologists. What is crucial for my research, however, is recognizing that despite the undoubtedly problematic nature of the current speed of consumption, the solution to the environmental crisis hardly lies in less care about material objects. In this project, therefore, I adopt Miller's view that:

(…) whatever our environmental fears or concerns over materialism, we will not be helped by either a theory of stuff, or an attitude to stuff, that simply tries to oppose ourselves to it (…) The idea that stuff somehow drains away our humanity, as we dissolve into a sticky mess of plastic and other commodities, is really an attempt to retain a rather simplistic and false view of pure and prior unsullied humanity. (2009, p. 5).

The point here is that conflating overconsumption and materialism with material culture is unhelpful because this creates a rather one-dimensional picture of our relationship with material objects. Edmund de Waal's (2010) account of his family history seems particularly enlightening in this context. In his description of the moment when the Viennese Gestapo first started confiscating his grandparents' property, potter de Waal notes:

> This is the strange undoing of a collection, of a house and of a family. It is the moment of fissure when grand things are taken and when family objects, known and handled and loved, become stuff. (p. 211)

Here, De Waal exposes a different facet of our relationship with material objects. His short reflection is notable for two reasons. First, it echoes Miller's (2008) point that despite the common assumption that stems from the critique of consumerism and materialism, our relationships with things do not necessarily compromise our relationships with those who are close to us. Indeed, as Miller demonstrates in his *The Comfort of Things* (2008), often "the closer our relationships are with objects, the closer our relationships are with people" (p. 1). Second then, De Waall's perception of "stuff" as opposed to "grand things" and "loved objects", as something that is disconnected from what, or indeed who, we care about and so devoid of any meaning, resonates strongly in my research through the experiences of the women I interviewed.

De Waal's description of his family history also fits well with the extensive body of research in material culture studies that highlights the vital importance of the process of making as well as using tangible things throughout our lives (Csikzentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Moran & O'Brien, 2014; McCracken, 1990; Miller, 1987, 2008, 2009). In their now seminal study on the meaning of domestic objects Csikzentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton refer to the work of Hannah Arendt (1958) and Martin Heidegger (1957) to argue that:

> (…) men and women make order in their selves (i.e. "retrieve their identity") by first creating and then interacting with the material world. The nature of that transaction will determine, to a great extent, the kind of person that emerges. Thus the things that surround us are inseparable from who we are. The material objects we use are not just tools we can pick up and discard at our convenience; they constitute the framework of experience that gives

order to our otherwise shapeless selves. Therefore, the things we make and use have a tremendous impact on the future of humankind. (1981, p.16)

Material culture studies thus recognize that material objects do not exist in an opposition or in isolation from our lives but are closely interconnected with the social context in which they are used, appropriated, appreciated (or not, for that matter) and eventually discarded. In this respect, the focus shifts from consumption to usership (Fletcher, 2016), or from what is described by Reisch as "material satisfaction" to what she calls "nonmaterial satisfaction" (2001, p. 378). In Reisch's view, material satisfaction is derived from the acquisition of things whereas non-material satisfaction is linked to experiences of use which require time, attention, and involvement (Ibid). Thus, they offer an expanded view of the active agency we possess in relationship to material objects.

In sum, as Attfield puts it, material culture studies concern themselves with the biography of objects, the process that follows once a thing "passes through the retail check-out into everyday life" (2000, p. 6). This is a suitable point of departure for my study that explores how women relate to the clothes that made their way into their wardrobes, whether through a retail checkout, a high-end boutique, a charity shop or as gifts from family or friends.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter was to outline the key theories and concepts that underpin this research. The first section introduced my role as researcher-practitioner and explained how reflexivity is applied throughout this thesis to acknowledge the ways in which my personal and professional background framed my inquiry. The second section continued with an overview of definitions and approaches to the complex and often overlapping concepts of fashion and clothing. I also clarified that my own approach is focused on users' everyday experiences with the clothes in their wardrobes.

Later I discussed how my research fits in with the recent call for human perspective on fashion and I positioned my research in the context of Kate Fletcher's (2016) plea for 'post-growth fashion'. Section four considered the relationship between consumption and material culture and I also explained how conflating the two is unhelpful for the efforts to encourage more sustainable relationships with the material world. The following chapter will focus on the current research on clothing and longevity, discussed in connection to the existing emotional design theories.

2 FASHION, CLOTHING, DURABILITY

Slowing down fashion

Life-cycle assessment and clothing lifetimes

Longer lasting clothing

How long is durable – Physical durability and emotional durability

This chapter is divided into four sections and opens with an introduction of the discourse on fashion rhythms. This section positions my study in the context of slow fashion research practice, also aligned with Clark's (2008, 2018) proposition that slow fashion unsettles the current hierarchies of designers-producers-consumers. The opening section also explains how the emphasis on slow living is closely linked to cultivating a long-term view of the products we design, buy and use in our everyday lives. Production and consumption of clothing are therefore inseparable and must always be considered in their mutual interconnections. This then provides both a link and a rationale for the following section that focuses on recent research in life-cycle assessment and its main challenges.

Predicting consumer behaviour and everyday use of clothing are here identified as the core difficulties in life-cycle assessment (LCA) studies that by their very nature draw on 'hard' data of environmental performance. Section three then highlights that despite these inevitable uncertainties, extending the active life of clothing is still considered the most effective way of reducing its environmental impact and enhancing the sustainability of the industry. I here also first draw attention to studies that emphasize the need for a cultural shift towards longevity as a sought for attribute of clothing, and later to those that point out that longevity brings few benefits if users are not ready to embrace and profit from it. This latter point is addressed in more detail in the concluding section that analyses the distinction between physical and emotional durability and the complex interplay between the two. Here, the focus is especially on Don Norman's (2004) concept of three level design that I identified as a key reference point for my research.

2.1 SLOWING DOWN FASHION

The Slow + Design Manifesto co-authored by Ezio Manzini, one of the most prominent current researchers in design and sustainability, explains slow approach as "the simple, but in current times revolutionary, affirmation that it is not possible to produce and appreciate quality if we do not allow ourselves the time to do so " (2006, p. 2). The "slow" concept is perhaps best known in connection with the growing success of the Slow Food movement that originated in Italy in the late 1980s as an attempt to return transparency and appreciation of quality to global food chains. The principles of "slow" living are associated with rediscovering the values of local resources, reviving regional micro-economies, and standing up for transparency in production through strengthening direct links between material suppliers, producers, and consumers. What is particularly important in the context

of my study is the emphasis that the concept of "slow" places on "good work" (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011) and the wider cultural significance of manual (craft) skills (Sennett, 2009). The overarching view that underpins the principles of slow living hence cannot be dissociated from cultivating a long term view of the products we design, buy, and use in our everyday lives (Strauss & Fuad-Luke, n.d.).

There is a strong affinity between the slow movement and the work of the design thinkers and theorists that I discussed in Chapter 1.3 Design for Change - Human perspectives on fashion[p. 31]. For example, the philosophy of the slow movement has many crossovers with William Morris's emphasis on the dignity of manual (as opposed to intellectual) work, with his advocacy for the value of craft in the face of fast advancing industrial production methods, as well as with his well-known plea to surround ourselves with only such things that we "believe to be useful or believe to be beautiful" (Morris, 1882). Papanek's call for the appreciation of the environment that immediately surrounds us, his focus on using locally available resources wherever possible, and his concern for the consequences of disposability in design also clearly resonate with the agenda of the slow movement. Same applies to Ed van Hinte, Jonathan Chapman, Kate Fletcher, Pascale Gatzen, Danielle Bruggeman and Otto von Busch, who all put emphasis on cultivating our abilities to appreciate quality over quantity and building stronger links between producers and consumers of material objects, including fashion and clothing.

For over ten years now, the "slow" concept has been gaining increasing resonance also in fashion. In a research context, among its most vocal advocates have been Hazel Clark (2008, 2018) and Kate Fletcher (2004, 2014 [2008], 2010, 2016). Clark, whose first article on this topic followed from her attendance of the Slow + Design symposium mentioned above, points out that "slow fashion" should not be seen in a direct opposition to the current fast model.

> The term is [instead] used to identify sustainable fashion solutions, based on the repositioning of strategies of design, production, consumption, use, and reuse, which are emerging alongside the global fashion system, and are posing a potential challenge to it. The slow approach offers more sustainable and ethical ways of being fashionable that have implications for design, production, consumption and use. (Clark, 2008, p. 428)

The slow fashion approach, Clark argues, unsettles the current hierarchies of designers-producers-consumers. Fashion is then repositioned as an "individual creative choice rather than a group mandate" (Ibid, p. 444).

Kate Fletcher, whose work I introduced in more detail in the context of Human perspectives on fashion in Chapter 1 [p. 31], in addition argues that slow fashion is associated with a systems change and active questioning of the paradigm of uninhibited economic growth (2010). Slow, she too highlights, is not an opposite of fast. It is a vision of fashion that radically breaks from the logic of the current (fast) model because it is based on an entirely different set of values and goals (Ibid, p. 262). Slow fashion therefore is:

> (…) a different worldview that names a coherent set of fashion activity that promotes variety and multiplicity of fashion production and consumption and that celebrates the pleasure and cultural significance of fashion within biophysical limits. (Ibid)

While positions of both Clark and Fletcher have noticeable cross overs to socio-cultural criticism of fashion practice, a slightly different angle is offered by Earley and Goldsworthy (2015, 2017; see also Goldsworthy, Earley & Politowicz, 2018), who addresses the question of fashion speeds mostly from the viewpoint of material and product development. Their research strongly echoes Fletcher's point that a systems view requires a balance of rhythms in fashion, to reflect a range of needs and activities, that mirror self-regulation capabilities of natural systems (2010, p. 265).

Earley and Goldsworthy hence argue that a spectrum of speeds, fast and slow, are needed in fashion. Decisions should be context dependent, with careful consideration of product categories as well as raw material recovery and renewal speeds (see also Fletcher & Tham, 2004; Fletcher 2014 [2008]). For example, renewal speed for biological materials such as cotton is relatively high and so such materials lend themselves for use in fast, mass-produced items that are suitable for chemical recycling at the end of their useful life. On the other hand, synthetic materials such as polyester have slow renewal speed which results in high environmental impact. These, Earley and Goldsworthy argue (2017), can be used in slower hand-made production processes and their useful lifetime should be extended through re-use and up-cycling for as long as possible. Considering their slow character and high environmental footprint, synthetics should not be used in fashion products with short expected life such as fashion products of low quality (2017, p. 132).

While I recognize the necessity of multiple research perspectives and parallel strands of innovation, it is my strong belief that low-quality and "fast" fashion products should not be produced at all. As I indicated in the Introduction to this thesis [p. 16], the environmental and social consequences of producing such items have been shown to strongly outweigh any potential benefits on individual, social or economic levels. It is for this reason that I position my research in the context of "slow" fashion as theorized by Clark and Fletcher. The blurring divisions between the roles of designers, producers, and consumers as well as the inseparability of production and consumption patterns of fashion goods provide the frameworks to lead my research-practice.

2.2 LIFE-CYCLE ASSESSMENT AND CLOTHING LIFETIMES

In the section on Consumption and material culture [Chapter 1.4, p. 38], I pointed to the fact that the ever faster fashion cycles inevitably compromise the potential benefits of technological innovation across all stages of the fashion value chain. Despite radical improvements of efficiency in water and resource use and overall reduction in carbon emissions, the continuous growth in quantity of sold clothing is reflected in a sad balance where savings made throughout the value chain are outweighed by the sheer volume of material throughput (House of Commons, 2019 (16); European Commission, 2019; Fletcher & Tham, 2016, Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011). To specifically target those stages of clothing lifetimes that incur most significant environmental footprint, numerous research initiatives have attempted to assess and compare the impact of material requirements, production, transportation, use and disposal of garments (see Allwood et al., 2006; ECAP, 2017). Life-cycle assessment (LCA) is a growing area of research (van der Velden et. al., 2014; Muthu, 2015; van der Velden, 2016; MISTRA Future Fashion, 2018) and multiple tools such as European Clothing Action Plan (ECAP) Footprint Tool (2017), Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAP) Higg Index (2012) or Circle Economy Circle Fashion Tool (testing ongoing) have been developed in recent years.

However, despite the accumulating theoretical evidence and advanced modelling, the true impact of clothing in real life scenarios is difficult to assess for multiple reasons. These include problems related to the transparency of the fashion value chains and the resulting issues with verifiability and comparability of data (e.g. the impact of cotton depends on where and how it is grown (ECAP, 2017c; MISTRA Future Fashion, 2019). Van der Velden et al.(2014) also point out that the process is further

complicated by non-disclosure of up-to-date life-cycle assessment (LCA) data by companies and nonexistence of life-cycle inventories (LCI).

Further variations occur across material and product categories. Due to frequent washing, most significant impact of cotton T-shirts in terms of energy use has been associated with their use stage. For example, a comparison of washing scenarios for a cotton T-shirt and a viscose blouse conducted by Alwood et al for their influential *Well Dressed* report (2006) confirmed that cotton products require most energy in their use stage, whereas for viscose the majority of energy impact is linked to production. However, more recent research also suggests that due to changing consumption habits – e.g. increasing number of T-shirts owned and decreased use rate – the impact levels of production and use stages tend to be much less clear cut (MISTRA Future Fashion, 2018; Laitala, Klepp & Henry, 2017). In addition, consistency in considering materials, product categories and the seemingly minor yet significant variables such as yarn size is also needed (Van der Velden et. al., 2014; Laitala et al., 2017). Still, the core difficulty linked to life-cycle assessment is in predicting consumer behaviour, especially laundry habits. Clothing care practices are known to vary not only from family to family but also between the individuals in one family (Shove, 2003; Rigby, 2016). As Laitala, Klepp & Henry (2017) highlight, what LCA cannot tell us, is the tacit knowledge and everyday use experiences of consumers.

Yet, despite the difficulties in accessing comparable longitudinal production and use phase data for LCA analysis, extending the active life of clothing is currently considered the most effective way of reducing the environmental impact of clothing, if combined with reduced material throughput and less frequent purchases (WRAP, 2017; ECAP, 2017). Keeping clothes in use for longer can release pressures on exploitation of virgin materials and can also reduce the impact of production and processing stages of the value chain (Alwood et al., 2006; ECAP, 2017; WRAP, 2017).

Research conducted by WRAP shows that if active life of 50% of UK clothing is extended by extra 9 months, the potential savings of carbon (8%), water (10%) and waste (4%) could be made per tonne of clothing (2017a, p. 47). Similarly, the LCA conducted during the European MISTRA Future Fashion research programme on five commonly used garments, showed that if garments are used three times longer a reduction of 65% in carbon footprint and 66% in water use can be achieved (MISTRA Future Fashion, 2015, p. 7).

However, as I previously signposted, any potential savings are contingent on reducing and slowing down the material throughput in the value chain. This means a radical paradigm shift in the current production and consumption patterns. Both producers and consumers have an active role to play in this process. Consumers need to wear clothes for longer and businesses need systemic innovation in the design and production processes as well as in the end of life strategies. Embracing new business models that encourage longer use through second and third lives, sharing, leasing and repairs is also essential in the process of rethinking how we design, make and use our clothes (MISTRA Future Fashion, 2015, p. 7; European Commission, 2019; MISTRA Future Fashion, 2019 (4)).

2.3   LONGER LASTING CLOTHING

For the reasons discussed in detail in the previous section, extending clothing lifetimes now belongs to the key priorities of both the European Clothing Action Plan (ECAP), that informs policies on the EU level, and the UK Sustainable Clothing Action Plan (SCAP), that informs the UK government policy.

In section Design for Change [Chapter 1.3, p. 31], I introduced the work of the Dutch engineer, design critic and educator Ed Van Hinte whose initiative Eternally Yours, with two key publications in 1997 and 2004, provided a key ground for discussion and knowledge sharing on product lifetimes. The UK network on Product Life Spans later built on the legacy of Eternally Yours. Another significant publication, *Longer Lasting Products,* edited by Professor Tim Cooper from Nottingham Trent University, followed in 2010. Currently, the Product Lifetimes and the Environment (PLATE) network supports product lifetime research across Europe and beyond. Its bi-annual conferences bring together researchers from across all areas of design, including fashion and textiles, and increasingly also attract interest of environmental economists and policy makers (the latest edition taking place in Berlin in September 2019).

Several researchers involved in these initiatives were also on the research team behind the *Design for Longevity: Guidance on increasing the active life of clothing* (2013) report. The report was published by the UK Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), who are responsible for the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan on behalf of the UK Government Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Aimed at product development teams, the *Design for Longevity* report built on the findings of a report published by WRAP a year earlier, *Valuing our clothes: The*

true cost of how we design, use and dispose of clothing in the UK. Both reports highlighted that changes at product design stage significantly influence the length of time for which an item of clothing can still be worn (WRAP, 2012; WRAP, 2013). Four principal areas in which design impacts the active lifetime of clothing were then identified through workshops with sustainable design researchers and fashion industry professionals (WRAP, 2013):

- Size and fit

- Fabric quality

- Colours and styles

- Care

The *Design for Longevity* report concludes that a careful consideration of these aspects and their appropriate balance in the design process for each of the product categories identified (childrenswear, occasion wear, knitwear, tailoring, denim, sportswear, casualwear, underwear) can positively affect a garment's longevity (Ibid). The authors also argue that to truly challenge the imperative of disposable fashion; it is essential:

> To create an environment where longevity is a desirable attribute of the product. This would require a cultural shift, driven by consumer re-education, corresponding marketing promotion and, perhaps, new business models. (WRAP, 2013, p.14)

Since the publication of the report, further guidelines on clothing longevity such as the *Clothing Longevity Protocol* (2014), *Clothing Durability Report* (2015), *Sustainable Clothing Guide* (2017) were also commissioned by WRAP. At the European level, the Design for Longevity on-line platform with resources for both designers and users was launched in 2015 as part of the European Clothing Action Plan (ECAP) project.

Although many of these resources do recognize the significance of behavioural factors such as care and washing habits, fashion orientation, or personal preferences in fit and texture for influencing clothing lifetimes, their primary focus is on the designable characteristics of garments and pragmatic concerns of product endurance. Yet, researchers whose work focuses on "softer" factors of longevity

emphasize that physical characteristics of products alone are only one part in the complex puzzle of a truly long-lasting product. As Fletcher (2012) argues:

> Expending resources and effort to extend the life of products pays few dividends unless, as users, we make use of the utility provided by longer-life products, and subsequently change our patterns of consumption. (p.222)

The potential longevity of products, including fashion and clothing, therefore always needs to be considered in a close connection to their life in the hands of their users. Jonathan Chapman, the author of the influential *Emotionally Durable Design: Objects, Experiences, Empathy* (2015 [2005]) and another advocate of asking more fundamental questions about product longevity contends that "unsustainability is a crisis of behaviour and perception, not one of energy and materials." (2016, p. 74) The next section will therefore examine the complex interplay between the different components of longevity, as they play out through both physical and emotional aspects of products.

2.4 HOW LONG IS DURABLE: PHYSICAL DURABILITY AND EMOTIONAL DURABILITY

"Lifetime", "life-span" and "longevity" are terms that extend beyond design, material specifications, or manufacturing quality, because the actual time for which a product gets used is influenced by individual users and socio-cultural expectations (Cooper, 2010, p. 8). A product's longevity is thus intricately linked to both its physical and emotional durability. The *Clothing durability Report* (2015) by the Waste and Resources Action Programme defines physical durability as a product's robustness and resistance to wear and tear (p. 9). Emotional durability, on the other hand, refers to the length of time for which a product remains relevant and attractive to the user (Ibid). As I pointed out in the previous section, physical and emotional durability of products are closely interconnected and both need to be carefully considered because "there is little point designing physical durability into consumer goods if consumers lack the desire to keep them" (Chapman, 2015 [2005], p. 13).

COGNITION, MEANING, PLEASURE

The relationships between the physical and the emotional aspects of products are examined in detail by Don Norman (2004) in his concept of three-level design [Figure 2.1]. Norman has background in usability engineering, user-centred design and cognitive science and he claims that humans process experience on three levels, associated with different levels of the brain. Each of the three levels, as introduced in his *Emotional design: Why we love (or hate) everyday things* (2004)*,* correlates with a different level of experience processing by the human brain. The first, *visceral* level, he explains, is 'automatic' and helps to make rapid judgments between good and bad, sending signals to the rest of the brain. Next is the more advanced *behavioural* level that affects most of the everyday human behaviour. The third and highest is the *reflective* level that refers to the contemplative part of the brain. Each of the three levels play different, yet important roles in our everyday interactions with the world around us, including, of course, the products we use (2004).

Norman therefore argues that each level requires a different approach to design. The first, *visceral* level of *design*, requires a focus on appearance and immediate appeal through its haptic qualities – the way things look and feel. The second, *behavioural* level of *design*, needs to consider the pleasure and effectiveness of use – the way things work. The third and last level, *reflective design*, is then directed towards the self-image and memories associated with the product – in other words, the meaning of things. In response to the question how these three levels would compare in importance, Norman highlights that "no single product can hope to satisfy everyone" and so it is essential that designers know their audiences (p. 39). Things that we "love" usually appeal to us on more than one of the levels. However, strong emotional experiences can also be linked with objects that perform particularly well on just one of them.

Norman's approach shows some similarities with the research of Gerald Cupchik (1999) who studied the varieties in meaning attached to industrial design objects and the ways these relate to emotional processes. Cupchik's views, however, stand in a slight opposition to Norman's theory. Norman argues that emotions are an inseparable part of cognition because they help us in making prompt decisions, "usually, you react emotionally to a situation before you assess it cognitively, since survival is more important than understanding" (2004, p. 13). Yet, Cupchik considers cognitive meaning to be a prerequisite for subsequent emotional reactions. He believes that emotional experience of design begins with the first impression of an object, it then continues through the experiences of using it,

and eventually results in various degrees of emotional attachment to it. Cupchik thus distinguishes three levels of meaning attached to products: *sensory/aesthetic meaning* which includes the qualities that have an immediate effect on experience, *cognitive/behavioural meaning* related to product's performance and ease of use and *personal/symbolic meaning* which is not necessarily related to product function or appearance. The more a person can relate to one or more of these levels, the deeper will be the attachment (1999).

In addition to Norman (2004) and Cupchik (1999), user response to products was also analysed by Jordan (2000), whose approach stems from his human factors background. Basing his argument on Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), Jordan claims that designers need to extend their design considerations beyond pure usability of products. With a reference to Maslow's hierarchy, he urges designers to recognise that as soon as people satisfy their needs on one level, they will demand more. Jordan's model of consumer needs therefore starts with the most fundamental Level 1 – *functionality* (product performance). It then continues through Level 2 – *usability* (ease of use) and it culminates with Level 3 – *pleasure*. According to Jordan, the implications of these hierarchies for the design profession are that once people have "become used to usable products" (2000, p. 6) they will soon expect more than just *usability*. They will demand "products that are not merely tools but 'living objects'… products that bring not only functional benefits but also emotional ones" (Ibid).

To illustrate his argument further, Jordan adopts four pleasure categories identified by the American anthropologist Lionel Tiger (1992) and proposes a framework of four pleasures to be considered by designers in the design process. These include *physio-pleasure* (bodily and sensory experiences), *social pleasure* (interaction and relationships with others), *psychological pleasure* (cognitive and emotional responses) and *ideological pleasure* (which is related to values) (pp. 13-14). Jordan suggests that the four pleasures framework enables designers to gain a much more accurate understanding of the people they design for. In this way, the framework helps designers to develop concepts that will better respond to the pleasures which could be associated with particular products.

Lastly, design theorist and advocate of sustainable design Stuart Walker (1995, 2006) uses similar categorisations in his exploration of material artefacts and their possible significance for sustainability in product design. Through the observation of museum collections, Walker identifies three main categories of objects: firstly, objects that are primarily functional; secondly,

social/positional objects, and thirdly, objects with strong inspirational/spiritual meaning (2006). Neither of these categories are exclusive, there are many overlaps, and some (often the most enduring) objects fall into all three categories. Like Jordan, Walker also links his categorisation to Maslow's hierarchy of human needs (see above). Hence, the first, functional objects, fulfil our basic physiological and psychological needs and are appreciated for their utility, safety, and ease of understanding. Second, social/positional objects appeal to our higher psychological needs such as being loved and accepted within society and a social group. They also address our aspirations, achievements, and our sense of self-worth. Third, inspirational/spiritual objects reflect our deeply held beliefs and as such it is these objects that carry the most significant meanings. In Walker's categorisation, fashion items fall into the combination of functional and social/positional objects which is problematic from the sustainability perspective because both functionality and social/positional aspects are quickly outdated due to advances in technology and changing styles.

The links between the approaches taken by Norman (2004), Cupchik (1999), Jordan (2000) and Walker (1995, 2006), with their respective focus on cognition, meaning, pleasure and sustainability, highlight the complex interconnections between the physical properties of products (including appearance and functionality), their symbolic meaning, and their potential emotional value to users. In addition to all this, relationships between users and products take time to develop (van Hinte, 1997; Norman, 2004; Chapman, 2015 [2005]). As Norman again argues, strong emotional bond can hardly be established without a "sustained interaction" between the user and the product over time (2004, p.46). As a result, emotional durability is rarely possible if products fail (i.e. deteriorate in terms of look or function) before the emotional bond between the user and the product has had a chance to develop. On the other hand, physical durability has little relevance without emotional durability as the danger lies in "designing of durable waste" (Chapman, 2015 [2005], p. 62). This point is also mirrored in three dimensions of lifespan - technical, economical, and psychological - highlighted by Van Hinte (1997) in his introduction of the Eternally Yours initiative.

Norman's concept of three level design provided a key point of reference throughout my research. The reason I was especially interested in Norman's approach was that his explanation of the levels of product experience in many ways reflected the experiences and the insights that my clients shared with me over the years of my practice. In addition to this, Norman's emphasis on the critical role of emotions in our everyday decisions, corroborated by growing evidence from behavioural economics

research (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Partnoy, 2013; Thaler, 2015; Roberts, 2015), resonated in the wider context of my research and sustainable consumption.

VISCERAL
Appearance and first impressions
How things look and feel

BEHAVIOURAL
Pleasure and effectiveness
How things work

REFLECTIVE
Self-image and memories
The meaning of things
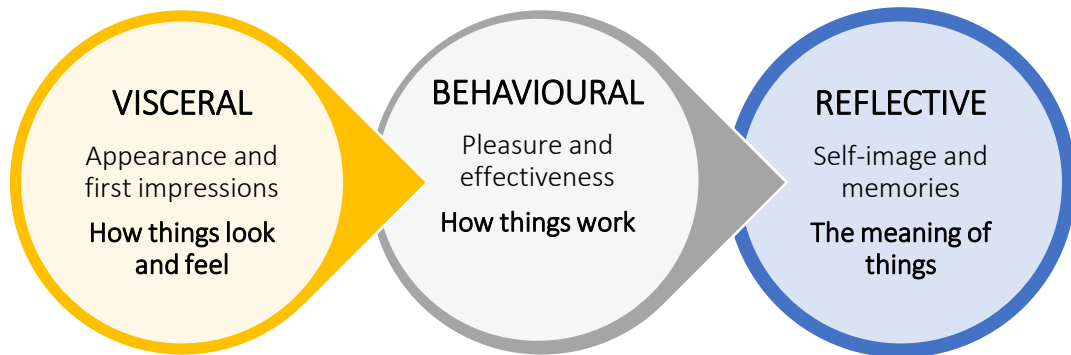
Figure 2.1 Don Norman's concept of three level design - Adapted from Norman, 2004

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter offered an overview of the key approaches to clothing longevity, in the context of reducing the damaging impacts of the current production and consumption patterns on the environment. Section one introduced the current discourse on fashion rhythms and here I positioned my research in the context of slow fashion research-practice, where the current hierarchies of designers-producers-consumers are unsettled as proposed by Clark (2008, 2018). The opening section also explained how slow living links to cultivating a long-term view of designed objects. Following on from this, section two focused on recent research in life-cycle assessment and its main challenges in predicting how clothing is used in everyday life.

Section three highlighted that extending the active life of clothing is currently considered the most effective way of reducing its environmental impact. This section drew attention to the need for a cultural shift towards longevity of clothing, but it also pointed to the necessity of careful consideration of user values and expectations in this process.

Finally, section four analysed the distinctions between the concepts of physical and emotional durability, with special focus on Don Norman's concept of three level design, that was identified as a key reference point for my research. The following chapter explores the relationship between design and emotion in more detail.

3 EMOTIONALLY DURABLE DESIGN

Design and emotion

Emotional attachment and design for emotional durability

Design strategies for emotionally durable design

Design strategies for clothing longevity

Research in practice: Temporary design responses

Chapter 3, divided into four sections, focuses on examining a range of theoretical perspectives in research on design and emotion. In the first section I introduce the history and main strands of enquiry in emotional design. Among these, I identify design for emotional durability as an area with key relevance for my study, due to its interest in sustained and reflective emotional bonds with designed objects, as opposed to short and reflexive emotional reactions that have been explored in other areas of research on design and emotion. Jonathan Chapman's emphasis on the uneasy relationship between physical and emotional durability of designed objects then underpins and leads my approach to this research.

Section two discusses how many everyday objects have significance well beyond their material value and the potential that such relationships may have in combatting the culture of excess and disposability. At the same time, critical perspectives on design and emotion that point to uncertain links between emotional attachment to objects and replacement behaviour and hence reducing consumption volumes, are also examined here.

In sections three and four I focus on the current design strategies for emotional durability and clothing longevity. Here, I discuss the key attempts to formulate guidelines that could lead designers in the application of emotionally durable design in practice. The main focus here is on Chapman's six-point experiential framework and its later development into an extended design toolkit. Finally, section four addresses the ways in which some of the strategies developed in design for longevity and design and emotion research have been used in propositions for the extending durability of clothing. Here, I critically review the key strategies that have been repeatedly cited in the context of fashion and sustainability. Following on from here, I discuss the studies that question the impact of these strategies on extending active lifetimes of clothing. In this context I identify a significant gap in knowledge on the links between design research and lived experience of clothing, which gives a clear direction to my research.

Chapter 3 concludes with a reflective section that provides a link between my contextual review and the empirical stage of my research. The designs in this section are presented as an impression of the first, exploratory stage of my research that explored how some of the key concepts and theories that I identified through my contextual review could be translated into practice.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional design is a relatively new branch of design research that has evolved over the last twenty years to explore the role of emotions in the process of perception and interaction with designed objects. Desmet & Hekkert (2009) place the beginning of the design and emotion movement around the year 1999, the time when the 1st International Conference on Design and Emotion was organized at the Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands. The conference led to the establishment of The Design and Emotion Society, with a mission to facilitate discussions between practitioners, designers and the industry " to integrate salient themes of emotional experience into the design profession" (The Design and Emotion Society, 2016).

However, as Desmet & Hekkert also point out (2009), the interest in emotional experiences was not a phenomenon limited to design research. The beginnings of the design and emotion movement coincided with the publication of several seminal books. Among these was *The Experience Economy* (1999) by Pine II & Gilmore who argued that to remain competitive in the future, businesses must provide memorable events for their customers. Memory itself then becomes the product – "the experience".

Pine & Gilmore's concept of experience economy (now also known as 'exponomy') builds on previous research in this area, notably Toffler's *Future Shock* (1970) in which Toffler anticipates the arrival of the "experiential industry", a time when people will be willing to spend a high percentage of their earnings to live amazing experiences. A similar concept was later also explored by the German sociologist Gerhard Schulze in his *The Experience Society* (1992). Two other publications, *The Dream Society* by Rolf Jensen from the Danish think tank Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies and *Experiential Marketing* by Bernd H. Schmitt from Columbia Business School in New York, both published in 1999, highlighted the shift towards an economy where emotional experiences will play a key role in both product design and marketing. Interestingly, one aspect of the *Dream Society* highlighted by Jensen is that companies can no longer rely on for-profit-only models because the ever-raising consumer expectations demand that businesses stand for more than just profit generating. One example of such shift, Jensen says, could be that:

(…) nearly all companies in the affluent countries have turned their attention to their own production processes; most of them even prefer to keep a couple of steps ahead of the minimal requirements set by legislation – and they do so because they are courting an environment-conscious consumer. (1999, p. 219)

In addition to the above, several publications from an entirely different strand of enquiry have also had a major influence on design and emotion research since its very beginnings. Firstly, it was Csikszentmihalyi's & Rochberg-Halton's now seminal work *The meaning of things*: *Domestic symbols and the self* (1981), that examined the significance of material possessions in people's daily lives. Based on a survey of eighty families in Chicago area, analysing their feelings about everyday household objects and the meanings they attached to them, *The meaning of things* has since had a lasting impact on material culture related research. Another influential contribution to the field was the previously mentioned *Eternally Yours: Visions of product endurance*, edited by Van Hinte (1997) with an expanded re-edition in 2004. Dutch design writer and researcher Ed van Hinte brought together similarly minded scholars and doctoral students to highlight the fact that current products end up in landfill far too quickly. According to Van Hinte, this is a result of "*a lack of psychological lifespan* – the time products are able to be perceived and used as worthy objects" (1997, p. 19). His use of the term references Packard's famous critique of the culture of obsolescence introduced in his *The Waste Makers* (1963) through the dual terms of *functional* and *psychological obsolescence*. Van Hinte therefore argues:

We can only make products survive year after year if we realize that they are used and cared for by people who see them, feel them, understand them and dream about them. Products must have the material ability as well as the immaterial opportunity to age in a dignified way. (1997, p. 19)

RESEARCH ON DESIGN AND EMOTION

Twenty years since the first conference, the main centre of research around design and emotion still remains at the Delft University of Technology, but other Dutch universities and institutions such as University of Twente, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Design Academy of Eindhoven and Waag Society have also significantly contributed to the research in this area. In the UK, Professor Tim Cooper at Nottingham Trent University and previously also Professor Jonathan Chapman at the

University of Brighton (currently at Carnegie Mellon University) have had long lasting links to the international design and emotion movement.

A key part of research on design and emotion has been published in the proceedings of the International Conference on Design and Emotion as well as in scholarly journals such as the *International Journal of Design*, J*ournal of Consumer Research, The Design Journal* or *Advances* in *Consumer Research*. Both the *Journal of International Design* and the *Journal of Engineering Design* have published special editions on Design and Emotion in the anniversary year 2009. Among the most influential of these studies, is the research conducted by Sirgy & Johar (1999) with eight product categories tested on 492 respondents. Sirgy & Johar based their study on the self-congruity theory proposed by Gardner & Levy (1959), who were the first to highlight that congruity between self-concept and brand image affects consumer behaviour. In Levy's view "modern goods are recognized as essentially psychological things which are symbolic of personal attributes and goals and of social patterns and strivings" (cited in Klipfel, Barclay & Bockorny, 2014, p. 133). In line with this thinking, Sirgy & Johar's findings confirm that consumers are more likely to be attracted and to get attached to products that are aligned with their own self-concept. Self-concept here includes: the ideal self (the person you would like to be), the public self (the image one thinks other people have of you) and the real self (what you really think about yourself).

Factors influencing emotional attachment to products were also studied by Richins (1994), who explored the relationship between possessions and personal values among 'high-materialism' and 'low-materialism' consumers. Richins focused on the significance of public and private meanings associated with possessions and the differences in the ways the two groups of consumers, high-materialist and low-materialist, generated meaning from material objects. Her findings suggest that 'low-materialism' consumers tend to value possessions with interpersonal/symbolic value and those with a hedonic potential (for example recreational equipment). The 'high-materialism' group showed more preference toward utilitarian possessions and was more concerned with appearance and status expression.

The study by Schultz-Kleine, Kleine III & Allen (1995) approached attachment to objects as a reflection of people's life stories and their behaviour related to self-development. They also studied how the mode of acquisition influences the attachment to possessions. Their findings showed that the most favourite objects either reflect the 'desirable connections' with others (affiliation) or reflect

aspects of one's individuality (autonomy seeking). The least favourite objects represented a disconnection from a part of one's self (self-change) (p. 335). Schultz-Kleine et al. therefore conclude that:

> A possession's potency for self-significance arises indirectly via its link to a meaningful life narrative episode. Thus, possessions are not literally the self, but artefacts of the self. (1995, p. 341).

In addition to this, they also challenged the hypothesis that gifted items could have strong potential for encouraging emotional attachment. Schultz-Kleine with her co-authors make clear that in their study most objects that people felt only weakly attached to were actually received as gifts (p. 340).

The findings of their research are in line with the conclusions made by the above mentioned study of Richins (1994). Main factors with a strong influence on product attachment identified by both studies thus are:

- Self-expression

- Shared experience

- Memories

Later research by Mugge, Schoormans & Schifferstein (2005) then considered two levels of product attachment. The first level is an attachment to physical form or function of the object. Although this can be felt quite strongly, the duration of such attachment is limited because it is likely to be withdrawn when a superior alternative appears (such as for example in the case of mobile phones). The second, much deeper level, is the attachment to the memories and shared experiences associated with the object. This kind of attachment has a much longer lasting potential as it can often lead to perceived irreplaceability of the object (such as for example a soft toy from childhood). The authors argue that this has potential longevity implications without actually requiring user's direct commitment to environmental issues, because "a person will take better care of this product and postpone its replacement for his/her own personal benefit" (p. 44)

A similar approach to studying attachment was also adopted by Battarbee & Mattelmäki, who in their influential study *Meaningful product relationships* (2004) introduced a three-point framework of consumer-product relationships:

1. Meaningful Tool - object needed for a purpose, can be replaced at any time

2. Meaningful Association - objects with cultural or personal meaning

3. Living Object - object as a companion, often personified "perceived as having personality, soul, character" (p. 394)

Di Salvo, Hannington & Forlizzi (2004) built on the work of John Dewey (*Art as Experience*, 1934), Richard Carlson (*Experienced Cognition*, 1997) and the above mentioned study by Mihaly Csiksentmihalyi's (*The Meaning of Things*, 1981) to develop their framework of emotional experiences for new product development. They distinguish between two types of emotional response:

- Emotion/Emotional statement - short and reflexive

- Mood/Emotional expression - sustained and reflective

In addition, they identify three ways in which products can contribute to emotional experience:

- Stimuli - of new emotional experiences

- Extenders - of existing emotional experiences

- Proxies - of past emotional experiences (p. 252)

What particularly resonates in the context of my study, is Di Salvo, Hannington & Forlizzi's point that a substantial proportion of research in design and emotion has been directed towards short and reflexive, rather than sustained and reflective emotions. As my research interest is in long-term emotional experiences with clothing, I will now focus on an area of design and emotion research that

has had a significant influence on framing my research, especially in its early stages - design for emotional durability.

3.2 EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TO OBJECTS AND DESIGN FOR EMOTIONAL DURABILITY

Numerous empirical studies of material engagement (Csikzentmihalyi, 1981; Hoskins, 1998; Schultz-Kleine, Kleine III & Allen, 1995) and consumer surveys (Solomon, 1986; Richins, 1994; Kahmann & Henze, 2002) have offered clear evidence that people form deep and complex relationships with material objects. Hence, as Schultz , Kleine & Kernan (1989) comment in their study of attachment in consumer behaviour "it is no revelation that consumers possess objects to which they are strongly and weakly attached" (p. 359). The mechanisms behind such attachments, however, are unclear and have provided a rich ground for further study.

A study with 161 respondents by Schifferstein, Mugge & Hekkert's (2005), for example, showed that both memories associated with a product and the pleasure experienced through its use considerably contribute to emotional attachment. Importantly, new things that are enjoyable typically get used more often, which encourages accumulation of memories attached to them. Memories linked to an object then play a vital role in the feelings of attachment as the object ages (Ibid). Over time, these memories also help build layers of narratives and associations which make the owner feel that the product is irreplaceable (Chapman, 2005 [2015]; Mugge, Schoormans & Schifferstein, 2005).

Everyday objects thus often have significance that extends well beyond their material value (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Norman, 2004; Schifferstein et al, 2005; Walker, 2006; Chapman, 2015 [2005], 2016). As Norman notes:

> The objects in our lives are more than mere material possessions. We take pride in them, not necessarily because we are showing off our wealth or status, but because of the meanings they bring to our lives. A person's most beloved objects may well be inexpensive trinkets, frayed furniture, or photographs and books, often tattered, dirty or faded. A favourite object is a symbol, setting up a positive frame of mind, a reminder of pleasant memories, or sometimes an expression of one's self. And this object always has a story,

a remembrance, and something that ties us personally to this particular object, this particular thing. (2004, p. 6)

Jonathan Chapman and emotionally durable design

It is this kind of deep and satisfying relationships with material objects that we need to nurture to combat the culture of excess and disposability, Jonathan Chapman (2015 [2005]) argues. According to him, waste "is a symptom of expired empathy, a kind of failed relationship that leads to the dumping of one by the other" (2015 [2005], p. 61). In his influential book *Emotionally Durable Design: Objects, Experiences and Empathy* (2015 [2005]), Chapman argues that the majority of methods in current sustainable design focus on symptoms, or after-effects of wasteful consumption and do little to challenge the core issues of the current environmental crisis.

In contrast to this, emotionally durable design seeks a deeper insight into the root causes of the fast turnaround of objects in our lives through looking at the emotional factors in key stages of consumption process – from purchasing decisions through to product use and disposal. In this way, emotionally durable design presents a radically new approach to sustainable design where responsible consumption is encouraged through the conscious effort to design objects that customers "do not want to throw away" (McLachlan, 2011, p. 3). Importantly, Chapman (2015 [2005]) also emphasises that changes in behaviour can rarely be achieved through negative messages and dis-empowering apocalyptic scenarios, rather, we need to offer more attractive alternatives to current solutions (p. 86).

Insights offered by cognitive scientists highlight that a part of being human is to yearn for new, fresh experiences (Norman, 2004). This has implications for our relationships with people (e.g. the excitement generated by meeting a new and interesting person) as well as for our relationships with material objects (e.g. the excitement of purchasing something new). Hence, Chapman contends:

> Consumer aspirations continually evolve, whereas products are hopelessly frozen in time. As we consume further meaning, our ideals change and shift, as does our experience base upon which we found a sense of self. ... until products embody a transient flexibility to shift and adapt in sync with us, we will always be adding to an immense landfill of transferred matter whose only crime was a failure to keep up. (2015 [2005]) , p. 61-62)

Yet, while some argue that if a lasting emotional bond can be stimulated by design, people may not only use products for longer but they would also wish to keep repairing them (Schifferstein, Mugge & Hekkert, 2005), critics of this view argue that strong bonds with products do not necessarily reduce further purchases (Cooper, 2010; Fletcher, 2012, 2016; Page, 2014; Riisberg & Grose, 2017). In another study, Mugge, Schoormans & Schifferstein (2005) concede that even if people do not let go of their valued possessions, they may still buy replacements when the favourite product no longer performs its original function (p. 45).

In this context, Harper (2017) for example argues that the potential of (clothing) items with strong emotional bonds to reduce over-consumption is contingent on their perceived aesthetic value (see also e.g. Schultz-Kleine et al. (1995) on "me" or "not me" possessions). Emotionally valuable items that do not appeal to their owner's sense of aesthetics are cherished and stored, however they are not used. Frequent use and continuous satisfaction are only linked with those items whose emotional value is matched with strong aesthetic appeal; what Harper refers to as "aesthetic sustainability" (2017).

In addition to the above views, Patlar & Kurtgözü (2004) also highlight that emotions are strongly exploited by the consumer culture itself. The potential danger therefore lies in that:

> (…) rather than engaging the users in a spiritual and prolonged interaction with products, 'design and emotion' runs the risk of becoming a fashionable style, a catchword employed by advertising for the marketing of luxury products to an elite culture. (Ibid, p. 473)

Also, the intangible nature of human emotions as well as the multi-faceted character of design itself mean that formulating clear guidelines to lead designers in the application of emotionally durable design in practice involves a number of challenges. This is well captured by Van Hinte's remark that although it is essential to invest all our efforts in extending product lifetimes, "there are no fixed rules in this game" (1997, p. 20). Recognizing the need to accompany theory with applicable advice for practice, several researchers, Chapman included, therefore attempted to provide strategies for incorporating the current research knowledge on longevity and emotional durability in the design process. The next section will explore a range of these strategies in more detail.

3.3 DESIGN STRATEGIES FOR EMOTIONALLY DURABLE DESIGN

Chapman's six-point experiential framework

While over the last twenty years design and emotion has become an established field of design research, it has repeatedly faced criticism for not providing clear guidelines to lead designers in its practical application in creative work (Desmet & Hekkert, 2009; Love, 2009; Forlizzi, 2010; Maclachlan, 2011).

In terms of design for emotional durability, one of the first focused efforts towards formulating a set of usable guidelines for designers followed from Chapman's doctoral study on domestic electronics (2008). Based on his survey of over 2000 respondents, Chapman proposed a six-point experiential framework that aimed to help product designers to engage with emotionally durable design and enhance their understanding of its many facets and contributing factors (2009). The six themes and associated explanations he proposed include (Ibid, p. 33):

- **Narrative**: Users share a unique personal history with the product; this often relates to when, how, and from whom the object was acquired.

- **Detachment**: Users feel no emotional connection to the product, have low expectations, and thus perceive it in a favourable way due to a lack of emotional demand or expectation.

- **Surface**: The product is physically aging well and developing a tangible character through time and use (and sometimes misuse).

- **Attachment**: Users feel a strong emotional connection to the product, due to the service it provides, the information it contains, and the meaning it conveys.

- **Fiction/Enchantment**: Users are delighted or even enchanted by the product as they do not yet fully understand or know it, especially with a recently purchased product that is still being explored and discovered.

- **Consciousness**: The product is perceived as autonomous and in possession of its own free will. It is quirky and often temperamental, and interaction is an acquired skill that can be fully acquired only with practice.

Chapman's experiential framework has a few crossovers with the design strategies suggested for exploration in the previously mentioned study by Mugge, Schoormans & Schifferstein (2005), following their review of current research in reducing environmental impact of products. Among the strategies they propose, it is especially their points on memories, personalized product and shared history (aging with dignity) that also resonate in Chapman's framework, through his Narrative (memories and personalized product) and Surface (shared history) themes. In addition to these, Mugge et al. also discuss strategies including superior utility, superior appearance, fit with lifestyle, exclusive product, and personal accomplishment.

Both Chapman's (2009) and Mugge, Schoormans & Schifferstein's (2005) proposals of strategies corroborate with the findings of other studies discussed in the previous section. For example, the important role of narrative in forming emotional attachment is also discussed by Schultz-Kleine, Kleine III & Allen (1995) and the significance of self-expression, shared experience and memories are all reflected in the conclusions of Richins (1994). Equally, Battarbee & Mattelmäki's (2004) 'meaningful association' and Di Salvo, Hannington & Forlizzi's (2004), 'proxies' of past emotional experiences, resonate across Chapman's (2009) Narrative, Surface and Attachment themes as well as throughout the memories, personalized product and shared history strategies discussed by Mugge et al. (2005). These themes and strategies are also clearly linked to Norman's (2004) reflective level of design, the personal/symbolic meaning of objects in Cupchik's (1999) classification, Jordan's (2000) views on social and psychological pleasures and inspirational/spiritual objects identified by Walker (1995, 2006), all introduced in Chapter 2.4 [p. 51].

What I find especially interesting in Chapman's framework, is that unlike other authors before him, Chapman highlights the aspect of 'Detachment'. Detachment, he explains, refers to a situation where low initial expectations of a product can later positively reflect on its perception by the user. In these situations, "the pressure is off" and so user remains open to pleasant surprises. By contrast, expectations linked with strong attachment can actually have detrimental effect on a product's perceived value and durability because the initial high expectations are difficult to live up to.

Similar experiences resonate in my designer-maker practice, especially in connection to making bespoke garments, where sometimes unrealistically high expectations of this process can result in a client's mixed feelings about the result (see also Sharma, 2016). Expectations can rise to such a level that they are impossible to attain (Chapman, 2009, p. 33), and as a result, they are unhelpful for developing a strong emotional connection to the product. The issue of expectations in relationship to emotional durability, is therefore highlighted throughout this thesis.

Emotionally Durable Design Framework

The most recent attempt to formulate practically applicable guidelines for integrating emotionally durable design into design practice is the Emotionally Durable Design Framework (Haines-Gad, Chapman, Lloyd, Mason & Aliakseyeu, 2017), developed in a collaboration between Philips Lighting Research and the University of Brighton.

EDD aims to be both a theoretical framework and a design toolkit. It consists of nine theme cards that stand for the main qualities that designers can explore and aim to achieve. A set of double-sided triangular cards contains a brief description of each theme, also highlighting the key contributing factors. The nine themes include:

- o Narratives
- o Evolve
- o Integrity

- o Relationships
- o Identity
- o Consciousness

- o Conversations
- o Imagination
- o Materiality

For example, the **Narrative** card includes four further sub-themes:

- Markers in Time

- Links to Family and Friends

- Nostalgia and Metaphors

- Provenance

The nine non-hierarchical themes and cards are also accompanied by thirty-eight strategy cards where each theme is broken down further, also offering suggestions and strategies for achieving the desired outcomes.

Interestingly, the EDD Framework suggests two main benefits it can offer to designers. Firstly, it can help develop "a richer emotional engagement to extend the emotional lifetime and physical lifetime" of their products (Haines-Gadd et al., 2017, p. 5). Secondly, it can encourage "a more exciting emotionally engaging user experience" between their products and their users (Ibid). The second benefit also perhaps reflects the fact that the framework was developed in a collaboration with a large multinational company such as Phillips, whose interests are naturally strongly rooted in generating profit. These two aspects also broadly reflect the two currently strongest strands in design and emotion research: 1. design for emotional durability and 2. design for pleasure and happiness (as also reflected in the themes of the 10th anniversary Design & Emotion Conference in September 2016).

Future perspectives

On the one hand then, design for emotional durability builds on the tradition set in motion by Papanek, by proclaiming itself:

> a specialist design genre that caters for deeper, more profound and poetic human needs, taking users beyond the ephemeral world of technocratic design toward a rich, interactive domain of emotionally durable objects and experiences (Chapman, 2015 [2005], p. 29)

On the other hand, however, as a strategy for product longevity, its main challenge in what Chapman calls the "the real world" (Ibid), is addressing the concern of companies who ask how they can keep generating profits if their sales per unit decrease as a result of introducing emotionally durable design in their processes. A number of studies have argued that integrating design and emotion in products has a potential to foster consumer loyalty and brand attachment (Davis, 2002; Desmet, 2003; Chapman, 2015 [2005]; Mugge, Schifferstein & Schoormans, 2010). As a result, companies are now asking designers to conceive products with emotional resonance that goes well beyond their primary function, to win a competitive advantage in the market (McLachlan, (2011, p. 325).

This is where emotionally durable design stumbles upon the fundamental question of the wider social and cultural values that I discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.4 [p. 38]. As long as profit and material prosperity are still the main criteria of success and value in the Global North, "the real world" will consider it only if it supports the expectations on economic growth (Chapman, 2015 [2005], p. 158). Aside from formal aspects of design then, the main future challenge for emotionally durable design is in ensuring its "present and future capacity for providing solutions to the social and cultural problems it addresses" (Patlar & Kurtgözü, 2004, p. 470).

In addition, the design strategies discussed in this section have all been formulated predominantly on the background of research in product design - especially small electronics and domestic appliances. As I have noted, examples of their practical application in design practice are still emerging. Importantly for my thesis, the relevance of these strategies for an entirely different product category such as clothing is still unclear. While there may be many possible overlaps and potential areas of cross-pollination, research also indicates that due to the intimate character of clothing, the mechanisms of building relationships with what we wear may differ from the ways we use and relate to other everyday products (Gnanapragasam, Oguchi & Cooper, 2017; Niinimäki & Koskinen, 2011; Fletcher, 2016; Connor-Crabb, 2017). For this reason, the next section focuses on those strategies that have been proposed specifically in connection to longevity and emotional durability of clothing.

3.4   DESIGN STRATEGIES FOR CLOTHING LONGEVITY

David Hieatt, co-founder of Hiut Denim, a small business that aims to revive the denim industry in Wales, argues that "great design is more important for the environment than lots of people get credit for" (Hieatt, 2013). Like Chapman, he also believes that too many things are thrown away because we have stopped loving them.

While it is clear that no design can satisfy everybody (Mugge, Schoormans & Schifferstein, 2005; Chapman 2015 [2005]; Norman, 2004) and truly timeless pieces are rarely created as a result of a conscious design decision (Mugge et al., 2005, p. 40; Fletcher, 2012, 2016), a growing body of research also confirms that design can significantly influence the longevity and emotional durability of clothing (Connor-Crabb et al., 2016; Townsend et al. 2017, 2019; DESIGN-longevity, 2019, Cooper

et al., 2017). In Chapter 2.3 [p. 49] I mentioned the *Design for Longevity* report (WRAP, 2013) that highlights size and fit, fabric quality, colours and styles, and care issues as important contributors to clothing longevity. Here, I will discuss a selection of further recommendations, design frameworks, and tools that have been proposed in the context of extending the longevity and emotional durability of clothing.

EXTENDING LONGEVITY OF CLOTHING THROUGH PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL DURABILITY

As I outlined in Chapter 2, both physical and emotional aspects of products need to be considered in design for longevity and these will be the focus of this section. Yet, it is also important to note that a range of other sustainable design strategies directed towards waste minimization in production (e.g. zero waste pattern cutting, production on demand) or the end of life strategies (e.g. design for disassembly, design for recyclability) also exist. In a holistic approach to reducing the environmental impact of clothing, strategies covering the full life-cycle of garments need to be considered in mutual connections (Fletcher & Grose, 2011; Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011; Dombek-Keith & Loker, 2011; Connor-Crabb, 2017), often balancing multiple contradictions.

For example, Cooper et al. (2017) note that advanced finishes that could potentially enhance physical durability of clothing are now available (e.g. anti-pilling treatments and treatments for reduced perspiration), however, their implications in terms of the environment, design, aesthetics or business are yet unknown and need more research (2017, p. 96). Similar argument is also made by Earley (2017), who argues that the currently problematic environmental credentials of blends are likely to be resolved by advances in chemical recycling processes in the next 20 years. This will change their perception within sustainable design (Ibid, p. 2655).

While the importance of reducing production waste as well as ensuring strategies for end of life of garments are both acknowledged in the wider context of my research, these are not discussed here in more detail as the core focus of my study is on the use phase and extending active lifetimes of clothing.

1. Reliability/Physical Durability

In the previous chapter I discussed a range of views on extending the physical durability of clothing, highlighting that improving the physical properties of clothing without considering the wider social and behavioural aspects of its use can be contra-productive in terms of the environmental impact. Fletcher, for example, is sceptical about the benefits of extending physical durability of clothing. She argues that many fashion items already last well beyond their useful lifetime in the eyes of their owners (2012). At the same time, research also shows that premature garment failure leads to consumer frustration and low quality is among the key reasons for dissatisfaction with clothing (Niinimäki, 2011, 2014; Cooper, Claxton & Hughes, 2015). Moreover, quality clothing has better chances of being repaired or re-purposed (WRAP, 2013, 2017a) as well as re-used once an item becomes obsolete in its original owner's wardrobe (Laitala & Klepp, 2015). Physically durable garments also enable the introduction of new product-service systems such as leasing or rental as a complementary strategies for keeping clothing off the landfill for as long as possible (Niinimäki, 2014; Vezzoli, Kohtala, & Srinivasan, 2014; Greenpeace, 2017; MISTRA Future Fashion, 2017 (4); MISTRA, 2019 (4)).

The *Design for Longevity* report (WRAP, 2013) identifies fabric quality as one of the main design interventions that can potentially affect the longevity of clothing. Fabrics of higher quality have better resistance to wear and tear, yet this also depends on the wearer's habits and the intended use of the garment. For example, the demands on wear and tear resistance are significantly different in childrenswear as opposed to occasion wear (Ibid). Another aspect highlighted by the report is that fabric quality is not necessarily synonymous with robustness, but it may refer to other properties of materials such as for example drape and sensory qualities. Product categories therefore play an important role too, as the parameters of quality considerably differ when it comes to a silk blouse as opposed to workwear trousers. In addition, appropriate quality requirements must also be met through the use of interfacings, linings, trims and components such as zips, buttons and other fastenings which are among the often cited reasons for garment failure (WRAP, 2013; Laitala & Klepp, 2015). As Fletcher also argues, appropriate matching of materials and components is essential to "build an internally consistent product strategy (...) that prevents squandering resources by over-specifying resource-intensive long-lasting components in conjunction with others that only have the potential for a short life." (2012, p. 226)

2. Versatility/Adaptability

Size and fit are crucially important in terms of clothing lifetimes as they have been proved to be among the main reasons why still functional clothing gets discarded (WRAP, 2013; Laitala & Klepp, 2015). While it can be reasonably argued that size and fit issues in childrenswear are naturally linked to children's growth, womenswear garments would benefit from more inclusive approaches to standard sizing as well as from designs with adjustable features that allow for fluctuations in weight and body shape (WRAP, 2013; Laitala & Klepp, 2015). Loose styles are one option, yet preferences in fit are a case of individual preference (Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011; WRAP, 2013). As Laitala & Klepp (2015) also point out:

> The great design challenge of women's clothing is the adaptation to the body. Few ready-to-wear items fit well and close to the body while also being flexible enough for changes in user's weight and body shape. (p. 101)

Colours and styles can also limit longevity, as people tend to quickly tire of garments with striking colours and strongly fashion-led cuts (WRAP, 2013). The *Design for Longevity* report (2013) therefore recommends considering 'classic', 'timeless' styles and neutral colours such as black or navy that have more potential for a long-term use. In contrast to this, Harper and Edvard (2017) propose that it is the more unusual designs that have a better chance for longevity due to their memorability and strong self-expression options. In both cases, however, the key to long-term usability is a garment's trans-seasonality (Connor-Crabb, 2017) enabled by a design that is not primarily trend-driven (WRAP, 2013) and the garment's adaptability to multiple use situations (Laitala & Klepp, 2015).

A number of researchers suggest that both can be achieved for example through designing modular garments, garments with detachable parts or reversible garments. Modular and detachable elements enable quick transformation of a simple design to a more elaborate wear option, depending on occasion (Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011). They also allow for updates in style and can save unnecessary laundering of the whole garment if only a part needs to be cleaned (Dombek-Keith & Loker, 2011; Fletcher, 2008; Rissanen, 2011; Gwilt, 2015b). In addition, modular adjustments can also address fit adjustments (Laitala & Klepp, 2015).

Fletcher & Grose (2011) however also point out that while modular garments on one hand aim to decrease consumption by versatile solutions to changing needs, on the other they may entice users to more consumption when new features become available. Connor-Crabb (2017), who studied the application of strategies for longevity in small fashion businesses, observed that customers of businesses offering modular garments often lack previous experience with modular clothing and so tend to have mixed feelings linked especially to fit issues and the availability of modular parts over time.

3. Alterability/Repairability

While for most part of history clothing repair and alteration were among common skills as clothing belonged to valued possessions, the increasing availability of cheap clothing made these skills obsolete. It is often cheaper to buy a new item than invest time or money into repair (Fletcher, 2012). However, the recent report *Fixing Fashion* (2019), published by the UK Government Environmental Audit Committee, is another addition to the rising call for embracing the re-skilling in repair and alterations among the priorities for transition to a more sustainable fashion future (Fletcher, 2016; MISTRA, 2017(7); Rreuse, 2017; Love Your Clothes, 2017; Fashion Revolution 2019). However, many currently produced garments do not lend themselves easily to repair or alteration because of low quality that complicates future interventions. Connor-Crabb (2017) for example mentions a case when a simple operation such as shortening a garment is made unnecessarily laborious by the fact that the original hem is not straight. Also, extra materials for repairs, such as swatches of materials or replacement buttons, are now rarely provided with new garments and their re-introduction could be another way of encouraging repair practices (Allwood et al., 2006; WRAP, 2013, 2017a; Fletcher, 2016).

Rissanen (2011) also highlights that the industrial practice of standard seam allowance of 1cm, used to save material and to make the work of machinists faster by easy alignment of pattern pieces, in fact disables any subsequent alterations because there is not additional material to work with if for example a letting out of a seam would be required due to figure changes. This is how both designers and pattern makers can enable such future alterations and so he suggests using a wider seam allowance 'as an investment in a garment's future' (2011, p. 129). He uses the example of the traditional Japanese fishermen's coats that were patched in layers over the years of use. Their design, he argues, enabled "to 'absorb' repair without compromise to their aesthetic appeal" (Ibid).

4. Laundering and care

The way in which clothes are laundered and maintained is an important factor in their usable lifetime (Laitala & Boks, 2012; WRAP, 2013, 2017; Fletcher, 2008, 2012, 2016; Rigby, 2016). In addition to the deterioration in garments, laundering is also associated with high environmental impact, hence accurate advice on suitable care practices should be an essential component of design for longevity (WRAP, 2013). Knitwear provides a good example of the importance of appropriate care practices as excessive pilling (though often also associated with low quality garments), as well as shrinkage due to machine washing at higher temperatures, are among the most common reasons of its premature disposal (Claxton et al., 2017; Laitala, Klepp & Henry, 2017; Laitala, 2014). Niinimäki (2011) also points out that frustration with low quality is often linked to care and laundry experiences with garments that quickly deteriorate after only a few washes. Although handwashing is often preferable for sensitive materials, this is not always convenient and practicable among the pressures of everyday life (Shove, 2003; Rigby, 2016). Same applies to garments that require an extra time investment because of ironing (Laitala & Klepp, 2015). From this point of view, suitability for machine washing and non-crease properties are potentially important considerations for consumers and the *Design for Longevity* report (2013) recommends that these are highlighted as significant benefits at the point of purchase.

While it is acknowledged that designers have little direct influence over people's routine washing habits, a number of authors also argue that decisions at the design stage can reduce the laundering and care requirements (Fletcher, 2008; Dombek-Keith & Loker, 2011; Laitala & Klepp, 2015; Rigby, 2016). Laitala & Klepp (2015) for example propose that the need for frequent laundering due to perspiration can be reduced through careful choice of materials and more generous fit around the armpits. In addition, draping volume of garments can be one way of disguising future stains (Ibid). Dombek-Keith & Loker (2011) consider new anti-stain and anti-odour fabric finishes, however, as is also highlighted in the introduction to this section, more research is still needed to assess the environmental and potential health implications of such treatments (Cooper, 2017).

5. Emotional durability

To counteract the anonymousness and uniformity of mass produced items, co-design with users has been recommended among the strategies that can strongly enhance the perceived value and

emotional durability of garments (Black & Eckert, 2009; Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011; Hirscher & Fuad-Luke, 2013; Duranni, Ravnløkke & Niinimäki, 2016). This may enable producers to make clothing that is better suited to individual user needs and desires and therefore has more potential to encourage strong relationship to the garment. In sum, by allowing users to partake in design decisions, their passive role changes into an active contribution, with a feeling of achievement and an increased satisfaction with the outcome as a result (Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011, p. 1880).

Among the design strategies considered in this context are:

1. **Co-design and bespoke** (Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011; Durrani, Ravnløkke & Niinimäki, 2016; Hirscher & Fuad-Luke, 2013).

Both are based on co-creation between the user and the designer/maker with a consensual decision making throughout the whole design process, "offering a perfect fit physically but also emotionally" (Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011, p.1880).

2. **Customization and personalization**, enabled either by technology or craft-based techniques that both allow for more flexibility in production (Black, 2008; Black et al., 2009; WRAP, 2013; Connor-Crabb, 2017; Ravnløkke, 2019).

These normally enable users to select from a number of pre-defined options and choose for example their own combination of colours, components such as e.g. cuffs or hoods, lengths and also to make the design 'theirs' by including e.g. initials, names, photos.

3. **Open source fashion** (Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011; Von Busch, 2008; McQuillan et al., 2018).

This option gives users most flexibility by providing them with initial tools such as down-loadable patterns or making instructions and leaving the rest of the creative process in their hands. In contrast to co-design or customisation, open source fashion also requires user's active involvement in the process of making.

In addition to these, it has also been argued that craftsmanship and a connection to the maker, both often linked to ethical sourcing and production can significantly influence emotional durability of

clothing (Clark, 2008; Rissanen, 2011; Chapman, 2015 [2005]; Mugge, 2008). Strong product narrative and storytelling, with an emphasis on the time and skilled craftsmanship invested in the process are key in clearly distinguishing these items from their mass-produced alternatives (Aakko, 2016). Slow or artisanal fashion, discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.1 [p. 44], as well as limited editions that reinforce the feeling that an item cannot be easily replaced (WRAP, 2013) would also fall into this category.

Another design strategy proposed for strengthening the emotional bond between the user and the garment is clothing that evolves with time (Rissanen, 2011; Riisberg & Grose, 2017; Rissanen, Grose & Riisberg, 2018). According to Riisberg & Grose (2017) this offers a double dividend, firstly, in reducing the throughput of materials and secondly, in offering new and exciting experiences with fashion to users (p. 450). Similar argument is made by Harper & Edvards (2017) who prefer to see the design stage as an unfinished process because time and use will eventually shape the final garment and its aesthetic value. Their open design object hence "includes assumptions that wear and use as well as personal associations and feelings can add to the completion of the object" (p. 621). Niinimäki & Hassi (2011) in this context refer to half-way products, as discussed by Papanek (2003 [1995]) or Fuad-Luke (2009). Tonkinwise's (2005) design that embraces things in motion, even if not rooted in the fashion context, also fits into this line of thought because it questions if a design can ever be finished. It is important to recognize, he argues, that not only we -as designers- change things, things also change themselves (Ibid).

THE NEED FOR EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

Research on longevity and emotional durability of clothing has been considerably expanding, as the number of recently completed (Skjold, 2014; Sadkowska, 2016; Connor-Crabb, 2017; Ravnløkke, 2019) and shortly forthcoming (Valle-Noronha, 2019; Holgar, 2019) doctoral studies, all appearing within the space of last five years, evidence. Despite this, the practical relevance and viability of design strategies for longevity and emotional durability in fashion design and making have so far received little critical examination.

Among the few examples are the doctoral thesis of Connor-Crabb (2017), who examined the application of design strategies for longevity in several UK fashion SMEs, specifically micro-businesses. These were followed by interviews with the companies' customers, focusing on their

views and experiences with classic designs, lifetime guarantee, modular garments, and co-creation. Participants acknowledged some benefits linked to most of these strategies, for example enjoyable creative process without the commitment of time and skills needed to make a garment from scratch, in the case of co-creation. However, no strong preference towards any of the strategies was found. The Dutch researcher Irene Maldini, whose current research focuses on the relationship between sustainable design strategies and clothing consumption volumes, investigated the environmental impact of digital DIY on the case study of Amsterdam FabLab users (2016). More recently, Maldini was also involved in a collaborative research on the use frequency and longevity of personalised garments (Gimeno Martinez, Maldini, Daanen & Stappers, 2019). The findings of these studies questioned the environmental benefits of both digital DIY and product personalisation.

As a result, Maldini & Balkenende (2017) usefully highlight that many sustainable design strategies repeatedly mentioned in literature "have been constructed, studied and promoted without empirical validation" (p. 232). On the one hand, several of the strategies discussed above were proposed as a result of empirical research in fashion and textiles. Niinimäki & Hassi (2011) for example conducted two on-line questionnaires with 137 and 204 participants respectively and Laitala, Boks & Klepp (2015) based their recommendations on a thorough analysis of 620 clothing items from a mixed-methods study with 35 persons in 16 Norwegian families. On the other hand, I would also argue that the current approach to the application of these strategies in fashion design and making still heavily relies on previous research in industrial design and small electronics, where most research on design and emotion originated. In addition, the effectiveness and user feedback on strategies such as co-creation or customization have been mainly studied in experimental scenarios (such as e.g. Mugge, 2005, 2008). While these shed some light on users' views, they do not reveal how these may be renegotiated when confronted with more complex demands of everyday life.

The impact of such strategies on longevity, reduced consumption and postponed replacement of clothing therefore requires more research and critical analysis (Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011; Fletcher, 2012; Laitala, Boks & Klepp, 2015; Connor-Crabb, 2017; Maldini & Balkenende, 2017). At the same time, Niinimäki & Hassi (2011) also argue that while design strategies "will not directly lead to sustainable practices, as the system is not yet ready for radical change" (p. 1882), they potentially offer secondary benefits, as "by focusing more on consumers' values and needs or providing better consumer satisfaction, these strategies may initiate discussion on how to start a systemic change in this industry" (Ibid). Still, there seems to be a significant disconnect between the recommendations

discussed here, the research on longevity and emotional durability, and the lived experience of clothing. This set a clear objective for the next stage of my enquiry – "to identify how the different ways in which women experience and engage with fashion affect the emotional durability of clothing".

3.5 RESEARCH IN PRACTICE: TEMPORARY DESIGN RESPONSES

One of the key rules of design thinking according to Meinel & Leifer (2011) is that "making ideas tangible always facilitates communication" (p. xv). Oxborrow and Claxton (2016) note that although there is a reasonable amount of clarity on what design for longevity should achieve, details of how this should be realised in practice are often missing (p. 6). While in recent years several projects have linked design for longevity and emotional durability to practical explorations, such connections between theory and practice are still emerging.

Among the most notable design experiments in the context of my study is the *Emotional Fit* project by Townsend, Sadkowska & Sissons (2017) (see also Townsend & Sadkowska, 2017) that used a combination of interviews, focus groups and co-design workshops with a group of mature women (55+) to explore their style preferences and emotional needs with regards to clothing, which are currently not catered for by the mainstream fashion market (see also Twigg, 2013, Dankl, 2011). The ongoing project of Riisberg, Grose and Rissanen that explores how garments can evolve over time through digital printing and reprinting (Riisberg & Grose, 2017; Rissanen, Grose & Riisberg, 2018) is also of relevance for the practical element of my study. Lastly, the recently completed doctoral study of Louise Ravnløkke (2019), who worked with a small sample of women to explore the applied possibilities of knitwear customisation, learning from women's emotional responses to knitwear items, and also the study of Julia Valle-Noronha, whose doctoral research focused on using design probes to examine the agency of new items in stimulating more active relationships with clothes in women's wardrobes (forthcoming September, 2019) are also of interest to this research.

ENVISIONING CLOTHES THAT CAN STAND THE TEST OF TIME[1]

The designs presented in this section as well as the accompanying commentary should be read as an impression of the first, exploratory stage of my research. In tune with the notion that thinking, making and writing are equally valid elements of design research (Sadkowska, 2016; Earley et al., 2016; Walker & Girard, 2013), these designs are explorations in design and thinking through making (Ingold, 2013; Gatzen, cited in Bollier, 2018). They should be read as preliminary tangible examples of how some of the theories discussed in the previous chapters could play out in practice. In addition, the making of these garments was also grounded in my belief that it is the responsibility of designers to "put products out there" and it is also their responsibility "to go back and see if they work" (The 10th International Conference on Design and Emotion, Q&A discussion, September 2016,). For the sake of brevity, I here present two design examples out of nine garments in total.

The aim of this initial phase of my studio experimentation in the first year of this research was to start exploring how to achieve the elusive balance between the visceral, behavioural and reflective levels of design described by Norman (2004) [see Chapter 2.4, p. 51], in an item of clothing. Along with this process, I also focused on addressing the recommendations on interventions in the areas of size and fit, fabric quality, colours, styles and care summarized in the 2013 *Design for Longevity* report. Finally, I gave special attention to sensory aspects of all the garments and their touch and feel in particular. Through a cross-analysis of all the requirements that came into the equation [Figure 3.1] and following a reflection on strategies already used in my design work, I identified the following areas to focus on in all designs:

- **Versatility and modularity**

  (addressing size and fit, fabric quality, colours, and styles)

- **Easy care**

  (addressing fabric quality, care)

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[1] This section draws on a paper published in connection to this research: Burcikova (2017a)

- **Easy repairs and alterations**

  (addressing size and fit, care)

- **Trans-seasonality**

  (addressing fabric quality, colours, and styles)

- **Sensory experiences**

  (addressing size and fit, fabric quality, colour)
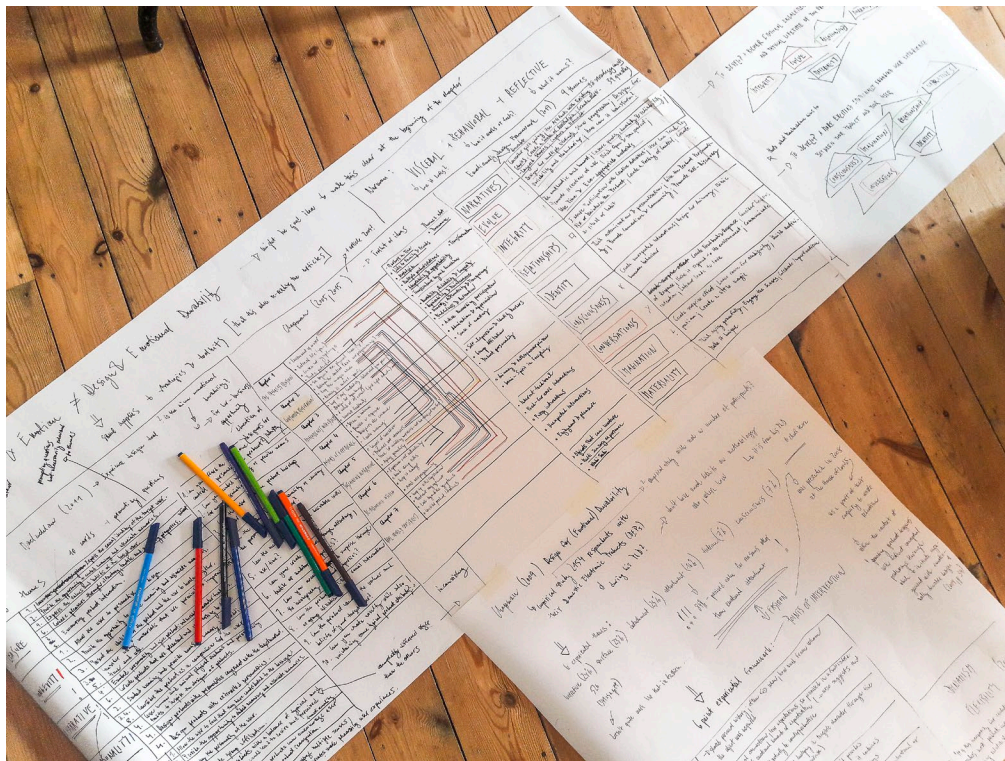
Figure 3.1 Cross-analysis of design recommendations from the design and emotion and clothing longevity contextual review

The iterative design cycles included planning, experimentation, material sourcing, sampling, and reflection. I used pre-consumer waste materials (end of line fabrics from a local factory mill) for both toiling and the final garments and I consciously avoided blend fabrics that still pose complicated challenges in the recycling process (Fletcher, 2008; WRAP, 2013). For the same reasons, the use of fastenings was also reduced to minimum, recognizing the need for easy disassembly in the end of life stage (Laitala & Klepp, 2015; WRAP, 2013). My decision to avoid fastenings was also based on

research evidence that failure of clothing components (such as zips or buttons) is among the most frequent reasons for early clothing disposal (WRAP, 2013).

All garments were made using a combination of machine-sewing and hand-stitching. I used hand-stitching both to stabilize seams and to add an extra personal touch to each garment - this approach has been integral to my designer-maker signature from the early days of my practice. In the context of my research project, however, hand-stitching was also used to emphasize the process of making and care invested in the garment (Swindells & Burcikova, 2012) as well as to highlight the connection to the maker. As I mentioned before, the opportunity to relate a product to its maker has been discussed by Chapman (2015 [2005], 2009), van Hinte (1997) or Mugge et al. (2005) among the strategies for encouraging the perceived irreplaceability of designed objects. Moreover, it has also been suggested that unique and personal products enable self-expression and can thus acquire meaning that potentially leads to a stronger emotional bond with the product (see e.g. Mugge et al., 2005). Design strategies that address users' values and identity correspond to reflective and symbolic levels of design as described by Norman (2004) and Cupchik (1999) (respectively), and ideo-pleasure identified by Jordan (2000). Experimenting in this area therefore reflected my aim to work towards a balance between the three levels of design, as described in more detail in Chapter 2.4 [p. 51].

Figure 3.2 Documenting the making process: hand-sewing of hems

The entire process of design and making was documented through photography [Figure 3.2] and my observations and reflections on the key stages were recorded in my research diary. In line with the belief that designers must experience wearing their own work (Sissons, 2016), I regularly wore and washed all the initial garments (apart from the occasion wear piece) throughout the duration of my research. All the garments were photographed in a photo-shoot in October 2016, and later also presented on my studio website under the tentative name *One Thing Collection.* Although this step was not integral to my research methodology, I used the opportunity to share my designs on-line, both on my website and my social media, to collect anecdotal feedback that could potentially feed into further development. The same opportunity was provided by my personal experience from wearing of the garments (Gwilt, 2013; Riisberg & Grose, 2017) and insights from any occasional comments I received.

DESIGN EXAMPLE 1: CASUAL WEAR

Strategies employed:

- Versatility

- Easy Care

- Easy repair and alterations

- Trans-seasonality

- Sensory experiences

The first design example is a casual top and a skirt in 100% cotton lightweight indigo blue denim. The design is trans-seasonal due to the 'classic' material, neutral colour (WRAP, 2013), as well as its style which is not trend-driven but inspired by Slovakian folk costumes (see also Laitala & Klepp, 2015 , p. 101 for a similar example). Both the material and the colour also contribute to the versatility of this design as they enable wearers easy combination with other garments and accessories. The top and the skirt can be either worn together or separately, in combination with other items, and both can be easily dressed up or down [Figures 3.5-3.6]. The style also reflects the recommendations of the *Design for longevity* report (2013) on the role of comfort in casual wear. According to the report, comfortable garments that allow for fluctuations in body shape (e.g. loose fitting or adjustable) are likely to be used for longer.

The bat-wing top is designed to fit a range of figures and it has additional benefits in terms of care because the loose-fitting sleeves are less affected by perspiration than more tightly fitting garments [Figure 3.3]. The skirt has an adjustable waist, making use of folds and movable sew-on snap fasteners [Figure 3.4]. Both the top and the skirt are machine-washable (at 30°) and do not require ironing if hang to drip-dry straight after washing. In addition to all this, both garments also have generous hem allowances, sewn in a long decorative hand-stitch, which adds an extra decorative and hand-crafted feel and also allows for easy length adjustments. Reflecting Rissanen's point that extra hem allowances should not be regarded as waste but as "an investment in a garment's future" (2011, p.129), the extra hem fabric can also be used for any future repairs. The skirt has no side seams, which means that the full length and width of the material can be used if the owner decides to have it re-made into another garment in the future.

Figure 3.3 Design example 1 - frontal view

Figure 3.4 Design example 1 – folds for waist adjustment

Figure 3.5 Design example 1 - wear option 1

Figure 3.6 Design example 1 - wear option 2

DESIGN EXAMPLE 2: OCCASION WEAR

Strategies employed:

- Versatility and modularity

- Easy care

- Easy repair and alterations

- Trans-seasonality

- Sensory experiences

The second design example is a convertible cocktail/evening dress in 100% viscose made in two colour versions – light pink and black. The dress consists of four modular parts that can easily transform the dress from a semi-formal cocktail option to an evening version. The combination of the modular parts offers at least three wear options and allows for many more possibilities to be explored by the wearer [Figures 3.7-3.8, 3.10-3.12]. The loose-fitting draped style offers versatility in terms of size and fit and the modular parts can also be used for length adjustments. Like in the case of Design example 1, the style is not trend-driven, and the choice of colours allows for a range of combinations with other garments and accessories. This further contributes to the versatility of the dress and gives it a relevance across seasons. The dress is designed for travel and easy care and can be folded in a small bag that comes with it. The bag can also offer extra protection during machine washing (at 30°). Due to the crinkled texture of the material, the dress can be easily drip-dried without the need for ironing. However, if ironed, the texture of the fabric is transformed into yet another look.

Apart from the centre back, most seams are hand-sewn to give hems a lovely soft drape and a hand-crafted finish [Figure 3.9]. The draped style also allows for any future repairs to be easily disguised in the volume of the fabric (Laitala & Klepp, 2005). Just like the skirt in the Design example 1, the dress has no side seams, so the full length and width of the material can be used for future alterations or even remaking the whole design or its parts into a new garment.

Figure 3.7 Design example 2 (light pink version) - wear option 1, front

Figure 3.8 Design example 2 (black version) - wear option 1, back

Figure 3.9 Design example 2 (light pink version) - detail of hand-stitching

Figure 3.10 Design example 2 (black version) - wear option 2

Figure 3.11 Design example 2 (black version) - attaching modular parts for wear option 3

Figure 3.12 Design example 2 (black version) - wear option 3

ENVISIONING EXPERIENCE

Forlizzi and Ford note that "as designers trying to craft an experience, we can only design situations, or levers that people can interact with, rather than neatly predicted outcomes" (2000, p. 420). As I previously stated, the designs presented here were my initial explorations in how research on design longevity and emotional durability can help us design, make and wear clothes that we do not want to throw away (Maclachlan, 2011). My own experience of this design experiment enabled me to further develop some of the strategies already used in my design work in a wider context of my doctoral research. I have found that several of the strategies I employed had multiple benefits and they positively contributed to both the design project and my personal experience of the process. To illustrate, hand-stitching used to highlight the garment's connection to its maker, is at the same time a technique that I find both enjoyable and effective, as it improves the drape and the hand of seams and often also their durability (especially in the case of top-stitching). Hand-stitching therefore seemed to be a win-win scenario that not only enhances the sensory aspects of garments and potentially also their appeal on the symbolic level, but also makes the creative process enjoyable and rewarding for the maker.

In addition to this, as I previously noted, I wore all the initial garments (apart from Design example 2) throughout the duration of my research and recorded my observations from wearing and care in my research diary. As a designer-maker, I fully identify myself with Fletcher's claim that "design is empty without use" and "use impossible without design" (2016, p. 78). For this reason, I considered my personal experience of how my designs perform and feel in everyday use an important contribution to the project. I found that wearing these garments helped further inform my thinking on some of the design decisions I had made and thus offered an opportunity for improvement in future iterations.

One such example was the use of folds for waist adjustments in Design example 1. While folds tend to be considered a suitable solution for allowing the flexibility in waist (see for example WRAP, 2013), their application in practice is not without challenges. A strategic placement of folds in a design is crucial for a flattering fit because folds generally add volume to the silhouette. Flexible folds, such as those with sew on fasteners in my Design example 1, can thus result in adding extra volume and attracting undesired attention to those parts of the figure that the wearer may actually prefer to disguise (e.g. hips, buttocks or stomach area). Moreover, from the point of view of easy care, folds

are a potential source of frustration during ironing. Although in my designs this issue was partly addressed by careful choice of materials that would not require ironing if drip-dried straight after washing, I learned through my own experience that following such instructions is not always practicable in the pressures of everyday life. On several occasions I had to face the frustration of ironing the folds in my skirts.

Another important insight from wearing my own designs was that these garments often turned into conversation pieces, "communication media" (Meinel & Leifer, 2011, p. xv), and so enabled me to collect further helpful feedback on the design aspects to consider in future stages of the project. These will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 6.6 [p. 245].

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter I focused on examining a range of theoretical perspectives in research on design and emotion. In the first section I introduced the history and main strands of enquiry in emotional design and I identified design for emotional durability as an area with key relevance for my study. Jonathan Chapman's (2015 [2005]) emphasis on the uneasy relationship between physical and emotional durability of designed objects is particularly important for my study and so together with Norman's (2004) three level design, it is used as a core reference point to underpin and lead my research. Following on from this, section two explained how significant everyday objects in our lives may defeat the culture of excess and disposability. At the same time, critical voices that question the links between emotional attachment and lower volume of consumption were also discussed.

Sections three and four then focused on current design strategies for emotional durability in design and clothing longevity. In section three I introduced the key attempts to formulate guidelines for designers who wish to apply emotionally durable design in their practice. Section four addressed the ways in which some of the strategies stemming from design and emotion research have been applied in propositions for extending the longevity of clothing. I then continued with an overview of studies that question the impact of these strategies on extending active lifetimes of clothing and reducing consumption volumes.

Chapter 3 concluded with a reflective section that provides a link between my contextual review and the empirical stage of my research. The designs in this section were presented as an impression of

the first, exploratory stage of my research that trialled the design and thinking through making. The research problem here was how absorbing the contextual foundation and design for longevity can be applied in the move from theory to practice.

PART TWO

4 SENSORY WARDROBE

Research approach and philosophical underpinnings

Research design - Wardrobe conversations

Empirical evidence – Key studies

Design ethnography and the senses

Chapter 4 will detail the methodology I used to fulfil the aims and objectives of my research. In the first part I will outline the philosophical underpinnings of my research and the concepts that provided the core for my overall approach. Section two and three will then be devoted to contextualizing my research in connection to previous empirical studies that applied a similar approach to the study of clothing. I will here clarify both the similarities and the differences between these studies and my research. In this chapter I will also explain in more detail how my designer-maker practice, both prior to and in parallel to this research, informed the methods used in my field research and in my design experimentation.

4.1   RESEARCH APPROACH AND PHILOSOPHY

PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The selection of research approach is a plan that involves decisions about the philosophical assumptions brought to the research, the procedures of enquiry (research designs) and the specific research methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2014). Due to the character of my research aim and considering my research objectives (please see the Introduction to this thesis, p. 16), I decided for an approach through a predominantly interpretivist paradigm.

Interpretivism has its roots in the work of German thinkers of the 19th Century - particularly Wilhelm Dilthey's elaboration of the philosophy of 'Verstehen' ('meaningful understanding') and the sociology of Max Weber, who raised the case for studying social action with a purpose (Neuman, 2014). Weber's claim that "we must learn the personal reasons or motives that shape…internal feelings and guide decisions in particular ways" (Weber, cited in: Neuman, 2014, p. 103) is especially relevant for my interest in a deeper understanding of women's everyday experiences with wearing clothing and how these are reflected in their emotional connections to items, and more broadly in their ways of engaging with fashion.

The suitability of this perspective for my research is further confirmed by Black (2006) who argues that "the strength and power of interpretivist approach lies in its ability to address the complexity and meaning of (consumption) situations" (p.319). In line with this, Battarbee & Mattelmäki (2004) also point out that designers need to expose themselves to "real people and real contexts" as the data from market research alone is insufficient to inform the design process (p. 338). A deeper

understanding of the relationships and stories linked with objects is essential for design that can satisfy on multiple levels (Ibid). Market research heavily relies on statistics and scale, but the inherent complexity of personal stories and emotions does not respond well to measuring (Candy, 2004; Boyle, 2011)

Creswell also explains that researchers working within an interpretivist paradigm mostly adopt inductive approach whereby their theory is derived through the research data (2013). In my research, however, there is a certain overlap between a deductive (theory led) and an inductive (data led) approach. This is due to the fact that I am exploring the relevance of existing theory (emotionally durable design) in a new context (fashion design and making), using data gathered through ethnography to inform this process.

Lastly, Creswell's point that interpretivist researchers acknowledge the impact of their own background and experiences on their research (2013) fits well with the fact that my study is underpinned by my established studio practice. This also resonates with my intention to highlight and reflect on any significant points in this research where my personal and professional background offered specific insights and shaped the direction at different stages of this research. In this respect, I fully identify myself with Ribbens & Edward's (1998) claim that:

> Rather than relativistic despair, we need high standards of reflexivity and openness about the choices made through any empirical study, considering the implications of practical choices for the knowledge being produced. (p. 4)

I addressed my approach to reflexivity in more detail in the opening chapter 1.1 [p. 24].

INDEPENDENT DESIGN RESEARCH

Related to this is another key aspect of my research methodology. Throughout my research, I approach my aim and objectives from the perspective of a practitioner-researcher, focusing my interests on a topic that is highly relevant to my practice (Robson, 2002). In a similar vein, Crossley (2004) calls for a "new breed of designer that undertakes a large apart of their time as a design researcher" (p. 45) to construct and communicate reflections of experiences in ways that are comprehensible within creative practice (Ibid). Sennett also notes that "every good craftsman [sic]

conducts a dialogue between concrete practices and thinking; this dialogue evolves into sustaining habits, and these habits establish a rhythm between problem solving and problem finding" (2008, p. 9). My prior experience, as well as the tacit knowledge acquired through my designer-maker practice, are thus not only prerequisites to this research but also integral elements of my research methodology that can contribute beneficial insights throughout the research.

Having defined my research through an interpretivist paradigm, while using a combination of deductive and inductive process, I will now address the details of the practical element that I described above as a perspective of a practitioner-researcher. Frayling (1993) famously refers to Herbert Read's model of education through art to suggest three types of research in art and design:

- Research **into** art and design

- Research **through** art and design

- Research **for** art and design (p. 5)

Design research in the first category - *research into design* - examines the process and profession of design (Frankel & Racine, 2010). The primary aim of the second approach - *research through design* - according to Frankel and Racine, is that "it seeks to provide an explanation or theory within a broader context" (p. 6). My research is closest to the third category – *research for design* - which is characterized by Downton (2003) as "research to enable design" (p. 17), research that provides the information, implications, and data that designers can apply to achieve an end-result in their design project (Ibid).

It is also important to clarify here that in the initial stages of my research the expanded definition offered by Downton well captured the key motivations behind this study and it seemed pivotal for its direction:

> The term *research for design* is understood to mean research that is carried out during the overall design process to support designing in whatever way the designer(s) regard as useful and this includes research intended to provide information and data that is necessary to successfully conclude the undertaking in question. (2003, p. 43)

As I set out on this research journey, Downton's definition seemed particularly important in connection to my Objective 3 "to create a series of garments that reflect women's experiences with emotionally durable clothing and propose new ways of extending emotional durability by design and making". Yet, as my research progressed, and specifically as a result of reflection on and analysis of my wardrobe interviews, it emerged that the emphasis on the "design project" (Downton, 2003) I set out to pursue in the final stage of my research should slightly shift in priority to allow for more explorations and multiple layers of analysis in the preceding stage.

On the contrary, my Objective 2, "to identify how the different ways in which women experience and engage with fashion affect the emotional durability of clothing", became increasingly more significant in relationship to addressing the overall aim of my research. What my research seemed to reveal with an increasing urgency, was that to contribute to improved understanding of how the concept of emotional durability can be applied in fashion design and making in order to enhance user experience of clothing, listening to women's experiences with the clothes they already own, should take a priority over designing new garments. Although I never stopped thinking about how these experiences could be translated into design and making, considering the limited time frame of this research, I gradually realized that my research should above all capitalize on the generosity of the women who shared their often very personal wardrobe stories and experiences with me. The following sections will therefore focus on previous empirical studies that applied a similar approach to the study of clothing. They will also clarify both the similarities and the differences between these studies and the way my research developed with my growing understanding of the context and the direction I should take.

4.2   RESEARCH DESIGN: WARDROBE CONVERSATIONS

UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCE: METHODOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

Chapman notes that designers who want to design for longevity without a deep understanding of user perspectives are forced to rely on similar generalizations to those who pack for a trip without knowing where they are going or what they will be doing there (2016, p. 78 - D&E keynote). In line with his point, Fletcher also argues that:

Making a garment last is very different to making a long-lasting garment. Enduring use is often difficult to predict. It is specific and personal, linked less with materials and more with ways of thinking, experiences and memories. Finding ways to access these may be critical to third, fourth or fifth lives. (2016, p. 186)

It seems clear that understanding the nuances of everyday experiences with clothing and how these may be reflected in our relationships with individual garments in our wardrobes is instrumental for advancing the current understanding of clothing longevity. In early 2000s, the dress historian Lou Taylor remarked that "one of the great voids of dress history has been its failure to examine emotional responses to clothing and appearance" (2002, p. 102). More recently, researchers across multiple areas still highlight that user behaviour around clothing, and emotional durability of garments in particular, remain largely under-researched areas (Cooper et al., 2017; WRAP 2012, 2017; Laitala and Boks, 2012, Laitala, 2014; McLaren et al. 2015; ECAP, 2017).

Niinimäki & Koskinen's (2011, p. 176) reflection on the methodological issues connected with the current lack of deep insight into attachment and long-term product relationships in general, and clothing more specifically, is important for my research. As the authors point out, most research in this area initially relied on questionnaires. Yet, while these enable to collect people's responses, they do not capture the granularity of detail that would enable an in-depth understanding of lived experiences. What is therefore urgently needed is a more interpretative, *empathic* approach to collecting data on emotional experiences with products, an approach that would focus on observing, probing and listening to people rather than making assumptions on categories to frame the research (Ibid, p. 176-177).

My research design addresses this methodological gap and the following sections , and also Chapter 5 - Wardrobe conversations, explain the details of the approach I developed to better understand the experiences that can lead to emotional attachment to clothing.

LINKING PRACTICE AND EMPIRICAL STUDY

As a designer-maker, I have often visited my clients at their homes to discuss the new commissioned pieces in relationship to the rest of their wardrobes. These home visits have been a rich source of information about each client's attitudes and views on fashion and clothing, their personal style and

also on their preferences in terms of fit, colour or material. In line with the observations by Woodward (2007), Klepp (2010) or Skjold (2014), who all studied clothing in participants' homes, I too noticed that the presence of whole wardrobes and other personal objects could often trigger conversations and narratives that would hardly have been possible in a situation outside the home environment.

My designer-dressmaker practice, the personal contact with my clients and my background in ethnography, therefore seemed to offer a unique research opportunity, not dissimilar to the notion of the 'embodied ethnographer' - someone whose profession gives them entry to an area that is normally not easily accessible to other researchers and whose tacit knowledge from their frequent presence in the researched environment opens up new layers for enquiry (Edvardsson & Street, 2007 in Pink 2015 [2009], p. 20-21). Considering my objective "to identify how the different ways in which women experience and engage with fashion affect the emotional durability of clothing", this seemed to provide the perfect starting point for my research design.

ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS

One of the most significant aspects of ethnographic research and a reason why I believed that ethnographic methods could make a key contribution to addressing my research aim, is that ethnography concerns itself with daily practices (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019 [1983]). Unlike researchers in many other areas, ethnographers first observe, probe, record (through notes, recordings, photography, or drawings) and attempt to understand what people do. Only then they try to contextualize and assign wider meanings to the observed actions and beliefs. As my research aimed to enhance the current understanding of women's emotional connections to their clothes, it was essential to allow their personal perspectives to take prominence over my possible preconceptions before drawing any conclusions. This approach also aligns with the tradition of interpretivist enquiry described in the previous section.

At the same time, it is also important to note that "ethnography is a peculiarly human endeavour" where "the researcher is the primary tool for collecting primary data" (p. xvi) and so the work produced through ethnographic research is inevitably linked to the researcher's traits and the kind of person they are (Schensul, Schensul & Compte, 1999, Ibid). Pink (2013 [2001]) in this sense defines ethnography as:

(…) a process of creating and representing knowledge or ways of knowing that are based on ethnographers' own experiences and the ways these intersect with the persons, places and things encountered during the process. (p. 35)

As a result, ethnography cannot make claims on objectivity, favoured by the positivist research tradition, and as I described in more detail in Chapter 1.1 [p. 24], the issues of validity in ethnographic studies are addressed through strictly reflexive approach that provides enough contextual detail on researcher's presence in the research situation and on the circumstances of conducting the research. Such approach fully acknowledges that no attempt to capture lived experiences is unproblematic (Denzin, 1997, p. 3).

This is brilliantly explained further by the anthropologist Robert Murphy in his late autoethnographic narrative of spinal paralysis *The Body Silent* (1990 [1987])*, a work that has been pivotal in shaping both my long-term interest in social and cultural aspects of design and in my methodological trajectory as a researcher. As Murphy argues:

(…) the truth is that our perceptions in ethnographic research are deeply affected by our personalities, by the language categories into which we sort our reality, by our education, by all the overburden of our own culture. And, as we get deeper into our research, the people's own interpretation of their culture provides an added coloration of our views, a further skewing of our perceptions. (1990, p. 176)

Still, caution about limitations of objectivity in any research involving humans exhibited by Murphy (Ibid) is not to be confused with undermining the significance of ethnographic enquiry for a deeper understanding of phenomena that can hardly be accessed through other methods. As Murphy confirms, unlike quantitative methods such as questionnaires, ethnographies that involve a direct contact between the researcher and the researched enable to compare verbal accounts to observable behaviour (1990, p. 174). This is crucial, because "people often do not do what they *say* they should be doing, or even what they *think* they are doing" (Ibid). Hence, relying solely on verbal statements, even if collected from larger samples of population, rarely enables to access the idiosyncrasies and nuances of human experience, and emotions in particular (Stappers & Sanders, 2004).

WARDROBE CONVERSATIONS

Since the publication of Niinimäki & Koskinen's article (2011) mentioned earlier, there has been a notable upsurge in experiments with new methods for studying users' relationships with products. This was also evidenced in the 2016 Design & Emotion Conference through a number of contributions that piloted new approaches to understanding product experiences (see e.g. Luden, Cila & Van Zuthem, 2016). With regards to user experiences with clothing, two works in particular have made a marked contribution to the methodological debate. Firstly, the previously mentioned *Craft of Use* (Fletcher, 2016), that collected stories of favourite garments from users across six countries (I will return to *Craft of Use* later in this section). Secondly, it was Fletcher & Klepp's co-edited collection *Opening up the Wardrobe* (2017) that offered a platform for a cross section of fashion researchers to introduce the methods they have used for studying different aspects of clothing use.

While only the contribution by Valle-Noronha, Kujala & Niinimäki on user experience curves explicitly focuses on emotional connections and attachment to clothes, a number of other contributions to this publication also strongly touch on issues that reveal subtle layers of relationships with clothing. Among these are Skjold's biographical wardrobe method and Fletcher's *craft of use* explorations, both discussed in more detail in the following section. In addition, Connor-Crabb's research on wear and tear of clothing, Haugsrud's study of value within the wardrobe, Hall's participant led photographing and ethnographic discussion, and the performance used by Rissanen et al. to inform the design of enduring garments all also strongly relate to the issues that are of interest to this research.

Opening up the Wardrobe (2017) highlights the recent rise of interest in what is broadly referred to as 'wardrobe methods' or 'wardrobe studies', a research area particularly pronounced since the late 2000s onwards. The work of Efrat Tseëlon, who developed a wardrobe approach for her study *The Presentation of Woman in Everyday Life* (1995), is worth noting in this context. As Tseëlon explains, at the time, her methodology marked a departure from the then prevailing approach of looking 'from the outside', favoured by costume historians, curators, designers and some social scientists, to looking 'from the inside' focused on the process of use, wearers' perspectives and socially negotiated meanings (Tseëlon, 2016, p. 155). Similar approach was later adopted by Sophie Woodward (2005) in her research on women's considerations in the process of getting dressed. Her *Why Women Wear*

What they Wear (2007), has since had a marked influence on development in the field of wardrobe studies (discussed in more detail in the next section).

Klepp & Bjerck (2014) define wardrobe studies as "a methodological approach that analyses the way in which clothes relate to each other on the whole or in parts of the wardrobe" (2014, p. 373). In their view, the primary focus here is on material and physical aspects of clothing rather than symbolic meaning (Ibid). This is interesting, as the spotlight on materiality seemingly contrasts with Tseëlon's initial impulse for her wardrobe approach, that was motivated by the wish to move away from the over-emphasis on materiality in object-based studies (2016). However, as Woodward highlights (2016), the real strength of wardrobe studies lies in interdisciplinary approaches that enable more adequate, combined understanding of both tangible and intangible qualities of objects/clothing (p. 360).

Hence, while the emphasis may vary depending on research aims, many wardrobe studies, especially those referred to as 'wardrobe interviews' (Fletcher & Klepp, 2017), draw on 'object elicitation' methods (Hoskins, 1998; Woodward, 2016), using garments as anchors for emerging narratives while also exploring their material aspects.

> Wardrobe studies use the presence of the object in two ways. The clothes are present and thus influence the informants' memories and narratives. Secondly, recording, photographing, and even handling the object itself contribute to the researcher's recollection and empathy, and provide opportunity for new knowledge. (Klepp & Bjerck, 2014, p. 378)

My own take on the empirical phase of my research broadly aligned with this approach, in the sense that I set out to study women's clothes in the context of their whole wardrobes, using the opportunity to observe and handle individual items as the conversation unfolded. I also used audio recording and photography to capture as much as possible from these conversations for subsequent reflections and analysis.

More specifically though, my approach was closely linked to what Warkander calls "organic wardrobe studies" (2013). As I explained earlier, I was conscious that I should enable for women to talk freely about their experiences and feelings and avoid impressing my own preconceptions by asking too

much too early in the conversation. For this reason, my method would be more accurately described as "wardrobe conversations", largely led by my interviewees, as opposed to "wardrobe interviews" that generally rely on semi-structured schedules and are facilitated by the interviewers (Fletcher & Klepp, 2017).

In addition to these methodological concerns, my approach was also motivated by ethical considerations. Like Tseëlon (1995), I also wished to depart from "the tradition of studying people or theorising them without taking their own perspective into account" (p. 3). This is also why the images and extended excerpts from women's wardrobe narratives are an integral part of this thesis.

4.3   EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE: KEY STUDIES

Although only a handful of researchers (Niinimäki (2011, 2013, 2014) and more recently Connor-Crabb (2017), Townsend, Sadkovka & Sissons (2017), Townsend & Sadkowska (2017), Ravnløkke (2019) and Vale-Noronha (forthcoming 2019)) have so far systematically applied research on design and emotion into fashion context, this section presents the key empirical studies that have contributed valuable perspectives towards a better understanding of (mostly women's) emotional connections to the clothes in their wardrobes.

BANIM & GUY AND SOPHIE WOODWARD

Throughout this thesis, I have repeatedly referred to the work of the anthropologist Sophie Woodward, specifically to her now seminal study *Why Women Wear what they Wear* (2007). Based on an ethnographic study with 27 UK women aged between their late teens to their late fifties, Woodward's enquiry focused on how women negotiate and create their identities through the clothing they choose to wear.

Similarly to Banim and Guy (2001), whose study on why women keep clothes they no longer wear was inspired by their observation that only a fraction of clothing in women's wardrobes is used on a regular basis, Woodward too noticed that the age of many of the items in her participants' wardrobes spanned over decades and the frequency with which these items were worn varied considerably. As she notes, this observation is important, because it highlights the value of a long-term view on women's relationships with clothing. This extended perspective requires a focus on

what she calls the "personalized temporality of the wardrobe" (p. 51), as opposed to the "externally imposed temporality of the fashion system" (Ibid) that reduces our understanding and makes women's relationships to clothes "appear fickle and ephemeral" (Ibid).

Through talking to women and observing their concerns when getting dressed, Banim and Guy's (2001 [see also Guy and Banim, 2000]) and Woodward's (2007) approaches elucidate the process of building a wardrobe and the reasons behind women's decisions on the frequency with which individual garments in the wardrobe get worn. The volume of items in women's wardrobes, Woodward argues, reflects a number of contradictory aspects of women's identities - "being an individual, fitting in, the person one is all the time, who one was, who one wishes one could be" (2007, p. 150). The wardrobe thus contains a constant renegotiation of the balance between who women want to be, who they fear they could be and who they are most of the time (Banim & Guy, 2000 In Banim & Guy, 2001, p. 203).

What is striking with regards to these findings, is that although they offer some critical insights on the underlying reasons why women keep more clothes than they regularly wear, (which is often the focal point of the critique of contemporary fashion consumption), these remain largely ignored in the current discourse on fashion and sustainability. This is highly problematic because the argument is then once again directed to addressing the symptoms, without first giving sufficient attention to the understanding of the underlying causes of women's wardrobe quantities [see also Chapman's critique of sustainable design in Chapter 3.2, p. 64]. As Banim and Guy (2001) contend:

> (…) it may be possible to account for kept but no-longer worn clothes in terms of them being the 'fall-out' of the fashion system. By this we mean that women are seen as the 'dupes' of an exploitative fashion industry, buying and wearing clothes when they are deemed 'fashionable' but discarding them when they are later deemed 'unfashionable'. At first sight it is tempting to view no-longer-worn clothes as merely taking up space or as irrelevant to women's current identities. (…) In most cases although these clothes may have ceased to have an active role (I.e. being worn), the data reveal that women still have an ongoing relationship with them.(…) [this relationship] extends beyond the structural and meaning systems of the fashion industry. (p. 204)

Banim & Guy's argument is important for my thesis, because it assigns an equal relevance to both worn and unworn items. It also highlights the need to balance external measures such as the logic of 'fashion', or in the context of the wider argument presented here, the 'environmental implications', against what actually matters from women's own perspectives and why.

Woodward then puts emphasis on sensual aspects of garments and continuous wearing experiences, both of which contribute to the "embodied material relationship of wearing" (2007, p. 32). This on the one hand strengthens women's emotional relationship to an item, yet, on the other, it also makes it difficult to articulate why the item is loved so much (Ibid). She further explains this difficulty by drawing on Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (1977, p. 78), meaning that long-term wearing of frequently used items becomes a second nature and so the initial impulse is obscured by what is now take for granted (2007, p. 32).

Another key point Woodward makes refers to the ways in which "clothing externalizes memory" (2007, p. 12-13). Unlike verbal or written biographies that necessitate a linear chronological order, the negotiation between the past, the present and the future is far more complex in women's wardrobes. The past is not finished in a wardrobe, it extends into the present and also well into the future. Woodward argues that such easy connections across time are enabled by the tactile and sensual qualities of materials, thanks to which:

> (…) clothing is able to carry memories and former selves; as women touch the item of clothing, the feel of the fabric on her skin allows her to remember and resituate herself in the past. (Ibid, p. 12-13)

As a result, then:

> (…) when women select clothing to wear, they are not looking at their wardrobe as chronology. Rather, from the array of clothing displayed before them, the older items form part of the continuum of the wardrobe (Ibid, p. 66)

ELSE SKJOLD

Similar point is also made by Else Skjold (2014), whose research emphasis is on *continuity* as opposed to *newness* in the wardrobe. Like Woodward, Skjold also studied how people select what to wear on

everyday basis. However, in contrast to Woodward, whose focus was solely on women (most in their 20s), Skjold worked mostly with men aged between 40-50. It is hence interesting that the findings of both have multiple overlaps, which would suggest that the process of dressing involves similar considerations and underlying patterns for both men and women. Keeping in mind, of course, that some nuanced aspects and possibly also their articulation may differ both between genders and across individual cases (see also Sadkowska, 2016).

Skjold explains her focus on the mature age group by her interest in long-term perspectives, an approach that resulted in her notion of the "biographical wardrobe" that affords "a diachronic perspective on dress practice" (2016, p. 137). She argues that it is more interesting to look at what is *old* than on what is *new* (2016, p. 138). Like Woodward, Skjold also observed that any changes in the wardrobes of her interviewees occurred steadily over longer periods of time and were more often linked to key milestones and life phases such as entry on the job market, change in marital status and having children, than to external forces such as 'fashion' and trends (2016, p. 136). Both also note that despite changes, continuity across different life phases is retained through referencing similar styles and favouring certain materials. Skjold, whose approach was in comparison to Woodward more design related, explains:

> My aim is to highlight how people are affected by design characteristics of what they wear - the bodily sensation of wearing certain fabrics, how a certain cut affects the movements of the body, how certain colours, textures and patterns are preferred by the user, or how certain stylistic references are preferred, regardless of fashion trends. (Ibid, p. 139)

Drawing on the work of developmental psychologist Erik Erikson (1902-1994), she argues that such formulas for dressing stem from the early adolescent years, a process that she further explains on her model of "sensory anchoring" (2014, p. 47). This gradual development of personal style, what she calls the "biographical wardrobe", also means that following an initial period of experimentation, any external influences later tend to be filtered through the lens of established wardrobe "formulas". As a result, Skjold highlights that there is a clear dissonance between the current garment production and garment consumption because the logic of fashion business does not reflect the "logics and practices of the majority of people when they go about getting dressed every day" (2016, p. 136).

KATE FLETCHER

Similar argument underpins Fletcher's *Craft of Use* (2016), first introduced in Chapter 1.3 [p. 31] in the context of Fletcher's plea to rethink fashion and our relationships to clothes within the wider call for post-growth futures. For over twenty years now, Fletcher's research has focused on user practices. The central thread linking all her projects is her strong belief that the current fashion sector ignores the long-term perspective and lacks an interest in how clothes are worn, laundered, and otherwise cared for throughout their lifetime. Yet, understanding use practices, she argues, is key to accessing viable scenarios for fashion and sustainability.

The *Craft of Use* thus draws on a rich collection of data gathered over several years by an international team of researchers as a part of the Local Wisdom Project led by Fletcher. As she notes, "visual imagery associated with ideas, activities and artefacts of use of clothes is undeveloped" (p. 55) and so the project addressed this gap by generating an extensive collection of portrait photographs of adult men and women across all age groups accompanied by short interview excerpts. Fletcher highlights that the richness of stories collected during the project points to a considerable resourcefulness in people's wear practices. What these stories unanimously demonstrate is that "in the face of forces that scream the opposite, people are acting in ways that are resourceful and motivated by a deep knowledge and satisfaction with what they have" (2016, p. 78).

Still, the reasons why some garments become treasured and well looked after pieces tend to be haphazard and unpredictable; Fletcher assigns them more to competencies, attitudes, and past experiences than to material properties of garments [see Chapter 2.3, p. 49]. On the other hand, she also observes that some materials, such as wool, silk and cotton are referred to repeatedly in people's stories, whereas others, such as polyester, are markedly underrepresented. In addition, other features that can be affected in the design stage such as cut, loose fit that allows for body changes, openness of garments to alterability, versatility and adaptability, craft production or functional details such as pockets and other components, are repeatedly referred to throughout the book. This suggests that design features do have a notable role in shaping people's emotional experiences with their loved pieces and my research attempts to further elucidate the connection between the two.

Also of interest to my research are the design practice scenarios that constituted the last phase of Local Wisdom. Student projects at the seven partner institutions explored how the lessons from the user's stories "could be adapted, amplified, integrated into current activities, in order to increase their uptake" (p. 53). As an example, the *Cut, Pleat, Shorten, Fit* project by Anja Crabb (now Connor-Crabb) from London College of Fashion focused on solutions for alterability through colour-coded guides marked on garments to highlight the areas where adjustments and alterations for different body types and figure changes are most often needed. The *Doppelganger* project by Alex Barton, Monica Buchan-Ng and Katie Colier from Massey University started with 'perfect' pieces that have brought much satisfaction to their users and invited them to make suggestions on improvements they wish they could make to the original garment. Based on these suggestions, a second garment was made and given to a person of the owner's choice. *My Little Black Coat* project by Jon Max Goh from Parsons The New School explored how repairability can be designed into a garment through needle-felting details on the new piece, intended as visual leads for future repairs.

The significance of the design element in the Local Wisdom project is in that it reflects empirical data on clothing use in design practice. As I noted before, this connection is still relatively rare, the studies by Rigby (2016), Sadkowska (2016), Townsend et al. (2017), Ravnløkke (2019) and Valle-Noronha (2019) are among the emerging examples. This is also echoed in the recurring criticism that despite being quite vocal on what should be achieved, design for longevity and emotional durability lacks practical examples on how to get there (Oxborrow & Claxton, 2016).

My research addresses this gap by articulating the findings through garments made in response to each of the four empirical themes that emerged from my research. It also extends the perspectives of the Local Wisdom project by studying significant garments in a relationship to other clothes in the same wardrobe, which enables a comparative analysis within as well as across the cases. While a number of Local Wisdom participants had connections to the fashion schools involved, my sampling purposefully targeted participants with no fashion background [see more in Chapter 5.1, p. 125]. I believe this approach further expands the current discourse towards everyday clothing practices and addresses the concerns of those users who may lack the technical skills and the professional confidence to endlessly experiment with the possibilities that garments can offer.

In contrast to Fletcher, who emphasizes the elusiveness of the concept of emotional durability, linking it to practices rather than to physical properties of garments, Kirsi Niinimäki, drawing on consumer research methodology, has in a series of studies attempted to identify the key attributes of attachment to clothing. At the time of their first publication, these studies were pioneering in terms of applying research on design and emotion to the area of textiles and clothing (Niinimäki, 2010; Niinimäki & Koskinen, 2011; Niinimäki & Armstrong, 2013; Niinimäki, 2014).

Unlike other studies discussed in this section, all with a qualitative orientation, the body of Niinimäki's contribution relies on quantitative data – specifically content analysis of three on-line consumer questionnaires administered between 2009 and 2013. The first two of these were conducted in Finland and respondents were mostly adult females under the age of 35 (246 and 204 respectively). The third survey took place in the US and covered a much wider age group of 401 respondents aged between 18 and 67, with almost equal division between males and females.

The first of Niinimäki's Finnish surveys focused on the attributes of emotional attachment to textiles and clothing, including an open question that asked participants about the oldest piece of textile and clothing in their possession and why they kept it. The second questionnaire also included a section on satisfaction with clothing. Here, respondents were invited to describe textiles and clothes that have been in long-term and short-term use, listing the reasons for both long and short use periods (Niinimäki & Koskinen, 2011). The US questionnaire further built on this research to include temporal elements and product categories (Niinimäki & Armstrong, 2013). Respondents were so invited to identify a piece of clothing that they felt especially attached to, by connecting it to a product category from a predefined list. They were also prompted to expand on the reasons why their chosen items were special, as well as to estimate the frequency of wear (from 6 categories), the length of ownership, and the mode of acquisition.

The reason why it is interesting to notice such methodological details is the following. In a discussion of her early findings, Niinimäki (2010) comments that the oldest clothes mentioned by her respondents were either inherited or connected to a strong memory of significant others (such as mothers, grandparents, or friends). In several of her studies she then reiterates that attachment tends to be linked to clothing that is no longer used (Niinimäki & Armstrong, 2013; see also Niinimäki

& Koskinen, 2011; Niinimäki, 2014), so also echoing Mugge, Schoormans & Schifferstein's (2005) point that the most favoured and cherished possessions tend to have strong connections to family history (p. 41). Yet, if we note that these observations were based on the first of the Finnish surveys, where the majority of respondents were women under 35, it is perhaps unsurprising that the oldest and most cherished of these women's possessions were more likely to be linked to family heritage as opposed to their own acquisitions and personal biography.

The contextual background of these findings elucidates another important issue. It can be reasonably argued that while respondents of the first questionnaire were asked about their oldest textiles and clothing and why they kept them, rather than for example about their favourite garment to wear, their attention would have been likely focused towards the items they cherished for sentimental reasons, not those that they regularly used. The results of the second survey support this view. As the questions here focused specifically on use, frequently worn clothes were often mentioned among the meaningful items (Niinimäki & Koskinen, 2011). Finally, the findings resulting from the third questionnaire, in which respondents were asked to choose an item of clothing they felt attached to, along with the information on frequency of wear and length of ownership, directly contrast with the conclusions drawn from the first survey. While the first questionnaire seemed to indicate that attachment was mostly linked to unused clothing, in the third survey "most of the meaningful garments that respondents declared their attachment towards were in use" (Niinimäki & Armstrong, 2013, p. 196).

These differences usefully illustrate the inherent difficulties of relying solely on quantitative methods and verbal statements when studying emotional durability of clothing; a limitation also recognized by Niinimäki (Niinimäki & Koskinen, 2011) as I noted in the previous section [Chapter 4.2, p. 102]. Nevertheless, the relevance of her work for my research is specifically in her focus on the determinants of satisfying use which she sees as prerequisites of attachment.

This is important, because the experience with which I embarked on this research strongly suggested that satisfaction on multiple levels, tried and tested through frequent use, was critical for the feeling of emotional connection to a garment. Interestingly then, Niinimäki & Armstrong (2013) also distinguish between satisfaction and the feeling of attachment to clothing, arguing that "satisfaction is more correlated with pleasurable use experiences while the attachment processes are based on the emotional experiences with the garment over time" (p. 192). Drawing on the approach of Swan

& Comb (1976, cited in Niinimäki & Armstrong, 2013), who highlight the elements of instrumental performance (physical properties) and expressive performance (psychological response), Niinimäki & Armstrong argue that experiences of physical properties such as durability, fit and quality are key to subsequent emotional responses (Ibid, p.192).

In her findings, Niinimäki's puts emphasis on quality, highlighting that poor quality, poor fit and disappointing performance during laundering (when the garment's fit and colour significantly change during the first wash or even falls apart) are among common reasons for short-term use (2014). This again contrasts with the views of Fletcher (2012), who argues that far too many garments last much longer than their useful lifetimes in the eyes of their owners [see Chapter 3.4, p. 71]. These differences can be assigned to both research focus and methodological orientation. Whereas Niinimäki specifically studied the reasons for short-term use, Fletcher's research has primarily focused on practices associated with long-term ownership of garments (although some of her earlier studies such as e.g. the Lifetimes project examined different patterns and "rhythms" of clothing use (2004, 2014 [2008]). In addition, Fletcher's point aims to underscore the need to redress the balance between production and consumption of fashion and the fast turnaround of items encouraged by the fast fashion model.

To summarize, Niinimäki (2014) identifies quality (fit, durable materials, durability in use and laundering), aesthetics (beauty, style, colour, fit, tactility), functionality (suitability in use, use experience, easy maintenance) and also alignment with user values (local production, ethical credentials, environmental aspects, longevity) as the key factors in long-term use of clothing. Her findings demonstrate that certain attributes specified at the design stage (such as e.g. fit, materials, colour, tactility, maintenance requirements) can significantly contribute to enduring use. However, she also recognizes that other elements of long-term use, such as memories and associations linked to past experiences with an item as well as addressing people's changing needs, are much harder to access through design.

Still, she suggests that designers can fine-tune their skills and abilities to tap into all these aspects of product experience through an "empathic design approach" that draws on the knowledge of attributes that are important from a consumer's point of view (See the "Framework sustainable product relationships, empathic knowledge and the field of design" (Niinimäki & Koskinen, 2011, p. 182)). This also echoes Fletcher's call (2016) for a tighter fit between everyday use practices and

the design process, moving beyond mood boards and visual references to instead consider more granular aspects of everyday clothing use such as multisensory perception of garments. Niinimäki too especially highlights the significance of sensory experiences in our relationships to what we wear, and the following section will address sensory qualities of clothing in more detail.

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4.4 SENSORY METHODOLOGY

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CONTEXT: SENSORY AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO CLOTHING

Norman's concept of three level design, introduced in Chapter 2.4 [p. 51] explains that we process experience on three different levels of the brain and that each of these levels requires a different approach to design. The first, *visceral* level, needs design that focuses on the way things look, their haptic qualities and feel. The second, *behavioural* level of brain, needs to consider the pleasure and effectiveness of use – the way things work. The highest, *reflective* level, is then linked to the self-image and memories associated with the object – its meaning.

Yet, fashion designers are predominantly trained for an appeal on just a fraction of the first, *visceral* level, by focusing mainly on the 'magic' moment of first impression through a strong visual impact. Fashion photography further builds on this, often presenting a staged and idealized view of garments that are static, "unworn and uncrumpled" (Fletcher, 2016, p. 101), with little relationship to how they will be used by their future owners. Substantial effort and expenditure also tend to go towards fashion branding, with strong focus on wearer's self-image and aspirations; these in some respects corresponds to Norman's *reflective* level of design. What is largely omitted in fashion, however, are those elements of the *visceral* level that extend beyond the visual appeal – the haptic qualities and the feel of clothing, and also the *behavioural* aspects of design which should consider how clothes work in everyday use.

The need to refocus from a singularly visual approach to clothing is increasingly recognized by researchers, especially those working across the disciplines of fashion studies, design, and anthropology. The studies by Woodward (2007), Klepp (2010), Skjold (2014) or Chong Kwan (2016) all unanimously demonstrate that the seemingly uncomplicated visual appeal of clothes becomes much more complex when it lands in the everyday reality of use. The everyday moment in front of the mirror extends far beyond the visual/aesthetic aspects of a garment and has a considerable

impact on the extent to which women feel *comfortable* in their clothing, Woodward (2007) argues. Comfort, according to her, "is not natural feeling engendered by the softness of a fabric; ... comfort emerges in a dialectic between how clothing looks and how it feels" (2007, p. 99). In a similar vein, Niinimäki & Koskinen (2011) note that the beauty of clothing includes the "tactile, olfactory and kinetic experiences, such as the feeling of comfort, the weight of the material against our body, and pleasant touch and odour" (p. 170).

The first focused effort to examine how our perception of what we wear is affected by a cross-section of senses, was the 2005 symposium *The Senses and Sentiments of Dress* initiated by Professor Joanne B. Eicher. Notably in the context of my research, equal attention was here given to what Eicher called "sentiments" of dress - emotional responses, memories and sensations associated with dress (cited in Foster & Johnson, 2007). As I previously discussed in Chapter 1.2 [p. 27], Roach-Higgins & Eicher's definition of 'dress' refers to a wider, anthropologically informed understanding that extends beyond the Western concept of fashion. The edited collection *Dress Sense: Emotional and Sensory Experiences of the Body and Clothes* (Johnson & Foster, 2007) that resulted from the symposium then marked a turning point towards a wider recognition of multi-sensory perspectives in fashion research.

DESIGN ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE SENSES

The developments described above fall into the wider context of what has been described as sensory turn in humanities and social sciences (Howes, 2005), now contained under the umbrella of sensory studies, that apply "cultural approach to the study of the senses and a sensory approach to the study of culture" (Howes, 2013). The formation of the discipline initially relied on research in history and anthropology and was inspired by a rising interest in sensory experiences, an element of culture that had been previously largely denigrated in the West as a lower form of perception (Howes, 2005). The key contributions to the field include the work of David Howes (see e.g. 1991, 2005, 2013, 2014, 2018) and Constance Classen (see e.g. 1993, 2005; Howes & Classen, 2014), both members of now the well-established Concordia Sensoria Research Team at Concordia University, Montreal.

Of special relevance to my study, however, is the work of the anthropologist Sarah Pink, whose research has been pivotal in introducing sensory approaches to design ethnography. Pink (2015 [2009]) argues that embracing the multi-sensory character of perception can provide invaluable

insights for those planning social or design interventions for improving the everyday experience of products or services (p. 21). While our attention frequently focuses on one sense over others, it is important to realize their mutual interdependence, she highlights (2015 [2009]).

As I noted earlier, fashion tends to give priority to sight. Yet, on a closer inspection, there is a lot more to be accounted for when it comes to daily use and appreciation of the clothes we wear. The choice of materials and fastenings, for instance, deserve a special attention in this respect. This is well illustrated on an example from my designer-maker practice, when a client who commissioned an outfit for a summer party told me that there was nothing she disliked more in her clothes than the feel of a cold metal zip next to her skin. Another client once declined a material that I recommended for a day dress because she felt she would soon come to dislike the sound it was making as she walked. Similarly, novelist Descain, interviewed for the collection *Women in Clothes* (Heti, Julavits & Shapton,2014), also refers to the sound of materials:

> (…) starched clothes also sound so different. I once interviewed weavers in different parts of India, and they were telling me how important the sound of silk is. If two women are going through a door together, and they rub saris, they should make a *kssshh*. They complained that cheap Chinese silks are flooding the market. They don't have the right sound. It should be rustling. (p. 40)

The role of sound in dress has been famously studied by Eicher in her anthropological accounts of tribal beads in Africa (Sciama & Eicher, 1998). Further references to sonic perceptions then occur in several contributions to the above-mentioned edited collection *Dress Sense* (2007), most explicitly in the study by Linda Welters who explored the significance of sound in daily use of Greek folk dress (2007). However, accounts of sonic perceptions linked to wearing contemporary Western dress are still scarce. The recent doctoral thesis of Chong Kwan (2016), exploring perceptions of Western dress in relation to all five senses (sight, touch, sound, smell and taste) is therefore a notable contribution to this emerging area of research. It is also worth noting though that Chong Kwan's adoption of Roach Higgins & Eicher's wider definition of "dress" [see Chapter 1.2, p. 27] expanded the area of her sensory explorations beyond clothing to all kinds of accessories, jewellery, shoes, scent and cosmetics.

In comparison to sound, then, tactile experiences of clothing perceived through the touch and feel of materials tend to be more often recognised for their significance in everyday use experiences. Buckley and Clarke (2017), for example, propose that the tactile experiences of wearing rayon in the 1930s denoted the era and shaped what they call the "everyday modernity" (p. 8-9). The same could be argued in connection to the tactile perceptions of wearing denim in the 1950s, or the 1960s impressions of wearing synthetic fibres such as acrylic, nylon or Spandex. The materials that soften through wear and become a "second skin" are yet another compelling example of how the tactile nature of textiles becomes integral to our perception of the clothes we wear (see e.g. Solomon, 1986; Miller & Woodward, 2011, 2012; Chapman, 2015 [2005]).

Olfactory experiences that get mentioned especially in connection to laundry practices (Pink, 2005; Laitala, Klepp & Boks, 2012; Pink, Mackley & Moroşanu, 2013; Rigby, 2016; Chong Kwan, 2016) also confirm that clothing is perceived through multiple sensory channels. For example, in their study of domestic laundering, Pink, Mackley & Moroşanu (2013) observed that people would often reassure themselves in the need to launder a particular piece by smelling it. Pink (2015 [2009]) also comments that this move is almost subconscious and so it can be difficult to detect through traditional interviewing methods, especially in cases when interviews take place outside the domestic environment, because people are unlikely to recall similar routine practices without replaying the situation in context. Another example of the strong link between smell and laundering comes from Fletcher's *Craft of Use* (2016) where one of the participants mentions his camping jumper which he has never washed because he does not want it to "lose its fantastic smell - a mix of fresh air and wood smoke" (p. 157). Similarly, one of the women interviewed by Heti, Julavits & Shapton (2014) talks about a wax-covered coat that reminds her of Scotland as "it smells of outdoors and sheep and rain, rain, lots and lots of rain, and black coffee" (p. 390).

All these examples evidence that whether or not we are aware of it, our relationships with the clothes we wear are constantly filtered through multiple senses. Importantly in the context of my thesis, Woodward also argues that it is the tactile and sensual impressions that make memories linked to clothing especially poignant (2007, p. 52). Her point that "reducing clothing to its visual properties ignores the crucial tactile and sensual aspects of clothing as worn by people" (2007, p. 27) therefore strongly resonates in the framing of my research.

SENSORY METHODOLOGY

The methodological significance of all these discoveries for my study is in that they clearly denote the importance of complementing the listening to what women say about their clothes by carefully observing how they touch and otherwise handle them. At this point, it also feels important to remind the reader a link back to the Prologue of this thesis [p. 13], where I described how a strong first impression of a woman folding her clothes into a suitcase seemed to hold a striking richness of information, reflecting a sensibility that in many ways inspired this research journey.

If we now return to the research of Sarah Pink, her numerous applied projects (see e.g. Pink 2005; Pink, 2011; Pink, 2012b; Pink et al., 2013) demonstrate that employing sensory perspectives in fieldwork can contribute valuable insights on how everyday products and services are experienced. As she explains:

> A methodology based in and a commitment to understanding the senses provides a route to forms of knowledge and knowing not accounted for in conventional forms of ethnography. It often leads us to the normally not spoken, the invisible and the unexpected - those things that people do not perhaps necessarily think it would be worth mentioning, or those things that tend to be felt or sensed rather than spoken about. (2015, p. 53)

In a similar vein, Klepp & Bjerck (2014) confirm that experiences connected to clothing are not always easily verbalized and often assume a tacit understanding (p. 374). The suitability of sensory approaches to the study of clothing was also confirmed through the previously mentioned doctoral study of Chong Kwan (2016), who also strongly relied on Pink's methodology. Moreover, her study focused on the under-researched area of everyday items, which is also highly relevant in the context of my research.

There are indeed multiple overlaps between Chong Kwan's work and my research, and these provide an important point of reference in the discussions of my findings [see Chapter 6.2 – 6.5, pp. 173 – 244]. Yet, there are also notable differences between her approach and my study. Firstly, Chong Kwan's research focused on wearers' embodied experiences and was not primarily directed towards design practice. Instead, she aimed to address the gap in knowledge on sensory experiences within the area of dress studies, as well as the lack of focus on dress within the discipline of sensory studies.

Secondly, while her methodology, like mine, was informed by Pink's sensory methods, Chong Kwan's primary research consisted of a series of semi-structured interviews most of which did not take place in participants' homes but rather in spaces especially hired for this purpose. As a result, her interviews focused on a smaller number of pre-selected items. Thirdly, while my study sample consisted of mature women (my participants were aged 29-69), Chong Kwan's participants were recruited from a wider age group (20-79) and included both men and women.

To reiterate then, in my research I set out to explore how women's sensory engagement with their clothes figured in their relationships with individual items and how these relationships could inform the creative practice of designers who wish to design for continuity (Skjold, 2014) and increased user satisfaction (Niinimäki, 2014). The research process of my wardrobe conversations was strongly shaped by Pink's work on sensory ethnography (2015 [2009]), my previous experiences from my designer-maker practice, and my own background in ethnography. My approach also reflected Norman's (2004) argument that look and feel in perception of design (*visceral level*) often precede considerations of how things work (*behavioural level*) and how they link to our self-image and memories (*reflective level*). As I explained in more detail in Chapters 3.5 and 4.1 [p. 80 and p. 99], both theory and practice equally underpinned my enquiry, albeit one or the other may have taken a stronger lead at different stages of the research.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter, divided into four sections detailed the methodology I chose to address the aims and objectives of my research. In the first part, I clarified that the philosophy of my research was led by an interpretivist approach which most adequately reflects the complexity and the nuanced character of everyday experiences with clothing. I also made clear that my overall approach to this study was from a position of practitioner-researcher. The theoretical and empirical stages of my research were therefore accompanied by an independent design research that aimed to contribute to the final objective of articulating my findings through a series of fashion artefacts. In addition, I explained that in the course of my research it emerged that the empirical stage along with a detailed analysis should be prioritized over designing a larger series of new garments, as originally intended.

Section two first pointed to some important methodological challenges of studying the lived experience of emotional connections to clothing. Later, I explained how my methodological

approach stemmed from the combination of my past designer-maker experience and my background in ethnography. I detailed how the work of the anthropologists Robert Murphy and Sarah Pink shaped my recognition that integrating ethnographic methods in interviewing involves a process of knowledge co-creation. I also outlined the implications of this approach on reflexivity and on the ethical considerations in both field research and knowledge articulation. The section concluded with an overview of the wardrobe method where I specified how my methods of studying women's experiences with clothing in the context of home environment aligned and differed from previous studies.

The third section introduced the key empirical evidence with respect to factors that affect emotional attachment to clothing. Studies by both anthropologists and fashion and textile researchers were included and the discussion of contributions and limitations of each study also noted their respective relevance and implications for my own research. The fourth and final section of this chapter pointed to the specifics of my interest in enhancing the current understanding of emotional connections to clothing. I highlighted the significance of multisensory approaches to studying women's relationships to clothes, while referring to previous fashion research, my own designer-maker practice and especially to Sarah Pink's sensory methodology that I experimented with in my fieldwork. Chapter 5 will now explain the process of my fieldwork and data analysis.

5 WARDROBE CONVERSATIONS

Entering the private space

Opening wardrobes

Understanding wardrobes

In this chapter, divided into three sections, I summarize the process of my fieldwork and data analysis. I first explain the methodological and ethical issues I considered, then outline the preparation I went through before entering the field and I reflect on how my presence in my interviewees' homes shaped the character of my interviews. I also show how the first interview served to inform the rest of my fieldwork. In section two I expand on my overall approach to the fieldwork; I describe how my previous contact with some of my interviewees strengthened this study and I also discuss how the process of establishing rapport was negotiated in the intimacy of the home environment. Later, I reflect on my role in the field and how my contributions and interventions shaped the direction and scope of my interviewees' narratives. Section three focuses on four key stages of my data analysis: 1. Transcription, 2. Wall printouts and wardrobe narratives, 3. Codes, themes, and categories and 4. Sketchbook reflections and selections for final designs.

5.1   ENTERING THE PRIVATE SPACE

In the previous chapter I detailed my overall methodology and discussed the key concepts and research methods that framed my fieldwork. In addition to these, the way I approached interviewing women about their wardrobes was crucially inspired by a question from a Q&A session at the 10th Design and Emotion Conference I attended in Amsterdam in September 2016. "Do you think asking people why they love something is the best way of finding out why they love something?", one discussant asked. At the time, I was considering a variety of possible approaches to my fieldwork and so the question truly resonated with me. It seemed to capture, I thought, the essence of the challenges inherent in studying the elusive concept of emotional durability.

As a result, I decided not to impose any hard and fast structure on my interviews. Considering that the main purpose of my fieldwork was to gain a deep insight into women's experiences and their attitudes towards emotional durability and longevity of clothing, I wanted to avoid, as much as possible, pre-framing their answers in any way. I therefore chose to focus on what women wanted to tell me, an approach that corresponds with narrative perspectives that aim to avoid "rigidly structured research interviews, which can artificially fragment individual's experiences" (Elliott, 2005, p. 36). In practice then, my interview schedules [see Appendix C, p. 525] served only as a mental reminder in case prompts and additional questions were needed during the interview.

I always kept them in my bag, mainly for my own comfort, but I never took them out or shared them in any way with my interviewees.

This way of approaching my fieldwork helped me to refocus on the interconnection between the theoretical and the practical elements of my project. A narrative approach reflected much more closely my previous experiences of visiting the clients of my studio [as described in Chapters 1.1 and 4.2, p. 24 and p. 102]. The links between my research and my practice suddenly became much clearer again and so I found my own voice within and beyond the scope of existing approaches to ethnographic work at large, as well as to wardrobe studies as a more specific category of ethnographic fieldwork.

Fieldwork planning - access to participants and sampling

My decisions on sampling and access to participants aimed to strike the right balance between the research aims and objectives and the ethical considerations connected to interviewing women in their homes. The two primary concerns were in negotiating the privacy boundaries while entering women's properties and at the same time mitigating any potential safety risks for myself as a female researcher researching on my own. Another key element of fieldwork planning stemmed from the fact that establishing close rapport between the researcher and the research participants is paramount for studies that take place in the intimate spaces of participants' homes, and more specifically in their bedrooms where wardrobes are normally located.

In the view of these concerns, I identified snowball sampling and word of mouth as the most suitable sampling methods for my research. The advantage of snowball sampling is that participants are often more willing to take part if they know someone who has already participated and enjoyed the experience (Given, 2008). In addition, this approach also ensures that researchers only enter research situations with people with whom they had had previous contact through common acquaintances, thus mitigating potential safety risks when entering a stranger's property (Ibid).

As my practice has been integral to the research process, in the initial stages I approached several clients of my studio, who kindly agreed to be interviewed (Hanka (Worcestershire, January 2017), Julie (Oxfordshire, March 2017) and Tanya (London, April 2017). I also expected that these contacts could act as 'gatekeepers' who could potentially introduce me to more interviewees. However, for

a number of reasons, such as for example timing (one potential interviewee contacted by Julie was in the process of moving abroad), or the time commitment needed (another considered by Hanka would struggle to find the time needed for the interview) this did not develop further. Nevertheless, the sample later grew organically, through both my later interviewees (Kathryn introduced me to her friend Anabelle) and further contacts I acquired through my personal contacts and social networks.

Although I had no predefined parameters for the participants, apart from that they were women with no fashion background and willing to invest time in my research, my initial hypothesis was that interviewing mature women would provide richer material for my study. This hypothesis was confirmed by the early interviews with the clients of my studio and so it consequently shaped the composition of the final sample. The early stages of my fieldwork also confirmed that to attain the richness and depth of the "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) I aimed for with my study, within the time constraints of doctoral research, the total number of studies would be at least eight but no more than twelve. This decision was additionally influenced by the fact that women of the age group I chose to focus on generally lead busy lifestyles with full-time work or childcare and often both. This meant that I had to be quite flexible in terms of timing of each interview as some women who agreed to take part later had to reschedule several times due other commitments. For the same reasons, interviews planned with two other participants did not take place in the end. The final sample therefore included ten participants.

Between December 2016 and April 2018, I interviewed women aged 29-69 in their homes in London (1), Oxfordshire (1), Berkshire (2), Worcestershire (1), Sheffield (1), Kirklees (3) and Leeds (1). As the focus of my research was not on consumption patterns as such but rather on women's experiences from the use stage of clothing, geography factors were not considered key determinants for participation. Equally, although all women were UK residents at the time of my fieldwork, the composition of the final sample included women from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Due to circumstances likely influenced by the sampling methods which relied on contacts from my designer practice and my own social networks, all women I interviewed were graduates who have or previously had professional careers.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Informed consent

Once access was established, I offered each woman an introductory meeting to explain the purpose of my research, how results will be used, the time commitment involved and to clarify that consent to use audio-recordings and photography during the interview will be needed. However, participants mostly considered this unnecessary and an e-mail explanation with an opportunity to ask questions and clarify any details proved sufficient and less time-consuming for both sides. A copy of the *Information for Participants* and the *Informed Consent* forms [see Appendix F, p. 562] was also sent by e-mail at this stage. To make sure that each of my interviewees felt entirely comfortable, I took the opportunity to re-explain the whole research process again in person at the beginning of each interview. I allowed enough time for each woman to re-read the *Information for Participants*, the *Informed Consent* form and to ask any questions or address any concerns off record. Each participant was reminded of her right to withdraw from the study at any point without giving a reason. They were also informed that ahead of any dissemination of the results, they will be given a copy of their interview transcripts and photographs for approval. If no further clarification was needed, the forms were signed, and audio-recording started.

Confidentiality, Anonymity, Harm

Due to the fact that the interview process included audio-visual data, during the initial meeting and ahead of each interview participants were reminded to try to avoid information that they would not wish to be used in the research outputs (e.g. avoid using surnames). Only anonymised first names of participants are used in this thesis. Initially, I aimed to give my interviewees the option of choosing a pseudonym they would feel comfortable with. However, apart from Golraz [pseudonym], my interviewees felt that this task involved extra time and energy and they generally found this issue unnecessary. Therefore, the decision was left to me. In the process of selecting the pseudonyms, I aimed to choose names that would retain a faithful picture of each woman by adequately reflecting her age, social standing, and ethnic origin. Pseudonyms were also used for any other persons mentioned during the interview (such as e.g. partners or friends).

However, some of the nuances involved in this process surprised me. I found that although I had no problems with choosing pseudonyms for my Slovakian and other international participants, these decisions felt much more complex when it came to my British interviewees. In the discussions with my advisers I found that although I had lived in the UK for last nine years, it was quite difficult for me to adequately gage the class and age connotations of female first names. For example, I was told that the name Jade which I assigned to one of my interviewees was more likely to be associated with a working class background and so did not suit this woman with a middle-class upbringing. Therefore, the names I chose in the end are a result of a consensus between my British advisers and myself. Other personal data such as age, occupation, geographical area, and family situation, providing context of each participant's situation, were not anonymised. All my interviewees were given an option to opt for full anonymisation, none of them however did so.

The possibility that this research could lead to any level of psychological harm or any other negative consequences for the participants was minimal. The in-depth interviews focused on items in women's wardrobes and while some of these were tied with memories of significant events from the past, emotional situations that could be considered harmful to either the women I interviewed or myself did not occur during the research. However, a strategy for sensitive situations was a part of my fieldwork planning and it was described in more detail in my Ethics approval application.

Several types of data were collected for this research and the overview of each type of data and how it has been or will be used is explained in the summary below. All this information was also included in the *Information for Participants* [see Appendix F.1, p. 563].

1. Contact details (phone number, address, and e-mail address)

Strictly confidential and never disclosed to anyone.

2. Some personal details (age, occupation, geographical area, and family situation)

Used in my research outputs. Surnames will never be used, and first names were replaced by pseudonyms.

3. Audio recordings of interviews

Shared only (if/when necessary) with the project supervisors who agreed to preserve the confidentiality of all the information. Audio recordings will not, at any point of the research, be shared beyond the supervisory team.

4. Selected parts of interview transcripts

Used in my research outputs. Each participant was given a copy of her transcribed interview for approval prior to any publication or dissemination.

5. Photographs of participants taken during the interviews and photographs of the clothes discussed during interviews

Used in my research outputs. Each participant was given an opportunity to withdraw any images that she did not wish to be included.

STARTING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Entering the private space

The interviews mostly took place at times when other family members or flatmates were away, to minimize distractions and to enable both my interviewees and me a maximum concentration on the task at hand. For the same reasons, at the time of planning, each woman was told that the interview would take between two to three hours, to make sure our conversation was scheduled for a time when we could take as much time as comfortably needed. Although this quite generous chunk of time was allowed for each conversation, the first interview with Golraz in December 2016 suggested that a shorter session might be more appropriate. After just under one and a half hour of a lively conversation, Golraz generously taking out pieces from her wardrobe and reminiscing about their history and her relationship to each, laying them out on her bed and sofa for me, I started feeling that she was getting slightly distracted and possibly a bit tired of the conversation. After a short coffee break during which she answered several e-mails, allowing the time for me to photograph

each of the items we talked about, our conversation continued for another half an hour with a renewed interest and enthusiasm.

Similarly, in nearly all subsequent interviews, about one hour and twenty minutes into the conversation, my interviewees started losing concentration, which seemed to be caused by a combination of fatigue and a concern that they might be talking too much or boring me with lengthy stories of their clothes. At this stage of the interview, more prompting from my side seemed welcome by women, giving me the opportunity to ask any questions that had not yet been answered in the previous conversation. Only in one case the conversation continued beyond this point with an uninterrupted intensity (Mary, recordings 1hr47mins; 52mins; 26mins; 1min). The length of each interview was also influenced by a variety of individual factors such as the volume of clothing owned, the level of detail that each participant considered appropriate for the interview, or even the speech rate of each of my interviewees. In this context, the length of each transcript offers a more accurate account of the duration of each interview [see Table 5.1, p. 139].

Pilot study

Although the initial study with Golraz was originally intended as a pilot study, our conversation proved that the overall approach I chose to the interview process was appropriate for my study and so the interview with Golraz was included in my main data. At the same time, the study with Golraz informed the subsequent interviews in several ways.

Firstly, as I have already mentioned above, talking to Golraz made me better aware of the timeframe for each interview and the situations I may need to negotiate to achieve the breadth and the depth of the data I aimed for. Secondly, this interview led to my decision to safeguard as much information as possible about the aims of my research prior to each interview (within the scope of relevant research ethics procedures) in order to avoid a bias resulting from participant expectations. Golraz, like me, was a doctoral student and I initially approached her because she attended a presentation of my research and showed an interest in the topic. However, during the verbatim transcription of our interview, I noticed that some of the language she used to talk about her wardrobe may have been influenced by her previous knowledge of my research. Golraz quite frequently used terms such as 'emotional attachment' or 'favourites', and without any prompting from my side claimed that if it were not for the fluctuations in her weight, she would like to have as few clothes as possible.

Although I did not feel that this fact devalued the research data in any considerable way (the effects of the bias were evaluated with caution during the data analysis), it was clear to me that similar situations should be avoided in the future.

Another consideration raised by the first interview was linked to the camera I used. Prior to interviewing Golraz I borrowed an SLR camera (Nikon D90) from the university. While Golraz seemed to have no issues with her clothes or herself being photographed and she even readily volunteered to be captured in her favourite garments, I felt that the presence of this quite robust device was disrupting the intimacy that was critical for a rich conversation. Moreover, I found that handling this large and quite heavy camera for the whole duration of the interview was both challenging and impractical as it was difficult for me to flexibly interact with Golraz who repeatedly asked me to touch or handle some of the garments she was showing me. As a result,, I decided to use my personal compact camera (Fujifilm X10) in the subsequent interviews.

Lastly, following my experiences from the first two interviews (Golraz and Hanka), I decided not to photograph each garment and its details in a static way, outside the interview context. As I mentioned earlier, a short pause in my conversation with Golraz gave me the opportunity to inspect each item we had talked about in more detail and take photographs of the garments and their details by stretching them on the bed. I repeated the same in my following study with Hanka in January 2017, as I was given this chance while Hanka attended to her children. Being able to handle each garment, explore the details, look for marks of wear and take multiple images was no doubt enlightening in several ways. For example, the material signs of use both corroborated and enriched women's verbal descriptions (Woodward, 2007). On careful reflection though, I resolved that the static garments, removed from the context of the wardrobe and their owners, lacked any sensuality and so conveyed an image which was directly opposite to my research intentions. In addition, photographing each garment separately proved to be quite time-consuming and therefore not practicable in most cases. Still more importantly, I felt that many women would find this too intrusive, especially in the case of the more ordinary, everyday garments (such as jeans and leisure wear), which tend to epitomize greater intimacy due to the frequency with which they are worn.

Starting my fieldwork by interviewing women I knew through my studio practice resolved the initial difficulties with establishing rapport with research participants. It also proved helpful in refining the interview process, as the mutual familiarity was also reflected in the amount of time I spent with these women. In two cases (Hanka and Tanya) I stayed overnight and in another (Julie) I stayed with the next-door neighbour. This allowed sufficient time for reflection on what works and what does not, without compromising the integrity of the research process.

As Twigger-Holroyd (2013) also notes, locating my research in my established studio practice freed me from the usual business concerns and enabled me to spend more time talking to my clients and develop ideas further (p. 37). The fact that I had known these women for many years, enabled me to see our conversations in a temporal context, as a moment in time in the life of a wardrobe, and so identify the strengths of my approach, its limitations, and detect potential biases in the interview narratives. As Murphy (1990) points out, such approach often has "great methodological merit, for, unlike survey research, it allows the investigator to check statements of attitude and value against actual behaviour" (p. 175).

This first phase of my empirical research also enabled me to consider the level and character of my input to the interview process, to refine questions for subsequent interviews and to further build on my interviewing skills. Not less importantly, the initial interviews with the clients of my studio also alerted me to some aspects of women's narratives that may require a higher degree of caution at the stage of analysis. For example, women's estimates of the length of ownership of various items as well as their statements on how often they wore certain pieces sometimes changed during the course of an interview. Also, some of these estimates were clearly highly subjective, which was interesting to observe in the framing of my research, considering that I aimed to focus on women's own perceptions of the clothes they chose to talk about.

As Lule & King (2016) note, the value of such narratives is not in their "intrinsic factual accuracy" (p. 451) but in the subjective meaning and personal interpretations that they help to unravel (Cameron, 2012; Elliott, 2005). One example here would be Tanya's description of her favourite blue dress [Chapter 6.1, p. 161, Figure 6.5; Tanya's narrative Appendix A.10, p. 498] which she told me she had had for about twenty five years. I later learned that the dress was by the British brand

Cabbages & Roses, founded in 2000,seventeen years before my interview with Tanya took place. This case well demonstrates why similar estimates should not be taken at face value and used outside the context of each narrative. This example also usefully highlights an important methodological issue inherent in similar studies, as also noted by Laitala, Klepp & Henry (2017). The experiences from my interviews confirm that unless an acquisition of a garment is associated with a significant event that is relatively easy to date (such as for example a holiday abroad or a special occasion such as wedding, graduation or a 50th birthday party), estimating the length of ownership of garments is more likely an exercise in approximation than an information with a factual reliability.

Talking about wardrobes

An important aspect of my preparation for each interview was considering my own self-presentation in terms of clothes that I chose to wear. As I was meeting women in their homes, I thought it was safe to assume that my interviewees' style of dressing would be relatively informal, within each woman's circumstances. I therefore aimed for a good balance between looking prepared and professional, but I consciously avoided a too polished look which I felt could reinforce the researcher - interviewee distance that I was eager to minimize. Sherman Heyl (2001) argues that ethnographic interviewing relies on a respectful relationship and rapport between the researcher and the interviewee, "for these to be a genuine exchange of views and enough time and openness in the interviews for the interviewees to explore purposefully with the researcher the meanings they place on events in their world" (p. 369). In line with this view, I strongly felt that my self-presentation would be an important contributing factor in setting the tone for the interview.

My choice of clothing therefore also varied from situation to situation. For example, a Saturday morning interview on a smallholding in rural Yorkshire required a different outfit to a week-day meeting with a woman that had just returned from a day's work in her managerial job in London. In addition, as the images throughout this thesis also illustrate, the outfits women chose to wear for their interviews were without an exception very casual. The fact that my interviewees seemed not to have invested extra effort into dressing for the occasion was to me the first indication that they felt relaxed and open to our conversation. This, in turn, also helped me to approach the interview in a relaxed manner that relied more on a mutual exchange and conversation, rather than on a more standard interviewer-interviewee hierarchy.

Introductions

Upon my arrival at a woman's place, I was usually offered a hot drink. This provided an opportunity for an informal warm-up chat which normally took place either in the kitchen or in the sitting room. During this time, I could answer any remaining questions about the research and the interview itself and clarify again how the recordings and photographs will be used. The *Informed Consent* forms were also signed at this point. After about fifteen minutes of such introductions, my interviewees usually spontaneously offered to show me their wardrobes. This involved moving from the social space of the kitchen or the sitting room to the areas of home normally designated to the closest family and friends only. In the context of the interview, this spatial transition within the home was a key move.

An invitation to my interviewee's bedroom, spare room, bathroom or even their children's bedroom, where their clothes were stored, was both a symbolic and an actual demonstration of mutual trust. This moment, I often noticed, was almost invariably accompanied by a sudden change of register in our conversation from the still relatively formal researcher - interviewee interaction, to a much more casual and relaxed discussion about clothes between two women. Interestingly, I have often observed similar transitions when visiting my clients. The business proposition inevitably linked with the dressmaker-client relationship, usually discussed in my client's kitchen or an open living space, tends to quickly transform to a peer-to-peer conversation about likes, dislikes, dreams and experiences the moment the discussion moves in front of the wardrobe, in my client's bedroom. Woodward similarly notes that interviewing women in the intimate spaces where their wardrobes were located enabled her to establish "instant rapport" which meant that she got to know her informants "from the clothing outwards" (2007, p. 75).

Recording conversations

To minimize any awkward moments that sometimes occur when the transition to a recorded conversation is too abrupt, I aimed to turn the recording on as soon as possible after my interviewee signed the *Informed Consent* form. For the same reason, I used a discrete dictaphone with a good distance range and an efficient ambient noise filter. I also had my mobile phone on hand as a backup in case of any technical issues with the recorder or the camera. This turned out extremely helpful especially during my conversation with Mary, who approached the interview process extremely systematically, aiming to show me the whole of her extensive collection of clothing. During this time,

my fully charged camera run out of battery and I also run out of the recording space on my dictaphone, so having the telephone back up enabled us to continue without any interruption.

Once the recorder was on, I just simply asked women to talk about the clothes in their wardrobes, especially those they have owned for some time. Where necessary, I guided them to pay attention to the length of ownership of each item, how it was acquired, if it was still worn and what they liked or disliked about it [see the Interview Schedules, Appendix C, p. 525]. In cases when warm-up prompts were needed to start the flow of the conversation, I asked women to show me the newest addition to their wardrobe. I assumed that talking about a new item, a piece that women may still feel excited about, would be a good 'icebreaker'. This proved to be correct and after this initial question, very little prompting was usually needed for women to select and talk about the rest of their clothes quite independently. The direction of the interview was then mainly led by my interviewees and I left any questions that remained unanswered during our conversation to the end of the interview.

Photographing conversations

As women started talking, I asked for additional verbal approval before I started photographing. Although I explained that the main focus of my photographs will be on their hands and the ways in which clothes are handled, most women quite happily posed for images that included their heads and some even offered to pose in the items they were showing me. Interestingly, the items women volunteered to be photographed in were typically their favourite clothes. Also noteworthy in this context is the fact that during the course of ten interviews, there were only two instances when I was asked not to take photographs. In both cases this happened in a situation when my interviewees were trying on a piece they did not feel sure about. *Don't take a photo, I don't feel good in it*, Hanka told me. When the photographs were later sent to the women for approval, out of the overall of 2778 photos I had taken, I was asked to remove only one image, with the explanation that my interviewee looked *particularly despondent* in that one.

Sharing knowledge

Pink (2015) notes that there is now an increasing recognition of the "need to investigate both the emplacement of the people who participate in our ethnographic research and ethnographers' own

emplacement as individuals in and as part of specific research contexts." (p. 28). As my interviews with women progressed, they almost invariably transformed into conversations with mutual exchange of experiences and memories related to clothing.

In an early example of reflexive approaches to empirical research, with a strong emphasis on the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, Oakley (1990 [1981]) points out that she was not the only one asking questions in her research. The women she was interviewing also seemed to have a number of questions to ask her and so she decided to step away from the role of a detached researcher. As she explains:

> (...) the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own identity in the relationship. (Ibid, p. 41).

Similarly, Woodward (2007) also mentions situations when sharing her own experiences helped to build closer relationship with her participants and enriched the stories shared.

> This is particularly important given the intimate nature of my enquiries. For example, many women, whilst willing to show me their hanging clothing, were far more reticent when it came to discussing underwear. My tactic was to share some anecdote of my own, which more often than not serves to acquire information in return and establishes an intimacy. (p. 78)

In line with the points made by Oakley and Woodward, I too found that contributing my own story often reminded my interviewees of related experiences and so helped them elaborate on a number of issues in much more detail than they may have otherwise done. This was especially significant in my interview with Tanya, when the memories of my own prom dress triggered a series of recollections from her past that were not only extremely touching, but also, as it later turned out, critical in shaping her future relationship to fashion and clothes.

In addition to this, my combined role of dressmaker-researcher was reflected in the fact that it was quite common for women to ask me for advice on styling, clothes shopping, care and repair and in a couple of cases also for tips for their planned sewing projects. To give some examples, I explained

to Golraz that her frustration with one leg of her jeans that keeps rotating as she walks had nothing to do with her *physique* but rather with the fact that it was not cut straight on the grain as it should have been. I advised to Hanka how best to fold her favourite coat when she puts it away to protect it from moths and I also gave some styling tips to Julie who repeatedly mentioned that one of her key issues with clothes is not having the imagination to experiment with combinations and different ways of wearing things. I impressed Mary by spotting an invisible repair on one of her favourite cardigans from a distance and explained to Emma how she can easily line a skirt that she likes but does not wear often enough because *it is really crappily made*. As a practitioner, I was also able to explore and photograph most garments in more detail, as this was generally perceived by women as my professional interest in construction details rather than intrusive researcher curiosity, an issue Woodward (2007), for example, encountered.

Research data

Table 5.1 (below) offers an overview of all interviews and Table 5.2 [p. 140] gives details of the number of garments discussed with each woman, also sub-divided into categories. The final data I collected for each woman includes:

1. Audio recording of the interview

2. Verbatim transcript of the interview

3. Photographs taken during the interview

4. My observations noted after each interview

5. General field notes

6. Analytical notes from different stages of the research

Name	Interview duration	Word count of transcript	Double spaced pages	Number of photos	Number of garments discussed	Age	Place of interview
Golraz	2hrs 30min	16.285	47	286	20	29	Kirklees
Hanka	2hrs 50min	20.275	62	382	48	38	Worcestershire
Julie	1hr 20mins	10.110	33	109	20	57	Oxfordshire
Tanya	2hrs	12.508	42	258	30	69	London
Louise	1hr 45mins	20.322	60	308	56	30	Kirklees
Emma	1hr 30mins	13.546	40	158	28	45	Kirklees
Kathryn	1hr 30mins	13.549	42	231	34	53	Berkshire
Anabelle	2hrs	19.509	70	266	71	50	Berkshire
Mary	3hrs	24.727	85	622	115	45	Sheffield
Nicola	1hr 30mins	14.239	38	161	29	32	Leeds
Totals	19hrs 55mins	165.070	519	2778	451		

Table 5.1 Overview of interviews

Name	Skirts	Dresses	Knitwear	Tops/ Shirts/ T-shirts	Trousers/ Shorts	Jackets/ Blazers/ Suits	Coats/ Outerwear	Accessories/ Scarves/ Shawls	Sportswear/ Loungewear	Nightwear	Underwear
Golraz	2	4	2	-	2	3	5	2	-	-	-
Hanka	5	20	6	4	1	-	5	7	-	-	-
Julie	-	10	5	2	-	2	1	-	-	-	-
Tanya	8	8	3	-	-	3	-	5	-	3	-
Louise	10	17	1	11	7	3	1	2	1	2	1
Emma	5	6	-	8	5	4	-	-	-	-	-
Kathryn	3	6	5	4	2	-	4	6	3	1	-
Anabelle	24	21	8	6	3	4	1	-	3	-	-
Mary	12	30	22	17	4	23	5	2	-	-	-
Nicola	2	9	4	6	5	2	1	-	-	-	-
Totals	**71**	**131**	**56**	**58**	**29**	**44**	**23**	**24**	**7**	**6**	**1**
Garments Total											450

Table 5.2 Overview of garments discussed with each woman

5.3 UNDERSTANDING WARDROBES - THE PROCESS OF ANALYSIS

ITERATIVE ANALYSIS

Analysis in ethnography is an iterative process (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010 [1999]), it does not simply follow the field research, rather, it both accompanies and informs the data collection (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999; Brewer, 2000; Huberman & Miles, 1998). In addition, as Pink (2015) notes, in sensory ethnography the analysis typically "moves between different registers of engagement with research materials and between different materials" and it also involves "analysing the same materials in different ways" (p. 158). In the light of this, the structure of this section does not necessarily reflect a neat chronological order in which all the different materials I collected during my interviews were analysed. Instead, it captures the key stages in my analysis process.

James Clifford notes that "living does not easily organize itself into a continuous narrative" (1986, p. 106). The same applies in research, especially research that attempts to capture narratives of everyday experiences, as also highlighted by Elliott (2005):

> (…) once we become aware that when the subjects of our research provide us with narratives, they are not merely reporting their experiences but rather are engaged in an activity that makes sense of those experiences, we are obliged to admit that our own research narratives are also constructed. Research is frequently a frustrating and messy enterprise with false starts, and blind alleys to negotiate, but in published work it is more often presented as a logical progression of stages. (p. 154)

Taking these points into account, in the process of my analysis some tasks inevitably preceded others, as for example in the case of transcription, a prerequisite for coding. Similarly, analysing each individual case was first needed before I could proceed to cross-case comparisons. However, other stages often overlapped and so gradually informed each other. For example, the photographs I took during the interviews were not analysed separately, in a single step, but were used in conjunction with my recordings, transcripts and field notes at different points throughout the process. For

instance, when used in sequence with my interview recordings, the photographs enabled me to recall each conversation in detail and so also contributed to my analytical notes.

In addition, throughout the three years of my research I collected inspirational materials from exhibitions, travels, web and the printed media, including photographs, articles, fabric swatches, patterns or textile fragments and I slowly added these to my studio inspiration board [Figure 5.1]. The board was important, as it served as a tangible reminder of the key ideas linked to the research. It also facilitated reflection at various stages of the project. Through arranging and re-arranging the collected materials, the studio board helped me to think about the hierarchies and relationships of various concepts as they emerged from the research. In the final stages of my analysis, I selected materials from the board and used them in conjunction with my interview photographs and documentation of my studio experiments to both facilitate and document my thinking about the final artefacts in my sketchbooks [Figures 5.2 & 5.3].

Figure 5.1 Studio inspiration board in progress (Year 2)
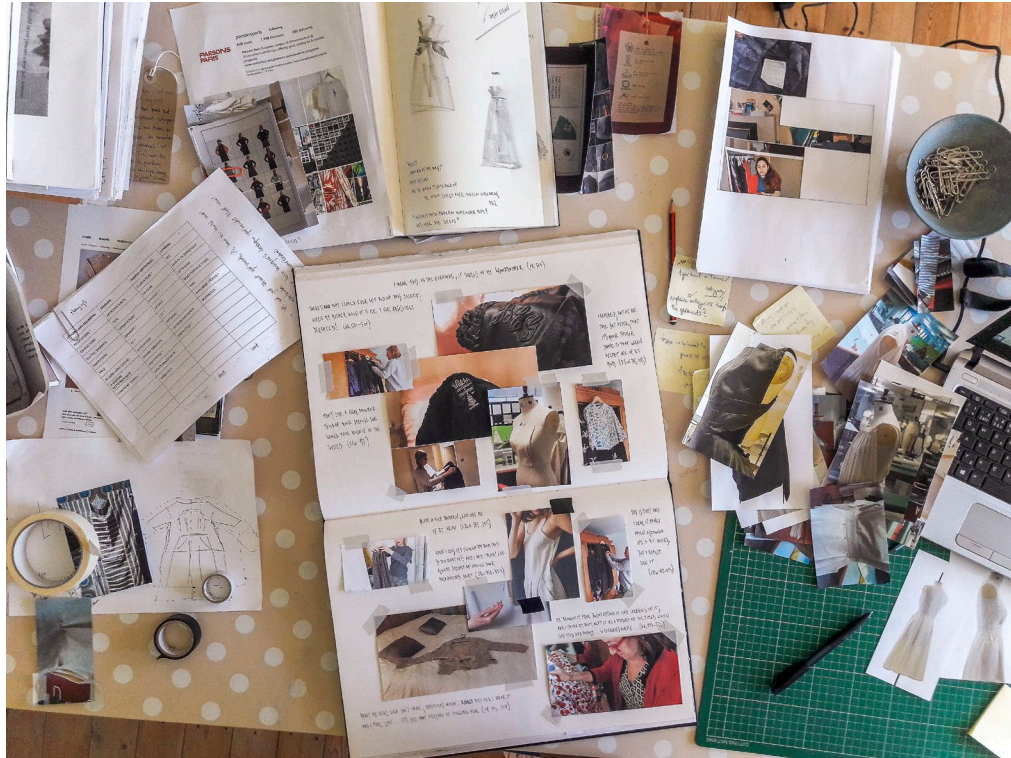
Figure 5.2 Sketchbook experimentation - collating materials from the studio inspiration board with primary research materials
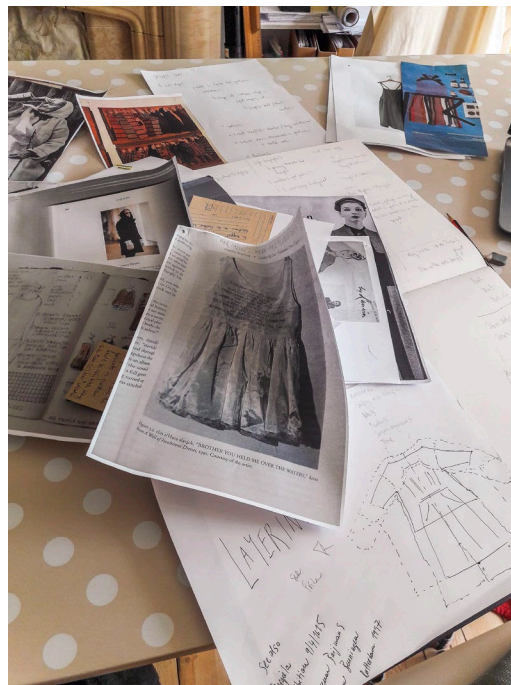
Figure 5.3 Sketchbook experimentation - collating materials from the studio inspiration board with primary research materials

PAPER-BASED AND COMPUTER-BASED ANALYSIS

I also combined paper-based and computer-based methods at different stages of the analysis process. Given the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of my research [see Chapters 4.1 and 4.2, p. 99 and p.102] and the intimate nature of my contact with my interviewees, I found paper-based analysis more appropriate in the initial stages. I used paper copies of transcripts and selected photographs, hand-written notes, colour-coded post-it notes and highlighters which enabled me to familiarise myself with the data in great depth and in a more tactile and more sensual way than would have been possible by using purely computer-based approach. Nevertheless, a computer was of course essential for storing and organizing my data, transcribing recordings (using MS Word and the oTranscribe on-line transcription software), coding, collating, and cross-case comparisons in the later stages of analysis, using MS Excel. I considered using the NVivo software to aid the analysis process, however, I resolved that the tactile engagement with my data enabled by a combination of printed materials with Excel spreadsheets allowed me a closer control over the data and it also better suited my personal preferences as a researcher.

The following sections offer an overview of the key stages of my data analysis. As an indication of the scope of analysis at different stages of the process, the information in brackets specifies the respective focus on case analysis, cross-case analysis, or the combination of both.

1. Transcription [case analysis]

All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim. This required efficient data management as in addition to 2778 photos I had twenty hours of audio recordings that amounted to 165.000 words and 519 double spaced pages [Table 5.1, p. 139]. The decision to use verbatim transcription as opposed to other, more selective, approaches to transcribing audio data was made for three main reasons:

1. To capture the interview in its entirety, as a narrative of a moment in life of a woman and her wardrobe, including an unedited account of her own interpretations and values linked to clothing.

2. To enable a critical reflection on my own input in the interview process and the way this both contributed to and shaped the data collected during the interview.

3. To provide a tool for validation of my research findings available to other researchers and also to preserve the research data in 'raw form' that enables testing alternative approaches to analysis in the future.

In the introduction of my approach to the interview process in Chapter 5.1 [p. 125] I mentioned Elliott's (2005) point that social sciences have been turning away from interviews with rigid structure on the grounds that these may unnaturally fragment people's lived experience (p. 36). Along the same lines, it is now widely recognized that transcription is a critical part of data analysis, rather than a dull, mechanical process that simply must be endured before the researcher can proceed to analysis (Pink, 2015; Silverman, 2014; O'Dell & Willim, 2013; Wengraf, 2001).

The truth is that it is virtually impossible to transcribe an interview without losing some of the richness of human conversation, as any transcription is to a greater or lesser degree an editing process. However, Elliot (2005) argues that qualitative researchers should aim "to find a method for preserving some of the additional meaning that was conveyed by the speaker's use of intonation, pauses, rhythm, hesitation, and body language" (p. 51), because all these can provide rich contextual information for the analysis. This is well illustrated in the following excerpt from one of my research interviews, in which Louise describes two unwanted gifts that she received from her mother-in-law:

> *It's just not my style so…I don't know…so she gets me…yeah…this fluffy one…and another…very fluffy one I think…GOD….I'm so small (trying to reach it on the top shelf)…but yeah…THAT one…that ACTUALLY…now I've come to like (laugh)…when I'm poorly…but it is just the colour!…you know - it's like…uhhh (making faces)…what this is like…(laughs) (Louise 243-246)*

The information I noted in brackets during the transcription not only helped me, as a researcher, to recall the moment with more accuracy in subsequent readings, but these extra details also provide useful clues for any future readers as they help to envisage the situation in much more lively terms. Moreover, this approach to transcribing enabled me to familiarize with my data in depth, which proved beneficial in consecutive stages of my analysis.

2. Wall printouts and wardrobe narratives [case analysis; cross-case analysis]

Another important phase of my analysis was the iterative selection of key garments from each woman's narrative. The photographs I took during the conversations were crucial at this stage as they allowed to reflect on each item in more detail after the interview. This was very helpful because examining every single garment is rarely practicable during interviews as it can be both too intrusive and extremely time-consuming (Woodward, 2007). Moreover, using the photographs in conjunction with the recordings, transcripts and my field notes again enabled me to recall and visualize the whole interview process in much more detail. As Pink comments, "a rich combination of written and visual representation can create possibilities for engaging them in mutual meaning making" (2007 [2001], p. 168). The fact that my photography focused on the ways in which women handled and otherwise engaged with the clothes they talked about further contributed to this process, as my images provided layers of non-verbal information that could not be captured on audio.

The process of selection involved dividing the key garments from each interview in two categories. I identified those that women liked and those that they no longer seemed to be sure about or did not wear anymore for some reason. These selections were then printed out and displayed on my studio wall [Figure 5.4] with additional colour-coded information such as women's statements about the liked garments (in vivo codes), the approximate length of ownership (if known), and in the case of garments that were no longer among the favourites, women's statements about why this happened. The decision to include the latter reflected an approach in which identifying "negative instances - that is, where variables or items are unlike each other or contest the existing definition" (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p.172) is considered a valuable step in refining researcher's understanding of the concepts and patterns emerging from the data. These printouts then covered the walls of my studio for the remainder of my research.

Parallel to this process, I also selected those photographs of each women's favourite garments which I felt best conveyed the narrative associated with them and I identified relevant sections of transcripts to accompany these images. The decisions I was making at each stage of this process helped me to gradually refine my thinking and develop clearer insights into the patterns emerging from each case as well as across the data. This part of my analysis corresponded with Alveson & Skoldberg's (2018 [2000]) claim that understanding in qualitative research is often achieved "not by laborious pondering, but rather at a stroke, whereby patterns in complex wholes are illuminated

by a kind of mental flashlight, giving an immediate and complete overview" (p. 52). The analytical notes I was continuously taking [Figures 5.5-5.6] then enabled me to start work on the first drafts of case summaries in the form of wardrobe narratives, capturing the essence of each woman's individual experience [Appendix A, p. 342]. A more detailed discussion of these wardrobe narratives, that are integral to my research methodology, is included in Chapter 6.1 [p. 166]. – A note on the presentation of findings.

Figure 5.4 Garment selections from primary research displayed on my studio wall
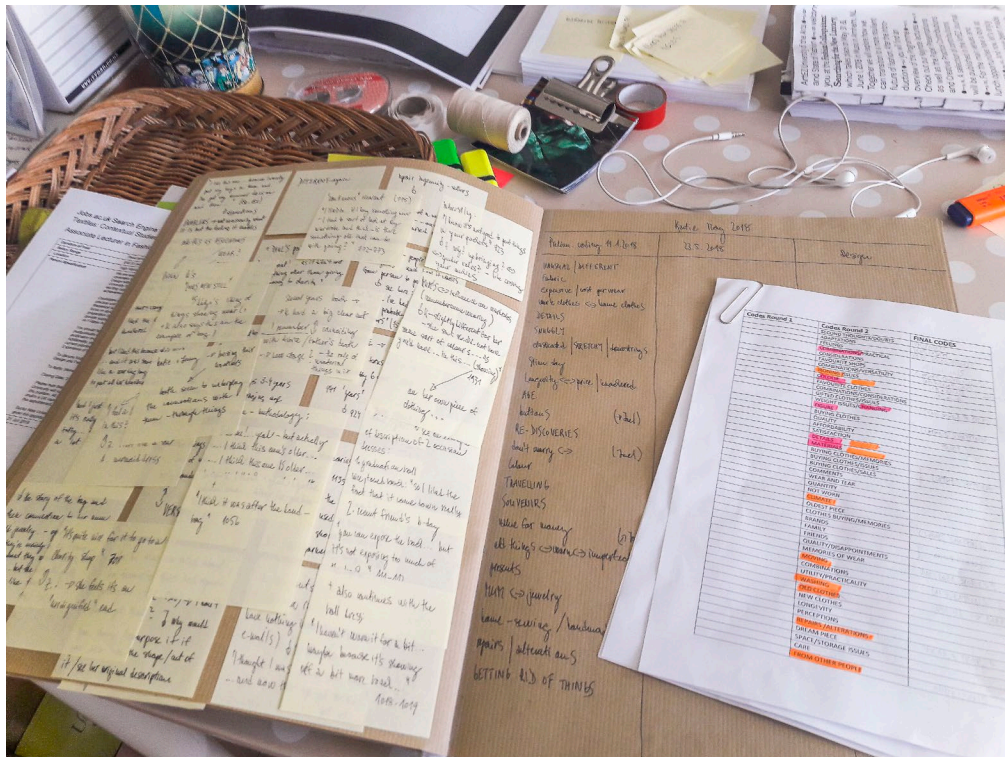
Figure 5.5 Analytical notes from reading of transcripts and garment selections: example 1
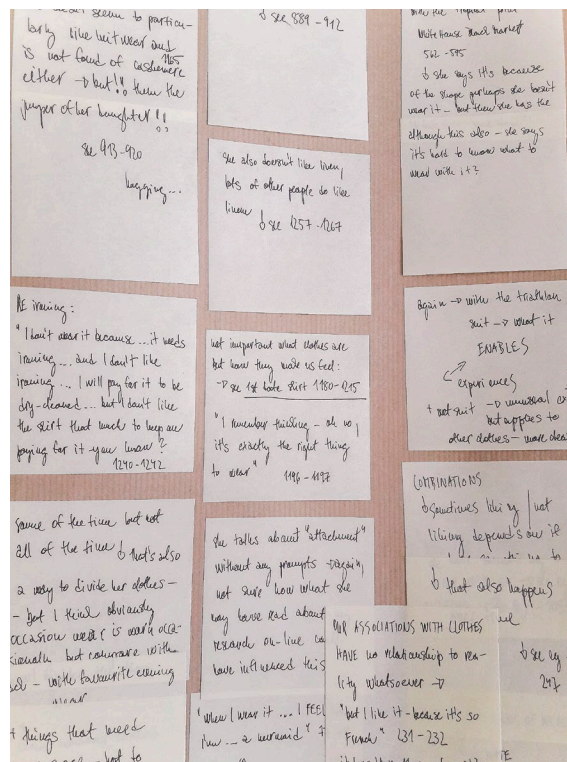
Figure 5.6 Analytical notes from reading of transcripts and garment selections: example 2

3. Codes, themes and categories [case analysis, cross-case analysis]

Coding is a process through which data is interpreted. It also facilitates transition between the data collection and later stages of data analysis (Saldaña, 2013, p. 4) Although coding is a crucial step in the analysis process, it is also important to note that coding and analysis are not synonymous. This is well captured in the metaphor that coding "generates the bones of your analysis…[I]ntegration will assemble those bones into a working skeleton" (Charmaz cited in Saldaña, 2013, p. 8).

Due to the character of my enquiry and the objective of this stage of my research, that sought insights into women's experiences and their own interpretations of them, I used thematic coding for my interview transcripts. Thematic coding was appropriate for this purpose as it is flexible and not wedded to a pre-existing theoretical framework. Hence, it allows an inductive approach in which the themes and meanings emerge from the data (Robson, 2011; Saldaña, 2013).

First tentative notes on codes were added to my transcripts as I was transcribing each interview. Later, I printed out all my transcripts with a double spacing to allow for notes and I also highlighted significant parts of conversations as I was re-reading them. At this stage, I also started adding preliminary codes in transcript margins. The next step involved dividing the transcripts into sections that reflected transitions between different topics in each conversation. These sections provided starting points for identifying those parts of the narrative that would get coded during the second and third round of coding.

As I mentioned earlier, I combined hard copies with computer-based methods. This meant that the first round of coding was done on paper and later, when the key sections to be coded were much more clearly defined, I proceeded to entering all the relevant sections in Excel worksheets. Working in Excel enabled me to make more accurate cross-case comparisons and so also helped in further refining of codes and categories for the final stage of coding [Figures 5.7-5.9].

Figure 5.7 Refining codes and categories for the final stage of coding: example 1

Figure 5.8 Refining codes and categories for the final stage of coding: example 2
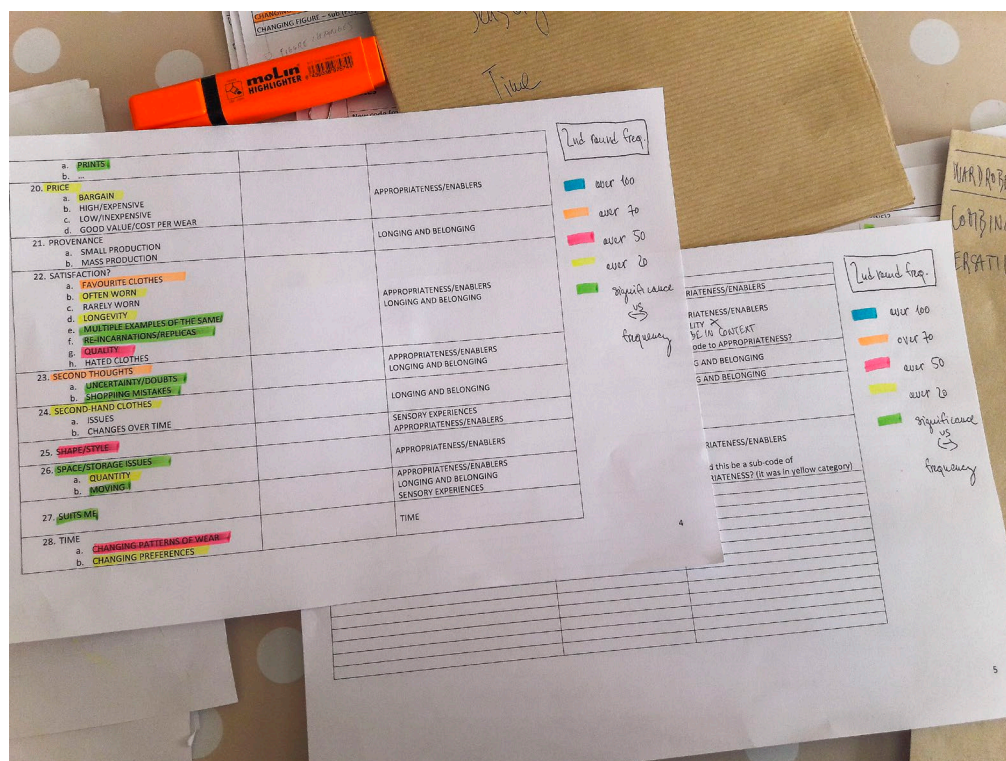
Figure 5.9 Refining codes and categories for the final stage of coding: example 3

Through iterative comparisons I then identified overlapping codes and those that lacked clear focus, merged and split all codes accordingly and started collating codes into hierarchical categories and preliminary themes [Figures 5.10 – 5.13]. Categories and themes were then further reviewed following the same iterative process [Figures 5.14 – 5.16]. Before I started the third and final round of coding in Excel, my coding frame was clearly defined and arranged in a hierarchy of 127 final codes organized under 28 categories that came under four themes [Appendix E.2, p. 556]. The four final themes that emerged from my data are reflected in the titles of Chapters 6.2 – 6.5, where I discuss the findings related to each theme in detail. The four final themes are also presented in the *Emotionally Durable Clothing Model* [Figure 6.7, p. 168].
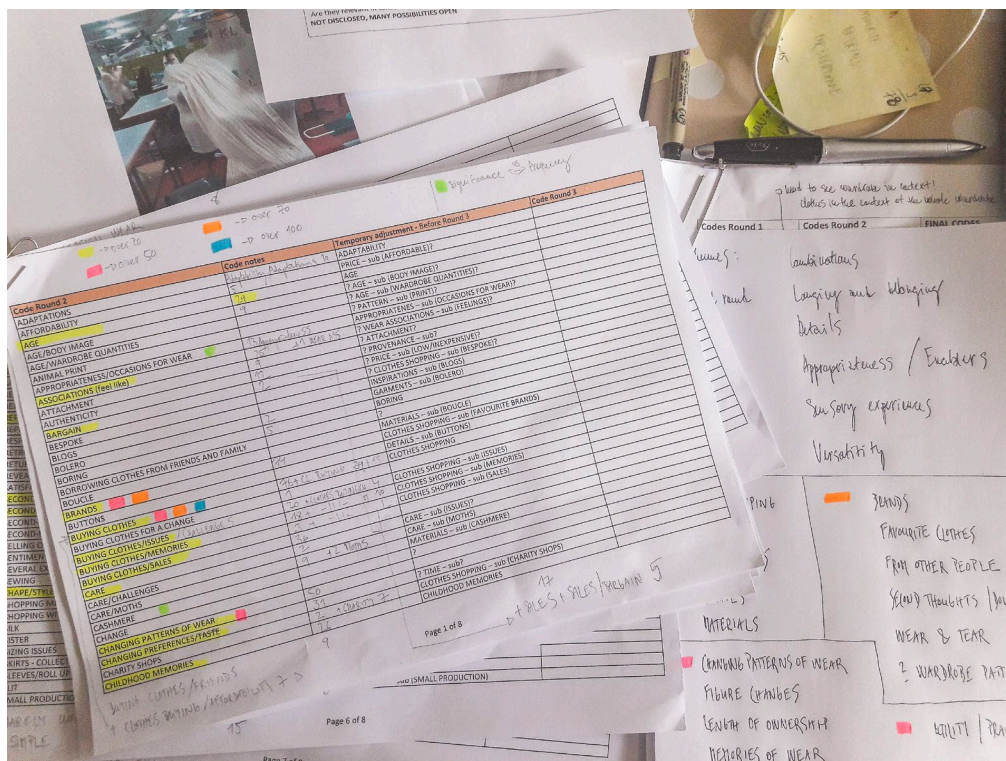
Figure 5.10 Collating codes into categories and preliminary themes: example 1
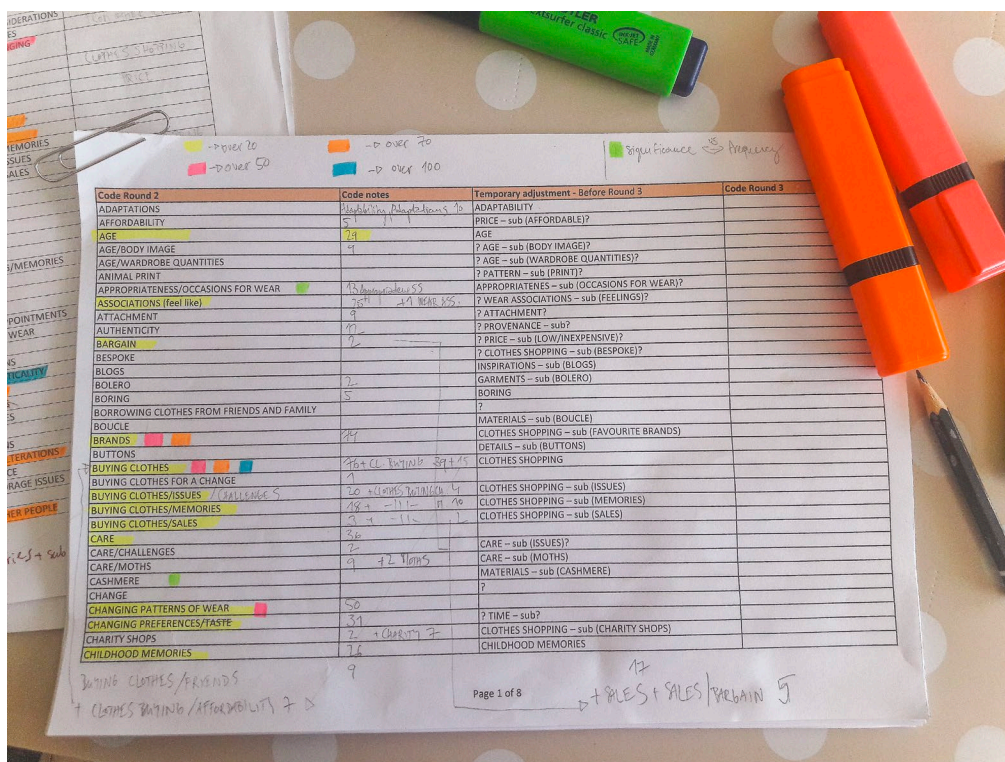
Figure 5.11 Collating codes into categories and preliminary themes: example 2
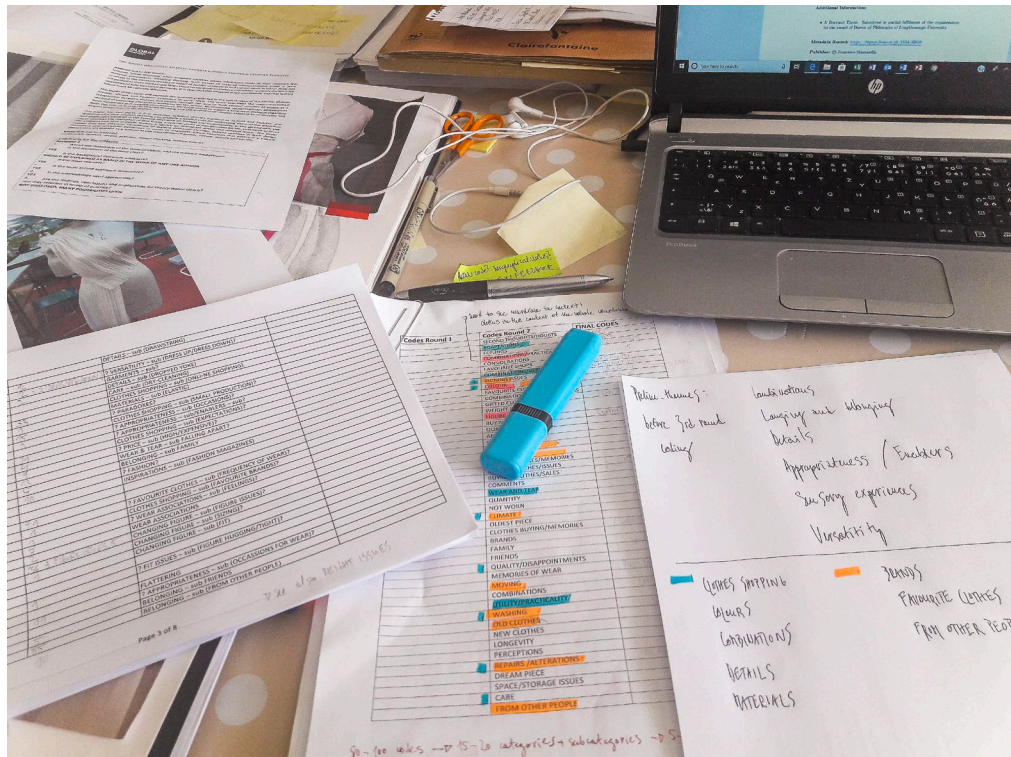
Figure 5.12 Collating codes into categories and preliminary themes: example 3
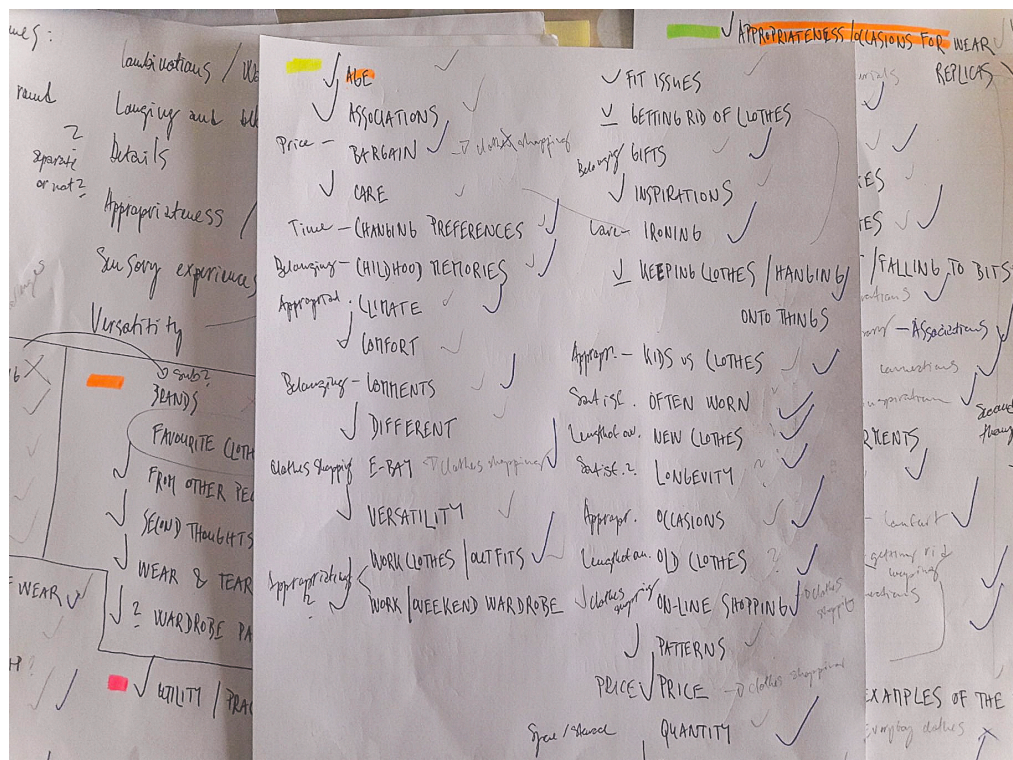
Figure 5.13 Collating codes into categories and preliminary themes: example 4
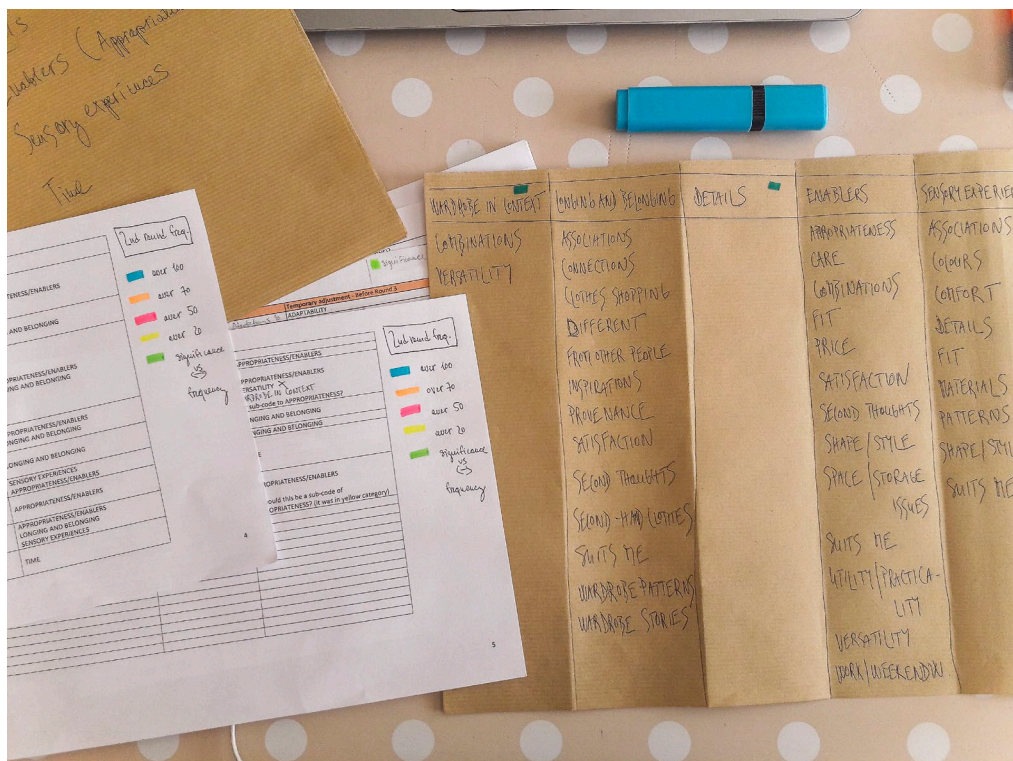
Figure 5.14 Iterative review of categories: example 1

Figure 5.15 Iterative review of categories: example 2

Figure 5.16 Iterative review of categories: example 3

4. Sketchbook reflections and selections for final designs [cross-case analysis]

Once I identified the four final themes that emerged from my data, I revisited the photos from my interviews. The aim of this process was to once again explore how different sets of data I collected could be engaged in the "mutual meaning making" (Pink, 2007 [2001], p. 168). As I also explained earlier in this section, I had previously identified significant garments from each conversation through photographs and then accompanied them with relevant sections of transcripts. In the final stage of my analysis, I reversed this process and instead looked for images that best reflected the transcript excerpts coded under the final themes and categories that arose from the research.

Like before, I first identified suitable images in the electronic files and then printed out my selection to refine it further as I was working on the sketchbook pages related to each theme [Figures 5.17 -5.18]. The photos from the interviews were thus used along with other inspirational materials that I collected throughout the research [Figure 5.1, p. 142] and documents of my previous studio experimentation to help refine my thinking about how each of the themes could be captured in a tangible way through an item of clothing [Figure 5.19].

155

What also helped me in this process was annotating my research images with the excerpts from transcripts. In this way, I was able to retain a close connection with my research data and so avoid the risk of letting my imagination meander too far away from what women told me. The process behind the design and making of the final four garments that resulted from this stage of analysis will be detailed in Chapter 6.6 [p. 245], following on from the explanations of each of the four final themes: 1. Sensory experiences, 2. Enablers, 3. Longing and belonging, and 4. Layering in Chapters 6.2-6.5 [pp. 173 – 244].

Figure 5.17 Sketchbook selections for final themes: example 1
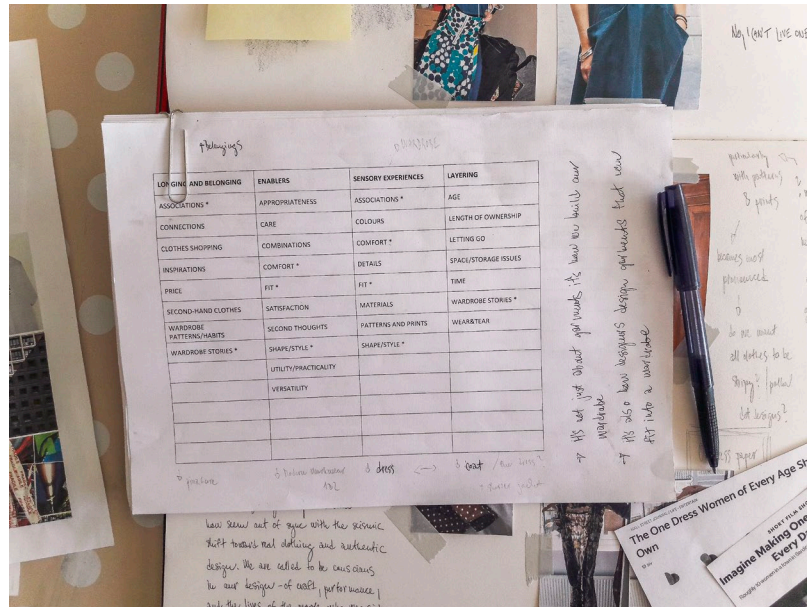
Figure 5.18 Sketchbook selections for final themes: example 2

Figure 5.19 Sketchbook page on the *Layering* theme - process

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter I summarized the process of my fieldwork and data analysis. I explained the methodological and ethical issues I considered, the preparation I went through before my interviews and I also reflected on the ways in which my presence and contribution to my conversations with women shaped the character of this research and the data I collected. I also summarized how my pilot study informed my approach to the subsequent interviews. In section two I detailed my overall approach to the fieldwork, I described how my previous contact with some of the women enriched this study and I reflected on my experiences with establishing rapport with my interviewees.

Section three then focused on explaining the process I went through as I analysed the data I collected and described the four main stages of my analysis in more detail. In the following chapters I proceed to discussing the findings of my research.

PART THREE

6 WARDROBE NARRATIVES

Learning from the wardrobe

Sensory experiences

Enablers

Longing and belonging

Layering

One Thing Collection

Chapter 6 summarizes the findings of my research and discusses their implications for extending emotional durability of clothing by design. For this end, the volume of the material presented is divided into four sections, each addressing one of the four empirical themes that emerged from the analysis of my wardrobe conversations – (1) Sensory experiences, (2) Enablers, (3) Longing and belonging and (4) Layering. Each thematic section is linked to the wardrobe narratives of those of my interviewees whose experiences in connection to the particular theme were especially pronounced [see the indications at the beginning of each section, with links to the narratives in Appendix A]. The aim of these wardrobe narratives is to capture, in women's own words, what matters to them and why. The argument in all sections develops through a discussion of the key aspects of each theme as reflected across all the narratives, also addressing how my findings link to previous research.

The introductory section of this chapter reflects on the methodology I adopted to fulfil my research aims and objectives and it also includes a note on my approach to the presentation of my research findings. The section also links back to the contextual review where I identified Norman's (2004) concept of three level design as a key point of reference for my research [see Chapter 2.4, p. 51]. The *Emotionally Durable Clothing Model* presented here [Figure 6.7, p. 168] explains the mutual interdependence of the four empirical themes that emerged from my analysis. I here also clarify how my findings extend Norman's concept in the context of fashion design and making. The concluding section of the chapter follows the process of making the *One Thing Collection*, understood as an absorption of this thesis. The purpose of my explorations over the three years of this study is manifested in the garments that I made in response to each of the empirical themes that emerged from my research.

6.1   LEARNING FROM THE WARDROBE

REFLECTIONS ON SENSORY METHODOLOGY[2]

As I explained in detail in Chapter 5.3 [p. 141], my analysis started with verbatim transcription of the recordings, later followed by pairing of all transcripts with the photos taken during each interview. Arranging my research data in this way strongly highlighted how visual showing and women's tactile

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[2] This section draws on a paper published in connection to this research: Burcikova (2017b)

engagement with clothing are inseparable from their verbal descriptions. This corresponds with Pink's observation that our engagement with materials is often quite performative, which means that people tend to "stroke, feel, smell, visually show and as such engage sensorially" with things during interviews (2015 [2009], p. 127). Throughout my wardrobe conversations, such sensory interaction with clothing sometimes preceded any verbal descriptions, other times it accompanied women's explanations. Most importantly though, on numerous occasions, touching, stroking, and examining garments in more detail clearly helped women to pin down what may have first seemed hard to put into words. For example, Figure 6.1 illustrates a situation in which Golraz, struggling to describe her difficulties with finding *the perfect pair of trousers*, suddenly came across a pair which helped her demonstrate her issues with inflexible fit. Figure 6.2 shows how facial expressions and the ways in which clothes are handled can make a deep satisfaction with a garment instantly explicit.

Figure 6.1 Golraz demonstrating her issues with fit

Figure 6.2 Deep satisfaction with a garment demonstrated in facial expression (Hanka)

A key secondary benefit of my methodology was that by listening to and observing what women wanted to show me, as opposed to asking them to pre-select clothes ahead of the interview, I got to hear not only about successful and loved garments but also about those that failed to satisfy. This was helpful in terms of offering further context for my research and enabling to cross-check and compare statements about both. What I found especially striking was noticing how the items that women liked would get repeatedly touched, and very often they would be held close to the body [see also Figure 6.2]. On several occasions, my interviewees also offered to put their favourite items on for me. In contrast to this, those clothes that "did not work" could be quite reliably recognized by the physical distance women would hold them at as they took them out of their wardrobes [Figure 6.3].

Figure 6.3 "Unloved" garments held at a physical distance from the body

My focus on photographing women's hands and the ways in which they handled their clothes also drew my attention to little details that women would often point out to me with excitement – such as interesting buttons, stitching, necklines, linings or belts [see Figure 6.4]. These features could sometimes also be traces of personal stories linked with the piece and reminders of its longevity. Perhaps the best example here would be one of Tanya's dresses that she has worn for nearly twenty years. Over this time, the dress became one of the key pieces in her wardrobe and she proudly explained to me how this long relationship is also reflected in a detail only known to her – the inside of the pocket [Figure 6.5; see also Tanya's narrative in Appendix A.10; p. 498].

Figure 6.4 Appreciated garment details

Figure 6.5 A hidden detail as a trace of garment's long history

Reflections on tactility of materials were also prominent in women's descriptions. The hand of the fabric and its feel on the body were frequently commented on. Soft and light-weight materials were often linked to pleasurable use and the way women handled such items again complemented their statements. Julie, for example, showed me a top that she combines with jackets for work and while

explaining to me with great sense of satisfaction how comfortable it is to wear, she also handed the sleeve over to me to try its softness for myself [Figure 6.6].

Figure 6.6 Soft feel of fabric demonstrated by Julie

All these observations confirmed that sensory approaches to wardrobe studies can offer helpful layers of information on subtle expressions of emotion and satisfaction that are hard to access through questionnaires and other purely verbal approaches to studying women's relationships with clothes. In response to the question that first sparked my interest in other than verbal approaches to studying emotional responses to clothing [see Chapter 5.1, p. 125], they prove that asking people why they love something is not always the best way of finding out why they love something. In reflection on my own experience with sensory methodology, I can therefore fully subscribe to Pink's claim that:

> A design-focused and future-oriented sensory ethnography approach has a key role to play in change processes and in what I would call future-making, precisely because it promises to bring to the fore the tacit, normally unspoken (about) ways of knowing and doing that are part of everyday life. [2015 [2009], p. 193]

The four sub-chapters that follow, structured around the four empirical themes that resulted from my analysis, elaborate on how these rarely verbalized, and often entangled aspects of everyday

experiences with clothing make up the mosaic of emotional durability in women's wardrobes. The discussion in each section is structured in a way that highlights the overarching issues linked to each theme, identifying the key areas of focus in relationship to clothing and emotional durability. Table 6.1 [p. 169] offers an overview of the four themes with their explanatory categories. Each section then opens with a visualisation of all the categories linked to the theme [see p. 173, p.193, p.211, p. 230]. For a more detailed breakdown of each theme, with categories and top layer codes, please see Appendix B.1-B.4 [pp. 518-524]. For the full coding book please see Appendix E.2 [p. 556].

The mutual interdependence of all four themes is presented in the *Emotionally Durable Clothing Model* on the following page. While my research findings in connection to the first three themes (1) Sensory experiences, (2) Enablers and (3) Longing and Belonging broadly correspond with the *visceral*, *behavioural* and *reflective* levels of Norman's three level design [Figure 2.1, p. 55], the analysis of my wardrobe conversations extends Norman's (2004) concept in two key respects. Firstly, while Norman's concept was developed with a focus on product design, my research offers empirical evidence for extending its application to fashion design and making. Secondly, my research focus on garments in the context of whole wardrobes reveals that emotionally durability of individual items is often shaped in close relationship to other clothes and the ways in which such relationships change and develop over time. This aspect of emotional durability constitutes the fourth theme of Layering, that does not have a parallel in Norman's concept.

SENSORY EXPERIENCES

Perception of clothes through multiple senses; especially touch and vision

LAYERING

Relevance of clothes across life phases; relationships evolving over time

ENABLERS

Clothes as enablers of lifestyles; everyday practicality and appropriateness to circumstances

LONGING and BELONGING

Unspoken personal histories, childhood memories and family ties embedded in clothes we choose to wear

Figure 6.7 The Emotionally Durable Clothing Model

SENSORY EXPERIENCES	ENABLERS	LONGING AND BELONGING	LAYERING
ASSOCIATIONS *	APPROPRIATENESS	ASSOCIATIONS *	AGE
COLOURS	CARE	CONNECTIONS	LENGTH OF OWNERSHIP
COMFORT *	COMBINATIONS	CLOTHES SHOPPING	LETTING GO
DETAILS	COMFORT *	INSPIRATIONS	SPACE/STORAGE ISSUES
FIT *	FIT *	PRICE	TIME
MATERIALS	SATISFACTION	SECOND-HAND CLOTHES	WARDROBE STORIES *
PATTERNS AND PRINTS	SECOND THOUGHTS	WARDROBE PATTERNS/HABITS	WEAR&TEAR
SHAPE/STYLE *	SHAPE/STYLE *	WARDROBE STORIES *	
	UTILITY/PRACTICALITY		
	VERSATILITY		

Table 6.1 Overview of the four empirical themes and their constituting categories

(* denotes overlapping categories)

A NOTE ON THE PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

In my Introduction to this thesis [p. 16], I explained that one of my aims in its final presentation was to make the stories and experiences of the women I worked with feel tangible. Several my interviewees told me that they found our conversations enjoyable and also useful from their point of view. The rare opportunity to talk through their wardrobes with another person sparked ideas about possible new combinations, reminded women of older items that they could wear again and in several cases it was also an impulse for *letting go* of the items that are unlikely to get used in the future. This again fits well with Pink's point that, "interviews are not only places where researchers learn about other people's experiences, but where interviewees might arrive at new levels of awareness about their own lives and experiences" (2015 [2009], p. 80). I wished to capture this mutual exchange and knowledge co-creation in talking about wardrobes and it is also for this reason that I decided to write a narrative summary of each of the ten conversations as a part of my data analysis [see Chapter 5.3, p. 141].

For the sake of brevity, I initially wrote these narratives as snapshots of about 1000 words with the intention to include these in the Appendices for reference. However, as I then started writing the thematic sub-chapters of my findings, illustrating them with occasional quotes, I increasingly felt that the brief narrative snapshots in the Appendices contradicted my earlier claim that my interviewee's perspectives and their often very personal stories should be at the core of my work. Despite my effort to capture each woman's story in an engaging and concise way, with short quotes and an image per interview, I could not help but feeling that this approach was quite mechanical and not at all in keeping with what I originally set out to do. Firstly, I felt an emotional and ethical commitment to all my interviewees for the time and generosity they invested in my research. Secondly, it also slowly became clear to me that my own emotional investment in the three years of this study should also be given its due by doing what felt right. I was writing a thesis about emotional durability after all.

In response to these concerns, I considered using the portrayal method (see e.g. Lulle & King, 2016; Woodward, 2007) that allows for a selection of participant stories to be discussed in more detail in each sub-chapter, while the rest of participant data is used for corroboration. However, I resolved that none of the women's stories should be prioritized in this way as each of them made a unique

contribution to the findings presented in each sub-chapter, thus complementing the full picture. Crucially, what also strongly emerged from my research was that there were no shortcuts in design for emotional durability.

Despite the fact that my thesis identifies four key themes that enable us to grasp some of the leading principles that can help navigate the complex territory of emotional durability as reflected in women's wardrobes, what I also wish to emphasise here is that designing with people in mind necessitates taking the time to listen and reflect on the many entangled aspects of their lives as lived in clothing. While a key quote can illustrate a case in point in relationship to each of the four themes, emotional durability of a garment can rarely be reduced to any one of these. It is therefore only through the wider picture of the whole wardrobe and each woman's life and needs that the nuances that truly matter are revealed. For example, *a deliciously warm* jumper in a beautiful colour does not make it far if a woman later realizes that the colour is too light for her skin tone and difficult to combine with other items in her wardrobe (Mary). In contrast to this, an *unflattering and weird* dress that shows many signs of wear and tear can get continuously worn because it belonged to a woman's mother, and it has nice fabric covered buttons (Emma).

In sum, I felt similar to Miller, who describes how one of the families that took part in his research made him want to present his *The Comfort of Things* (2008) in a slightly unconventional way:

> The Clarkes are one of the reasons why, as well as writing an academic text in the future, I wanted to paint these portraits. To convey something of the sense of ethnography as enchantment, as a privileged access to such private beauty. As in all these portraits, it has been possible to record and include only a few fragments of what there is to learn from the Clarkes. But I have to hope that there is enough here to convey a sense of their extraordinary craftsmanship and of the central role of their material culture. (p. 31)

For all these reasons, I decided to capture each woman's narrative in much more detail. The approach I selected in the end is a variation on the portrayal method because each of the four thematic sections is now linked to the narratives of those of my interviewees whose experiences in connection to the theme in question were particularly pronounced [see the indications at the beginning of each section: p. 169, p. 189, p. 207, p. 226]. Yet, the stories of all ten women are covered across the four themes. These narrative summaries [see Appendix A, p. 332] inevitably became

a part of my analysis process as they aimed to capture the essence of each woman's individual experience. In writing them up, I aspired to portray each interviewee's personal story as reflected in her wardrobe, while including those photos and quotes which I believed best captured the key aspects covered in our conversation. The same approach was adopted in choosing the titles for each narrative, through a quote that best reflects each woman's story.

In sum, linking each thematic section of my findings with a selection of narrative summaries included in Appendix A [p. 342] was motivated by my research philosophy and by my own emotional involvement in the research process. This approach now enables to demonstrate how each woman's attitudes and preferences with regards to her wardrobe are shaped by her current circumstances on one hand and her past experiences on the other. While a wardrobe conversation is a moment in time, a woman's wardrobe is a diachronic process that constantly evolves and can hence never be captured in its entirety. Yet, as this chapter will demonstrate, being able to savour at least a fraction of this process through a woman's narrative, still offers a number of valuable clues on the clothes women love to wear and the reasons why they prefer some items to others.

[Please see the narratives of Julie, Louise, and Hanka in Appendix A.1-A.3; p. 343, p. 356, p. 372]
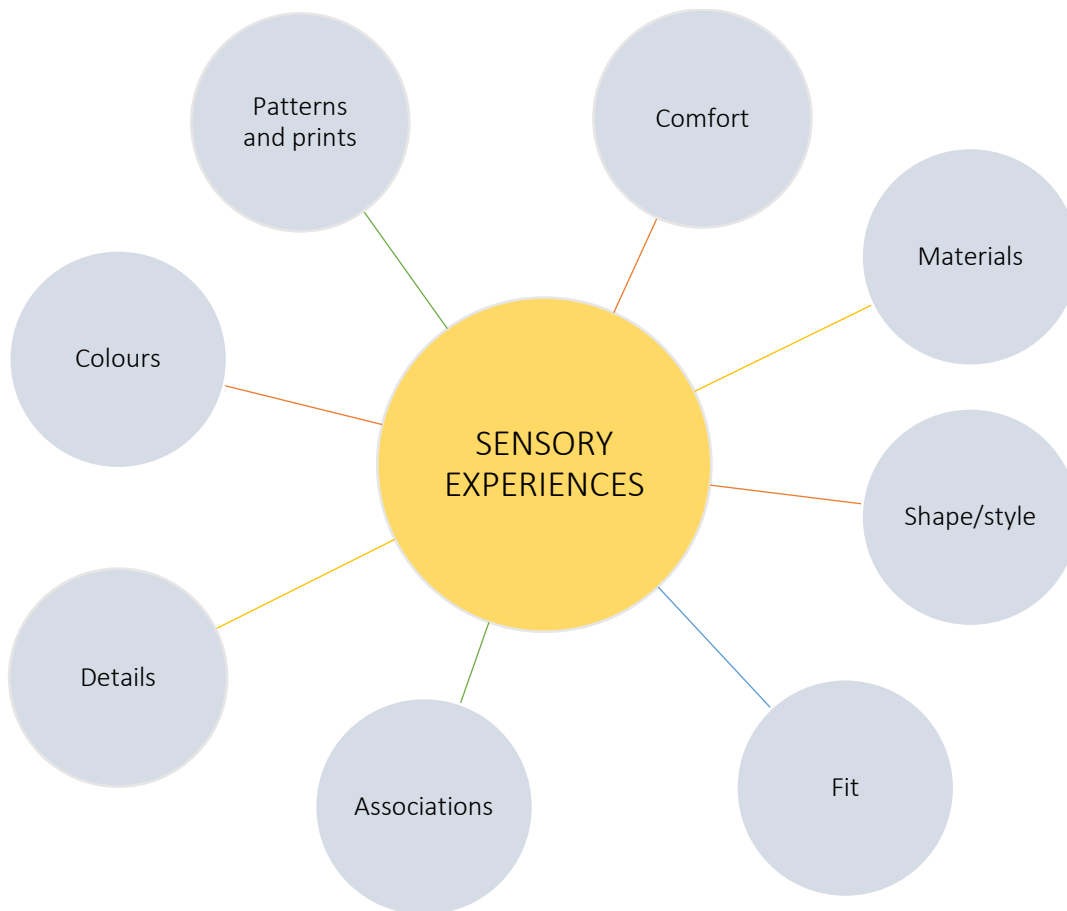
Figure 6.8 The *Sensory experiences* theme and categories

INTRODUCTION

The overarching argument of this section is that sensory experiences considerably influence women's feelings towards individual items in their wardrobes. Body plays a vital role in women's decisions about what to wear, Woodward (2007) argues, and the tactile perceptions of softness or warmth as well as the sense of how a garment enables or restricts movement are all key in these considerations (p. 17). Chong Kwan (2016) further notes that the changing "sensorial materiality" of clothes, as experienced through multiple senses, affects wearers not only physically but also emotionally (p. 284). While perceptions through multiple senses can often be coordinated and

supporting each other, at other times they can be contradictory and causing confusion (Howes, 2005; Chong Kwan, 2016). The latter often results in mixed feelings about an item of clothing, when for example a jumper with a beautiful pattern and a lovely colour feels itchy against the skin.

As I explained in the previous section, all of my interviewees repeatedly commented not only on the aesthetic and visual qualities of their clothing but also, and in many cases perhaps more often, on how an item wears on the body or how it makes them feel. Interestingly, in contrast to the participants involved in the study by Riisberg, Bang, Locher & Moat (2015), whose clothing choices seemed to be based first and foremost on visual perceptions, for the women I interviewed tactile qualities of garments were often the primary concern. This variation in findings possibly indicates shifting preferences in relationship to age. While Riisberg et al.'s participants were high school students between the ages of 18 and 20, the age of the women I interviewed ranged from their late twenties to their late sixties. Changing preferences in relationship to age and their implications for emotional durability of clothing will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 6.5 Layering [p. 230].

Here, I will discuss in more detail how sensory perceptions of clothes play out in practice, through the key explanatory categories that emerged from my analysis: Comfort; Materials; Shape, style and fit; Details; Colours; and Patterns and prints. Please refer to Appendix B.1 [p. 518] for a detailed break -down of all categories and top layer codes linked to Sensory experiences.

COMFORT

In his discussion of Heidegger's *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* (1977), the anthropologist Tim Ingold remarks that the leading interest of the essay is in determining what it takes "for a house to be a home" (2000, p. 180). My research was led by a similar concern. As my explorations progressed, it gradually emerged that research on what lies behind the emotional durability of an item of clothing is in many respects a search for a point when a piece of fabric worn on the body is no longer perceived as something external to the wearer. Perhaps somewhat counterintuitively, my wardrobe conversations with women evidence that a strong emotional connection to an item of clothing often manifests itself in that the garment is no longer noticed when worn. Its wearing becomes habitual and almost unconscious and the feeling of reassuring familiarity makes the experience feel like a second nature. In line with Baumann's notion of the home as a place where no defence is required and where there is no need to prove anything (cited in Malicki, 2014, p. 4), such piece of clothing

becomes "a home for the body" (Niinimäki, 2010; Chong Kwan, 2016). While such items are then integral to how we feel and how we experience the world around us, their success relies on the fact that their wearing is effortless and almost unnoticed by the wearer.

Soft

One of the best examples here is Julie's comment on her favourite top, which she says is so nice and soft that *it feels like not wearing anything*. The same is reiterated by Louise as she comes across a dress that she loved wearing to work before her maternity leave [Fig. A.35, Appendix A.1, p. 343]:

> IT'S SO NICE, it's so nice - you know - you put it on and it's like you're not wearing anything. It's so nice to wear (Louise 867-868)

Golraz also shows me a casual rain jacket that she describes as a *loyal friend*, something that she wears when she does not want to invest any extra effort in her looks and feels happy just going about her day entirely unnoticed. Wearing this jacket, she says, has become so natural to her that she can become almost invisible in it.

All these instances are strongly linked to bodily comfort, often enabled by the softness of materials, as Julie's comment above well demonstrates. Soft and light garments seem to possess the crucial capacity to be appreciated for being "unnoticed". Just like health is the blessing of being unaware of one's body (Murphy, 1990), comfort experienced through the soft feel and the lightness of fabric seems to be a state of being unaware of one's clothes. Crucially in terms of my research, both these qualities also tend to improve with time, through continuous wear and laundering. It is mainly for these reasons that Louise much prefers old clothes to new. Tanya's beloved blue dress that she has worn for over fifteen years [see Figure 6.5, Chapter 6.1; p. 165; Figs A.201-204, Appendix A.10, p. 498], has softened to an extent that it is incredibly comfortable to wear, and, importantly for Tanya's frequent travels, it now also folds very easily into a suitcase.

Niinimäki (2014) also notes that comfort of materials can significantly improve through long-term use, and she points specifically to wool and leather as materials that age "gracefully" and so often get mentioned in connection to favourite pieces (2010). In this context, an especially compelling point in case is denim, whose popularity and wide appeal also tends to be assigned to its inherent

quality of moulding to the body and aging with the wearer (Candy, 2005; Woodward, 2007; Miller & Woodward, 2011). Interestingly though, while Woodward (2007) observed that an aging pair of jeans was cited by many of her interviewees as the most comfortable piece of clothing, most women I spoke to did not mention jeans, or any trousers at all, until I explicitly asked. One exception here was Tanya, who quite early on brought out two pairs of denim jeans, both used frequently, which made them very soft and slightly worn out around the crotch as a result. One of these was an old pair that she has had for nearly twenty years and the other was no longer wanted by her son, so she now wears it - legs rolled up - with her unique vibe of careless elegance.

None of the other women I spoke to, however, thought of bringing out their jeans. This is worth noting because most of them did in fact have a favourite pair that they wear regularly. After some prompting questions it turned out that Anabelle too has a well-worn pair of jeans that is nearly twenty years old and she still wears it despite the accumulating signs of wear and tear [Figure 6.9]. Hanka and Mary seem to have found the styles that fit them and so now always buy their jeans from the same companies. Louise and Golraz, on the other hand, still search for their "perfect pair" because standard sizing rarely works for their figures. Both however also recall having had a great pair in the past that they *wore to pieces*.

What emerges from my wardrobe conversations is that one possible explanation why jeans slip women's attention is that denim's propensity to soften through wear makes jeans one of those items that no longer get noticed. They do not seem to be worth mentioning as having become "a second skin" (Solomon, 1986; Miller & Woodward, 2011, 2012; Chapman, 2015 [2005]) they are used ordinarily and hence get taken for granted (Miller & Woodward, 2012; Pink, 2011, 2012a). Just like Mary's black work tops that combine with anything and so are used as a kind of base layer on almost daily basis, favourite jeans softened through years of wear and laundering seem to be the perfect example of comfort and *mundane fashion* – they are well-loved, essential pieces of clothing, that no longer stand out in any way (Miller & Woodward, 2012).

Figure 6.9 Annabelle's 20 years old jeans

MATERIALS

In terms of materials, cotton, linen and wool were mentioned most frequently in women's comments on comfort and pleasant touch, with occasional exceptions of some woollen garments that caused irritation and disappointment because they turned out to be itchy. While most women seemed to share their love for the feel of linen, Annabelle was an exception here, being adamant that she never buys it because while she likes it freshly ironed and crisp, worn it soon looks like *an old dish rag*. As she hates ironing, Annabelle prefers materials that can be *scrunched up* and easily worn the next day, which generally requires a percentage of synthetic content. However, on the whole, mostly natural materials were highlighted by my interviewees.

This aligns with previous observations of Niinimäki (2014) and Fletcher (2016), who both note that natural fibres tend to dominate people's stories of favourite garments, with cotton mentioned most frequently, closely followed by wool. As Fletcher also comments, wool's representation in the stories of loved garments is quite striking, considering that it only forms 1.3% of global trade (Ibid, p. 142). However, the sensory methodology I used in my study provides useful clues for this popularity. Woollen knitwear, especially cashmere, featured heavily among the favourite garments women chose to tell me about. Numerous examples from my wardrobe conversations then show that the sensory pleasure experienced through softness and warmth of wool is key to the appreciation of

177

woollen garments. This offers a clear explanation for the wide demand for woollen clothing [see especially the narratives of Hanka and Mary, Appendix A.3 & A.9, p. 372 and p. 474].

Similar contribution in terms of the methodology used in my study can be noted in connection to synthetic materials. Here, once again, attention had been previously drawn to the fact that synthetic fibres seem to be scarcely represented in the stories of long and satisfying use, which is considered especially alarming in the light of the volumes of polyester production, that currently covers over a half of the global fibre market (Niinimäki, 2014; Fletcher, 2016). While my findings seem to confirm that synthetic materials rarely get explicitly mentioned when women talk about their favourite clothes, looking at the more mundane, everyday practices and items in the context of women's homes and their whole wardrobes brings additional clarity to the picture. Firstly, it is perhaps unsurprising for synthetic materials with "their perceived low value and as a cultural currency" (Fletcher, 2016, p. 142) to receive little emphasis when people are asked about their more valued and loved items. This context is notable in connection to Fletcher's Local Wisdom project, all three of Niinimäki's questionnaires, where the enquiry revolved around items selected for their significance to their owners, and to a degree, similar bias also occurs in my research [see Chapter 4.3, p. 108 for more detail].

However, with the benefit of comparative analysis between the transcripts and the photo documentation from my interviews [see Chapter 5.3, p. 141], my findings also show that while synthetic fibres do not get often mentioned in verbal accounts, a number of favourite garments, especially those in regular use, do actually contain them. For instance, women who prefer more fitted styles tend to appreciate stretchy fabrics (where synthetic content is inevitable), because they can hold a nice, flattering shape while also keeping them comfortable. In addition, as I noted earlier, Annabelle's dislike of ironing also means that she especially values the crease resistance of some of her dresses, enabled by their synthetic content [see Figs A.129-130, Appendix A.7, p. 440]:

> *This material? You can scrunch it up, it can be in the corner there on the floor for two days [laughs] and I pick it and wear it and it looks great (Annabelle 678-702)*

The same point is reiterated by Kathryn, who is very fond of her acrylic top because she does not need to iron it when travelling [see Fig A.115, Appendix A.6, p. 424]. This top is one of her most long-standing items, she has *never really got bored of it*. In fact, she partly ascribes its longevity to the

synthetic material which, unlike some natural fabrics, *keeps its shape*. Still, perhaps tellingly in the context of Fletcher's point on low cultural currency of synthetics, Kathryn also feels apologetic about her love for this top:

> *I know – I DO really like natural fabrics – but sometimes it's quite nice having a few things like that...which is REALLY REALLY easy (Kathryn 777-802)*

All these instances prove that natural materials are favoured for their tactile qualities, pleasant feel against the skin, resistance to body odour, and undoubtedly also due to their cultural endorsement/acceptability. At the same time, in *mundane fashion* where practicalities of everyday life need to be addressed, synthetics have advantages and qualities that do get appreciated in use – especially their structural flexibility and their ability to resist creasing.

SHAPE, STYLE, AND FIT

Bodily comfort, my research confirms (WRAP, 2013; Niinimäki & Koskinen, 2011), is a key enabler of long-term relationships, because feeling good in an item of clothing encourages its repeated use. Dis-comfort, on the other hand, can be a significant barrier because if women feel *trapped* in a garment, they are unlikely to wear it frequently. However, while feeling comfortable is vital for my interviewees' clothing choices, it is also worth reminding at this point that my sample consisted of mature women between their late twenties and their late sixties. This seems important because my findings also indicate that such priorities may be subject to age-related preferences [see also Chapter 6.5 Layering, p. 230].

Julie, for example, repeatedly emphasizes that comfortable fit is now key for her clothing choices. Yet, when she was a student it was not unusual *to lay on the bed for half an hour tryin' get our jeans zip up*. In contrast to this, what she loves wearing now are *things that feel nice and are super-comfortable*. With age, her priorities with regards to bodily comfort have changed*,* and her point is echoed by all of my interviewees.

In addition to the tactility of materials, comfort or dis-comfort are then also perceived through the shape, style and fit of garments and also through their appropriateness in terms of personal taste, mood and social circumstances. With regards to the latter, Chong Kwan uses the metaphors of

"emplacement" and "displacement" (2016, p. 55). "Emplacement", she explains, refers to the feeling of connectedness to a place, time and occasion as experienced through the sensory interaction with a piece of clothing (Ibid). "Displacement", on the other hand, is felt where such connection is missing, when the sensory perception of wearing a piece of clothing makes one feel "out of place" (Ibid). Chong Kwan's metaphors of "emplacement" and "displacement" through sensory engagement with clothing are close to what others also referred to as feeling "right" or "wrong" (Woodward 2005, 2007; Skjold, 2014) in an item, or feeling that it is "me" or by contrast "not me" (Schultz-Kleine et al., 1995; Banim & Guy, 2001; Woodward, 2007).

For example, wearing an item of clothing whose cut or material are too revealing often makes women feel uncomfortable, particularly in a work context. This again comes through clearly in Julie's comment on one of her work dresses. As the skirt is a wrap style that crosses at the front and tends to open with movement, despite the fact that she loves it, Julie says she has to *kind of feel comfortable in the first place* to be ready to *flash* her legs at the same time as wearing a fitted dress like this [see Fig A.8, Appendix A.1, p. 343]. Similarly, Louise is reconsidering if she can still wear one of her favourite skirts after her recent pregnancy. Again, the skirt is a wrap style that opens at the front and Louise feels, now more than before, that at work she wants to look *smart and not showing off everything* [see Figs A.32-33, Appendix A.2, p. 356]. For Hanka, the one fault of her favourite cheque dress is that it is slightly too short and so when she wears it without trousers underneath, she feels *like a schoolgirl that grew out of it* [see Fig A.49, Appendix A.3, p. 372].

The importance of feeling comfortable with the material, shape, style and the fit of a piece of clothing is perhaps best captured by Nicola who, like most of the women I interviewed, prefers simple, understated pieces, because more extravagant designs tend to make her feel self-conscious:

> *I guess it's just when I wear something that I'm comfortable in I feel like more in control of the room (Nicola 211-232)*

This seems crucially important in *mundane fashion*, as comfort perceived by wearers as "emplacement" (Chong Kwam, 2016), feeling "right" (Woodward 2005, 2007; Skjold, 2014) or feeling "me" (Banim & Guy, 2001; Woodward, 2007), enables women can stop noticing what they are wearing and go about their lives focusing on the things that really matter to them.

DETAILS

As I already highlighted in the opening of this chapter [6.1, p. 161], my focus on photographing women's hands and the ways in which they handled their clothes pointed to the significance of garment details, such as the fabric covered buttons pointed out by Emma as a favourite feature of her mum's old dress. Louise's "Pocahontas skirt" named after the little plastic pearls on the drawstring is another good illustration here [Figure 6.10]. The skirt originally belonged to Louise's mum and Louise remembers dreaming of wearing it as a child. She was thrilled when her mum finally gave it to her and she wore it frequently, especially during her recent pregnancy. Unfortunately, this heavy wear stretched the fabric, which makes Louise sad as she would love to continue wearing it. However, her main worry is that one of the plastic pearls is now broken and without it, the skirt loses its "Pocahontas" history.

Figure 6.10 The little plastic pearl that gave name to Louise's Pocahontas skirt

Emma's fabric covered buttons, Louise's plastic pearls or the insides of pockets on Tanya's favourite travel dress that serve as a reminder of its now washed out original colour [see Figure 6.5 in Chapter 6.1; Figs A.201-204, Appendix A.10, p.498] all demonstrate how subtle an often hidden details can be vital for a garment's appreciation, as they capture a richness of meaning only known to its wearer.

In addition to this, my wardrobe conversations also show that garment details are often seen as important indicators of quality. This comes through especially clearly when Golraz explains to me

that to asses quality when she is shopping for clothes, she first looks at details. To demonstrate, she shows me the zip on one of her favourite day dresses. Sitting on her bed, she slowly unzips and then closes the zip again several times over, obviously enjoying this process [Figure 6.11]. Her love of the dress is very much linked to the way the zip has been inserted, she explains:

> *Because when I wear it I kind of think that I am taking care of myself – because somebody actually took care of this – this has been loved, you know [smiles]. That's what I like. (Golraz 655-664)*

Figure 6.11 The zip that proves to Golraz that she is *taking care* of herself

Similarly, Julie points out the lining and also the mismatching buttons on a designer jacket that she had bought on a shopping trip with a friend [Figure 6.12]. While she is adamant that she is not interested in designer brands per se, and does not know enough to care about them, she says what she likes are these kind of details that tend to come with more expensive pieces as opposed to cheaper high street items. Like Golraz, Julie agrees that attention to detail makes her feel that an item she is wearing was well made. It is this sign of quality, rather than a brand, that she truly appreciates in a piece of clothing.

Figure 6.12 Mismatched buttons - one of Julie's favourite details on her jacket

Buttons

Buttons, belts, and decorative details such as applique or embroidery were frequently mentioned by women in connection to favourite items, as the following extracts illustrate:

I like the fact that you've got the sort of brocade things, the velvet and then it's done it also on the pocket (Kathryn 566-569)

This is very old...I love it because of these flowers (Golraz 1016-1022)

I liked it because of the belt (Mary 1517-1522)

This I love because it's kind of like...I love these buttons (Kathryn 718-734)

I like things like this – I like pearl buttons (Nicola 426-438)

It's a feature on the sleeves – I think that's quite nice – it gives a little something to the jacket (Louise 431-452)

Kathryn and Emma especially emphasized their love of buttons. They both seem to have jars of vintage buttons which they occasionally use to alter and liven up some items. *I quite often change buttons on things*, Emma told me, *because it makes quite a difference, doesn't it?*

Buttons, my research confirms, can decide whether a piece of clothing finds its use in its owner's wardrobe. This strongly corresponds with Fletcher's point that, "many times the stories from the public suggest that it is the details and components of garments that hold the key to satisfying use" (2016, p. 238). Hanka offers a good illustration here, as she tells me that buttons were a great disappointment to her when she first received a dress from one of her favourite designers bought on E-bay. Similarly, Annabelle admits that she *felt a bit rotten* for throwing away a jacket from her mother's two piece because *the buttons were just too big and looked dated*.

In the context of this study, it is especially interesting to notice how details including buttons, belts or linings relate to alterability and repairability. For example, while Nicola had her oldest vintage coat repeatedly relined with a plain lining to make sure that her coat keeps its nice shape, Mary is not sure if relining could revive her beloved coat that *nothing can quite measure up to*. Because the original lining was especially beautiful, Mary is afraid that the replacement would not match her high expectations on how the lining should fit into the overall design.

This seems to point to a notable paradox and a challenge in design for repairability [see Chapter 3.4, p. 71]. On the one hand, the attention to detail demonstrated in the original design by careful choice of lining seems to have been an important factor in Mary's love of this coat and also the reason why she would wish to extend its longevity by replacing the lining. On the other hand, however, the original lining seems to be hard to match which makes Mary doubtful about the possibility of a successful repair. This example seems to underline the need for design solutions that can easily "absorb" future repairs, highlighted by Rissanen (2011, p. 129). Yet, at the same time, my conversations with women also evidence that repairability does not guarantee repair. In juggling the competing demands of everyday life, women often simply *do not get around* to looking after their wardrobes in the way they would ideally imagine. Emma's pile of *I'm going to do something with these things and then I haven't done anything again* strongly mirrors the experiences of the rest of my interviewees, highlighting the many interconnected barriers to repair that often go beyond designable features of garments (Connor-Crabb, 2017; McLaren & McLauchlan, 2015; Armstrong,

Niinimäki, Kujala, Karell & Lang, 2015). [See also Chapter 6.5 Layering [p. 230] for a discussion of other aspects that affect repairs and repairability.]

Pockets

It doesn't have pockets, that's its only fault, Hanka tells me as she hands me over a dress that she loves wearing in summer. Pockets, as it later turns out, are key to the success of any item in Hanka's wardrobe. Mary and Emma do not especially look for pockets when clothes shopping, but along with the rest of my interviewees they agree that pockets are an appreciated and extremely useful feature in clothing. While Mary feels that is also important for pockets to work with a garment's cut, she admits that they have their place in most garments, work jackets especially:

> *It's nice to have pockets, so it's gonna be irritating on the odd occasion you're wearing something that doesn't have pockets…yeah, that' irritating not having pockets on a jacket (Mary 1877-1887)*

As Summers (2016) argues, having pockets to put things into gives women independence and a freedom to walk around unburdened by extra items such as purses. This comes through especially strongly in Kathryn's description of one of her longest standing pieces of clothing - a denim jacket that she associates with holidays. She says she loves it especially because she can put her keys and anything else she needs in her pockets when she wears it with a summer dress. The same is reiterated by Golraz, who always has something to put into her pockets, so if her clothes do not have them *it's a problem because I have to put things in my bag then*.

In sum, pockets seem to be a strong feature of favourite garments. If my interviewees liked an item without pockets, their absence was often commented on, just like in Hanka's above description of her pocketless dress. The lack of pockets seems to be *a shame* and *a disadvantage* of a piece of clothing. My findings therefore confirm that construction details play a crucial role in satisfying use, as also highlighted in the recommendations of the *Design for Longevity* report (WRAP, 2013), discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.3 [p. 49]. In addition, the evidence from my wardrobe conversations provides further support for Fletcher's suggestion that "our search for satisfaction – so often the motivation behind a new round of consumption of whole fashion pieces – is channelled through uncovering and noticing the details" (2016, p. 283). Yet, surprisingly, apart from the two

sources cited here, garment details have previously received little attention in research on fashion and sustainability more broadly, and design for longevity and emotional durability more specifically. I here therefore propose that more questions regarding the role of garment details need to be raised in the future by researchers and practitioners in all these areas of research and practice.

COLOURS

The emphasis of this section so far has been on the tactile perceptions of clothing, especially as an attempt to re-balance the dominating visual perspectives, as I explained in Chapter 4.4, [p. 117]. At the same time, I am aware that such rebalancing should not result in undermining the visual and aesthetic qualities, as these too are vital in how clothes are perceived and experienced in everyday life.

Having recently come to the conclusion that her wardrobe collection is one of her most valued possessions, Mary is an especially good case in point here. *I just love fabrics and colours and patterns!*, she tells me with unsuppressed excitement. Mary's wardrobe just heaves with colours and patterns, and her eyes light up several times during our conversation as she reiterates how much she enjoys combining colours, patterns, and prints. Interestingly, she also makes a point of showing me how the different outfits and colours in her wardrobe go together and she spares no effort in collecting all the items that make up her successful outfits from various parts of the house.

Mary seems extremely confident in her decisions on which colours do and do not work with her skin tone and it is for this reason that she aims to avoid black. Too much black, she feels, can look rather overwhelming with her pale skin. She devours successful colour and pattern matching [Figure 6.14], such as when she combines a cashmere top in her favourite slate colour, with a beaded necklace and a grey T-shirt. Mary feels that these three items *really work together* yet she is adamant that the same items in another colour variations would just not be the same [Figure 6.13]:

> *It wouldn't work in another colour – you know – I have pale pink and it's not the same thing (Mary 2153-2166)*

Figure 6.13 Mary's favourite colour combinations

Figure 6.14 Mary loves combining patterns, colours and textures

Mary's love of colour combinations is well contrasted by Nicola, who is much more conservative in her colour choices. Most of her ordinary clothes seem to be variations on tones of black and grey [see Figs A.65-70, Appendix A.4, p. 389]. Nicola herself admits that the colour palette of her wardrobe is quite surprising considering that she loves colours, magenta pink in particular. However, she finds that in her everyday life grey is just *a really easy colour to wear*. In addition to this, because her job involves a fair amount of public speaking, Nicola also feels that brighter colours could distract from what she is saying.

It is clear from these two examples that perception of colour is highly subjective and context dependent. Moreover, my conversations also show that women's colour preferences are heavily influenced by both their past experiences and their current circumstances, and in these terms, colours play a vital role in women's relationships to their clothes.

Often, colours can be the key to the lasting attraction of an item of clothing. As Kathryn illustrates:

> *I LOVE!!! OHHHH!...I love the colour of this one...oh, that's a nice make...but the colour is gorgeous!...it's the sort of colour that kind of gives you a bit of a lift (Kathryn 395-412)*

On other occasions though, colour may attract initially but on reflection women may feel unsure if they can make it work in their wardrobes. As Mary shows [see Fig A.180, Appendix A.9, p. 474]:

> *I bought this in February, it was really cold and miserable, it was my birthday and the colour just sang of summer time...so, of the cardigans that I've got there, quite a few of them go with several different things...but because that's such a bright colour, I struggle to pull it off (Mary 1404-1413)*

Colour can also be the main reason why an item is not worn, whether as a result of a shopping mistake or when a gift or a hand-me-down does not match women's usual colour preferences. As Annabelle explains:

> *I've NEVER worn this skirt...I bought it and I've never worn it, I thought about throwing it away...because it's skin coloured – I think that's what it is...maybe it's just a very bland skin coloured (Annabelle 1034-1050)*

PATTERNS AND PRINTS

Related to the considerations of colour are also patterns and prints. All the women I interviewed seem to share the love of beautiful materials and in many cases, it is clearly the pattern or the print of the fabric that makes a piece of clothing special. For example, Golraz keeps one of her favourite dresses that she can no longer fit into for her future daughter because the pattern, which differs at the front and at the back of the dress, *is just lovely* [Figures 6.15-6.16]. Similarly, one of Kathryn's best buys ever seemed to be *an expensive skirt* that she chose because of *the beautiful flower pattern* and she has now been wearing it for many years. She loves the fabric so much that she is also considering repurposing the skirt into something else in the future [see Fig A.166, Appendix A.6, p. 424].

Figure 6.15 Golraz's loved dress that she is keeping for her future daughter: front

Figure 6.16 Golraz's loved dress that she is keeping for her future daughter: back

Nicola is *obsessed with anything stripy*, she loves all variations on Breton stripes, pin stripes and polka dots, which all again fit into her preference for a subdued, minimalist look and enable her endless everyday combinations as discussed in connection to colours. A strong love of stripes is also shared by Julie, yet stripes in general and Breton stripes specifically, as well as polka dots, seem to re-appear across most women's narratives. In this respect, Emma stands out for her love of large, colourful, Chinese inspired patterns and animal prints. Mary, who also loves patterns and prints, generally gravitates towards smaller *splotchy* designs and her larger patterns tend to be toned down in terms of the colour scheme. Hanka strongly feels that the problem with large patterns is that they draw too much attention, *almost like an artwork of a kind*, and so the danger is that after an initial excitement one gets tired of them rather quickly. For this reason, like most of my other interviewees, Hanka prefers plainer designs that she finds more satisfying in terms of long-term use.

What is especially interesting to notice in relationship to *mundane fashion*, is that despite the variety of colour, pattern and print preferences among my interviewees, the items that are ordinarily worn generally have much more muted colour palettes. Just like Nicola's practical daily wardrobe, the everyday wear of most women I spoke to often consists of variations on black, blue, and grey tones. This observation again corresponds with the recommendations of the *Design for Longevity* report (WRAP, 2013) for the design of casualwear, stating that "classic or neutral" colours such as black, charcoal, white and navy, are considered versatile, easy to combine with other items and hence have more chance to stay in use for longer than trend colours (see also Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011). As Nicola especially highlights, these colours also enable women quick morning decisions, a concern that considerably shapes *mundane fashion* [see also Chapter 6.5 Enablers, p. 230].

CONCLUSION – SENSORY EXPERIENCES

This section explained how women's perception of clothes through multiple senses, touch, and vision in particular, affects how they feel about individual items in their wardrobes. The feeling of comfort, often negotiated trough the light weight and soft touch of materials was identified as the key contributor to emotional durability of clothing, because the success of favourite pieces often manifests itself in the fact that their wearing is effortless and almost unnoticed by the wearer.

As Niinimäki & Armstrong (2013) also note, it is the physical aspects of garments that we experience first, and while these in themselves do not guarantee neither long-term relevance nor emotional connection, they are critical to how we respond to a piece of clothing over time (p. 192). Another key insight from observing women's sensory engagement with clothing is the significance of apparently small construction details, such as pockets or buttons, for how women relate to the clothes in their wardrobes over time. Pockets, it seems, are humble agents of independence and comfort, while buttons can easily tip the balance between loving or discarding an item of clothing.

While my data does not clearly indicate a connection between olfactory qualities and emotional value of clothing, my conversations with women suggest that a garment's ability to resist perspiration can contribute to satisfying use and so encourages more frequent wear. It is therefore possible to propose that considering fabric quality and garment cut, with the view to minimize the effects of perspiration, could in this way contribute to emotional durability of a garment.

Noticing the critical importance of multi-sensory perception for everyday experiences with the clothes women wear, it seems striking that sensory aspects of design hardly feature in design education, as is also highlighted by Sonneveld (2004). In her *Doing Sensory Ethnography,* Pink (2015 [2009]) recommends that sensory ethnographers prepare for their fieldwork by an auto-ethnographic exercise which can help them develop an understanding of their own sensory perceptions of the world (p. 60). In the light of my findings, I here propose that designers who wish to design clothes that can have long-term relevance in *mundane fashion*, would usefully benefit from a similar auto-ethnographic exercise, as this could help them sensitise to sensory perceptions of clothing. Sissons (2016) argues that designers can hardly expect people to want to wear their creations if they themselves would not want to wear them. Hence, developing a deeper understanding of their own sensory responses to the clothes they wear, could help designers embrace multi-sensory considerations in their work and so improve the everyday experiences of people who will go about their lives wearing their designs.

[Please see the narratives of Nicola, Golraz, and Kathryn in Appendix A.4-A.6; p. 389, p. 409, p. 424]
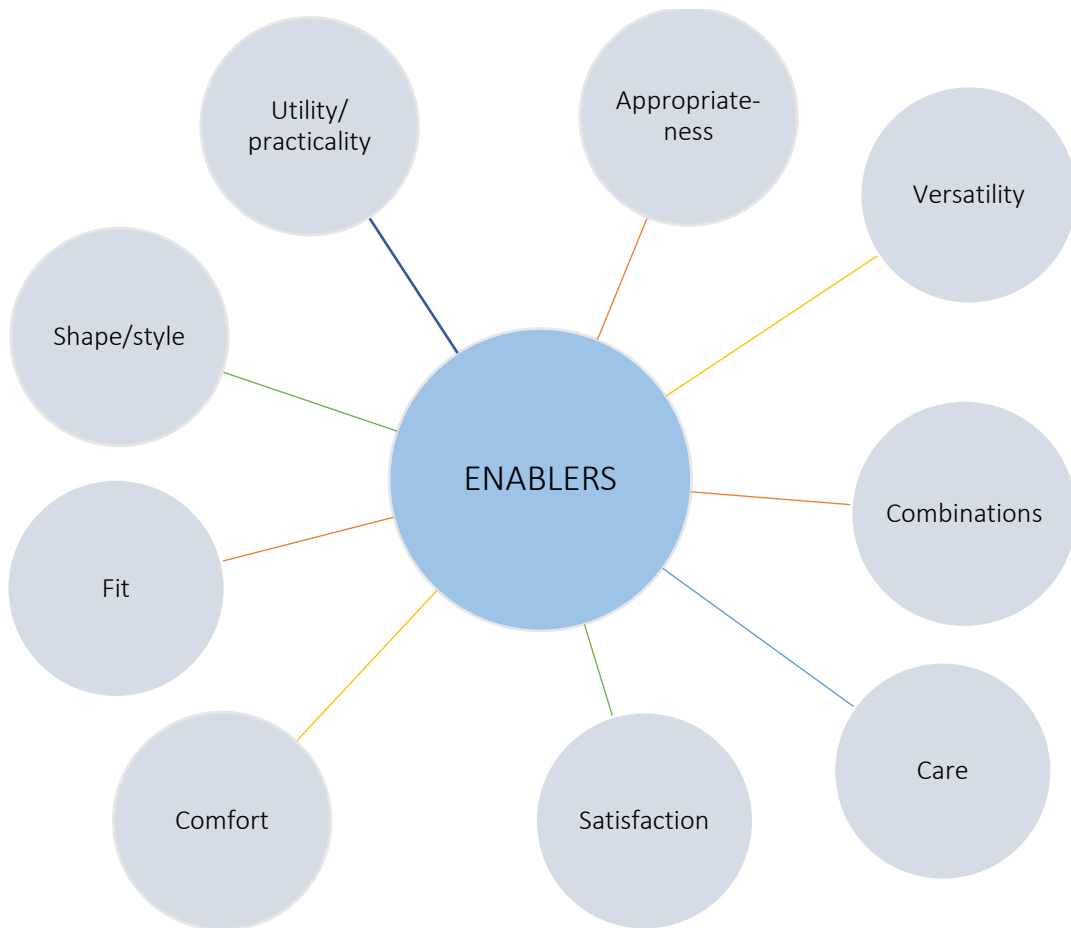
Figure 6.17 The *Enablers* theme and categories

INTRODUCTION

As I noted earlier, Fletcher (2016) argues that clothes tend to be advertised and sold as products, perfect static pieces. The physical dynamics of clothing in use is missing, as is the connection to the often messy dynamics of our everyday lives within which these clothes are being used. Accordingly, fashion mood boards tend to draw on images of idealized lifestyles that have little to do with the day to day routines of those who wear these clothes after the point of sale. Along the same lines, Julier (2008 [2001]) also contends that "mood boards can look dangerously like clichéd storylines for

a campaign" that largely ignore the desires and needs of users, things here lose "their status as objects of use "(p. 103).

As a result, what is generally missing in design practice, is a consideration of how clothes fit into the lives we want to live. Despite of what fashion campaigns may like us to believe, our lives do not revolve around clothes. Quite on the contrary, my findings clearly show that if clothes are to be used and enjoyed, they need to revolve around the kind of lives we want to live. This is well reflected in Mary's observation:

> *I think a lot of shops, you know, (…) that shops seem to be quite heavy weighted towards stuff which is fancy or dressy and it doesn't really reflect everyday life. But then, women fall into trap of buying lots of those types of clothes. So, for example heels. You're going to lots of shops, there will be loads and loads of high heels - REALLY high heels! But that's not everyday stuff, I don't know. And yet we buy it because it's glamorous and think we might wear it one day. (Mary 1461-1477)*

Mary, for whom clothes are a passion, admits that she repeatedly gets attracted to buying new clothes because of their beautiful fabrics and patterns. At the same time, she is also well aware that many of these clothes remain unused in her wardrobe because they have little relationship to her lifestyle, which is largely divided between her busy office-based job and a country life on a smallholding. Although she much appreciates clothes as objects, confessing that her collection of clothes is among her most valued possessions, she is also conscious that many of these "collector" items rarely get worn. What strongly emerges from my research, is that while such items may still be appreciated and liked for their aesthetic qualities, the truly long-lasting and deep relationships with clothing is stimulated through repeated use, or what Norman calls "sustained interaction" (2004, p. 46).

Golraz's description of one of her most long-standing items, *a very ordinary* jacket [see Figs A.94-95, Appendix A.5, p. 409] that she has worn for over fifteen years, offers an apt snapshot of experiences reflected across other women's narratives:

> *But I wear it very often because I like it! Like we are now, I think, after so many years, friends. You know, you don't look for friends - you don't look if they're beautiful or they're…, you know,*

you just want them to be trustworthy. That's the same feeling I have with it. I think it has been very loyal to me that's why I AM being loyal to it [laughs]. (Golraz 438-447)

As I discussed in more detail in Chapters 3.2 and 4.3 [p. 64, p. 108], research on emotional durability has tended to focus on "special" items, often associated with a considerable symbolic or sentimental value within the owner's life story [see more in Chapter 6.4 Longing and Belonging, p. 207]. Yet, my data offers compelling evidence that the truly significant garments can often be those used on everyday basis and appreciated for their long-lasting suitability to the owner's way of life. It is well known among the scholars of everyday life (see e.g. Shove,2009, 2012; Pink, 2012a) that such "ordinary" items tend to get overlooked, even by their owners. I explained before that this also offers a logical explanation of why such clothes rarely feature in studies that rely on asking participants to pick out the truly special pieces [See Chapter 4.3 for a more detailed discussion of this point, p. 108].

As I also observed during my wardrobe conversations with women, the garments that turned out to be the true, regularly used favourites, were almost invariably mentioned only towards the end of the interview, often as a result of extra prompting questions [see also the discussion on jeans in Chapter 6.2, p. 173]. Mary's comment is again telling in this respect:

> *I've just whizzed through all the knitwear, but actually the knitwear's stuff that you just wear a lot. So, all those things you can wear with jeans. Whereas some of this other stuff, it would be unusual to wear that not in a work context. (Mary 1455-1457)*

The idea of "uncrumpled" (Fletcher, 2016, p.101), glamorous garments worn by carefree women with perfect figures that seems to be so easy to buy into (as Mary's comment on the previous page also confirms), gets radically transformed once these garments enter the much more complex and volatile everyday life. After the point of purchase, clothes suddenly enter a significantly different territory in which navigating across numerous, often competing demands of our daily lives is essential. In stark contrast to their glamourous pre-purchase presentation, once brought home, clothes often get *thrown on* in dimly lit bathrooms while women are still trying to wake up, get the children ready, and dream of a chance to grab a cup of coffee before their first meeting begins. A lot goes on during the day and the clothes women wear need to slot into this puzzle, as Nicola well explains:

I've got a very kind of diverse and quite hectic job description, so I need clothes which are kind of functional for such as, you know, doing installation and hanging, which is very much a part of my role, but also, I'm attending a lot of boardroom meetings and I'm meeting a lot of people. So, I have to have a kind of balance between the very very formal and the very kind of practical, informal. So, that has probably shaped my wardrobe to a great extent these days. And also, fact that I'm now a mother. I only have a very short amount of time to get ready in the morning. That also is very much on my mind when I buy clothes now. (Nicola 8-22)

Design recommendations regarding emotional durability of clothing often tend to focus on fostering the meaning embedded in individual items through an emphasis on craftsmanship, provenance, customization, or the ability of the garment to evolve over time [see Chapter 3.4, p. 71]. However, I here argue that a careful attention to everyday practical considerations is equally important because long-term satisfying use is vital for emotional durability of clothing.

The discussion in this section therefore focuses on these practical concerns through the key explanatory categories that emerged from my analysis: Appropriateness; Versatility; Combinations; Care; and Satisfaction. Considerations of Utility/Practicality also featured prominently in my interviewees' narratives but as these are closely interlinked with other issues covered throughout the following discussion, they are here not addressed separately. The table in Appendix B.2 [p. 520] offers a detailed break-down of all categories and top layer codes linked to the Enablers theme.

APPROPRIATENESS

Appropriateness can be defined as a degree to which something is suitable, acceptable, or correct for particular circumstances (Oxford Learner's Dictionary of Academic English, 2014) and my research offers clear evidence that appropriateness is a crucial contributor to emotional durability of clothing. Those clothes that fit well into the circumstances of women's lives in terms of climate, occasions for wear, everyday use, professional and family life, and especially those items that prove to be able to help them negotiate multiple of these demands, tend to get worn regularly. Over time, this contributes to the feeling of loyalty and satisfaction (Niinimäki, 2014), as Golraz's description of her jacket [p. 194] illustrates.

Naturally, appropriateness also fluctuates in dependence on women's changing circumstances and needs and so does not always guarantee continuous use [see Chapter 6.5 Layering, section Time, p. 230]. Therefore, I here wish to highlight that it is critical to understand the multifaceted character of appropriateness, in order to consider, empathize with, and to try to balance such competing demands in the design process. I here fully subscribe to Chapman's point that, "designers must learn to embrace human unpredictability before they can attempt to effectively enrich and elongate subject-object engagement" (2015 [2005], p. 78).

Climate

Several of the women I spoke to, had the experience of moving, often internationally. In each case, such moves were inevitably also reflected in the wardrobe, because garments that were *worth* moving had to be selected in dependence on the quantities women were able to take with them and the storage issues in their new destination [see also Chapter 6.5 Layering for more detail on space and storage issues]. In addition to this, for Golraz, Louise, and Annabelle, their moves also involved a change from the warmer climates of Italy, Iran, France, and Florida, to the much colder and wetter conditions in England. Golraz here explains how her move to the UK affected her priorities in terms of clothing choices:

> *Nowadays, since I'm here [in the UK], and I'm really like, cold weather really bothers me - it hurts me! So, when I see something, I'm like - woooow! - because I feel like it's warm. It can just make me reaaaally warm [laughs]. (Golraz 132-138)*

Some of her favourite pieces bought in Italy, for example a long red skirt that she used to feel *very happy* wearing, now remain unused in her wardrobe [see Fig A.96, Appendix A.5, p. 409]. Similarly, Golraz comments that her beloved black coat that she relies on especially when she wears skirts or dresses [see Figs A.91-93, Appendix A.5, p. 409], was not actually designed for England. It does not have a zip and so it tends to open in windy weather. *It works properly in Tehran, where I bought it, but it doesn't work as good here*, she tells me. Louise also repeatedly comments that quite a few of the gifts she receives from her French mother-in-law are unwearable in the wet and windy Yorkshire climate, not even if layered with other garments. Many of these are simply more suitable for a stroll on a French beach in high summer. Similarly, Annabelle has quite a few items that she used to love

wearing in Florida, however, she now keeps them for holidays or the rare occasions when she can wear them to summer parties.

Appropriateness to climate and weather are however not limited to concerns of those women who move internationally. The same applies to considerations related to seasonal clothes, as Mary's comparison of her two dresses demonstrates:

> *So that black dress, you could probably relatively easily wear that a number of different times and I have got a REASONABLE amount of wear out of it. But this, you can only really wear this when it's hot because in wintertime you'd just freeze to death [laughs]. (Mary 1069-1078)*

Although she has had the second dress for a few years and she feels *very fond of it*, Mary also confesses that she has not worn this dress yet. Admittedly, a lack of suitable formal occasions is an issue here too. Yet, the fact that this dress is only wearable in warmer spring and summer months further limits Mary's opportunities for wearing it. The experiences of my interviewees thus underscore the need for trans-seasonal considerations in design for longevity and emotional durability (WRAP, 2013; Connor-Crabb, 2016; 2017), not only in terms of a garment's relevance across fashion seasons but also in terms of its adaptability to multiple weather conditions.

Early motherhood

Another issue that resonated across several of my interviews was related to the ways in which motherhood is reflected in women's clothing choices. Strikingly, although I spoke to several young mothers (Hanka, Louise and Nicola), maternity clothes were only mentioned in passing and all my interviewees seemed to be united in aiming to avoid buying maternity clothing for as long as possible. What was especially interesting, was that none of my interviewees mentioned a maternity piece among their favourite items. This is worth noting because prior research indicated that clothing associated with significant life phases, such as pregnancy and childbirth, may hold significant sentimental value due to happy memories associated with such period (Woodward, 2007). By contrast, without an exception, all of my interviewees who touched on this phase of their lives (Hanka, Louise, Emma and Annabelle) unanimously agreed that they did not feel comfortable with their body changes at the time and therefore felt no need to keep the *shapeless and not very flattering* maternity clothes that seemed to be unpleasant reminders of this time.

On the one hand, unlike maternity wear, clothes worn in the early years of motherhood seem to hold more significance in women's wardrobes. This comes through very clearly in the narratives of Louise, Hanka and Nicola [see their narratives Appendix A.2, A.3 and A.4; p. 356, p. 372, p. 389], who all have children under the age of five. Appropriateness in connection to this stage of women's lives seems critical to note for several reasons. Firstly, suitability of clothing for the multiple competing demands of this period is among the key concerns affecting women's daily choices as well as any new purchases. As a result, these clothes well demonstrate how the often contradictory requirements of family and professional lives and also women's own ideas of style and identity may be negotiated throughout their lives. In addition, unlike pregnancy clothes, clothes worn during early motherhood can have lasting relevance throughout women's lives due to their potential for long-term use and hence also emotional durability within women's wardrobes.

The radical transformation that early motherhood brings to women's wardrobes is eloquently described by Nicola:

> It's - it's pretty quick these days. I used to have lot more time, I had so much more time in the mornings to just kind of like accessorize and kind of think really carefully about what I was gonna wear [laughs]. And now I'm just like - oh, throw it on - you know. (Nicola 472-481)

Naturally, implications on materials and general robustness of the clothes women wear during this time are also brought into the equation, because the fact that children need to be lifted and carried, often *in their muddy boots,* does not lend itself to more sensitive materials such as cashmere or silk, for example. *I need things which are not gonna tear and things which aren't gonna get kind of too messed up,* Nicola further explains. Hanka's somewhat crude but telling explanation of why she now stores her more precious items of clothing away, comes down to similar concerns:

> if I take out for example a cashmere shawl in the morning, it's covered in kids' snot in no time, so it's not exactly the functional wear I would have use for right now [smiles] (Hanka 1223-1228).

Louise, who previously wore trousers only occasionally, has now re-discovered an old pair from her teenage years and has also bought a couple of new pairs since. *I live my life on the floor – maybe you can tell, I've got these patches [worn out knees]*, she says laughing.

Without a doubt, women's wardrobe priorities shift in this period. However, finding the right piece that both suits the demands of their current lifestyles yet at the same time helps them retain their identity as individuals seems especially important during this time. Despite being mothers, women still have dreams of their own, even if these need to be contained in the constraints of everyday practicalities when it comes to their wardrobes. Hanka's eyes noticeably light up as she shows me one of her favourite dresses that she wore during a holiday with her three children [see Fig A.37, Appendix A.3, p. 372]:

> *This is a beautiful linen and when I went to Slovakia last summer, I wore it as a dress and then I also slept in it and, you know, I wasn't actually taking it off [laughs]. And it didn't matter one bit, only that one had to wash it every now and then. And I wear an apron over it, you know, and I feel like a star [smiles]. (Hanka 28-35)*

Despite the necessity to put utilitarian concerns first, the stories of the women I interviewed confirm that the importance of wearing clothes they like and enjoy wearing does all but diminish at this important stage in their lives.

Work outfits

Most women I interviewed made a clear distinction between their work and weekend wardrobes and in several cases this was also reflected in a notional division of the storage space. Annabelle's work clothes, for example, were stored in the main hanging part of the built-in wardrobe in her bedroom. Nicola keeps her work clothes in a cupboard in the bathroom because that is where she gets dressed in the morning and so it makes practical sense. The distinctions between work and weekend wardrobes were less significant in the case of Tanya, with her profession in the creative industry, and Kathryn, whose job as an osteopath requires comfortable, practical clothing that does not differ much from what she would ordinarily wear. Emma, who still owns several outfits bought at the early stages of her professional career, when she *had this idea of, you know, you supposed to look like this as a professional working woman*, now says that more recently the differences between her professional and private wardrobe blurred. She puts down to a combination of a growing professional confidence and the fact that she recently started free-lancing work.

Interestingly, work wardrobes seem to be further sub-divided into everyday work outfits and items that are picked with a careful consideration of their appropriateness for special events such as board meetings, exhibitions, open days and international conferences, where professional self-presentation is especially important. Everyday work outfits often consist of set combinations that women default to without the need for long deliberation in the morning. Several of my interviewees referred to these outfits as *uniforms* that are *thrown on* easily. They would mostly consist of various combinations of dark trousers, black tops and jackets, skirts and light knitwear or plain dresses, again in combination with jackets. These outfits are *easy to wear*, and so they tend to be worn very frequently, often to the point when they show significant signs of wear and tear.

For example, Julie's favourite work jacket has been worn so often that the sleeves are now shiny, and the bright coloured lining no longer comes out clean when she takes it to the dry cleaners [see Figs A.9-10, Appendix A.1, p. 343]. Mary has had several work outfits such as suit trousers and skirts that she has worn so much that they *literally fell apart*:

> *So, some of my work jackets, over the years, have REALLY got absolutely just hammered. Really heavily used. So, some of them just disintegrated. (Mary 1528-1534)*

Nevertheless, these *everyday work outfits* show only a part of a much more complex picture of women's professional self-presentation (Tseëlon, 1995). There was a general agreement between all my interviewees who were currently working, that it is crucially important to *feel the part* in the workplace. Here, clothing was viewed as an important enabler of women's professional ambitions. This seemed especially important for my younger participants, at the beginning of their careers (Louise and Nicola), for whom appropriate work clothes were also a major contributor to their professional confidence. As Nicola again well illustrates:

> *I feel I HAVE to feel confident when I go into those spaces – like automatically. It HAS to be effortless. Like I just have to sort of NOT be thinking about that sort of things. Which is again - it probably influences what I buy because I think I want something which is gonna be a comfortable me. (Nicola 581-603)*

While a number of my interviewees agreed that over the last few years a more feminine style in workwear has become increasingly widespread and acceptable, there also seemed to be a general

consensus on that work outfits should never be too detracting in either colour or a style that would be too revealing (see also Connor-Crabb, 2017). *At work I want to be comfy, smart and not showing off everything*, Louise sums up [see also the discussion in Chapter 6.2 – Shape, style, fit].

Suits me/flattering

Nicola's *comfortable me* from the above excerpt, links to another important aspect of appropriateness - women's perception of how different items do or do not suit their shape, skin tone or personal style [see also Chapters 6.2 Sensory experiences – Comfort, 6.4 Longing and Belonging – Wardrobe patterns, and 6.5 Layering – Age]. Mary explains this well on an example of an occasion when she bumped into an ex-neighbour who was shopping for something to wear to a wedding. Thinking if she owned something that her neighbour could possibly borrow made Mary suddenly realize *how the clothes that you pick are kind of very much part of you.* Although her neighbour is similar in height and size, Mary felt that none of her own clothes would *easily translate* to fit with her neighbour's style.

Golraz's explanation of why she loves a dress that many of her friends and acquaintances may consider uninteresting offers another good example [see Figs A.97-98, Appendix A.5, p. 409]:

> *It looks good on me and I FEEL good when I'm wearing it. I don't feel, you know, when sometimes you wear something, and you feel like it's not ME particularly? … I don't know, sometimes I don't feel like it's me. But this is something that when I wear it, like in weddings even, which is very formal, I feel that I'm myself. I feel good and I LOOK nice in it. (Golraz 641-645)*

The feelings Golraz describes are often quite subjective and may also change in dependence on women's figure fluctuations, moods, and current circumstances [see also Chapter 6.5 Layering – Time, p. 226]. Nevertheless, they are critical for emotional durability because no garment enjoys long-term use in a woman's wardrobe unless it fits in with her needs and her own self-perception (Niinimäki & Koskinen, 2011).

Julie, for example, admits to *falling out* and giving away an artisan made jumper because *it didn't make me look nice*. This is worth noting especially in relationship to the design strategies for

emotional durability that mention handmade garments, and a connection to the maker among potential contributors to emotional durability of clothing [see Chapter 3.4, p. 71]. Julie's case is a telling indicator that none of these strategies should be seen in isolation, without a connection to the much more complex picture of women's experiences and needs (see also Connor-Crabb, 2017; Maldini & Balkenende, 2017).

VERSATILITY

Another common feature of many of the favourite garments women showed me is their versatility, or the possibility to *dress them up and down* for various occasions. Kathryn loves things that have *lots of use* and one of the oldest pieces in her wardrobe is a stripy leotard that she wears for cycling and yoga [see Fig A.107, Appendix A.6, p. 424]. However, she can also combine it with a maxi skirt for going out in the evening. She loves her brocade coat bought at a charity event that her friend invited her to, as in addition to the fond memories she has of the event, she appreciates that the coat can look very formal for special occasions, but it also goes well with jeans and can be used more often in this way [see Fig A.108, Appendix A.6, p. 424].

Mary's favourite coat that *nothing can quite measure up to* [see Figs A.188-191, Appendix A.9, p. 474]*,* works well for both country walks and much more formal occasions. *It's that thing you can either sit around a bonfire or garden in it or look very smart in it*, she says. The transformation happens simply through a combination with a different pair of boots and tying the belt more tightly. Another item she *adores* is a dress bought quite recently but already used several times [see Figure A.168, Appendix A.9, p. 474]. If she chooses to wear it to work, it goes well with turtleneck tops that she has in several colours. But Mary has also worn it to a party she went to with her partner. Combined with high heels the dress *looked very smart* and it was *good fun*, she says with a smile.

Occasion wear is notorious in sustainable fashion research for being among those garments that remain mainly unused in our wardrobes (Fletcher & Tham, 2004; Fletcher, 2014 [2008]; WRAP, 2013; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017, Barley Communications, 2019). For this reason, alternative scenarios through "fast" biodegradable garments have been previously explored for example by Fletcher (2014 [2008]) or Earley & Goldsworthy (2017); a new design project addressing this issue is also about to start as a part of The Business of Fashion Textiles and Technology Creative R&D Partnership. Another solution to seldom used occasion wear items is offered by the emerging rental

and sharing models such as Rent the Runway (USA), Lena Library and The Next Closet (NL), or Nu Wardrobe (IRL, UK), that offer the convenience of having outfits available when they are needed without owning them. The assumed environmental implications of these new business models are in improving resource efficiency through extended use (for a more detailed analysis of these emerging models see MISTRA Future Fashion, 2017 (4)).

It is indeed possible that biodegradable party dresses or clothing hire may provide a welcome alternative to many. However, I would at this point like to reiterate that it is the continuous wear that helps build long-lasting relationships with clothing. My findings indicate that the feeling of familiarity developed through such "sustained interaction" (Norman, 2004, p. 46) contributes to nurturing the mindsets of care and responsibility for the items we buy and use. This, I strongly feel, is vital for the wider argument presented in this thesis, recognizing the need for long-term systemic interventions that focus on core issues of unsustainable consumption instead of diverting to solutions that temporarily "fix up" the symptoms.

While there is no doubt room for co-existence of multiple scenarios, my wardrobe conversations offer ample empirical evidence to confirm that considering versatility of clothes and their appropriateness for multiple occasions can be effective solutions for extending the active use of clothes and hence potentially their emotional durability. In this way, my research provides further support for the body of research that considers focus on versatility and adaptability among the key strategies for extending the longevity and emotional durability of clothing (e.g. WRAP, 2013; Laitala & Klepp, 2015; Niinimäki & Armstrong, 2013; Connor-Crabb, 2017).

COMBINATIONS

One of the key benefits of talking to women about their wardrobes without asking them for prior preselection of items is connected to the observation that emotional durability and satisfaction with individual garments often seem to be closely linked with how a piece of clothing relates to other items in the wardrobe. The ways a piece of clothing does or does not work with other clothes in the wardrobe can either extend or narrow down the possibilities of its use. In a close link to versatility, possible combination options affect the frequency of wear and hence also relate to emotional durability of individual garments. The importance of easy combinations surfaces especially through the following examples:

This bolero is a REALLY great staple 'cause it kind of goes with everything. So yes, that's great, so that's a FAVOURITE. (Kathryn 134-140)

Other things - you get them and they just kind of join everything together and pull it together and work with a lot. So, that cardigan, because it goes with so many different things, it just kind of pulls lots of things together. (Mary 921-930)

Oh, this is nice! This is kind of like pyjama shirt, but again, just really easy to wear with lots of things. (Nicola 392-395)

So, this cardigan is really cute because it's got the colour and that kind of patterning. So, I combine that with that dress and that really works. And that looks really good with jeans as well. (Mary 1388-1396)

As all the women I talked to confirm, a wide choice in terms of combinations contributes to the general *wearability* of an item of clothing. Accordingly, a lack of real or perceived possibilities for combination can rend a garment unwearable. For example, Julie admits to owning quite a few pieces that she bought because she liked their style and material but because she is not quite sure how to combine them with other things she already owns, she has not worn them yet. For this reason, shopping and styling is *an art* in her eyes because she feels she lacks the imagination to combine her clothes in interesting and effective ways. Julie emphasizes that unlike her friend that she occasionally goes shopping with, she herself is not able to combine her new and old items creatively. As a result, what she would genuinely appreciate in terms of making the most of her existing wardrobe is *honest* styling advice from someone who *sees these things*.

Mary, Tanya and Hanka, on the other hand, seem to be especially skilled in making the most of multiple combinations enabled by mixing and matching their newer and older clothes [see also Chapter 6.5 Layering]. New options arise as time goes by, which is one reason why Mary and Tanya especially, tend to *hang onto* their old clothes. One such example is a skirt that Mary bought many years ago for a party she did not go to in the end. For a long time, the skirt remained unused because she found it hard to find something that she could wear it with. It was only after she stumbled upon a top which she thought was a perfect match, that she finally started wearing and enjoying this skirt years after she originally bought it.

At the same time, just as a new item that combines well with an unused piece opens new opportunities for wear, a previously successful combination that is no longer possible can make a garment unusable. In line with Klepp & Bjerck's (2014) point that a ski boot is not much use without its pair, when a skirt that combined well with a jacket wears out, the jacket can remain unused until the next suitable combination is found, or, if this is taking too long, it may even be discarded or passed on.

In addition to this, the issue of combinations also seems to strongly link to underwear. Several women showed me garments that they liked but were unable to wear because they either did not have suitable underwear, or they had second thoughts on how revealing the piece may be. Hanka, for example, decided to give away a dress that she liked very much because it required the kind of bra which she found impractical for everyday wear. She says she did not realize this when she first bought the dress:

> It's very pretty. The only problem is that I need to wear a bra – and it's open in the back. You know, you can wear a strapless bra and then you don't see it much but it's not the kind of thing I would just put on and wear on a daily basis then. (Hanka 422-430)

The issue of combinations therefore seems to occur at the intersection of design, women's individual skills and confidence in terms of styling, and, related to this, also careful shopping decisions that take into account how any new purchases may combine with what is already in the wardrobe. Along with the previously discussed design considerations linked to versatility and adaptability, combinations also highlight the need to focus on user capabilities (Fletcher, 2016; Connor-Crabb, 2017) and shopping decisions (Niinimäki, 2017).

CARE

About an hour into our conversation, Mary left downstairs to get a bag of her lighter, summer knitwear, out of the freezer. She only recently started storing her seasonal pieces in this way, to protect them from moths. As she walks back through the bedroom door, she tells me:

> So, Alex [partner] just, when I went downstairs, he teased me and said – does Mila think you've got too many clothes or something? In a sense, I kind of do. Because there comes

a point where you're having to look after all this stuff. You're having to keep it clean, mended and safe from moths. So, I'm probably, I am at that point where I need to stop getting things – or get rid of things. (Mary 1436-1445)

Mary's reflection well captures another key concern that resonated throughout other women's experiences. In *mundane fashion*, care is a critical factor with important implications for use frequency and hence also emotional durability of clothing. My findings confirm that in the face of numerous competing demands on their time and attention, women often lack the capacity to devote themselves to care for their clothing (Shove, 2003; Laitala & Klepp, 2015; Rigby, 2016) and so a focus on easy care options is needed (WRAP, 2013). Whether it is due to busy work commitments, childcare, or a combination of both, Nicola's remark that *it's gotta be quick, it's gotta be practical, it's gotta be kind of relatively easy to keep and maintain* mirrors the experiences of all my interviewees, without an exception.

An important issue in care for knitwear and family heirlooms such as fur seems to be their protection from moths. For this reason, things are often stored away in protective plastic covers, with the use of mothballs, or as Mary shows even in the freezer, yet women generally agree that nothing seems to guarantee full protection. Another key concern is laundry, especially washing of knitwear and other sensitive materials such as silk or woollen weaves. In line with observations from studies on everyday laundry practices (Shove, 2003; Laitala, Klepp & Boks, 2012; Rigby, 2016), that repeatedly point to users' confusion about best practice in laundering different materials, my research also shows that women often lack the confidence and sufficient knowledge on how to look after sensitive materials. For this reason, they may default to using professional services such as dry-cleaners.

This is significant in the context of my study, because aside from the environmental and health concerns linked to dry-cleaning (see e.g. Laitala, Klepp & Henry, 2017), my findings show that the need for dry-cleaning can also significantly reduce the wear frequency of clothing. The reasons for this are twofold and closely interconnected. Firstly, taking clothes to dry-cleaners requires extra effort and expense, and so women often try to save both time and money by wearing such garments only occasionally. Secondly, because organizing dry-cleaning is usually not amongst life priorities, such garments wait in piles of clothing that needs to be either taken to or picked up from dry-cleaners for long periods of time. As Mary's experience with her jacket well demonstrates:

> *It WAS expensive, and I did wear it quite a bit, but because it's so pale it needed dry cleaning regularly. And I wouldn't say I've got brilliant value out of it. (Mary 1052-1511)*

It is for these reasons that women with more confidence in garment care, like Mary or Hanka, often prefer to hand-wash many pieces with dry-clean recommendations, thus weighing out the risk of *ruining* the garment with the benefits of self-reliance that enables them to have more control over the use of such clothes. *All of these say dry clean,* Mary says, *but it's just not practical.*

Nevertheless, among all the care issues that may affect the frequency of use, the most significant seems to be ironing. Without an exception, all women I interviewed unanimously agreed that they do not like spending their time ironing and they consider this with all their new purchases whenever possible. *I've gotta tell you! I don't do ANY ironing*, Annabelle whispers, admitting that ironing and her *are not friends*. Annabelle dislikes ironing to the extent that she would rather pay for dry-cleaning. For Golraz, the need for ironing is especially inconvenient now because the lack of space in her student accommodation means that *anything I take out takes lots of time to just again put it back in the same place*. Louise used to do more ironing before she became a mother but now avoids it as much as possible because free time is precious, and she does not want to spend it by ironing. Kathryn admits that although she has a huge ironing pile downstairs, her ironing is *very cursory*, and when I ask Mary if she does much ironing, she is very quick to answer: *not if I can help it*!

SATISFACTION

As I noted before [see Chapter 4.3, p. 108], Niinimäki & Armstrong (2013) argue that the pleasure and enjoyment of wearing clothes for extended periods of time significantly contribute to emotional durability of clothing (p. 192). As I have shown throughout the discussions in this chapter, my findings offer ample evidence to support their claim. Satisfying use encourages frequent wear and so helps develop an emotional bond with an item of clothing. As Julie well illustrates:

> *I DO get attached to things and I wear them and wear them and wear them and forget to wear something different [laughs]. (Julie 758-760)*

A large body of research considered pleasant memories associated with products as important contributors to emotional attachment (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988; Schultz Kleine, Kleine & Allen,

1995; Schifferstein & Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, 2008; Mugge, Schifferstein & Schoormans, 2010). While less comparable data exists on clothing, several empirical studies indicate that meaningful memories linked to wearing garments to special occasions or personally significant events such as weddings, birthday parties or first dates can contribute to feelings of strong emotional connections (Banim & Guy, 2001; Woodward, 2007; Niinimäki & Armstrong, 2013; Connor-Crabb, 2017).

While my conversations with women confirm that memorable occasions have their relevance in this respect, my data also points to a reversed causality. Firstly, it emerges that the items worn to such occasions are invariably chosen with extra care and consideration and so it could be argued that they are already pre-primed to inspire stronger emotional bonds. Secondly, when deciding what to wear for special occasions and important events, women often chose among the already successful outfits in their wardrobes. For example, for her first date with her current partner, Annabelle chose to wear an old skirt that she loved and felt especially comfortable in [see Fig A.123, Appendix A.7, p. 440]. She now has very fond memories of the occasion which both her and her partner associate with this skirt. Yet, she did not grow attached to this skirt because of her first date. Rather, she chose it for her first date because it was already something that she loved wearing.

Similarly, Julie finds it impossible to part with a dress that reminds her of a lovely wedding she went to when her two sons were little. However, as we speak, it soon becomes clear that the dress was among her favourite outfits at the time, which is why she chose to wear it to this wedding. Hence, although the memories of the wedding are now inseparably connected to this dress, it was Julie's experience of satisfaction through use that made her chose to wear it to the wedding. This also corresponds with Niinimäki & Koskinen's (2011) point that memories are not necessarily associated with loved items from the very beginning but rather they are accumulated through long pleasurable use (p. 197).

CONCLUSION - ENABLERS

This section focused on the ways in which the clothes women wear enable them to lead the lives they live. What strongly emerges from my research is that seemingly minor practical issues and often overlooked considerations of everyday use such as ironing requirements and laundry options, or versatility that enables one to carry a toddler, impress one's colleagues and climb up a ladder in the same dress, are critical in *mundane fashion*. It is clear from my conversations that appropriateness

of a piece of clothing for women's current circumstances, or what Fletcher might call "garment's perfect suitability" (2016, p. 160), enables its frequent wear and enjoyment. At the same time, it is also important to recognise that circumstances and needs are not constant and so clothes that can easily adapt to life changes stand the chance to remain relevant for many years to come. They are often kept and used until they are "completely bedraggled", "worn to pieces" or "literally fall apart" in wear. Therefore, as Van Hinte argues, if people are to use things for longer, it is crucial to pay careful attention to the context of their use (1997, p. 196).

Context of use and fitness for purpose were also key concerns behind the concept of "appropriate technology" (now known as Practical Action), coined by Fritz Schumacher, whose work I discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.3 [p. 31]. In the light of my findings, I here propose that considering "appropriate fashion", as an approach that takes the dynamics of use and the messy beauty of everyday lives as a core impulse for creative design work, can be critical in enabling long term satisfying use and emotional durability of clothing.

Lidewij Edelkoort, one of the world's most influential trend forecasters, now argues that fashion needs a shift in focus from catwalk designers to designers who know how to design interesting everyday clothes (2014). I here fully subscribe to this call. Yet, my research also shows that emotional durability of clothing hinges on shared responsibility. On the one hand, it is the responsibility of designers and makers to consider "appropriate fashion" and long-term use of their designs. At the same time, however, users need to recognize that like any other relationship, our relationship to clothing needs to be an investment from both sides. As I demonstrated throughout this section, satisfaction and long term relevance of clothes in our wardrobes also relies on choosing items that fit not only our bodies but also our needs and circumstances. As Mary's observation in the introduction to this section hints [p. 194], being less emotional when shopping for clothes may enable us longer-lasting emotional experiences while wearing them.

[Please see the narratives of Annabelle and Emma in Appendix A.7-A.8; p. 440, p. 457]

Figure 6.18 The *Longing and belonging* theme and categories

INTRODUCTION

As Weber and Mitchell (2004) note, if women are asked about clothes, they will almost invariably drift to sharing detailed stories of their lives, including "anecdotes that start out ostensibly about clothes, but end up being about so much more – events, family, community, relationships, body image, feelings, aspirations, attitudes, beliefs and thoughts about all sorts of things" (2004, p. 3-4). Hoskins similarly argues that it is impossible to talk about things people use without a connection to the lives they lead (1998, p. 2), because the material things people value are so closely interwoven

with their life stories that the two are extremely difficult to separate (Ibid). These points were strongly echoed throughout my wardrobe conversations.

On countless occasions, a description of a piece of clothing taken out of a wardrobe turned into much more than just casual comments on fit, design, or material. At one end of the spectrum, what followed could range from simply voicing frustrations about homogenous styles and limited fit options available from the high street, to fantasising about the styles and shapes that women would like to wear, if their body, skin tone or current circumstances were different. At the more personal level, some clothes were strongly linked to memories of social occasions or loved ones such as partners, children, or parents. I previously mentioned that significance of memories connected to clothing is widely recognized in wardrobe research (see e.g. Woodward, 2007; Fletcher, 2016; Niinimäki & Armstrong, 2013). Yet, what I found interesting to notice as a designer-maker, was that such memories not only shape women's feelings towards the item in question but they often also seem to have lasting influence on their feelings towards any similar items in the future. In several cases, this would be reflected in a series of later *incarnations* of the original garment. Lastly, on several occasions, my wardrobe conversations with women unfolded moving stories of clothes linked to life-transforming episodes, with significance that stretched well beyond the woman's wardrobe [see Tanya's narrative Appendix A.10, p. 498].

As a result, my findings provide further evidence for Miller's (2008) claim that cultivating relationships to material possessions is not contradictory to cultivating deeper concerns in life and strong inter-personal relationships. In contrast to the view that material possessions distract from our deeper personal and social needs, largely rehearsed by the critics of Western materialism and consumer culture [see Chapter 1.4, p. 38], my wardrobe conversations with women clearly show that strong relationships with material things do not always imply weak relationships with people. Rather, the stories of my interviewees confirm that relationships to things, in this case clothing, can be vehicles for relationships to people and vice versa (Miller, 2008, p. 29). The observation that "the aesthetics of care" can easily extend from objects to people and from people back to objects (Ibid), is critical for my research because it also links back to Papanek's argument, discussed in Chapter 1.3 [p. 31], that care for things and care for people draw on similar sensibilities [Chapter 1.3, p. 31]. This means that not caring about the things we use (including the clothes we wear) can also have wider implications for the care sensibilities we all need to nurture in other areas of our lives.

The theory of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1986 [1969]), explains people's actions as reflections of the meanings that objects, events, and situations acquire in the process of social interaction (see also Tseëlon, 2016). What then emerges from my analysis, is that women's care for a piece of clothing is often a way of nurturing the meanings, the feelings, and the relationships that an item may be associated with. This care does not diminish relationships with people, rather, it often enables the cultivation and extension of those connections that could not be otherwise maintained due to temporary absence, physical distance or even death (see also Stalybrass, 1993). In this way, clothes can become agents, "drawing in" relationships (Woodward, 2007, p. 158), as opposed to being frivolous distractions that detract from them.

What also surfaces through noticing the traces of relationships in women's wardrobes, is that for the women I interviewed, fashion has only limited influence over their clothing choices. It is the people in their immediate surroundings who usually influence women's choices and preferences in a much more significant way. As Connor-Crabb (2017) also observed, it is not the catwalks and latest fashion news that determine women's wardrobe decisions, but rather how these are interpreted by the people who matter to them (p. 201). In this context, Woodward also notes that women's perception of fashion gets filtered through their social networks, and so when women are deliberating over their wardrobe choices "they are more often than not measuring this against the trendy woman who works in their office or a cooler younger sister than against a de-personalized image in a magazine" (2007, p. 119).

This is clearly evidenced on Annabelle's appreciation of the clothes gifted to her by her colleague Barbara, whose style she clearly admires. Emma's recent purchase of a yellow leatherette skirt that she was attracted to because she had seen another woman looking fabulous in a similar one [see Fig A.146, Appendix A.8, p. 457], is also a proof that it is more often the *sidewalk* than the *catwalk* (Polhemus, 1994) that resonates in *mundane fashion* – the clothes that women actually wear.

In the following pages I explain in more detail how the influences of women's biographies and their relationships are echoed across the narratives of the women I talked to, through two key explanatory categories that emerged from my analysis: Connections; and Wardrobe Patterns/Habits. Please refer to the table in Appendix B.3 [p. 522] for a detailed break-down of all categories and top layer codes linked to Longing and belonging.

CONNECTIONS

Childhood memories

Among the first items that Emma looks for as she opens her wardrobe are two vintage shirts that her sons recently helped her to choose at a festival stall. As they appear from behind the tightly packed row of other items, I can hardly disguise how the brightness of their patterns takes me by surprise [see Fig A.139, Appendix A.8, p. 457]. Up to this point, most women I had encountered through either my dressmaking practice or my research (perhaps apart from Tanya), would naturally gravitate to much more subdued designs. Yet, as Emma rummages through her wardrobe thinking about what is worth showing, she seems to produce more and more similarly bold pieces. Her wedding top, for example, was custom made from a large geisha print fabric found on Etsy [see Figs A.148-149, Appendix A.8, p. 457]. Another of her favourite pieces is a black tunic with large white cranes that she was lucky to spot in an outlet and get for a half of its original price [see Fig A.155, Appendix A.8, p. 457].

Although it seems that Emma never consciously realized how strongly her love of prints is reflected in her wardrobe, on reflection she admits that her *eyes seem to be drawn to patterns* – especially Chinese and Japanese prints. She suddenly remembers another dress she made as a student from a material she had bought on her travels in Australia, and as the dress pops against the background of the picture on her wall, Emma's long-term passion for Eastern prints is undeniable [Figure 6.19]. Until she mentions in passing that her glamorous grandmother used to have many similar clothes from her life in Singapore, Emma's love of these designs appears to be a relatively random aesthetic inclination. Yet, her childhood memory of dressing up in her grandmother's Singapore clothes offers an important link to Tanya's story.

Figure 6.19 Emma loves Chinese and Japanese patterns and prints

Tanya, a confident shopper with extremely clear ideas about how much she is prepared to pay for clothes, suddenly remembers to show me a jacket that she simply had to buy when she spotted it. She says she spent much more than she normally would on a charity shop purchase, but she simply could not resist. While the cut was not great, the jacket had cherries on it and that was what mattered to her [Figures 6.20-21]. Without a shadow of doubt, Tanya says she would buy anything with cherries on it [Figure 6.22]. It seems clear that unlike Emma, Tanya is fully conscious of the appeal that cherry patterns have always had for her and she also knows exactly where this attraction stems from. Her explanation shows with a unique poignancy how the largely unspoken details of personal histories can be pivotal in shaping women's wardrobes and the clothes they love to wear.

Tanya was born in the late 1940s in the communist Czechoslovakia and when she was about two years old, her father was arrested on political grounds and imprisoned for nearly nine years. Apart from one brief visit, Tanya did not see her father for most part of her childhood and lived alone with her mother. A pinafore dress that her father had bought for her in Budapest shortly before he was arrested, was the only link to his presence in Tanya's early years. *I don't remember the dress, but I remember the feeling*, Tanya tells me. She also recalls that her pinafore dress had a cherry pattern on it. This memory was later further reinforced by the fact that her mother treasured the little pinafore for many years, possibly as a reminder of the times, *when she still had a family, and everything was all right*.

Figure 6.20 A jacket Tanya *could not resist* because of its pattern

Figure 6.21 Tanya's beloved cherry patterns tied with childhood memories: jacket

Figure 6.22 Tanya's beloved cherry patterns tied with childhood memories: skirt

Emma's inclination to Japanese and Chinese prints that she used to dress up in when she stayed with her grandmother as well as Tanya's powerful story of her love for cherry patterns both seem to evidence that "what people are buying is not necessarily identical to what manufacturers think they are selling" (Hoskins, 1998, p. 195). It was not the luxurious silk material, the cut, the quality of the making or the high-end designer label that attracted Tanya to her jacket. What Tanya's story clearly shows is that usual concerns such as cut, fit, material, quality of making, or provenance, can all be easily overlooked if an item has the crucial potential to provide a tangible connection to the elusive moments and sensations that women wish to treasure for the rest of their lives.

The same is confirmed in Mary's confession of a "splurge" in Max Mara, buying a classic coat with bracelet sleeves because it looked like something her grandmother would have worn. As another point in case, shortly after she got her first job, Nicola bought a shirt with a pattern that reminded her of her slightly eccentric *gran*. What surfaces here then, is that the clothes women love to wear seem to be in many ways intricately connected with the people they love (or would love) to be with. My wardrobe conversations also highlight that childhood memories have a lasting influence over women's future wardrobe choices.

Through materializing links between women's past, present and future selves (Banim & Guy, 2001; Woodward 2007; Skjold, 2014), clothes can again enable wearers the feeling of "emplacement"

217

(Chong Kwan, 2016, p. 293) [see also Chapter 6.2 – Comfort, p. 169]. By occasionally or repeatedly referencing the styles, materials, or patterns that that have the ability to spark recollections of reassuring childhood moments, women seem to be nurturing connections to the most significant people and events in their biography.

Clothes from other people

Hoskins also remarks that "possessions that came into someone's hands as consumer commodities may then 'deviate' from their expected trajectory and come to be invested with personal meaning" (Hoskins, 1998, p. 195). Such things are then mainly valued for their personal significance, rather than for their physical properties (Ibid). As I previously mentioned, personal meanings associated with family heirlooms, hand-me-downs, or gifts, have often been associated with inactive items kept purely for their sentimental value (Niinimäki & Armstrong, 2013; see also Niinimäki & Koskinen, 2011; Niinimäki, 2014; Mugge, Schoormans & Schifferstein, 2005; Harper, 2017). The role of emotional attachment to such items for extending clothing lifetimes has therefore been questioned on the grounds that there is little point in keeping clothes for a long time if they do not in fact get worn (see e.g. Fletcher, 2012; WRAP, 2016; Harper, 2017).

Yet, my findings bring more clarity to some of these issues. What emerges is that the understanding of items with strong sentimental value as mainly dormant mementos and keepsakes is somewhat limited in scope and depth and I will here explain how my research further develops the understanding of women's relationships to such items. As garments linked to significant occasions and places were addressed in the Chapter 6.3 Enablers [p. 193], the following pages will focus on items that are in various ways linked to other people – "inherited" and handed-down clothes, as wells as gifted items.

Annabelle's wardrobe provides a good point of departure as it seems to be full of her mother's old clothes. While some of these are evening pieces, which by definition only get occasional airing at a theatre, most of the other, more casual items, do in fact get regularly worn. Annabelle says that wearing all these clothes always makes her think of her mother and she also admits that if an item gets commented on she relishes the opportunity to acknowledge its original owner. Naturally, she prefers some of these clothes to others. For example, she adores a light non-crease top that she

often combines with work skirts [see Fig A.133, Appendix A.7, p. 440], yet her mother's cashmere jumpers are mostly too warm for her so they get used less frequently.

Emma too has a number of pieces from her mother's and grandmother's wardrobes, that she actively wears. She feels that clothes sold in the high street are often *boring* and *lifeless* whereas her mother's and grandmother's items *have got some life in them somehow*. She also enjoys that the age of these clothes makes them unique, no one else is likely to have the same piece now. While she is worried about the fragile state of one of the dresses in particular [see Fig A.145, Appendix A.8, p. 457], and admits that she is *always scared of it falling to bits*, Emma still continues wearing all these clothes. Most of the time she is not actually noticing the worn parts and the accumulating holes. A skirt that literally disintegrated during a dance on her wedding night is a clear proof that Emma is prepared to embrace the risks of *wearing clothes to pieces* [see Figs A.147, A.149-150, Appendix A.8, p. 457]. It is the *slightly worn* state of clothes imbued with family connections and a history of wear that she finds especially attractive in comparison to the *pristine* feel of newly bought items.

The same sensibilities are also reflected in Louise's preference for clothes that have been worn before. She loves them for the softness they acquire through wear and she also enjoys the idea that someone loved the piece before and perhaps someone else will love it in the future. For all these reasons, most of Louise's wardrobe consists of clothes that other people have given her. Perhaps the best example is her absolute favourite - the (once) black skirt that she wears *all the time* [see Fig A.36, Appendix A.2, p. 356]. While she clearly enjoys that her mother-in-law also used to wear this skirt years ago as a student, what is equally important to Louise is the plain, straight cut that makes the skirt easy to wear and easy to combine with different things for work. The fact that personal meaning and a connection to someone she loves would not be enough in themselves, is clear in Louise's quite stoical comment that she will *never wear* her mother's old dress, *because it's not me*. Mary echoes this stoical attitude, reiterating that the reason why she did not keep many of her late mother's clothes is that her and her mother's skin tones were different and so colours and styles would not easily translate between them. On the other hand, a skirt that was a *cast off* from her aunt is simply perfect because *it just really suits my shape* and looks *instantly smart* in the morning [see Fig A.161, Appendix A.9, p. 474] . In addition, the material *falls really well* and so in the two years she has had it, Mary has worn this skirt *maybe hundreds of times*.

What these examples show is that items with strong personal meaning and sentimental value do indeed get worn and in many cases provide a great sense of satisfaction and enjoyment in use, so further reinforcing their emotional value. However, what also comes through clearly is that personal meaning and sentimental value linked to loved ones do not guarantee neither appreciation nor a strong emotional feeling towards an item of clothing. Their role in extending emotional durability of clothing therefore cannot be considered in isolation from other factors such as women's personal preferences in terms of style, fit and colour and also each garment's practicality and suitability for women's lifestyles.

In a similar vein, while gifting has featured in design and emotion research among strategies for extending emotional durability of design objects (Schultz, Kleine & Kernan, 1989; Schifferstein, Mugge & Hekkert, 2005), the results of my wardrobe conversations confirm the findings of Schultz-Kleine, Kleine & Allen (1995) that gifts, regardless of who the giver is, do not guarantee stronger feelings towards things. In fact, gifting can be almost counterproductive in this respect. Louise's facial expressions as she shows me some of the items received from her mother-in-law [Figure 6.3, p. 164] are a clear proof that being given items that are definitely "not me" (Schultz-Kleine, Kleine & Allen, 1995; Banim & Guy, 2001; Woodward, 2007) makes women noticeably uncomfortable. This discomfort seems to be further multiplied by the moral dilemma of considering whether "getting rid of" the item would be offensive to the relationship with the giver.

While my data does not offer sufficient evidence to propose that strong feelings for individual garments reduce further purchases, what my analysis does show, is that such feelings help nurture the sensibilities of care, appreciation and loyalty that significantly unsettle the logic of fast turnarounds and disposability. Similar to Kodi exchange objects studied by Hoskins (1998), these clothes defy the endless pursuit of novelty by instead valuing age, memory, and storytelling. Just like one of Hoskin's informants Maru Daku, who chooses a betel bag of a specific, quite simple style, because this enables him to identify his own story with his grandfather's (1998, p. 192), women I interviewed choose to wear old clothes imbued with meanings and feelings as these seem to help ground them in their lives and families and strengthen their sense of belonging in the world (Belk, 1988). Clothes with sentimental and personal meanings tend to exist entirely outside any fiscal values or judgements, both fashion cycles and market value are here surpassed by things that matter on entirely different grounds. It is therefore possible to suggest that although strong attachments to clothing with sentimental and personal value do not discourage further consumption in short-term

view, they still have positive implications for long-term practices, preferences, and possibly even shopping habits, as they indicate clothing choices based on other than fashion and market logic. Clothes that connect to loved ones are hence not just mementos and keepsakes but items with a rich potential in emotionally durable *mundane fashion*.

WARDROBE PATTERNS/HABITS

Different and Same

These are unusual dresses; Annabelle says pulling out a couple of day dresses that her partner bought for her. While she is obviously touched by this surprise gesture, she also seems to be in two minds about the result:

> *This neckline is a little different for me and it just about works...I can get away with it – just about... (Annabelle 1065-1084)*

Despite her very considerate phrasing, it seems clear that if they were not chosen by her partner, Annabelle would be unlikely to wear either of these dresses. Both their fitted style and the non -crease material match well with her usual choices, but the large floral patterns are not something she would normally go for in a dress. More importantly though, the cowl neckline of one of the dresses seems to unsettle her long-term reliance on V-necklines that she feels suit her *frame*.

Figure 6.23 Annabelle's *unusual* dresses chosen by her partner

Annabelle seems to be at a point in her life when she feels quite confident about the kind of clothes she likes to wear and so she generally gravitates to similar items [see Chapter 6.5 Layering – Age, on the relationship between age and confidence in wardrobe choices]. At the same time, it is intriguing to observe how she also repeatedly emphasizes that the reason she likes a piece of clothing is because it is *different.* The same is also echoed in other women's experiences. Despite their clear ideas of styles, shapes and colours they prefer simply because they learnt that these *work* for them [see Chapter 6.5 Layering – Age], most women I spoke to also seem to look for subtle ways of disrupting their own patterns of dressing by constantly longing for something just that little bit *different* to what they would normally gravitate to.

Thus, clothes that may from an outsider's point of view come across as more or less "adjustments of the same" (Skjold, 2014, p. 37), still seem to have subtle differences that are significant in the eyes of their owners. What connects all these clothes is their positioning on a notional scale that demarcates a kind of wardrobe comfort zone which helps women negotiate the sometimes overwhelming variety of possible fashion options. For Annabelle, V-necklines and plain fitted styles seem to do just that and so any items that divert too far from these preferences are more than likely to pose a wardrobe dilemma.

This gradual fine-tuning of personal style, accompanied by continuous negotiation of the fine balance between 'the same, yet different' items, corresponds to what Skjold (2014) calls the "biographical wardrobe" or what Dankl (2011) refers to as "style biography". Studying wardrobes of mature women, as opposed to younger participants, turns out to be especially enlightening in this respect because it offers a diachronic snapshot of such choices across many years (see also Skjold, 2014). What emerges then, is how a range of strikingly similar styles, colours and materials get revisited in individual wardrobes over long periods of time without much regard for fashion cycles and trends (Woodward, 2007; Dankl, 2011; Skjold, 2014).

A good illustration here is Julie, who suddenly spots how the dresses she has laid out on her bed all seem to look the same [Figure 6.24]:

Figure 6.24 Julie's *same* dresses that make her feel comfortable

It's funny actually, isn't it? Because each of these dresses that I'm saying are comfortable are very similar. I stick to wearing what I find comfortable (laughs). (Julie 508-515)

Similar attitude is also echoed by Nicola who remarks that she is *a creature of habit and comfort* and so when something wears out, she usually goes and gets something very similar. Her wardrobe now feels more settled as after many years of being quite adventurous with her outfits, she has learnt what suits her and what does not, and she reflects this in her shopping habits. For example, all her trousers are variations on the same peg style which she feels suits her petite figure and so she stopped experimenting with other styles. For the same reason, she has entirely given up the idea of wearing a jumpsuit, something she always wanted, because every single time she attempts to try one on, she gets reassured that it just *swamps her figure* [See Chapter 6.5 Layering [p. 226] for more discussion on how styles and preferences do not remain static and how they can develop over time (compare also Dankl, 2011)].

What Nicola's narrative also strongly demonstrates is how the styles that women settle into, or formulas for dressing *(*Skjold, 2014), have significant practical implications. Tried and tested options enable to quickly put together outfits of what almost becomes a personal uniform, without a need for long deliberation about what to wear [see also Chapter 6.3 Enablers, p. 193]. Pondering a myriad of possible combinations on a daily basis is unrealistic in *mundane fashion*, because women,

especially those with young children, often have only minutes to get ready in the morning. In addition, as Woodward (2007) points out, such "habitual clothing" also resolves the anxieties of those who feel less confident about combining different styles, colours and materials, as in this way they can easily "fall back on items they 'know' how to wear" (p. 120), an issue that is especially evident in Julie's case [see Appendix A.1, p. 343].

Family influences

Annabelle, however, opens another key point in reflection on women's wardrobe patterns and personal style preferences. Like Julie, she looks amused by the striking similarity of the skirts she wears on a daily basis, as she lays them out on the bed [Figure 6.25]. *I got a little bit stuck in my ways*, she laughs, noticing especially their muted tones and the fact that they look *kind of dull* in that respect. This also instantly reminds her of a bright-coloured skirt that she had bought *as deliberate attempt to try to break away from brown beige* [Figure 6.26].

Figure 6.25 Annabelle's *dull* work skirts

Figure 6.26 Annabelle's *deliberate attempt to try break away from brown beige*

As it turns out, Annabelle's mother *had the same thing* and to this day brown and beige prevail in both women's wardrobes. Similar connections between mothers' and daughters' wardrobes resonate across other cases, mirroring Woodward's claim that "the most important relationship that is negotiated through clothing is that between mothers and daughters" (2007, p. 102).

As I have previously noted, influences across generations are evident in multiple aspects of women's wardrobes. My analysis also draws attention to the importance of considering how childhood memories of mother's (and sometimes grandmother's) clothes can be at various points in women's lives echoed in their longing for similar clothing.

Earlier in this section I discussed Emma's love of Chinese and Japanese prints, as an example of what could be called cross-generational belonging through clothing. However, Emma's referencing of styles previously worn by her mother and grandmother does not end with her love of Eastern prints. Her printed jacket with a diagonal zip across the front once again strongly echoes the style of her mum's old jacket, whose shape Emma loves and so she wears the jacket a lot despite its quite fragile state [Figure 6.27]. Likewise, the raw silk skirt that she bought second-hand as a student and ended up using for her wedding almost twenty-five years later, is strikingly similar in both its material and style to her grandmother's old skirt from Singapore that Emma used to love trying on as a child [Figure 6.28].

Figure 6.27 Left: Jacket with a diagonal zip that used to belong to Emma's mother. **Right**: Jacket with a diagonal zip that Emma bought some years back

Figure 6.28 Left: Emma's grandmother's skirt that she used to try on as a child. **Right:** Emma's wedding skirt

As Emma's example confirms, family background can have a vital role to play in mediating taste and style preferences (Dankl, 2011, p. 128). At the same time, Tanya, who is adamant that one of the

main reasons she loves wearing red is that her mother would never allow her to wear it, also shows that this process involves many entangled layers of negotiation and is hence all but unproblematic. Her mother, Tanya tells me, insisted that Tanya's skin tone was far too dark for other than pastel colours, beige and light blue were considered the best. Tanya's radical response to this imposition was eliminating all pastel colours from her wardrobe for years to come as soon as she was separated from her family as a student in London.

In Chapter 3.2 [p. 64] I mentioned the research of Schultz-Kleine, Kleine & Allen (1995), who studied attachment to objects as a reflection of people's life stories and their behaviour related to self-development. In their research, the authors also identified two competing archetypes of self-development behaviour which they described as 1) "affiliation versus autonomy seeking" and 2) "temporal change versus stability management" (p. 328). Each of these behaviours are given different emphasis at various points in our lives and so the most favourite objects tend to be either those that reflect the process of affiliation through desired links to other people, or, by contrast, those that strongly mirror the need for autonomy, and search for own individuality (p. 335). Similar tensions were also observed by Woodward (2007), who notes that women tend to go through an exploratory period that to a greater or lesser extent negates their experiences from their parental homes. Later, however, as women's need to prove their own independence gradually converges with a desire to re-establish the links with their families and early lives, the process of maturing is also reflected in the re-alignment of some of their favourite styles with the those of their mothers (p. 104). Similar process, although without a direct connection to family ties, is described by Skjold (2014) in her model of "sensory anchoring" [see Chapter 4.3, p. 108].

Hence, like life itself, *mundane fashion* seems to evolve in relationship to endless competing needs, wishes and paradoxes, many of which are deeply intertwined with our often complex family ties. As Woodward puts it:

> Because clothing is non-verbal, it lends itself to becoming a means through which people can acknowledge the aspects of a relationship that they do not want to or cannot explicitly acknowledge. … As a subtle material practice, such contradictions are possible as they are not made explicit, and as such clothing does not necessarily cohere with the rest of the relationship. (2007, p. 102)

In this respect, Tanya's wardrobe seems to be simultaneously a revolt against and an homage to her late mother. While an element of her personal "liberation" from the time when her mother selected her clothing is still mirrored in a sizeable proportion of items in bright colours, especially red and yellow, Tanya now also comfortably wears light blue, beige and all other pastel colours. Moreover, her love of handmade textiles, traditional embroidery and also her open-mindedness with regards to wear and tear of clothing, are all no doubt at least to some extent a testimony to her mother's influence. One of her most fondly remembered pieces of clothing is a dress that her mother commissioned for Tanya while she was a student. It was remarkably simple, with spaghetti shoulder straps, made from vintage home-made canvas, with no attempt to disguise the signs of the material's age, including the stains on it. With an immense sense of care and tenderness, Tanya now wears many of her mother's old pieces, some of which are over sixty years old [see Tanya's narrative, Appendix A.10, p. 498].

CONCLUSION – LONGING AND BELONGING

This section discussed the multi-layered ways in which childhood memories and family ties get reflected in women's future wardrobe choices. In sum, the analysis of my wardrobe conversations clearly highlights what could be called a "fashion lag". Similar to the term "cultural lag" coined by William Fielding Ogborn (1922) to describe the common phenomenon when the changes in material culture (technology especially) outpace the changes in non-material culture (ideas, beliefs, symbols), "fashion lag" points to a dissonance between the fast turnaround of fashion items in the mainstream industry and the needs, beliefs and crucially the relationships of the women who wear and appropriate these clothes in their wardrobes at a much slower pace (see also Woodward, 2007; Skjold, 2014; Fletcher, 2016).

While draining material resources in the pursuit of endless change, the current fashion system seems to blindly ignore the continuity of styles, habits and relationships cultivated in *mundane fashion*, through the everyday clothes that women choose to wear. As Skjold (2014) also notes, continuity is here often valued more often than change. From this standpoint, the narrative of the fashion industry is entirely incompatible with the narrative of *mundane fashion*, as both seem to be underpinned by entirely different sets of values.

As an important takeaway for extending emotional durability of clothing, the evidence presented here highlights how the largely unspoken details of personal histories are often pivotal in shaping women's future wardrobes. The significance of early childhood experiences for long-term (clothing) practices has so far been largely ignored in research on emotional durability as well as in the context of fashion and sustainability. My findings therefore provide important initial clues on the potential implications of early education for fostering more sustainable clothing practices. What is here proposed is focusing not only on emotional durability of design but also paying more attention to our own emotional durability by nurturing the sensibilities that enable us to value and appreciate what we have before we resolve we need something else.

[Please see the narratives of Mary and Tanya in Appendix A.9-A.10; p. 474, p. 498]
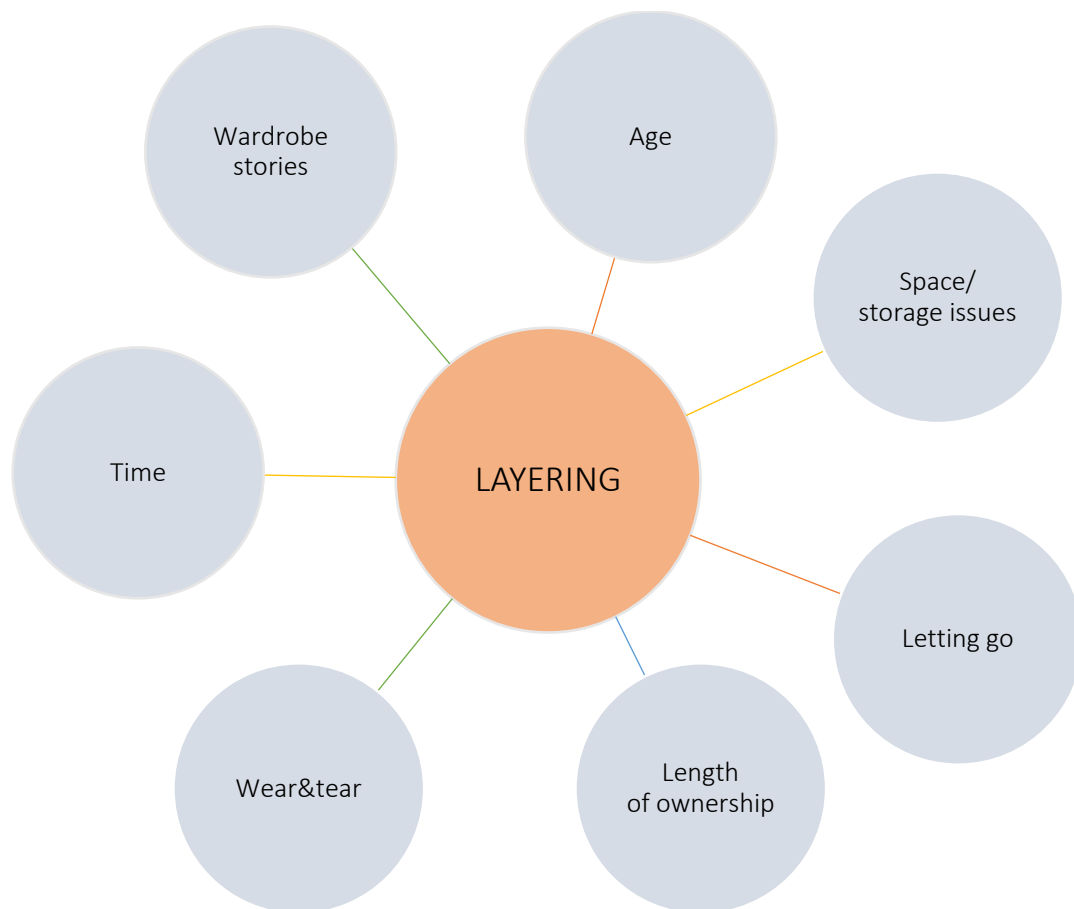
Figure 6.29 The *Layering* theme and categories

INTRODUCTION

As I highlighted throughout the explications of all previous themes, although material aspects of clothing have a critical role to play in emotional durability [see especially Chapter 6.2 Sensory experiences, p. 173], it needs to be noted that they still constitute only one 'layer' of women's complex relationships with their clothes. Clearly, women's wardrobes are not just containers where individual garments they wear now, used to wear in the past, or wish to be able to wear in the future, get accumulated. Previous research described wardrobe as material biography (Banim & Guy, 2001; Woodward, 2007; Dankl, 2011; Skjold, 2014) and argued that wardrobes capture in material form

230

women's "co-existing views of self" (Banim & Guy, 2000, p. 313). Wardrobes also enable to appropriate what has been bought as a commodity into something that becomes integral to individual life story (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 61). Yet, what I especially wish to highlight in the wider context of this research is how women's views on continuity and change are reflected not only in their relationship to individual garments, but also to the wardrobe as a whole. Crucially, what is also demonstrated here is that like any other emotional investment, relationships with clothes are not static and they evolve and change over time.

Unlike Nicola, Kathryn or Golraz, who see the accumulation of clothing over time as a hindrance and possibly an obstacle to personal growth and well-being, for Tanya and Mary the opposite seems to be true. While in its literal sense, the process of layering is associated with putting on more and more items of clothing for physical comfort and warmth, Tanya and Mary embrace a notional layering also for another kind of comfort. Both women seem to derive a profound sense of contentment (Miller, 2008) and grounding from collecting the clothes they loved wearing in the past, those they enjoy wearing at present, and also those that may still *slot into place (*Mary) in the future.

Aspects of layering resonate across the stories of all the women I interviewed and demonstrate themselves through women's experiences related to age, their attitudes to the length of time for which they tend to keep clothes, their ability to let go of them, and the ways in which each woman's space and storage options may influence all of the above. As I highlighted in the beginning, changes over time also play a vital role here, through changing patterns in wearing certain items, women's changing preferences and fluctuating figures, as well as through the stories of items that acquire special significance in women's wardrobes through continuous wear over many years. The ways in which wear and tear are seen as either a fascinating materialization of this experience (Tanya, Louise), a reason to stop wearing something (Mary), or how they are often overlooked for the reassuring familiarity they offer (Emma, Kathryn), are also interesting to note in the context of longevity and emotional durability of clothing.

Here, all these issues will be discussed in more detail through the key explanatory categories that emerged from my analysis: Age; Time; Letting Go; Length of Ownership; and Wear and Tear. Please refer to the table in Appendix B.4 [p. 524] for a detailed break-down of all categories and top layer codes linked to Layering.

AGE

Women's aging in connection to wardrobe has often been portrayed in terms of negative experience. Undoubtedly, the process of aging and the related body changes can bring their own challenges in terms of clothing choices and these have been addressed by Twigg (2013), Townsend, Sadkowska & Sissons (2017, 2019) or Church Gibson (2000). On the other hand, Dankl (2011) also emphasizes that positive elements of ageing tend to be overlooked, focus is often given to signs of deterioration, and this undermines the process of growth through building on lifelong experiences. In line with this view, my findings strongly show that the process of getting older can also be perceived by women as an advantage with regards to their clothing choices. In comparison to their younger years, age often helps women acquire more confidence (see also Connor-Crabb, 2017) and more experience in terms of styles and shapes that suit them, which is in turn reflected in fewer shopping mistakes, fewer frustrations, and hence more successful relationships with new purchases and the whole wardrobes.

As the below excerpts from my interviews demonstrate, maturing can be associated with to embrace one's own limitations in a positive and constructive way, feeling comfortable in "one's own skin":

> *I suppose you get to a certain stage, don't you, in your life when you kind of know what suits you (Kathryn 350-351)*

> *So, I think a part of getting older is really just knowing what works for your shape and colouring and then you make less mistakes I suppose (Mary 2086-2094)*

> *I think maybe I've become more confident about wearing some of those things, but that's not necessarily since having children, that's probably just, you know, age, confidence, and just going - that's more me (Emma 1016-1024)*

> *I think now that I'm in my thirties I just got used to the idea that there's things that suit me and there's things that don't [laughs], I'm less experimental I suppose with clothes now, I'm just kind of, I know what suits me and what doesn't and, you know, I stick to it [laughs]… (Nicola, 490-501)*

A number of previous studies demonstrated that the dissonance between the ideal self and reality can often result in high turnarounds of clothing in younger women's as wardrobes, as women test

232

through clothing different options of who they think they might want to be, against the person they actually are (Banim & Guy, 2000, Woodward, 2007; Klepp, 2010; Skjold, 2014). As Woodward puts it:

> At the moment in front of the mirror women certainly do not feel they are simply expressing themselves as they wish; on the contrary, they are going through a long list of failed attempts to find themselves. (2007, p. 15)

Maturity, by contrast, as my interviewees confirm, is reflected in the ability to better negotiate such dissonances, and hence make more satisfactory, long-term purchases. For example, Nicola (in her early thirties) now seems to have settled on items that she knows work for her figure, and her reflection on this process of learning resonates across other women's narratives:

> *when I was in my twenties I used to try lots of different patterns and I would be a little bit more interested in kind of what was fashionable at the time and try it out…I've always tried to find like a jumpsuit for instance that suits me but they tend to just swamp my figure, so - yeah [smiles] (Nicola 490-501)*

Emma (now in her mid-forties) also says that compared to her decisions in her twenties, she has now become more thoughtful about the quality of fabric, the provenance, considering why she wants to buy an item of clothing and if it really is something that can *work for her* for a long time.

Body image

At the same time, the fact that women's bodies and their own perception of them also change with age (often following multiple pregnancies), cannot be overlooked. As a result, some garments are no longer considered suitable to wear. Even though they may still fit, the subjective experience of fit often differs from the feeling women remember from the time when they originally wore the garment. For example, Hanka offered me a skirt that she says she will not wear anymore with the following explanation:

> *I bought this long time ago in Malvern, before we had kids, and then we went to Barcelona the summer before - or the summer after - we got married, and I walked around Barcelona*

233

in it and I felt really good, but now, you know, that was before the kids...now it doesn't fit me quite the way it should, it doesn't look good anymore (Hanka 651-657)

Similarly, Louise felt upset by the well-meant comments of her neighbours and acquaintances who tried to reassure her that her body did not change at all after her recent pregnancy. Despite her petite figure, Louise herself strongly felt a difference. Hence, although she avoided buying maternity clothing for most of her pregnancy, after her son was born she actually bought several items with a much looser fit than she would normally go for, because feeling comfortable was especially important for her in that period. Some of these have now become her favourite staples, like the denim dungaree skirt which she found especially useful at the time *because it was hiding what I thought was showing,* she tells me laughing.

Other changes may not necessarily be related to pregnancies but rather to shifting perceptions of one's own body over time. Hanka, who used to like wearing short skirts in her twenties, does not wear anything with a length above the knee now. *I don't like my knee anymore*, she says. Mary recently bought a wrap silk blouse as an *incarnation* of one she *wore and wore until it fell to bits* However, she finds that she does not wear it very often because she suddenly realized that now she feels *less comfortable about it kind of falling open there* [at the front].

As a result of such changes and shifting perceptions, other garments get appreciated especially because they help to cover the parts which are now considered less flattering. For example, Kathryn loves her semi-transparent bolero that she can wear over her sleeveless dresses to disguise her upper arms, that she does not like to expose anymore [see Fig A.106, Appendix A.6, p. 424]. She also likes the style of her new evening dress that allows her to show what she feels comfortable showing while not being too revealing [see Fig A.118, Appendix A.6, p. 424]:

I suppose what I like about this is that you can expose the back but it's not exposing too much of the back as this bit comes down and it breaks the back a bit, so it's quite nice to show a bit of back - it's a little bit flirty - but on the other hand it's not showing masses when we're becoming a bit older [laughs] (Kathryn 106-128)

Wardrobe quantities

Layering is also reflected in the quantity of garments women accumulate in their wardrobes over time. As I noted in the introduction to this section, this is well illustrated by Tanya and Mary, who both seem to acquire clothing as a long-term investment while rarely discarding anything and so their wardrobes grow year by year [see Tanya's and Mary's narratives, Appendix A.9-A.10]. As Mary admits, her *collection of clothes* is now reaching a point where she might need to make some critical decisions on how to go on in the future, because her passion for collecting beautiful pieces can get time-consuming in terms of care and it also puts considerable demands on storage space in her house. Apart from Tanya and Mary, Annabelle also has quite an extensive collection of clothing, stored in two rooms. This corresponds with Woodward's (2007) observation that older women tend to have larger wardrobes, both due to their tendency to build material biographies and also due to the fact that their generally more settled living conditions allow them to do so.

However, as my conversations with women have also shown, wardrobe quantities are also affected by significant life changes such as divorce, moving, or sometimes a combination of both. For example, Tanya's seemingly extensive collection of clothing would be in fact even larger, if her move from her previous family home did not force her to deposit some pieces into storage. Julie and Annabelle also had to seriously reconsider their wardrobes due to moving countries after their relationships with previous partners ended. Similar transformation is also implicit in Kathryn's story, where her impulse for a major house clear out and discarding of many older pieces of clothing seemed to coincide with her recent divorce.

On the one hand, such "wardrobe edits" can be an opportunity to discard past selves women no longer wish to be associated with and start anew (Banim & Guy, 2001; Woodward, 2007; Klepp, 2010). On the other hand, as demonstrated by Annabelle's account below, the motivations are often primarily linked to simple practical concerns such as storage and logistics of moving between continents:

> *I brought a lot of clothes TO the States and then back FROM the States and at some point, you've got to say: I can't just keep on taking clothes around with me just because I have them (Annabelle 1268-1299)*

Moving has also significantly impacted Nicola and Golraz, both being exceptions to the rule of building larger wardrobes with age. While their nomadic lifestyles no doubt had a role to play here, both women also strongly feel that their wardrobes should remain quite minimalist, or *capsular*, reduced to only pieces they truly love and wear on an everyday basis. The pattern of development in Nicola's wardrobe therefore contrasts the tendencies in most other cases:

> *I DEFINITELY had a lot more clothes when I was a teenager and when I was in my twenties, but the problem was that things would get like kind of slightly lost and I'm much more interested now in being able to see everything that I've got? And kind of know where things are? (Nicola 877-886)*

Interestingly, for Nicola, this is also a strategy of managing the demands of her busy job with early motherhood. She feels that in order to cope, she needs to be *much more sort of uniform and organized* [see also Chapter 6.3 Enablers, p.193].

TIME

A lack of space or specific storage arrangements can sometimes lead to pleasant rediscoveries of clothes that women forgot they owned. Emma, for example, has a wardrobe in which clothes are stored on two parallel poles placed across the depth rather than the width of the wardrobe. For this reason, she normally only sees the clothes closest to the wardrobe door. What a sudden rediscovery of an older item that gets worn again shows, is that loved clothes are not necessarily items that women always hold in their active memory. Kathryn, for example, while showing me her knitwear, stumbles upon a cardigan that she loves because it falls beautifully. She seems very pleased, admitting that it often gets forgotten at the back of the drawer.

This is important for several reasons. Firstly, it clearly shows that inactive garments are not always just things that take up space and never get worn again. Often, these items simply get forgotten due to life's more important matters (Shove, 2009, 2012) and quickly acquire renewed relevance when they are found again. Secondly, such dormant items also demonstrate that similarly to our relationships with people, our relationships with clothes are not static and they develop over time. Just like bumping into an old friend who we are pleased to see again after a long time, a successful rediscovery of an older item shows that our past purchases can have long-term relevance, if given

the chance. Lastly, such re-discoveries further confirm that once clothes leave the shop check out, their relevance is more often judged in connection to our lifestyles and current preferences, than to wider fashion trends.

Most of my interviewees also confirm that *hanging onto* an older piece of clothing often brings advantages in the future, because a rediscovered older item takes on the excitement of a new garment with the reassuring familiarity of the old. Mary tends to *hang onto things* because she has had the experience *of them working much later on*. This is also why she is not giving up on a coat that she bought because it was similar to her all-time favourite:

> *But it might be one of those things where I bought it, I'm not wearing it a huge amount at the moment, but then I might, in a couple of years' time, really fall back in love with it and wear it a lot, which is what happened with that skirt [she showed me previously] (Mary 735-739)*

Changing patterns of wear

These changing patterns of wear can be linked to a number of reasons. For example, Golraz, Louise and Annabelle all have quite a few items that they like very much yet cannot wear at the moment because they are more suitable for the warmer climates of their previous homes - Italy, France and Florida respectively [see also Chapter 6.2 Sensory experiences, p. 173]. Annabelle also has several work suits which she used to love wearing when she worked in the United States but does not wear them now *because people in England don't wear this stuff*. Kathryn has a favourite jumper and a pair of trousers both of which she can only wear on her *slim days*, and Hanka is looking forward to a bit more independence from her young children so that she can go to town on her own and have a coffee wearing her beloved green woollen coat. Hanka, Louise and Annabelle also recall that they could not wear some of their favourite clothes following their pregnancies, but as their body changes gradually settled, they were pleased to be able to wear these clothes again. For Annabelle, who says her figure changed considerably after her two children, a desire to be able to wear her favourite old clothes again was the main motivation to get into the gym and regain her pre-pregnancy form.

LETTING GO

Still, there are also times when despite repeated attempts to re-discover and wear an item again are unsuccessful. This comes through especially clearly in Hanka's narrative, but similar experiences are shared by all other women. While showing me a shirt dress that she loved so much that she bought another of the same style in a different fabric, Hanka also tells me that she feels *past the phase* of wearing either of them [see Hanka's narrative in Appendix A, p. 360]. Although *there's nothing wrong with these dresses*, wearing them just does not feel the same as it did five years ago. This is also why she is concerned about some of the clothes she has put away until her children are a bit older, she hopes *that it isn't the case that when I can wear them again, I won't like them anymore.* Mary and Emma tend to *hold onto* things they hope will work better for them after a slight alteration. Yet, both also admit that this actually rarely happens because they never *get around* to making these changes.

Women's attitudes to the right balance between keeping hold of things that were once significant and loved and overburdening themselves with more possessions than they can reasonably manage seem to differ considerably from case to case. Julie, Kathryn, and Nicola all agree that they are not too sentimental about clothes and that they try to keep only those items that they love and use. Julie and Kathryn regularly *chuck things out* and Nicola has had to reconsider her possessions repeatedly due to moving. Hanka, Annabelle and Golraz seem to stand in the middle. They do like to keep unused clothes with the view of their possible usefulness in the future. Golraz, for example, is keeping the dress she loves because she hopes to give it to her future daughter one day. Yet, all three also agree that they are prepared to part with things that seem to only take up space in their wardrobes, without much regret.

Tanya, Mary, Louise, and Emma consider themselves *hoarders*, all admitting that they find it quite difficult to *say goodbye* to their things. *It's kind of too pretty to let go*, Mary says about her favourite blouse from her student days. In addition, she feels that parting with clothes is an open admission that she is not wearing something and therefore clearly *wasted money* on it. In contrast to Hanka, who strongly feels that if clothes are not being worn, they have lost their function, for Mary her clothes are a collection of aesthetic objects that give her pleasure because of beautiful fabrics, colours, and patterns. As I previously mentioned, her recent attempt at a house clear-out made her realize that her *nice collection of clothes* is among her most valued possessions.

As Dankl (2011) also notes, practical possibility of wear is often not essential in women's relationship to clothing.

> (…) clothes offer a future continuation without actually having to wear the garment. (…) The enclosure and the possibility to choose when and if pieces are worn for public scrutiny make them collections for personal empowerment. These collections are kept due to their potential of caring for and preserving the past at the same time. (p. 139)

For Mary, with her almost curatorial approach that brings her pleasure, her collection of clothes opens a myriad future possibilities that connect her past, present and future wardrobe choices. Annabelle's skirt with a pattern that reminds her of the tropics is another case in point. While she struggles to make it work in her wardrobe, she is not prepared to part with it. *I just don't want to let go of that part of my life*, she admits.

LENGTH OF OWNERSHIP

As I explained in more detail in Chapter 5.2 [p. 133], to start the conversation with a casual reference that women could easily relate to, I also asked about their most recent purchases. This question enabled additional insights that I had not anticipated. Firstly, it offered some extra clues on each women's shopping habits and the frequency with which they acquire clothes, enabling me to corroborate their later claims with real life evidence. For example, in case of Emma, who put a lot of emphasis on her preference of second-hand shopping, mainly for ethical reasons, her latest purchase turned out to be a faux leather skirt from a high street shop, Emma herself being aware of this contradiction. Secondly, asking women about their newest pieces also revealed how perceptions of what is considered "old" and "new" differ between the cases. This is best exemplified on a comparison of Kathryn's and Mary's wardrobe. Whereas most Kathryn's clothes were up two to five years old, with the newest piece bought only a month ago, Mary's *relatively more recent* items turned out to be *five years at the most*.

This usefully highlights the issue of differing perceptions of longevity and expected lifetimes (Cox, Griffith, Giorgi & King 2013; Gnanapragasam, Oguchi & Cooper, 2017). For Kathryn, the fact that an item she has had for four-five years is *losing its shape a bit,* seems to be accepted as a result of its

long life. Mary, on the other hand, finds something that looks *a bit bedraggled* after the equivalent amount of time a disappointment and a sign of poor quality.

Asking about old clothes, on the other hand, showed that the age of items in women's wardrobes can go up to fifty years back, or more, in case of 'family heirlooms' such as fur coats that are worn only occasionally and are therefore less susceptible to wear and tear (Skjold et al., 2016). Another insight in this context is that judgements about the length of ownership of individual garments are often unreliable and should hence be only used as a lead rather than approached as data in themselves (see also Laitala, Klepp & Henry, 2017). Quantitatively oriented studies often attempt to capture wardrobe inventories that include dating individual garments (Fletcher & Klepp, 2017). From my research experience, however, this approach is highly contested as it is often rather difficult for women to remember accurately the exact length of ownership of each garment [see also Chapter 5.2, p. 133].

Individual items in women's wardrobes are often difficult to categorize in terms of age, possibly with the exception of those associated with a special occasion that is easy to date – such as for example a 50th birthday party. Like life itself, women's wardrobes are not neat linear narratives but often rather messy accumulations of layers of past experiences and events that are not always remembered accurately. Good example here is Tanya's dating of her favourite blue travel dress, which she says she has had for about twenty-five years [Figure 6.5, p. 165; Figs A.201-204, Appendix A.10, p. 498]. As I later found, however, the brand was founded in the year 2000 – i.e. only seventeen years ago at the time of our interview. As another example, in her answer to my question about her oldest clothes, Hanka claimed she had no clothes that go back to the time before she moved to the UK. Yet, as our conversation progressed, she came across a denim skirt kept and worn since her student days over twenty years ago.

In addition to being symbolic links between the past, the present and the future (Banim & Guy, 2001; Woodward 2007; Skjold, 2014), old clothes also carry a more prosaic connection between women's past and future selves, as my findings show. A garment's continuous relevance seems important to women for one more reason previously not covered in research on longevity and emotional durability of clothing. Aside from the environmental implications in terms of extending clothing lifetimes, being able to wear the same item of clothing for many years seems to also have positive implications for women's self-perception. For example, Kathryn feels very proud that she can still fit

into her favourite leotard that is now over fifteen years old. Annabelle makes a similar comment as she shows me a skirt that was a gift from her then boyfriend and later husband when she was just nineteen. Although the couple have since separated and Annabelle moved continents, the fact that she is still able to wear this skirt when she goes out in the evening, puts a smile on her face. Despite all the changes in her life over the thirty years, the skirt still fits, and Annabelle's wide smile suggests that this gives her a welcome reassurance that in one way at least she is still the same person she was when she put this skirt on for the very first time.

WEAR & TEAR

Far from being just an indication of deterioration, wear and tear is an eloquent testimony to a long-term satisfaction and lasting relevance of individual items of clothing. It also mirrors the layers of experiences lived through while wearing these clothes and so rather than decreasing in value, well-worn garments often become indispensable parts of women's wardrobes (Spivack, 2014; Heti, Julavits & Shapton, 2014; Fletcher, 2016). While women often fear the moment when a loved item will finally *fall to bits*, meaning they will no longer be able to wear it, this rarely seems to stop its continuous use. Experiences with such worn garments resonated across the stories of all the women I interviewed:

> *so it's falling apart so much that I can't really do anything with it (Emma 345-355)*

> *you can see I'm very fond of that one because it's a bit knackered [laughs] (Kathryn 429-431)*

> *yeah, so some of my work jackets, over the years, have REALLY got absolutely just hammered, really heavily used, so some of them just disintegrated (Mary 1528-1534)*

What is also interesting in this context is that many of such garments no longer seem to be *seen objectively* by their owners. Although items with visible signs of wear arguably do not fit into the wider societal norms that still tend to be geared towards newness and latest trends, well-worn clothes are often used with pride and personal comfort that largely disregards what other people may think.

Tanya is an especially good example here [see her narrative Appendix A.10]. As I noted in the Prologue to this thesis [p. 13], she obviously takes pleasure in the signs of wear and tear that her clothes show. For Louise, the fact that her favourite black skirt has now faded to an extent when it is certainly not the *prettiest* of her clothes, does little to stop its frequent use. To show it to me, Louise had to pull it out of the washing machine, which only confirms that the skirt gets constantly worn [see Fig A.36, Appendix A.1, p. 343]. Emma and Kathryn also regularly wear favourite items that they admit would benefit from more attention to mending or de-fluffing, but in the face of everyday demands they usually just end up putting them on without even noticing any wear and tear issues.

This is also where the question of repairs and repairability comes in again [see also Chapter 6.2 Sensory experiences, p. 173]. Apart from Louise, all the women I interviewed were able to do minor repairs such as sewing on a button or repairing a hem, yet often they would also admit that they do not normally *get around* to doing such jobs. All of my interviewees also agreed that they would consider having their favourite items repaired if the repair would require more specialist skills. However, as Connor-Crabb (2017) also observed, in most cases these decisions were also linked to women's perception of repairability as a function of price and effort needed to seek suitable services. Overall, my findings provide further support to Fletcher's (2016) point that repairability does not only refer to the designable features of garments. What seems equally important is women's perception of whether or not each individual garment is worth further investment in terms of time, energy and money. Mary's comment on her favourite coat [see Figs A.188-191, Appendix A.9, p. 474] that *nothing can quite measure up to* resonates across other cases:

> *the lining is falling to bits, but this is a coat where I would - replacing and repairing a lining can be expensive - this is a coat where I would bother, I would bother (Mary 626-635)*

As Mary's comment confirms, items women love, have on the whole a better chance to get repaired (Mugge et al., 2005; Connor-Crabb, 2017; Love Your Clothes, 2017). At the same time, while Mary says she *would bother* to have her beloved coat relined, she has not done so over several years that the lining has needed attention. This usefully demonstrates that in *mundane fashion* intentions often do not come to fruition as women juggle other life priorities [See also Chapter 6.2 Sensory experiences – Details]

CONCLUSION - LAYERING

This section focused on the ways in which clothes serve as tangible links between multiple events and stages in women's lives and discussed how women's relationships to clothes in their wardrobes evolve over time. While the Chapter 6.4 on Enablers [p. 193] highlighted satisfaction that stems from a garment's fitness for purpose and its appropriateness to women's current circumstances, the theme of Layering captures satisfaction derived from long-term ownership and use of clothing. What Layering importantly reveals in the context of emotional durability, is that the relevance of an item of clothing (or a lack of it) at one point in time is not finite, because different phases in women's lives tend to be linked with different clothing needs and preferences.

My research provides ample evidence that dormant clothing in women's wardrobes is often likely to *slot into place* again in the future and to be worn and enjoyed repeatedly over many years. Hanka, for example, contacted me as I was writing up this thesis to say that in the last few weeks, she had hardly taken off the shirt dress she had told me she could never wear again [see p. 238].

This, of course, may not happen with all the items women own. However, what my research clearly shows is that while women's lives mostly do not revolve around clothes, the collections of clothes in their wardrobes very much reflect the kind of lives they lead. This is well captured in Attfield's (2000) point that:

> (...) to locate design within a social context as a meaningful part of peoples' lives means integrating objects and practices within a culture of everyday life where things don't always do as they are told nor go according to plan (p. 6)

Just like women's lives do not unfold in a neat linear sequence of significant events, successful relationships and fulfilled dreams, their wardrobes also inevitably contain clothes that are beautiful, useful and deeply meaningful to them, those that are insignificant but *handy to have*, but also items that they do not need now, will not need in the future or should have never bought in the first place.

Bridgens & Lilley (2017) note that while designers are producing objects to be used in the future, they rarely look at that future. Yet, as I have showed throughout this thesis, while the current fashion tends to be faster and faster, women's relationships with their clothes unfold at a considerably

243

slower pace - over many years and sometimes decades. Hence, if clothes are to be layered and enjoyed over time, learning to project long term use must be at the core of the design process.

At the same time, to return to Norman (2004) [see Chapter 2.4, p. 51], while designers can produce attractive and useful things, the rest is up to the people who use them. Design cannot guarantee that people will bond to things, that part is up to each individual user (p. 225). As I have observed many times during my wardrobe conversations with women, a significant proportion of the items that were never used and never loved were not actually the "failed relationships" (Chapman, 2015 [2005], p. 24) I referred to in the opening chapter of this thesis [see p. 23]. Rather, they were relationships that rarely even started because women felt unsure already at the point of purchase whether and how these clothes could fit with their lives and their wardrobes. Van Hinte (1997) notes that the first step to successful long-term use is choice. My research seems to confirm that to enjoy the long-term satisfaction of layering in our wardrobes, the attention should not be directed solely to design but also to investing more effort in choosing well, buying only clothes that fit well with our personal circumstances, preferences, and needs.

6.6   RESEARCH IN PRACTICE: ONE THING COLLECTION

To find the essence of a thing in the process of fabricating it.

(Wim Wenders, Notebook on cities and clothes, 1989)

INTRODUCTION

The *One Thing Collection* is an absorption of this thesis, the purpose of my explorations over the three years of this research is manifested in the garments that I made in response to each of the empirical themes that resulted from my analysis. The process of making these clothes accompanied the writing up stage of my research, the making therefore complemented and extended the thinking and vice versa.

At this point, I returned to Gatzen's notion of "design through making" [see Chapter 1.3, p. 31]. While this approach was not unfamiliar to me as in many ways it reflected my studio practice before I embarked on this research journey, now I had the unique opportunity to underpin my practical explorations through the collection of experiences and narratives of the women I spoke to as my research progressed. The garments presented here are my interpretations of these experiences, they are my attempt to capture through tangible means the intangible and entangled reality of emotional durability of clothing. The continuous dialogue between the thinking and the making throughout this process reflected Gray & Malins' (2016 [2004]) point that one of the roles of practice in research can be "using the skills of the artist/designer to visualize and understand complex processes (perhaps in other fields) – making the invisible" (p. 105).

The aim was not to design a collection in a traditional fashion sense but to corrode the paradigm of disposable fashion by learning from the collections of clothes that stood the test of time in my interviewees' wardrobes. Returning to what I set out to do in the Introduction to this thesis [see p. 16], the *One Thing Collection* is a distillation of my efforts to contest the dominant fashion business model "by understanding fashion as a manifestation of routine daily lives that remains with people over time" (Buckley & Clark, 2017, p.4). In line with my commitment to reflexivity throughout this research journey, it also needs to be noted that the design and making process described here reflects the learnings from my empirical research through the lens of my own design sensibilities.

THE PROCESS

Although this chapter presented the empirical themes of Sensory experiences, Enablers, Longing and belonging and Layering in four separate sections, throughout my discussions I also repeatedly highlighted that all four themes are intricately entangled and mutually interdependent. This complexity must also be reflected in their practical interpretation. For example, a beautifully soft garment will not make it far if it does not fit well or if it needs to be dry cleaned after every wear.

In my designs, I therefore aimed to capture this complexity by simultaneously considering the following [see also the *Emotionally Durable Clothing Model*, p. 168]:

Multisensory perceptions with a special focus on soft feel, comfort and details.

Practical considerations of everyday use such as versatility, adaptability, appropriateness for purpose, laundry, ironing, and easy combinations with other clothes.

The poetic elements of women's narratives, referencing the largely unspoken details of personal histories that are often deeply embedded in women's clothing choices.

Long-term use through a focus on repairability, alterability and styles that easily adapt to fluctuating figures.

Figure 6.30 Design considerations in One Thing Collection

Material sourcing

All of these concerns were reflected throughout the whole design and making process, from the point of material sourcing [Figures 6.31-36]. I chose to use natural materials, as these prevailed in my interviewees' stories [see Chapter 6.2, p. 173], largely due to their tactile qualities, pleasant feel on the body and better resistance to perspiration. I made every attempt to source all materials as ethically as possible, starting with locally available options. When sourcing locally was not

practicable, due to availability of materials suitable for my project, I carefully checked provenance of all materials and components with my suppliers.

It must be noted, however, that the process of sourcing brought several challenges linked to small-scale production, that I was previously aware of from my designer-maker practice. These included minimum orders, suppliers' willingness to disclose their sources and also the availability of suitable alternatives to widely available threads and components (see also Aakko & Niinimäki, 2018; Connor-Crabb, 2017; European Commission, 2019). Hence, for example, despite my decision to use natural materials, I eventually resolved to use polyester threads because I did not find a satisfactory alternative in the colour and quality I envisioned for my project.

Due to care considerations [see Chapter 6.3, p. 193], I gave special attention to selecting materials that would resist creasing and would be machine washable where appropriate to the use of the garment. To see how each fabric reacted to washing, I wash-tested all material samples at 30˚C. I also wanted to ensure that each garment offered the possibility to be drip dried, without the need for ironing, because all my interviewees unanimously agreed that they avoid ironing whenever possible due to time constraints and more important life priorities [see Chapter 6.3, p. 193]. While woollen cloths I was sampling for the coat to be made in response to the theme of Layering would normally be expected to be dry cleaned, I was still interested to see how the chosen material would react to machine washing, and so any pre-selected woollen fabrics were also wash-tested.

Another key element of my fabric sourcing was considering how materials would evolve in the future, through frequent wear and laundering. For this reason, most samples were washed repeatedly, to gage resistance to multiple washes. I was inspired by the many stories I heard of clothes that were loved because of the softness they acquired with time [see Chapter 6.2, p. 173] and I wanted to make something that would have the same inherent ability. For similar reasons, I also considered how materials would "absorb" any future repairs (Rissanen, 2010), approaching repair as a way of adding, rather than reducing the value of the garment. My tacit knowledge from the long-line of repairs and alterations I have done for my clients proved especially valuable here, as having handled such clothes for the many hours they sometimes took to repair, I felt that I could instinctively tell how materials would wear over years and how they would respond to future reinforcing or patching. This was important, because repairs can add extra volume to seams and other parts of garments and so it is

critical to ensure that they do not negatively affect the tactile qualities of garments [see Chapter 6.2, p. 173]. Otherwise a repaired garment can easily fall out of favour.

In addition, Emma's comment that she does not like the *pristine feel* of new clothes [see p. 219] especially resonated with me and encouraged me to further develop the use of hand-stitching details that I trialled in my early studio experiments [see Chapter 3.5, p. 80]. Hand-stitching in contrasting colour was on the one hand a way of incorporating my designer-maker signature and on the other a technique engaged to disrupt the *pristine feel* of the garments, by incorporating a "disturbance" (Rissanen, 2010). I wanted the clothes to feel "new and old at the same time" (Wenders, 1990). If hand-stitching was integral to the design from the very beginning, adding some more in the future when a repair is needed would not devalue the garment's original look. On the contrary, each future repair could be an identifier of a chapter in its story. As hand-stitching is added over time, the story unfolds. For these reasons, stitches were deliberately not perfect, as I was conscious that this could revert the *pristine feel* I wanted to avoid. The aim was to invite and encourage the owner to dare to add more in the future.

This approach to making clothes returns to the question of whether a design can be ever finished, discussed in Chapter 3.3 [p. 67] in connection to the "open design object" (Harper & Edvards, 2017), half-way products (Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011; Papanek, 2003 [1995]; Fuad-Luke, 2009) or things in motion (Tonkinwise, 2005). In this context, keeping in mind the possibilities of future lives my clothes may take on, I further developed my interest in working with rectangular shapes and full widths of fabrics [see Chapter 3.5, p. 80], to enable easy disassembly and re-use of material in the future. With the view of future repairs and alterations, all garments included generous hemlines for length adjustments and also to offer extra material for repairs.

Lastly, my choice of materials also reflected my interviewees' statements on colours, patterns, combinations, and easy wear. I aimed to enable multiple combinations between all the garments I was making, and I also wanted my designs to combine well with other garments in the future. As the wall printouts of the selections I made from my interview photos were covering the walls of my studio [see Chapter 5.3, p. 141], it was striking how blue, grey and black in a range of tones seemed to reoccur in the stories of favourite clothes. I was also intrigued by the countless variations on stripes and polka dots that seemed to reoccur throughout the interviews.

All the considerations described here were reflected in my final choice of materials. These included:

MATERIAL	THEME	USE
Black beehive weave cotton	SENSORY EXPERIENCES LAYERING	One Dress Coat pocket details
Lightweight organic denim (9.5 OZ)	ENABLERS	Modern Workwear
Navy blue and white stripe seersucker	LONGING AND BELONGING ENABLERS	Pinafore Modern Workwear pocket details
Charcoal grey boiled wool	LAYERING	Coat
Red polka dot and coffee hand-printed cotton	SENSORY EXPERIENCES ENABLERS	One Dress facings, belt, and pocket details Modern Workwear pocket details

Table 6.2 Materials used for One Thing Collection

Figure 6.31 Material sampling - wash tests

Figure 6.32 Material sampling - wash tests

Figure 6.33 Material sampling - testing texture and feel of materials
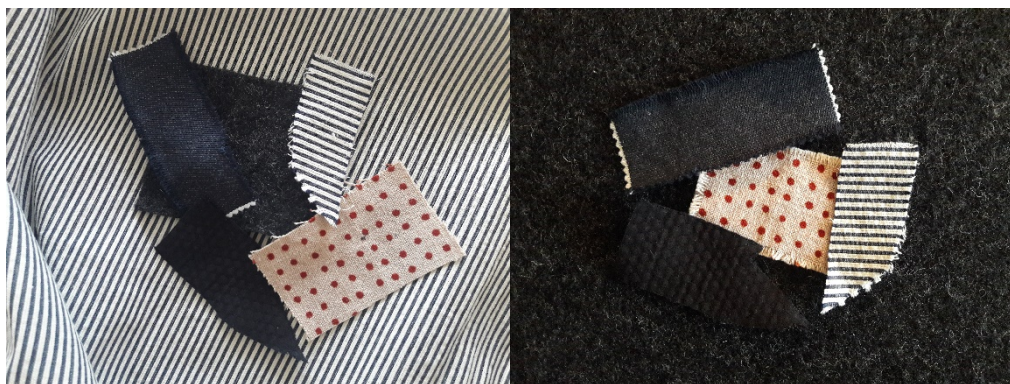
Figure 6.34 Material sampling - testing combinations of final materials

Figure 6.35 Sketchbook page referencing reoccurring patterns (stripes and polka dots) from wardrobe conversations

Figures 6.36 Material sampling – testing combinations of final materials with threads for hand-stitching details

Styles, details, and fastenings

The styles of all garments reflected the need for versatility in terms of accommodating fluctuations in weight over time and figure changes linked to age. At the same time, I was aware that a *flattering* fit should be at the core of each design as *shapeless* garments were invariably linked with negative associations throughout all my wardrobe conversations. The task ahead was therefore to balance shape with comfort and enable free movement and long-term flexibility.

As I previously mentioned, I fully subscribe to Sisson's (2016) claim that designers cannot expect people to want to wear their designs if they would not want to wear them themselves. In addition to this, my research also made me acutely aware of the vital importance of sensory perceptions of clothing. As a result, throughout the process of making the *One Thing Collection* I paid careful attention to imagining how wearing each of the garments I was making would feel. This was enabled by trying the toiles on, wearing them for hours, sometimes days, in some cases even washing them. I also used my hands to try the depth and comfort of pockets. Pockets were now included in all the garments without exception, mirroring their significance for an item's utility and the independence they enable women, as it clearly emerged from my interviewees' stories [see Chapter 6.2, p. 173].

My findings about the significance of other subtle details and fastenings [see Chapter 6.2, p. 173] were also carefully considered in all the designs. As my interviews confirmed that fastenings are a frequent reason of garment failure and disposal (WRAP, 2013), I again aimed to limit fastenings to a minimum. Just like in my temporary design responses [see Chapter 3.5, p. 80], I used only snap fasteners that do not require any extra openings in the material and can be easily detached if a garment is to be altered, re-used or recycled. At the same time, considering that buttons often belong to favourite details of loved garments [see Chapter 6.2, p. 173], I looked for fasteners that could become subtle decorative features, enhanced by the use of hand-stitching in contrasting colours that echoed the rest of the design.

While I opted for subtle tones in all the designs, especially for practical reasons such as easy combinations (as explained above), I was also keen to reflect some of the more poetic elements of women's relationships with clothes that emerged from the wardrobe conversations [see especially Chapter 6.4 Longing and Belonging, p. 211]. I felt moved by the stories of my interviewees that revealed some deeply intimate personal histories behind garments that may seem ordinary and

insignificant in the eyes of others. I therefore wanted to find a way how these could be integrated into my designs with a sensibility that would honour the trust the women I talked to gave me. I wanted these stories to be integral to my designs, while at the same time not exposing them to scrutiny by random passers-by.

The inside of Tanya's pocket, that simultaneously concealed and revealed a long history of wear [Figure 6.5, p. 165], provided a key inspiration here. While also mirroring the family histories of my interviewees linked to patterns and prints [See Chapter 6.4, p. 211], I decided to use the largely hidden construction details such as pockets and facings to sew in the hints of all the stories women shared with me through subtle contrasts of printed fabrics that enlivened the garments from the inside out.

Finally, in reflection on the presentation of my temporary design responses [Chapter 3.5, p. 80], which despite of my attempt to convey an alternative to the mainstream narrative of fashion still seemed to be largely rooted in traditional fashion imagery, I decided against a final photoshoot of my *One Thing Collection*. Instead, I photographed the process of making these garments in exactly the same way I photographed my wardrobe conversations with women. Without any staging, simply capturing the process as and when it unfolded. I felt that this approach much better reflected the essence of *mundane fashion*, with all its idiosyncrasies and imperfect beauty, that I wish to convey through this thesis.

SENSORY EXPERIENCES: ONE DRESS

There's something about a dress, I don't know, it's hard to put into words, Mary told me. Her words resonated throughout the rest of my wardrobe conversations. Without an exception, each of the ten women I interviewed had a *go to dress,* as Louise put it, loved because of its suitability for most occasions. Such dresses are worn frequently, and just like Tanya's blue dress [Figs A.201-204, Appendix A.10, p. 498] or Hanka's cheque dress [Fig A.49, Appendix A.3, p. 372], they often soften through wear to a point when they feel like *second skin* [see Chapter 6.2, p. 173]. Women's experiences with their *go to dresses* are reflected in my *One Dress.*

After the iterative process of sampling [see p. 249], the material I chose for *One Dress* was a black medium weight beehive weave cotton that has a better crease resistance in comparison to a plain weave. As a way of exploring the process of the garment becoming lighter and softening through wear over the years of wear and washing, I deliberately chose a medium weight material. The light red polka dot cotton was then used for neckline facings for the reasons described earlier [see p. 253] and also for its soft feel. The same material was also used for other details, including the top part of the pocket bag and in the middle section of the reverse side of the optional belt [Figure 6.46, p. 262].

The design strongly references the styles of Tanya's and Hanka's favourite dresses (see above), yet I decided to use folds instead of gathers because I felt that these would be more suitable for the material I was working with. As I also explained earlier, another important consideration was avoiding a *baggy*, *shapeless* look that was generally dismissed by my interviewees. Reflecting the concerns of *mundane fashion*, I aimed for a casual and versatile garment that would be at the same time easy to *dress up*, for example in combination with its optional belt.

In reflection on my experiences with folds from my temporary design responses [see Chapter 3.5, p. 80], I made sure that all the folds in the design were wide enough to be comfortably ironed (if required), yet also well-balanced to avoid extra volume in the sensitive areas of waist and hips. The neckline and all hems were hand-stitched for the reasons I explained earlier in this section, and also to enable easy length adjustments. A long hand-stitch is much easier to unstitch than machine stitching. As during my conversations with women, I noticed that they would often roll up or turn up their sleeves, the *One Dress* sleeves have a wide hand-stitched hem that can be turned up easily.

Lastly, like all the other garments in the *One Thing Collection*, the *One Dress* has comfortable deep pockets that enable to fit everything in without a need to carry an extra bag.

THE ORIGINAL COLOUR ALMOST
NOWHERE ... THE DRESS
USED TO BE DARK BLUE,
BUT NOT ANYMORE
(XX 534-535)

ONE DRESS

I CAN JUST GIVE IT TO MY DAUGHTER MAYBE,
I LOVE IT SO MUCH! (LZ 212-213)

NO, I CAN'T LIVE WITH ONE DRESS EVERY DAY
(LZ 648)

WELL I'VE WORN IT LOTS ...
BUT I MEAN THAT WAS ONE
OCCASION THAT... (JL344)

I JUST HAD SO MANY GOOD TIMES IN
THIS DRESS (CH₁A 204)

The One Dress Women of Every Age Should
Own

SHORT FILM SHOWCASE
Imagine Making One Dress You'll Wear
Every Day for Life

Roughly 10 women in a town in Sardinia still wear the traditional dresses they made as
adolescents.

Every woman used to wear this dress

Figure 6.37 Sketchbook page – the *Sensory experiences* theme

Figure 6.38 One Dress - the toiling process. Testing placement of folds, size, and shape of pockets (Toile 1)

Figure 6.39 Adjusting size and shape of pockets (Toile 2)
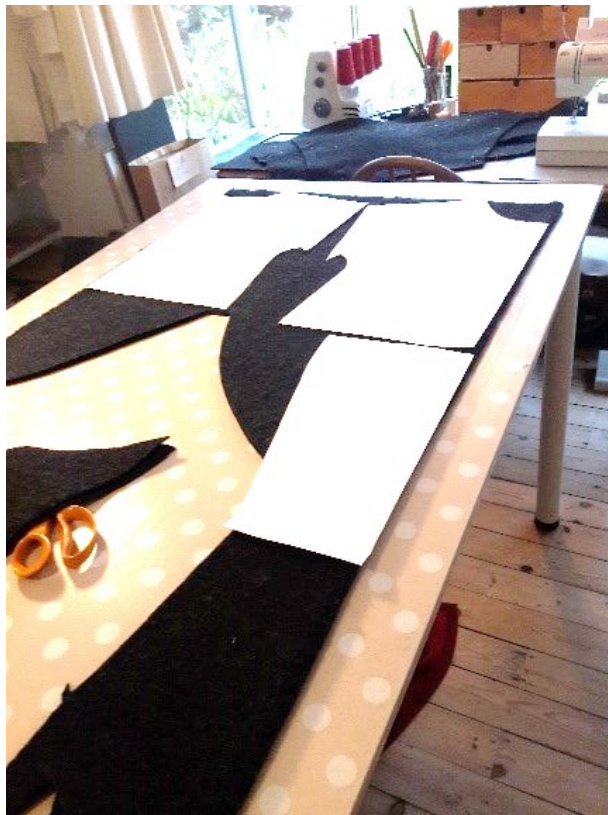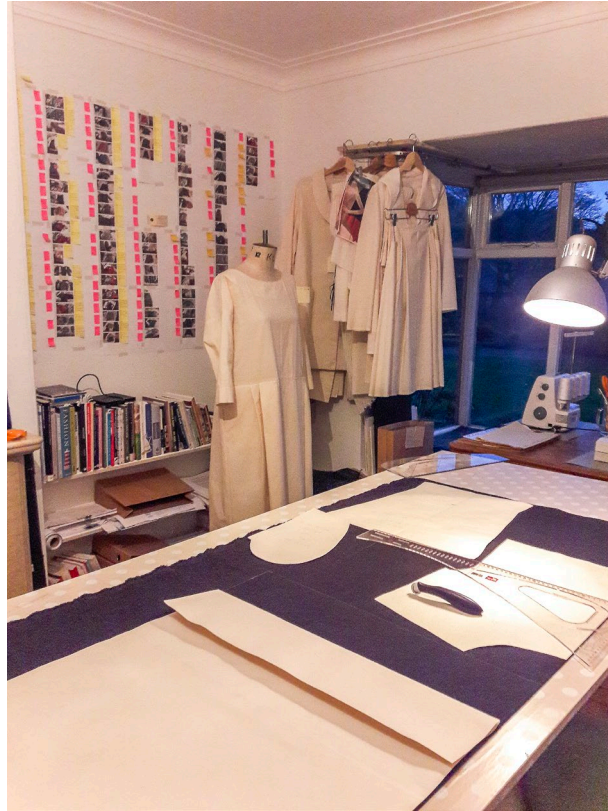
Figure 6.40 Cutting out in the final material

Figure 6.41 Top with pre-stitched neckline. Background: wall printouts from wardrobe conversations

Figure 6.42 Skirt with pre-stitched, extra wide hemline

Figure 6.43 Details in polka dot printed cotton. Left: top pocket bag. **Right:** neckline facings

Figure 6.44 Top and skirt final assembly

Figure 6.45 One Dress – pre-stitched for hand-stitching in contrast colours

Figure 6.46 One Dress with optional belt – pre-stitched for hand-stitching in contrast colours

ENABLERS: MODERN WORKWEAR

I was fascinated by Nicola's description of her work dress in which she can go *straight from the board rooms onto a ladder*. Already in my temporary design responses, I started exploring the idea of "modern workwear" in relationship to the strategies of versatility and trans-seasonality [see Chapter 3.5, p. 80], through translating the simplicity and multi-functionality of everyday Slovakian folk costumes into current context. The experiences of the women I talked to strongly highlighted the importance of work outfits in which they could find their *smart and comfortable me,* enabling them to forget what they are wearing and focus on the task ahead. This is why I decided to explore the idea of *Modern Workwear* further.

In addition to the sourcing considerations described earlier in this section, referencing the idea of workwear and the strong prevalence of blue colour across my interviewees' wardrobes, I chose to use lightweight indigo blue denim for my *Modern Workwear* design. I then used the navy blue and white stripe seersucker for the top pocket bag detail and the red polka dot cotton for the facings of the button up sections on the sides. As I mentioned in the section on my temporary design responses [Chapter 3.5, p. 80], continuous wearing of the clothes I made in the initial stages of my research was a part of my practical explorations, feeding in helpful insights for later design iterations. What I realized while wearing the first "modern workwear" design I made [see Chapter 3.5, p. 80], was that while the bat-wing top was comfortable and also practical in terms of resisting perspiration (in line with the recommendations of the *Design for Longevity* report (WRAP, 2013)), the extra volume of fabric in the sleeves also meant that it was difficult to layer with other garments that had less generous sleeves. For this reason, I decided to rethink the design and adopted the same style as I used in the *One Dress* also for the top of *Modern Workwear.*

I previously mentioned that the folds I used in the first version of the "modern workwear" proved to be challenging when it came to ironing [see Chapter 3.5, p. 80]. In addition to this, my initial concern that folds in the waist area could be an issue due to adding extra volume in sensitive areas, was confirmed by multiple references to similar issues by the women I talked to. Yet, with the benefit of my multi-level analysis accompanied by wall printouts and selections of garments from the women's wardrobe narratives, I noticed that many of the favourite skirts that my interviewees showed me seemed to have dropped yokes [Figure 6.48]. This was interesting, as a dropped yoke seemed to offer the right solution for taking the volume away from the waist area. At the same time, in the light

of my findings, it was also essential to make sure that the *Modern Workwear* skirt is adjustable, so that it can flexibly adapt to women's figure changes and weight fluctuations over time. With this in mind, I resolved to include button up panels with two sets of sew-on snap fasteners on each side, thus allowing for flexible adjustment by 3 or 6 cm [Figures 6.50-52]. Just like the *One Dress*, the *Modern Workwear* also has sleeves that can be easily turned up, as well as large pockets and generous hemline.

People fascinate
e. Their bodies,
heir brains, their
motions, their
deals, their
istories, their
hoices and their
reams. Their
tories. It all
omes back to
tories.
Everything
everywhere is
ltimately a
story."

— Victoria Erickson

BALENCIAGA, MARKED-UP TOILE, V&A exhibition '19

how does it make you feel?

THAT IS MY MERMAID OUTFIT (AR 92)

YOU CAN SEE HOW POPULAR THIS LOOK IS FOR ME TO HAVE ONE TROUSER SUIT AND... (AR 274-275)

TEMPORARY RESPONSES YEAR 1

YOU HAVE TO FEEL COMFORTABLE IN THE FIRST PLACE BECAUSE THAT FLATS, SO IF YOU'RE ALREADY THINKING ITS A BIT TIGHT AROUND YOUR TUMMY AND THEN YOU'RE FLASHING YOUR LEGS AT THE SAME TIME - IT'S NOT A NICE FEEL (JL 742-744)

I WEAR A BLACK TOP AND A CARDIGAN AND SOME SHOES, IT JUST LOOKS INSTANTLY SMART (JEW 338-339)

THIS REALLY NEEDS TO GO TO THE OTHER CLOSET BECAUSE THIS IS A SUMMER SHIRT - BUT I WEAR IT WITH THIS, SO THAT'S A SUIT (AR 833-834)

SMART & COMFORTABLE

I HAD THIS IDEA OF - YOU KNOW - YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO LOOK LIKE THIS AS A PROFESSIONAL WORKING WOMAN (JEW 834-835)

HOSTING BUT ALSO KIND OF PRACTICAL, BUT ALSO STYLISH AND NOT DETRACTING (CITCA 1015-1016)

Figure 6.47 Sketchbook page – the *Enablers* theme

Figure 6.48 Sketchbook page - yokes on favourite skirts.

Figure 6.49 Modern Workwear toiling - testing the balance of folds (Toile 1)
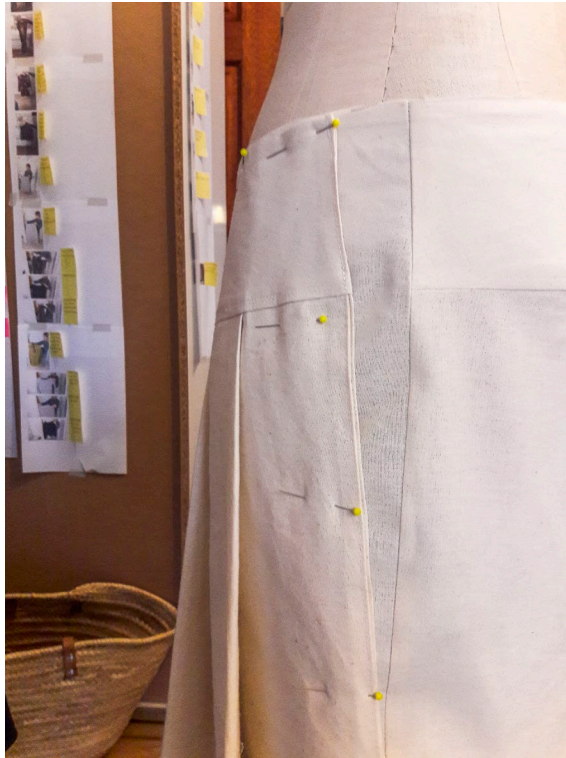
Figure 6.50 Experimenting with side panel adjustments

Figure 6.51 Skirt side panel adjustments with snap fasteners, hand-stitching in contrasting colours

Figure 6.52 Experimenting with skirt side panel adjustments, detail

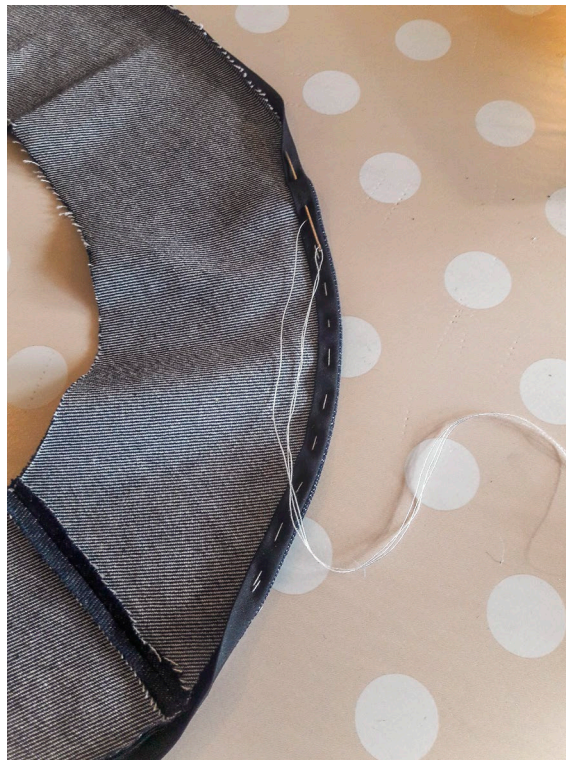Figure 6.53 Cutting out in the final material

Figure 6.54 Pattern pieces in the final materials, including materials for hidden details

Figure 6.55 Skirt pocket construction

Figure 6.56 Construction of skirt yokes, folds, side panels and pockets

Figure 6.57 Hand-finishing of top facings

Figure 6.58 Modern Workwear top and skirt - pre-stitched for hand-stitching in contrast colours

LONGING AND BELONGING: PINAFORE

Women's memories of pinafore dresses, often in connection to their mothers, reoccurred in several narratives. As the wall printouts were hanging around my studio [see Chapter 5.3, p. 141], I was also intrigued by noticing that many favourite dresses referenced the pinafore style. This seemed to fit well with my findings on the significance of childhood memories and family ties for women's future wardrobe choices, as I explained in Chapter 6.4 Longing and Belonging [p. 211]. In addition to this, Hanka's description of wearing an apron over one of her favourite dresses and feeling *like a star* made me think that a pinafore dress would combine well with both my *One Dress* and *Modern Workwear* designs. In the context of *mundane fashion*, the idea of a protective yet stylish garment to wear over work clothes after return home deserved further exploration.

The material I selected for the pinafore was a navy blue and white stripe seersucker, which I considered suitable for its easy care qualities, soft feel and also as a reference to the countless stories of stripy garments I heard throughout my wardrobe conversations [Figure 6.35, p. 251]. After careful testing for colour fastness, the indigo denim used for the *Modern Workwear* was also used for the top pocket bag and I also used diagonal placement of the bottom pocket bag as an extra decorative detail [see Figures 6.69 and 6.71].

As I started finalizing the pinafore toiles, it became clear to me that I needed to work on these simultaneously with the *Modern Workwear* design because the two needed to fit comfortably together. At the same time, I also wanted the pinafore to work as a standalone garment to be used either as a dress on its own or in a combination with a T-shirt and trousers. I therefore moved between the two options, once again trying for myself how different versions would feel on the body [Figures 6.61-62 and 6.66]. For example, I initially considered the option of tying the top behind the neck. Yet, when I tried this version on, I realized that when I put my hands in the pockets, my hands pulled the neck-strap, and this made the wearing uncomfortable. As a result, in the final version I used the combination of sew-on snap fasteners to fix the top to the centre-back (again using two sets for adjustments like in the *Modern Workwear*) and extra straps at the centre-back and inside side seams to allow multiple flexible options of wrapping the skirt.

The final version of the pinafore also includes a pleated panel at the centre top, as a way of balancing my aim to work with simple, rectangular shapes (as explained earlier in this section), with shaping

the garment and allowing for flexibility also in the bust area. While pleating the stripy material for the central panel was time-consuming, I thoroughly enjoyed the process and felt reassured about my choice of material by the lovely soft hand of the fabric as I was working with it. Aligning the stripes of the skirt and the top was also a time-consuming process, alternating the direction of stripes would have been an easier way forward. However, while I considered and tried this option, I felt that it would optically add volume to areas that women did not want to draw attention to. The length adjustments of the pinafore are enabled by both moving the snap fasteners on the neck-straps and again a generous hemline.

The handwritten annotations on the sketchbook page include:

LONGING & BELONGING

PINAFORE DRESS

ADJUSTABILITY

IT'S NICE BECAUSE YOU CAN - YOU HAVE A LITTLE BELT AT THE BACK (JM 651)

YEAH, THIS, WHICH IS NOT UNLIKE WHAT WE'VE JUST BEEN LOOKING AT (JL 293)

WARDROBE PATTERNS

RETURNS

SHE WEARS A LOT OF REALLY NICE KIND OF PINAFORE TYPE DRESSES WHICH I CAN BORROW (CMcA 919-920)

It's one of those dresses which you can dress up or down, you can wear it with trousers and a top underneath, or because it's a wrap dress, you can wear something underneath – like a slip – and make it a bit more evening (CMcA 190-193)

SO CARRYING ON THE PINAFORE DRESS TREND, THIS ONE I BOUGHT LAST WINTER AND I ABSOLUTELY ADORE IT (JMr 823-86)

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES TRANSLATED TO WARDROBE PATTERNS

I HAVE A MEMORY OF DUNGAREE DRESSES FROM WHEN I WAS A KID (JMr 808)

MY MUM BOUGHT A YELLOW PINAFORE DRESS FROM SOMEBODY (KK 878)

VERSATILITY ADAPTABILITY

IT DOESN'T HAVE POCKETS, THAT'S THE ONLY FAULT OF THIS DRESS (JS 90)

YOU JUST PUT IT ON AND YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING (JS 96)

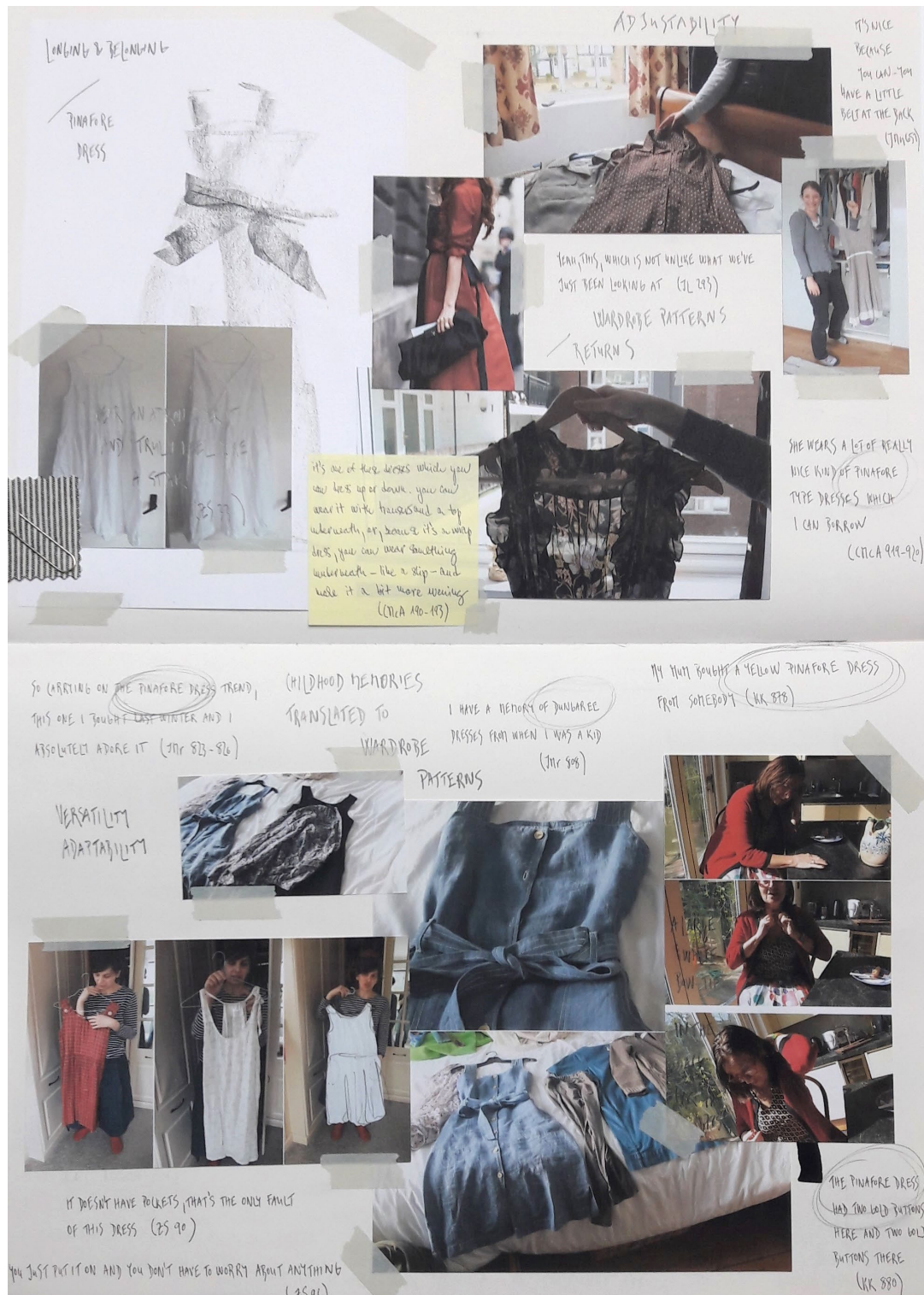THE PINAFORE DRESS HAD TWO GOLD BUTTONS HERE AND TWO GOLD BUTTONS THERE (KK 880)

Figure 6.59 Sketchbook page – the *Longing and Belonging* theme

Figure 6.60 Pinafore fastening (Toile 1)

Figure 6.61 Trying the fit and feel (Toile 1)

Figure 6.62 Trying the fit and feel (Toile 2)

Figure 6.63 Fitting over the One Dress

Figure 6.64 Front panel pleating sample for Toile 3

Figure 6.65 Pinafore top front and back (Toile 3)

Figure 6.66 Trying the fit and feel (Toile 3)

Figure 6.67 Fitting over the Modern Workwear (Toile 3)

Figure 6.68 Pinafore top in the final material - front and back

Figure 6.69 Pinafore construction - pocket bags, pleated front panel and facings

Figure 6.70 Pinafore in combination with Modern Workwear

Figure 6.71 Pinafore top detail – pre-stitched for final top-stitching

LAYERING: COAT

As a top layer that offers protection, warmth, comfort, and also as a piece of clothing that tends to be bought as a more long-term investment, a coat seemed to be a suitable garment to capture the theme of Layering. Most women I talked to have a favourite coat they owned for many years, several of these garments showed obvious signs of wear and tear as a result, but despite this they were still loved and kept in use. Being among the more valued items of clothing, coats were generally well looked after and repairs were more likely in comparison to other garments, if for example a lining was torn, or a button fell off. For all these reasons, a coat seemed to provide the perfect top layer that tied across the multi-layered elements of emotional durability of clothing.

As I explained earlier in this section, the material I used for the coat was a dark grey boiled wool that I selected for its practicality, lightness, and a lovely soft touch. Considering that coats are items that are more likely to be repaired than other, less expensive items, boiled wool was also chosen as a material that is forgiving in terms of wear and tear, yet it also responds well to repairs and alterations. Small holes, for example, can be darned almost invisibly. Larger damage, especially on darker backgrounds, invites many creative options of visible repairs that can enhance, rather than devalue the original plain design.

The style allows layering of several garments underneath, without the coat feeling too loose or *baggy*. This is again enabled by the soft drape of the boiled wool and the raglan sleeves, that adapt well to different figures and can also accommodate more loosely fitting garments such as for example a bat-wing top. The coat is deliberately unlined, because I aimed to retain the lightness and the softness of the material. In this way, it could also be worn across most seasons, taking the UK climate as a starting point. However, the construction also enables easy insertion of lining, should the owner prefer this option, or as an opportunity for a future alteration of the design and another step in the coat's history. Like all the garments in *One Thing Collection*, the coat has generous pockets. These are lined with the material used for making the *One Dress,* thus linking all the layers of my practical reflections on the findings from this research journey.

Figure 6.72 Sketchbook page – the *Layering* theme

Figure 6.73 Coat Toile 1 before the insertion of the collar

Figure 6.74 Coat collar (Toile 2)

Figure 6.75 Testing the size and placement of pockets (Toile 2)

Figure 6.76 Coat Toile 3 after wash test

Figure 6.77 Cutting out in the final material

Figure 6.78 Cutting out in the final material, markings for placement of buttons

Figure 6.79 Reverse side of sleeves, hand-finished seam details

Figure 6.80 Insertion of sleeves

Figure 6.81 Coat before the insertion of the collar

Figure 6.82 Collar insertion

Figure 6.83 Coat in combination with One Dress

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 6 summarized the findings of this research and discussed their implications for extending emotional durability of clothing by design. For this end, the core part of the chapter was divided into four sections, each of which addressed one of the four empirical themes that emerged from the analysis of my wardrobe conversations – (1) Sensory experiences, (2) Enablers, (3) Longing and belonging and (4) Layering. I here also highlighted that each thematic section is linked to the wardrobe narratives of those of my interviewees whose experiences in connection to the particular theme were especially pronounced [see indications at the beginning of each section: p. 173, p. 193, p. 211, p. 230]. The four thematic sections discussed the key aspects of each theme in connection to the experiences of all my interviewees, also addressing how my findings link to previous research. The concluding section followed the process of making the *One Thing Collection*, understood as an absorption of this thesis, through the garments made in response to each of the four empirical themes.

The next, final chapter, offers a retrospective look on the thesis in relationship to the three research objectives, summarizes the key insights and contribution to knowledge, addresses the limitations of my study and suggests possible avenues for future development of this research.

7 CONCLUSION

Concluding the research objectives

Points of discovery and contribution to knowledge

Contribution to knowledge summarized

Limitations

Future development

7.1 CONCLUDING THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This conclusion first outlines how the three research objectives have been addressed through the structure of the thesis. Broadly, the thesis is structured in three parts that mirror the three research objectives in moving from a contextual, global, understanding of the research problem, through to the practices of ethnography and fashion design and making. Here I outline the key insights in using sensory methodology to study emotional durability of clothing, before outlining the core discoveries and contribution to knowledge. The chapter concludes with future development and limitations of my study.

Objective 1 (Thesis Part One): To critically review relevant emotional design theories and explore the possibilities of their practical application in fashion design and making.

In Chapters 1 to 3 I contextualized my research within the urgent call to rethink the ways in which we engage with fashion in the future and I critically discussed the key theories and concepts that underpinned my research journey.

In Chapter 1 [p. 23] I positioned myself as a researcher-practitioner and explained how reflexivity has been applied throughout this thesis to address the issues of validity and as a way of recognition of how my personal and professional background framed my inquiry. I examined the overlapping concepts of fashion, clothing, dress and style and in this process I found that Tulloch's (2010) perspective on 'style as agency' especially resonated in the context of my research, because it highlighted users' active role in digesting, appropriating and possibly even redefining 'fashion' through their use of everyday 'clothing'. Equally, Tulloch's (2010) take on 'style narratives' mirrored my intentions to capture women's everyday experiences through their own words.

I here also examined how my research sits within the wider tradition of design thinking that highlights the role of human agency and personal responsibility throughout the lifetime of designed objects, for us as designers, makers as well as users of products. Papanek's notion of "Our Kleenex Culture", which, he argued, normalizes the mindset of disposability, seemed to have special potency in the context of research on emotional durability. I saw that my designer-maker philosophy sits very well with the current calls for human perspectives on fashion, especially Gatzen's (2018) notion of 'design through making', Fletcher's (2016) plea for 'post-growth fashion' and Von Busch's (2018a)

suggestion that designers should cultivate 'emotional and sensorial closeness to their users'. In the concluding section of Chapter 1, while considering the relationship between consumption and material culture, I gained reassurance that conflating the two is extremely unhelpful for the efforts to encourage more sustainable and richer relationships with the material world.

Chapter 2 [p. 43] reviewed key approaches to clothing longevity in the context of reducing the damaging impacts of the current production and consumption patterns on the environment. In a discussion of the current discourse on fashion rhythms, I found that my research would best be described as slow fashion research practice, thus mirroring Clark's (2008) view that 'slow' approaches to fashion unsettle the established hierarchies of designers-producers-consumers and cultivate a long-term view of design objects.

Following on from here, I looked into the current research on life-cycle assessment and noted its inherent challenges in predicting how clothing is used in everyday life, once it leaves a laboratory setting. I also gained reassurance that despite the difficulties in accessing 'soft' data, extending the active life of clothing is still considered the most effective way of reducing environmental impact and enhancing the sustainability of clothing practices. Importantly, however, any potential savings achieved in this way are contingent on reducing and slowing down the material throughput across the whole value chain. User values and expectations are a crucial factor in this respect, along with considering both physical and emotional durability of clothing. At the end of Chapter 2, I identified Norman's (2004) concept of three level design, that progresses from *visceral* to *behavioural* and at last to *reflective* aspects of design, as a framework with key relevance for my further research.

Chapter 3 [p. 57] directly focused on my objective of examining a range of theoretical perspectives in research on design and emotion, with the view of their practical application in fashion design and making. In this process, I gained an understanding of the history and main strands of enquiry in emotional design and identified design for emotional durability as the focus point for my research. Its focus on what Di Salve, Hannington and Forlizzi (2004) referred to as "sustained and reflective", as opposed to "short and reflexive" (p. 252), emotional responses to design, seemed critical for my interest in long-term emotional experiences with clothing. With this in mind, I here also examined how objects with significant emotional value feature in the current culture of obsolescence, focusing also on critical voices that question the links between emotional attachment and reduced volumes of consumption.

The second half of Chapter 3 first focused on key attempts to formulate guidelines for designers who want to apply emotionally durable design in their practice. The following section then detailed how previous research on design and emotion featured in some of the currently proposed strategies for extending longevity and emotional durability of clothing. In the latter part of Chapter 3 I highlighted the lack of empirical evidence on the impact of these strategies in practice, and hence a significant gap in knowledge between design recommendations and the lived experience of clothing. This provided a clear focus for Objectives 2 and 3 of my research.

The chapter concluded through the reflective section Research in practice: Temporary design responses [3.5, p. 80]. This section is the fulcrum that starts to link theory and practice. It is also a link between the first part of the thesis with parts two and three. The designs in this section are presented as an impression of the first, exploratory stage of my research, that trialled the 'design and thinking through making'. The research problem here is how absorbing the contextual foundation and design for longevity can be applied in the move from the macro to the micro level of my research and from theory to practice.

Objective 2 (Thesis Part Two): To identify how the different ways in which women experience and engage with fashion affect the emotional durability of clothing.

Chapters 4-5 covered the methodology I chose to address my research aim and objectives and discussed my fieldwork experiences and data analysis.

Chapter 4 [p. 98] first explained that I approached this research from an interpretivist perspective, which I believed most adequately reflects the complexity and the intricate character of everyday experiences with clothing. I reiterated that I entered this research as a researcher-practitioner and so the empirical stages of my study were accompanied by an independent design research that aimed to contribute to the final objective of articulating my findings through a series of garments/fashion artefacts. At the same time, I explained how in the course of this research it emerged that the empirical stage along with its detailed analysis (Objective 2) should be prioritized over designing a larger series of new garments as originally intended (Objective 3).

As my contextual review pointed to important methodological challenges in studying emotional durability of clothing by using quantitative methods such as questionnaires, my methodology

stemmed from a combination of my designer-maker experience with my background in ethnography and cultural studies, an approach that has not been previously used in this area of research. The work of the anthropologists Robert Murphy and Sarah Pink shaped my recognition that integrating ethnographic methods in interviewing involves a process of knowledge co-creation, with strong implications on reflexivity and ethical considerations in both the field research and the articulation of findings. Following a review of prior studies that touched upon different aspects of women's wardrobes and emotional durability of clothing, I specified my interest in exploring how the sensory methodology introduced by Pink (2015 [2009]) for studying everyday experiences can be applied in my fieldwork.

In Chapter 5 [p. 124] I summarized the methodological and ethical issues I considered before interviewing women in their homes as well as my own preparation for each interview. In line with the reflexive approach I adopted, I here also reflected on the ways in which my presence and my contribution to the conversations with women shaped the character of my study and the data I collected. In a similar vein, I described how including several clients of my studio enriched this study and I also reflected on my experiences of establishing rapport with my interviewees in order to achieve the "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) that my research aimed for. To conclude this stage of my research journey, the experiences that women shared with me, captured in audio recordings, photographs, and my research notes, were analysed in four main stages:

1. Transcription

2. Wall printouts and wardrobe narratives

3. Codes, themes, and categories

4. Sketchbook reflections and selections for final designs

These are partly presented in Chapter 5 and extended versions are included in the Appendices in support of the research findings.

Objective 3 (Thesis Part Three): To create a series of garments that reflect women's experiences with emotionally durable clothing and propose new ways of extending emotional durability by design and making.

Chapters 6 [p. 160] summarizes the findings of my research and in line with the overall aim of my study, discusses their implications for extending the emotional durability of clothing by design and making.

The chapter is introduced by a reflection on the use of sensory methodology in studying emotional durability of clothing, and it also addresses why I decided to present my findings through an emphasis on the wardrobe narratives of each of the ten women I interviewed. The four following sub-chapters each address one of the four empirical themes that emerged from the analysis of my wardrobe conversations with women: 1. Sensory experiences, 2. Enablers, 3. Longing and belonging, and 4. Layering.

In Chapter 6 I also explain how these narratives [see Appendix A, p. 342] are simultaneously to be approached as "in-vivo, in-wardrobe" (Fletcher, 2016, p. 170) design development process which culminates in addressing the Objective 3 of this research by a garment made in response to each of the four empirical themes. This *One Thing Collection*, is a distillation of women's narratives collected during my research. It is inspired by women's wardrobe collections, and rather than being a collection in a traditional fashion sense, it aims to corrode the paradigm of disposable fashion by learning from the collections of clothes that stood the test of time in my interviewees' wardrobes.

7.2   POINTS OF DISCOVERY AND CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Sensory methodology

In the discussion of my fieldwork I noted that my choice of approach to the empirical phase of my research was partly motivated by the hypotheses that asking women why they love something may not be the best way of finding out why they love something [see Chapter 5.1, p. 125]. My experiences from integrating the sensory methodology in my wardrobe conversations with women confirm that sensory approaches to wardrobe studies can offer valuable layers of information on subtle expressions of emotion and satisfaction that can be hard to access through questionnaires and other

purely verbal approaches to studying women's relationships with clothes. A detailed reflection on the benefits of sensory methodology for studying emotional durability of clothing is included in the introductory section of Chapter 6 [6.1, p. 161].

The key insights from this process include:

- Benefits of sensory approach for a deeper understanding of experiences that may be difficult to verbalize.

- Loved clothes encourage rich sensory engagement, while in case of those that "do not work" sensory engagement tends to be avoided.

- Focus on handling clothes draws attention to deep appreciation of details such as buttons, stitching, necklines, linings, and belts.

- The key importance of tactile qualities of materials for women's wardrobe choices and long-term appreciation of individual items (e.g. soft touch, light weight and softening through wear and laundering).

In addition, as I noted in Chapter 6.2 on Sensory experiences [p. 173], sensory methodology has strong potential to extend the practice of fashion design and making, by on one hand providing a deep understanding of users' everyday experiences with clothing and on the other encouraging designers and makers to reflect on their own sensory perceptions of the clothes they wear in their creative work. As my own experience from this research journey confirms, it enables designers to "think of fashion as *intimacy*" and "open emotional and sensorial closeness to their users" (Von Busch, 2018a, p. 81). In this way, sensory methodology can also help unsettle the current paradigm of fashion, by nurturing "new breed of designers" (Crossley, 2004, p.45), who care less about catwalks and are more concerned about the long term relevance of their work for their users.

Four empirical themes: Sensory experiences, Enablers, Longing and belonging and Layering

The overarching point to highlight in connection to emotional durability of clothing is that women's relationships with the clothes in their wardrobes stem from a myriad of sensory impressions, practical needs and personal histories which are often so closely intertwined that it is quite

impossible to disentangle them. While through my detailed analysis I identified four key themes that enable researchers and designers to grasp some of the leading principles to navigate the complex territory of emotional durability as reflected in women's wardrobes; emotional durability of a garment can be rarely reduced to any one of these.

My research demonstrates that the entangled concerns of women's relationships to their clothes can be streamlined into four areas [see also the *Emotionally Durable Clothing Model*, p. 168]:

1. **Sensory experiences**

   Women's perception of clothing through multiple senses, touch, and vision in particular.

2. **Enablers**

   The ways in which clothes enable women to lead the lives they live; the key concerns include everyday practical considerations and appropriateness to circumstances.

3. **Longing and belonging**

   The largely unspoken details of personal histories, childhood memories and family ties, that are often pivotal in shaping women's future wardrobe choices and the ways in which they relate to what they wear throughout their lives.

4. **Layering**

   The relevance of an item of clothing at one point in time (or a lack of it) are not finite, because different life phases tend to be linked with different clothing needs and preferences. A deep satisfaction is often derived from use over many years and across multiple life phases, and the reassuring familiarity that result from this process.

What seems striking then, is that current design strategies for clothing longevity [see Chapter 3.3 and 3.4, p. 67 and p. 71] often represent artificial divisions and fragmented approaches that have little in common with women's lived experiences of clothing (see also Connor-Crabb, 2017). For example, emotional durability tends to be presented as a separate strategy, often emphasizing that meaningful relationships need to be fostered through craftsmanship, storytelling or user engagement in the design process. Yet, my findings clearly demonstrate that emotional durability of an item of clothing hinges on a number of other, often quite mundane concerns, for example, how easy it is to wash, if it needs ironing and how it combines with other things in the wardrobe.

As I demonstrated on the process of making the *One Thing Collection* [see Chapter 6.6, p. 245], the task ahead is then in avoiding the temptation to "escape complexity" (Manzini, 2017) and instead work with multiple strategies and strands of knowledge in unison, embracing the entangled beauty of *mundane fashion*.

Listening, Discovering and Making

In the light of the above, it seems critical to reiterate that there are no shortcuts to emotionally durable design. Designing with people in mind necessitates taking the time to listen and reflect on the many entangled aspects of their lives, and how these can be translated into more sustainable and emotionally durable clothing choices. In my thesis, this is reflected in the presentation of findings through the wardrobe narratives [see Appendix A, p. 342] that provide one starting point. My own experiments in "design through making" (Gatzen, 2018, cited in Bollier, 2018), illustrated on the *One Thing Collection,* demonstrate how the key findings from my study on *mundane fashion* can be absorbed in design practice. While most previous design projects in this area were experimental (Townsend, Sadkowska & Sissons (2017), Townsend & Sadkowska (2017)), diagnostic (Valle-Noronha) or creative/expressive (Riisberg & Grose, 2017; Rissanen, Grose & Riisberg, 2018) [see Chapter 3.5, p. 80], the making of the *One Thing Collection* extends the conversation on how an in-depth understanding of the quotidian can be reflected in garments that balance everyday requirements on wearability with women's unique personal histories and deeper emotional needs.

At the beginning of this thesis, I referred to critical voices of those who argue that overfocus on materials will not resolve the core issues of fashion and sustainability (Fletcher, 2016, 2014 [2008]; Brooks et al. 2018). My research also highlights that a focus on behaviour alone is not a solution

either, because behaviour often emerges from what materials and designs enable us to do [see Chapters 6.2 and 6.3, p. 173 and p.193]. Hence, as Van Hinte notes, "every project requires its own harmonized combination of solutions" (1997, p. 21), as we are not looking for "mass answers", but instead for, "a mass of answers" (Fletcher, 2007, p. 130).

In addition, my conversations with women also made me acutely aware that any real impact in fashion and sustainability can only be achieved if the current discourse is balanced against what matters from women's own everyday perspectives. Although most of my interviewees would no doubt agree that a healthy environment is essential for our futures, the everyday reality revolves around concerns that are felt with much more immediacy. Despite gender stereotyping, examples might include a complex mixture of daily tasks, such as getting oneself prepared for work, getting the children prepared for school, household management and so on. It is therefore important to recognize that long-term future is often shaped by much more short-term, mundane concerns (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Partnoy, 2013, Roberts, 2015). My research shows that the quotidian must be tightly integrated into the current discourse, if sustainable fashion is not to become an irrelevant "do good" exercise (Von Busch, 2018c) but an integral way of how we think about the future of our wardrobes, and consequently, in a more holistic sense, the future of our planet.

7.3 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE SUMMARIZED

The core contributions of my thesis are in three areas linked to my research objectives:

1. Extending and deepening the discourse on emotional durability

2. New methodological approach to studying emotional durability of clothing

3. Rich contextual data and imagery of clothing in use through wardrobe narratives

Contribution 1: Extending and deepening the discourse on emotional durability of clothing

- The thesis applies a unique combination of theoretical underpinnings, ethnographic methods and design practice; extending the current research on

emotionally durable design, specifically: Chapman, 2015 [2005]; 2008, 2009; Haines-Gadd et al., 2017; Mugge, 2008; Norman, 2004.

- The thesis extends the understanding on clothing longevity and emotional durability, specifically: Niinimäki, 2011; Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011; Niinimäki & Koskinen, 2011; Niinimäki & Armstrong, 2013; Niinimäki, 2014; WRAP, 2013, 2015; Connor-Crabb, 2017.

- The thesis extends the emerging discipline of wardrobe studies, with its focus on clothing in use, specifically: Woodward, 2007, Dankl, 2011; Skjold, 2014; Fletcher, 2016; Fletcher & Klepp, 2017.

- The *Emotionally Durable Clothing model* presented in Chapter 6.1 [see p. 161] extends Norman's (2004) concept of three level design in relationship to women's lived experiences with clothing.

- Overall, the research enables a model for an ethnographic tool in fashion that could aid students, designers, and makers, to navigate the complex landscape of emotional durability of clothing.

Contribution 2: Sensory methodology in wardrobe studies and fashion design and making

- The research establishes methods to access rich contextual data about clothes in women's wardrobes. Applying sensory ethnography within wardrobe conversations produced unique material for observation, analysis, and coding [see Chapter 6 [p. 160] and Appendix A & E [p. 342 & p. 535]].

- The methodological contribution to knowledge resulted in four key empirical themes and twenty-seven explanatory categories [see Table 6.1, p. 169], presenting a holistic view that has not been previously applied to emotional durability of clothing.

- The development of the multi-level analysis [see Chapter 6 [p. 160] and Appendices [p. 342]] established a richness of data that demonstrates a unique continuous dialogue between qualitative empirical research and the practice of fashion design making, thus introducing a new approach to studying emotional durability of clothing.

Contribution 3: Rich contextual data and imagery of clothing in use through wardrobe narratives

- The thesis resolves an academic gap between empirical data on clothing in use, applying ethnographic methods and design practice.

- The thesis establishes a pathway from theoretical study in fashion sustainability and sensory ethnography to an applied practical outcome embodied in the making of *One Thing Collection*.

- The thesis establishes four empirical themes: 1. Sensory experiences, 2. Enablers, 3. Longing and Belonging, and 4. Layering [see Chapter 6.2-6.5, p. 173-244] that demonstrate a 'thick description' and granularity of detail on women's experiences with clothes, that are applied in practice within the *One Thing Collection*.

- Applying a substantial volume of rich contextual data and imagery the thesis establishes the concept of *mundane fashion*. The concept of *mundane fashion* builds specifically upon Buckley and Clark (*Fashion and Everyday Life*, 2017) and Fletcher (*Craft of Use*, 2016).

Beneficiaries - Research audience

This research will be valuable to a breadth of researchers and students of fashion, particularly those concerned with emotional design, fashion futures and sustainability. The study will also be of interest to designers-owners of micro and small fashion businesses whose business model, like my own designer-maker practice, aims to counteract the mindset of disposability in the fashion industry.

While the mainstream narrative of fashion is ruled by large players and high-street chains, the fashion sector largely comprises of small and micro businesses (see e.g. FSP, 2018-21; Statista, 2017) who are often major innovators in the current fashion landscape, especially in terms of transition to more sustainable practices (Aakko, 2016; Connor-Crabb, 2017; European Commission,2019). In addition, design and production industries of fashion and clothing can use this research as a point of reference to reconceptualise their practices towards greater customer satisfaction and environmental, social, and cultural sustainability.

7.4 LIMITATIONS

Naturally, all research has limitations, often linked to methodological decisions made along the way and the timeframe available.

The most obvious limitation of this study is in the size of the sample for the empirical stage of the research. However, as I explained in Chapter 5.1 [p. 125], my decision to work with a smaller sample of participants was informed by the initial stages of my fieldwork. My experiences from the first few interviews confirmed that to benefit from the richness and depth of "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) that I aimed for with my study, enabling also multiple levels of coding, analysis and interpretation of results, reducing the number of participants for the empirical study was necessary.

It could also be argued that the snowballing sample of the women I interviewed resulted in a focus upon a specific demographic of the UK fashion consumer. While the international background of some of my participants provided a richness of experiences and diverse cultural influences, on the whole all the women I spoke to were graduates who have or previously had (some on maternity leave) professional careers. It also needs to be noted that my conscious decision to focus on the experiences of mature women [see Chapter 5.1, p. 125] is naturally reflected in my data. My analysis indicates that including a younger age group in my sample may have affected some of the results, especially in connection to the themes Sensory experiences and Layering. While the age group and makeup of the sample might have some inherent limitations, as the wardrobe narratives included in the Appendices demonstrate [see Appendix A, p. 342], despite their similar demographics a diversity of opinions and experiences was expressed by my interviewees.

Due to my choice of qualitative approach, the findings presented here should not be generalized on the wider population and globally. Yet, this research offers some clear methods of analysis and outcomes that could be used or/and re-appropriated within fashion research and practice. What is clear, is that adopting a qualitative approach provided me with the granularity of detail in the analysis and contribution to knowledge [see the Appendices] that could not have been achieved if I adopted a quantitative approach.

While the *One Thing Collection* conceptualizes the learnings from the theoretical and the empirical stages of my study into design and making practice, further research would be needed to assess the benefits of this way of working for extending emotional durability of clothing. In Chapter 4.1 [p. 99] I explained that in the course of this research it emerged that most emphasis should be put on the empirical stage (Objective 2), to maximize the insights from listening to women's experiences with the clothes they already own. As my findings demonstrated, emotional durability of a garment develops over many years, and it often fluctuates across different life phases. Testing the *One Thing Collection* in terms of emotional durability within the time constraints of doctoral research was therefore deemed methodologically insignificant. Yet, a clear direction for post-doctoral research is offered here.

Lastly, this approach to fashion design and making sits outside the production methods used in the "current condition" (Fletcher, 2016, p. 272) of the fashion industry at large. However, what is proposed here is not an approach to be scaled up, thus residing within the current narrative of growth and scale [see Chapter 1.3, p. 31], but rather a way of working to be "scaled across" (Connor-Crabb, 2017) by micro-businesses and designers-entrepreneurs operating within the new narrative of "post-growth fashion" (Fletcher, 2016).

The conclusion presented here clearly demonstrates that this thesis fulfilled its aim and objectives, by extending the current knowledge on longevity and emotional durability of clothing in connection to fashion design and making through the notion of *mundane fashion*. As the next section will show, the study also lays the foundations for multiple future enquiries to be developed.

As my research progressed, multiple future avenues for both my future research and practice seemed to emerge. For example, I was intrigued by several spontaneous conversations with my interviewees' husbands and partners, which made me think that studying men's long-term relationships with their clothing would provide an equally fascinating material to study. As I indicated above, there is also scope for extending this research to more participants and also to other (especially younger) age groups for comparison.

Another key point that emerges from my study is that emotional durability of clothing relies on a shared responsibility. On the one hand, it is the responsibility of designers and makers to consider long-term use of their designs. At the same time, however, users need to recognize that just like any other relationship, our relationship to clothing needs to be an investment from both sides. As I stated in the conclusion of Chapter 6.3 [p. 193], being less emotional in the process of acquiring clothes may enable us to have richer emotional experiences in the process of wearing them. To experience rich long-term relationships with our clothes, we need to invest more time and effort in choosing well. This, of course, has wider implications beyond the realms of this research, for example: fractured links between designers, producers and consumers, consumer habits, the nature and availability of appropriate clothing retail outlets, time management and more. As I identified in the course of this study, further helpful insights in this respect can be offered by the body of research in behavioural economics (see e.g. Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Partnoy, 2013; Thaler, 2015; Roberts, 2015), that I will consult in more detail in my post-doctoral enquiries.

In addition, the experiences from the design development process and making of the *One Thing Collection* led me to the decision to further develop this way of working in the future. As I explained in the discussion of limitations of this research, while I strongly felt that the timeframe of doctoral research did not provide the opportunity to user-test my designs in a methodologically significant way (based on my findings on the long-term nature of emotional durability), I will consider this option in my post-doctoral research. In connection to this, because my research also highlighted the contested nature of using fashion photography rooted in the 'traditional' fashion narrative, I would also like to explore the possible avenues of using photography in a way that would be meaningful in the new, post-growth narrative of fashion.

As I also indicated in the section on the core contributions of my research, I see the potential for creating a teaching tool to encourage students of fashion related courses to consider the issues of emotional durability in their design work. I have started this process as a part of my research-based teaching on the MA module Creative Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the University of Huddersfield and have already discussed the possibility of testing the future development of this tool internationally.

To conclude, in Chapter 1.3 [p. 31] I indicated that my current study was underpinned by a triad of concerns:

1. Focus on the human dimension of fashion through understanding user needs and expectations.

2. Identifying effective ways of extending the emotional durability of clothing through design.

3. Imagining alternatives to the status quo and promoting a parallel economy of fashion production through micro-business models.

With both retrospective and prospective view on my study, I feel that my understanding of the issues related to the first two concerns has significantly progressed during this research journey. Looking ahead, I am looking forward to the opportunity to further explore the possibilities offered by the third concern through my current engagement at the AHRC funded project Rethinking Fashion Design Entrepreneurship: Fostering Sustainable Practices at Centre for Sustainable Fashion, London College of Fashion.

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