

VOICES FROM WOMEN'S WARDROBES:

MIDLIFE AND SELF-IMAGE

by

Maria Rosa Dal Cin

Advanced Diploma in Fashion Arts, Seneca College, 1981

A major research project
presented to Ryerson University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in the Program of
Fashion

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2016

© Maria Rosa Dal Cin 2016

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION FOR ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF A MRP

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this MRP. This is a true copy of the MRP, including any required final revisions.

I authorize Ryerson University to lend this MRP to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research

I further authorize Ryerson University to reproduce this MRP by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I understand that my MRP may be made electronically available to the public.

VOICES FROM WOMEN'S WARDROBES:
MIDLIFE AND SELF-IMAGE

Maria Rosa Dal Cin

Master of Arts 2016

Fashion Studies

Ryerson University

ABSTRACT

Current fashion research has not explored women's perceptions of available clothing choices during the biological and physical transformations of midlife. Instabilities such as menopause, family breakups, or a loved one's death augment women's diminishing visual presence amid Western society's beauty ideal. In response, clothing may become vital for self-expression, but also measurable in the terms of dress success, or a wardrobe impasse. A reflective Photovoice approach required participants (n=11) to take 7 full-body selfies over the course of a week, while wearing their favourite daywear outfits. The photographs prompted in-depth discussions during one-on-one interviews. Photovoice's debut in fashion research reveals the common philosophies and strategies used by women in midlife to navigate a quick-response fashion system and establish a wardrobe that reflects their self-image. Women's personal perspectives and self-evaluated dressing choices reveal whether their everyday wardrobe supports or compromises their desired self-image, promoting dress success or causing a wardrobe impasse.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank many people for guiding and standing by me through this journey. From in-depth lectures to practical workshops and from interviews to casual discussions, I would like to thank all those who took the time to share their thoughts, knowledge, and wisdom with me. I wish you all the best in your endeavours.

First, to my parents, Domenico and Delmina Dal Cin: thank you for everything you have shared and taught me. You have always led by example and I am proud to be your daughter.

To my trusted Supervisor, Sandra Tullio-Pow: thank you for your long-standing support, patience, and perseverance through this detailed process, especially when I continued to add more studies and explorations to my list of learning. Your expertise, perspective, and professionalism taught me so much and inspired me to learn more than I ever anticipated. You have opened my eyes to lifelong learning and the fascinating world of human-centered design.

To my second reader, Susan Barnwell: thank you for your wisdom, guidance, and the wonderful stories you so generously shared.

A special thank you to Dr. Alison Matthews David, Dr. Ben Barry, Colleen Schindler-Lynch, and Grahame Lynch who went out of their way when I called on them for help.

To all the professors and support staff in the School of Fashion Communication and Design, always generous in sharing knowledge and experience: it's been a privilege; thank you.

A special thanks to Farley Chatto, who, through an awesome internship, shared his immeasurable creativity and skills and inspired me to do better.

To Dr. Natalya Androsova and Erin McCurdy of the Ryerson University Writing Center, who encouraged and guided me as I tried to find my voice.

To Nancy Dal Cin, Filomena Gasparro, and Jiali Ou, for their help, advice, and encouragement throughout this journey.

For sharing your wonderful talents, in order of appearance, Miriam Couturier, Mark Poulin, and Anne Curry: thank you for providing your expertise.

To all my classmates for making this journey so motivating and cool.

To Dr. Sonya Dal Cin for her expertise when usually asked for at the 11th hour.

And to Isabelle, for her patience during the challenging moments, and for giving up the kitchen table; and Freddie, for all the walks I missed.

Last, but by no means least, to my participants: this study would have faltered without your generous participation. Each and every story was insightful, inspirational, and thought provoking. I sincerely thank you all for sharing your individuality, creativity, and most of all, your authenticity.

Dedication

To my mother Delmina Dal Cin, who loved to dress us with her creations and embraced us with her love. My fascination with texture and colour began the day you let me play with a shoebox filled with all your buttons. I now know that you did that just for me. Your passions and many talents shaped my many love affairs with creativity and inventiveness. I especially thank you once again for creating inspiration, which allowed me to take this unexpected and captivating journey.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Dedication	vi
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	x
List of Appendices	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Researcher Background.....	3
Key Terms	4
Background of Study	8
Problem Statement	10
Purpose	11
Value of the Research.....	11
Theoretical Framework	12
Limitations	14
Delimitations	14
Organization of the Study.....	14
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	16
Embodied Dress in Everyday Life	17
Aging Through Midlife	19
Beauty Ideal.....	21
Fashioning Midlife	24
Self-Reflection.....	29
Literature Review Summary.....	31
Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design	33
Research Design	34
Participants	43
Data Collection.....	45
Data Management.....	51
Methodology Summary	60
Chapter 4: Analysis	62
Influences	62
Shopping Behaviours	69
Creating Self-Image	74
Building the Wardrobe	79
The Woman and the Wardrobe.....	89
Additional Analysis	92
Summary	92

Chapter 5: Discussion	94
Summary of the Study	94
Discussion of Findings	96
Self-Reflection.....	100
Self-Design.....	101
Self-Analysis	102
Implications for Practice.....	105
Future Research.....	106
Conclusion.....	106
 Appendices.....	 108
References.....	119

List of Tables

Table	Page
1. Data Collection	46
2. Areas of Inquiry	48
3. Phases of Interview Analysis	53
4. Phase 1 of Data Analysis: READ	55
5. Dress Success Versus Wardrobe Impasse.....	91

List of Figures

Figure	Page
1. Photovoice.....	37
2. Interview Database: Master Data Sheet.....	52
3. Interview Database: “Fashion Information” Worksheet.....	53
4. Interview Database: Participant Interview Summary	57
5. Interview Database: Summary of All Themes.....	58
6. Interview Database: Key Words	60
7. Circle of Influences.....	69
8. Examples of Participants’ Self-Image	78
9. Participants’ Expressions of the 4 C’s of Key Features.....	83
10. The 4C’s of Key Features	84
11. Fast Fashion vs. Slow Fashion.....	86
12. Uniform Approach vs. Investment Pieces	89
13. The Circle of Self-Design	99

List of Appendices

Appendix	Page
A. Participant Demographic Survey	108
B. Participant Information Letter.....	109
C. Telephone Recruitment Script	113
D. Recruitment Poster.....	114
E. Consent Form.....	115
F. Interview Schedule.....	117

Chapter 1: Introduction

Current fashion research has not explored adult women's perceptions of available clothing choices in relation to the biological changes they experience during midlife.

This research centered on women and their relationships between their clothing, self-image, and midlife transformations. Throughout life, women's biological and physical transformations include but are not limited to pregnancy, motherhood, and menopause (Northrup, 2006). Women at the midpoint in their life course may experience a diminishing social presence, as Western patriarchal construct emphasizes a beauty ideal of being young and thin (Twigg, 2010, 2013). Cultural shifts such as divorce or the premature death of a partner or loved one may significantly disrupt a woman's emotional and psychological disposition. In response, clothing may become a vital expression of a woman's personal and public personas.

Additionally, fashion studies may be unfamiliar to those not involved in the field, and additionally, not understand women's midlife journeys of self-image within the Western social construct. Disciplines such as social and health sciences, anthropology, and psychology among others have studied the body, body image, and identity in the context of women, changing body shapes, and aging. Studies linking fashion, dress, and the body—interdisciplinary in their own right—have been framed around sociology, cultural studies, anthropology, history, and social psychology (Entwistle & Wilson, 2001). It is important to note that these areas of knowledge have explored the relationships between aging and women, and provide crucial content for this study. Very little however has been done in the form of body image and dress or material culture outside of quantitative research. Furthermore, without the input of women's lived experiences in everyday life, one cannot truly understand the complexity of life transition within this demographic. In order to develop a deep empathetic understanding, this exploratory qualitative

study utilizes multidisciplinary perspectives with the aim to determine the effect that dress has and to better understand women's perceptions of clothing and fashion as it relates to their self-image and the positive self-realization that may occur during midlife.

Buckley and Clark (2012) argue that within fashion scholarship and discourse, "the truly ordinary remains elusive" (p. 18). Tseelon (1995) refers to the many identities women portray with clothing. It may be speculated that during midlife, the everyday wardrobe and daily dressing practices foster an elusive and undesired self-image, leading toward the possibility of the *wardrobe impasse*. The wardrobe impasse refers to a woman's struggle to portray the dressed self-image she desires due to challenges and transitions she is experiencing through midlife. The wardrobe impasse becomes a visual and symbolic clothing side effect synonymous with a woman's lost or decentered self (Wilson, 2003). While its presence may or may not be consciously obvious, an individual may require a comparative self-reflective assessment between her photographic images and her remembered mirror image to find a resolution and achieve dress success. However, in contrast, women may achieve self-actualization portrayed through dress success; that being, women's clothing choices and embodied practices achieve a desired, fulfilling self-image. The study considers this special group's characteristics in the context of everyday midlife experiences. These experiences may possibly be more complex and diverse than those of younger adult women (Kilpela, Becker, Wesley, & Stewart, 2015), thereby warranting exploration of the way this cohort negotiates the fashion system to develop their self-image. The following three theories framed this study: (a) dress as an embodied practice (Entwistle 2000); (b) fashion, as a way to validate the self (Wilson 2003, 2003); and (c) photography as a means for personal reflection of one's self-image (Nash, 2014a), all within the context of the participants' everyday lived experiences.

The previous section in this chapter has introduced the study. The remainder of this chapter orients the reader about this major research project according to the following subsections: (a) researcher background; (b) background of the study; (c) problem statement; (d) purpose; (e) value of the research; (f) theoretical framework; (g) limitations; (h) delimitations; and (i) organization of the study.

Researcher Background

What motivated me to conduct a study about women in midlife and the relationships they maintain with their clothing and self-image? After a long absence I needed to reconnect with the fashion industry, but I wasn't sure how. I took note of friends' claims that they had difficulties finding appropriate clothing. Yet, I did not see how that was possible because I presumed there was an extensive variety of available apparel options in the marketplace. A few professors mentioned how middle-aged women are not represented in current fashion research and in the marketplace. Given my age and life circumstance, I began researching female baby boomers. The gaps and unresolved issues within existing literature presented problems and created roadblocks, therefore I took a few detours to try to find some solutions.

Prior to attending the MA Fashion program at Ryerson University, I received an Advanced Diploma in Fashion Arts at Seneca College specializing in design. My work experience in the fashion industry was based primarily in Toronto, Canada and included women's wear manufacturing and custom bridal and evening wear design and production. Before furthering my fashion education, I acquired a wide range of business-related experience and skills in the areas of finance, accounting, administration, and management while working in Toronto's construction industry. As a mature student, I received an Advance Digital Graphic Design Certificate at Humber College and subsequently completed various undergraduate

courses in fashion theory and history at Ryerson University. I became fascinated by fashion theory and research, material culture, and design in the context of special groups' needs and identities, including gender, Canadian culture, human-centered design, and textiles.

I consider myself a lifelong learner and thus I try to gain wisdom from every opportunity encountered, both in the academic world and in everyday life. In the end, I describe myself as a designer-artist-explorer who aims to excel using design to solve problems. The exploratory nature of this research encouraged a personal rejuvenation. Through the lens of fashion, I hope to inspire and enable others to use clothing and dress as a way of embracing unwanted change and transformations and ultimately even to exceed their expectations.

Maintaining neutrality was an essential component throughout this research process. In alignment with Silverman's (1997) and Rapport's (2002) views, I aimed to maintain a conscious awareness of my position as an insider, as I engaged with each participant throughout the study (as cited in Woodward, 2007). As a woman in the same age group, and the implicit cultural understandings I possess from a similar background, neutrality and fairness were consciously and cautiously observed as any biases would impact my research (Woodward, 2007). In addition, relationships in varying forms and contexts already had been established with some of the participants. It was imperative that participants felt no obligation to partake in the research and that our personal dynamics during the interview not alter participants' natural disposition. The opportunity to decline participation, to withdraw, to not answer questions, or to use photographs was presented at various stages during the research process; however, each participant chose to complete all stages of the data-collection process.

Key Terms

For the purposes of this paper, the terms listed below are defined to avoid confusion or

misrepresentation between similar and/or interchanged wording used in the existing literature, participants' interview data, and social and fashion discourse.

- *Beauty ideal* is the stereotypical feminine beauty that Western culture values and defines as being youthful and thin (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Saucier, 2004).
- *Body image* is defined as “a subjective picture of one’s own physical appearance established both by self-observation and by noting the reactions of others” (“Body Image,” n.d., para. 1).
- *Clothing* is “the things that people wear to cover their bodies; garments in general” (“Clothing,” n.d. para. 1).
- *Dress* according to Entwistle (2000) is “the result of dressing or getting dressed”; an act to cover the body; can be both functional and aesthetic using clothing that is adorned, thereby referred to as fashion (p. 11). Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, dress is the everyday aesthetic result of clothing and accessories one wears over the course of a typical week or month (based on each participant’s routine or practice) and not other types of clothing such as workout wear, sleepwear, or loungewear (Author’s definition).
- *Dress stories* are described by Weber and Mitchell (2004b) as “autobiographical narratives in which an item of clothing becomes a key organizing feature for a detailed account of life events, [and] are not just ‘any stories’... [but rather forms] of critical or reflective memoir ... make the past usable [and] remembering in the service of future action” (p. 256).
- *Dress success* describes an individual’s happiness about how effectively her wardrobe portrays her self-image, and revealed overall positive interview responses when

participants referenced their relationships between their clothing, wardrobe, personality, and self-image (Author's definition).

- *Everyday wardrobe* is Attfield's descriptor of everyday wear in the context of fashion that "comprises of the ordinary and mundane 'practices of wearing,' where items are drawn from the personal wardrobe in a routine manner" (Buckley & Clark, 2012, p. 19); however, the definition encompasses participants' everyday daywear outfits, or "dress" as defined above, and no other types of clothing such as workout wear, sleepwear, or loungewear.
- *Fashion* is "a system of continually changing styles which sets out an array of competing discourses on image and is the dominant system governing dress in the West" (Entwistle & Wilson, 2001, p. 39).
- *Fast fashion* is "a term used to describe cheap and affordable clothes which are the result of catwalk designs moving into stores in the fastest possible way in order to respond to the latest trends" ("Fast fashion," n.d. para. 1).
- The *looking-glass self* is Charles Cooley's (1902) theory, which "states that a person's sense of self grows out of the perceptions and social interactions with others. Gordon Marshall explains the three components as: our imagination of our appearance as viewed by others; how we believe we are judged by others; and self-feelings, such as pride" (Marshall, 1998).
- *Middle-age*; traditional definitions within sources such as *Collins Dictionary* and *Oxford English Dictionary* use inconsistent age ranges. For the purposes of this study, "middle-age" refers to the period of life between the ages of 40 to 65, thereby satisfying traditional

definitions and encompassing the age ranges within existing research and literature (Author's definition).

- *Midlife*, for the purposes of this study, is defined as the central period of a person's life, generally considered as 45 to 59 years of age, and the age group used for participant recruitment for this study (Author's definition).
- *READ* is an acronym that stands for Read, Edit, Analyze, and Describe and is used to describe the process of interview analysis during this study (Author's definition).
- *Self-image* is the way you think about yourself and your abilities or appearance; one's conception of oneself ("Self-image," n.d. para. 1, 2)
- *Slow fashion*, for the purposes of this paper, is defined based on the participants' perceptions derived from interviews¹. Slow fashion is considered to be the opposite of fast fashion, containing some or all of the following characteristics: (a) classic aesthetics and silhouettes; (b) garments made of relatively good quality materials and construction; (c) are timeless in the context of fashion; (d) can be transitional over seasons; (e) maintain longevity over years (Author's definition).
- *Wardrobe* in this research paper refers to the total accumulation of clothes and accessories that an individual has amassed, and not a physical closet or piece of furniture used to contain clothing.
- *Wardrobe moment* is a term defined by Woodward (2007) as "The private act of getting dressed, which is (usually) experienced at least once a day, mediates clothing as appearance management and public display and the private intimate domain of the bedroom and wardrobe. As women choose outfits from their wardrobe, they stand

¹ These features are subjective to the individual but normally refer to clothing that the participants feel reflect elevated self-worth.

looking at their reflections and wonder about whether they have ‘got it right’; for a particular occasion, for someone their age; they may also worry whether their bum looks too big, their legs too short or their skin too sallow” (p. 3).

- *Wardrobe impasse* refers to a woman’s struggle to portray the dressed self-image she desires due to challenges and transitions she is experiencing through midlife, and therefore becomes a visual and symbolic clothing side effect synonymous with a lost or decentered self, as noted by Wilson (2003). Its presence may or may not be consciously obvious; however, an individual may require a comparative self-reflective assessment between her photographic images and her remembered mirror image to find a resolution and achieve dress success (Author’s definition).
- *Wardrobe readiness* is a concept that identifies whether or not a wardrobe can effectively represent a person’s self-image in everyday life on a regular basis. That is, a wardrobe that the individual is happy with, can enjoy the majority of the time, and can minimize possibilities of unpleasant or anxious wardrobe moments (Woodward, 2006) (Author’s definition).

Background of Study

The interdisciplinary nature of clothing and fashion is as expansive as there are people, cultures, and social structures. Fashion studies, while relatively new within the scholarly disciplines, provides a new multilayered lens of exploration. Dress and its practice within the framework of the body is the result of social and cultural practices used by the individual (Entwistle, 2000). However, the typical daily repetition of fashion interpretations created by an individual during different fashion cycles becomes in itself the everyday experience. This study’s literature review discovered that women might experience simultaneous reorganizations in both

their personal and social lives when transitioning through midlife towards the menopause. Bodily changes and nervous and brain reorganizations are physical transformations concurrent with increasing invisibility, while aging in social and fashion systems perpetuate the beauty ideal as being young and thin. Studies reveal that the beauty ideal places this age group in the background of current visual and social culture.

This study draws on the personal wardrobe stories of 11 women transitioning through midlife. These reflexive contemplations contribute primary data of their everyday lived experiences as they make clothing and dressing choices. These perspectives are in-depth, and they elaborate on women's negotiations with Western fashion, social, and visual culture systems. Viewed through the lens of everyday life (Sandywell, 2004), previous studies (e.g., Buckley & Clark, 2012; Entwistle, 2000; Wilson, 2003; Woodward, 2007) acknowledge the complex and ambiguous relationships women have between fashion and society, and their identity. The modified Photovoice methodology used to collect data subsequently builds on previous research by Woodward (2007), Guy and Banim (2000), and Kilpela et al. (2015). In order to empathize and deeply understand the effects that dress, clothing, image, and identity have on this demographic, a qualitative exploration using various theoretical lenses was used. However, without taking into account women's lived everyday experiences one cannot truly understand the depth and complexity that midlife transitions create for this demographic, nor the effects that dress has on an individual's self-image. Therefore, this study explores women in midlife through the lenses of embodiment, self-actualization, and photographic reflexivity, as it relates to their everyday life.

A woman's closet has a defined selection of clothing to choose from. However, the retail environment offers a vast selection and shopping; that is to say, making the right fashion choices

may be challenging. At what point does the adult woman stop judging fashion, and follow the obvious, resorting to habitual dressing and possibly tone down her image, thus making her less visible among society? When is she comfortable being creative and visible, and when does she put aside her “clothing loves” and surrender to what will get her through the day? During the wardrobe moment (Woodward, 2007), a woman’s closet is the result of her fashion judgments during her shopping experiences. This research reviews both Woodward’s (2007) ethnographic account of the dressing negotiations of her participants, and Nash’s (2014a, 2014b, 2015) research on pregnant and postpartum mothers to understand various aspects of everyday dressing. The wide scope of memories and attachments to garments became evident as the participants recounted personal wardrobe and “dress stories” (Weber & Mitchell, 2004b). Through the lens of the personal wardrobe, the participants’ perspectives illustrate how everyday dressing and body changes affect their self-image and personal dispositions.

Problem Statement

As women cross the threshold of midlife, they may experience simultaneous experiences of loss, such as a decline in their visible social presence, biological and physical transformations, and possible social and cultural shifts such as divorce, or the premature death of a partner or loved one. These all contribute to anxiousness or disrupt a woman’s sense of self. As a result, the everyday wardrobes may become the key component that provides a grounded sense of self and their desired visible presence within their environments. Woodward (2007) argues that older women experience more complexity and anxiety during their wardrobe moments. What happens when the wardrobe does not succeed, thereby adding anxiousness during a wardrobe moment? Metaphorically speaking, this could turn into a wardrobe hour, or a wardrobe day, leading to wardrobe challenges, and ultimately a wardrobe impasse. This research explores the possibility

of the wardrobe impasse, which may be the dressed body's visual and symbolic side effect that is synonymous with challenging times during midlife.

Purpose

This research was undertaken in order to better understand midlife women's perceptions and relationship with fashion and their wardrobe as they experience aging, and body changes within today's fashion system. The central research question—How do mature women successfully navigate the fashion system and develop a wardrobe that properly reflects their personal identity?—was the basis used to investigate what motivates and determines the clothing choices made by this demographic (women in midlife between the ages of 45 and 59) within an environment that: targets the youthful and thin beauty ideal; uses both fast and slow fashion industry models; and visually under-represents the middle-aged women in the media.

To date there is scant research that examines middle-aged women and fashion; however, through the lenses of the wardrobe and fashion, this major research paper seeks to clarify some issues around self-image among women in midlife.

Value of the Research

The interdisciplinary nature of clothing and fashion is as expansive as there are people and cultures. The theories or importance of fashion studies are poorly understood by those outside the discipline or field. This research adds a new approach to obtain consumers' perspectives of their clothing and fashion needs within a special group or demographic. This research provides a new visual research method that is a tool for self-reflection, potentially facilitating women's positive changes and transformations. Likewise, research regarding the complexity of fashion needs and purchasing decisions of adult females are sparse, therefore this

research also contributes to and builds on existing literature about fashion and apparel by examining the relationships between women's identities, clothing uses, and clothing purchases.

Theoretical Framework

This major research paper is underpinned by three established theories used to discuss middle-aged women's relationships between clothing and their self-image within Western society. These theories are outlined below and further explained in Chapter 2.

The first theory is posited by Entwistle (2000b). Dress is an embodied practice. Beyond clothing's functional aspects, Entwistle argues that dress is social in nature, gives meaning to bodies, and is embedded in social order: "Dress (thus) works on the body, imbuing it with social meaning; while the body is a dynamic field that gives life and fullness to dress" (Entwistle, 2000a, p. 327). The two operate dialectically, and since the body does not go undressed, dress and fashion cannot be understood without studying the body (Entwistle & Wilson, 2001). The theory of embodiment was most relevant when asking participants about the sensorial and emotional relationships they have with their clothing.

The second theory is offered by Wilson (2003), who contends that fashion, within a modern social context, is "a lifeline" for a "lost self or decentered subject" (p. 122), providing physical evidence of the self's existence. Although fashionable dress is always changing, it is central in social settings, and thereby dress is a critically important symbolic system that can "articulate the soul" (Wilson, 2003, p. xiii). Women's relationship between their self-image and personal dispositions are explored by keeping in mind their intrinsic links with clothing.

The third theory is posited by Kuhn (1985) in that photography is a crucial way to research visual culture. Kuhn suggests that looking in the mirror is not the same as when a photograph is taken of the self. The mirror may reflect what we want to see, a momentary form

of self-actualization whereas the photograph provides empirical evidence of one's actual appearance and this may contradict the mirror image, allowing for a view of reality that eliminates subjective interpretation.

This research focuses on the everyday wardrobe and how it is used to reflect self-image in everyday settings. Therefore, the theme of everyday life is a common thread woven throughout this study. Within fashion discourse, dressing experiences of the everyday are professed by many theorists to be contradictions of the self. Barnard (1996), Wilson (1992), Davis (1991), and Evans and Thornton (1989) agree that a contradicting sense of self and self-perception is perpetuated by the fashion system and a patriarchal social structure (as cited in Guy & Banim, 2000). Furthermore, "Barnard (1996) recognizes that there have been broadly conflicting analytic themes that focus on the wearers' agency as passive or active in relation to fashion" (Guy & Banim, 2000, p. 313). For women, the fashion system professes to give choice and options that provide personal agency, however the patriarchal social system dictates and perpetuates an unauthentic representation of the self that has been restricted and disciplined (Bartky, 1990; Guy & Banim, 2000; MacCannell & MacCannell 1987). Through the lenses of wardrobes and dress stories (Weber & Mitchell, 2004a), this research reveals participants' negotiations when making clothing and dressing choices. This researcher hypothesizes that clothing's elusive yet intrinsic nature impacts women's emotional and psychological dispositions and their well-being more critically during midlife than in their earlier adult years. During unpredictable midlife transitions, the everyday wardrobe could possibly manifest in a subversive way, thus resulting in a visual representation that may become uncomfortable or disappointing. Therefore, this research explores the level of satisfaction of women in midlife's dressed images, which communicates their everyday personas.

Limitations

It is important to note that the older studies referenced in this research do not address any current economic situations and their possible effects on the fashion system. Additionally, the business aspect of fashion adds further perspectives to this research, however the small size of this research paper does not permit current economic factors to be included; therefore there are no quantitative valuations and references. This researcher acknowledges the propensity that participants may have to over-curate their everyday favourite outfits knowing others would review them at a later date. The use of cell phones to take the selfies was a convenient method for participants; however, this medium did not generate highly flattering or well-defined images, thereby limiting the visibility of details and printing quality. Finally, it must be highlighted that the group of participants in this research represents a small and very narrow scope of the female demographics. However, the small population conversely reveals the extent of clothing and dressing possible variables among this cohort.

Delimitations

This research did not pursue the topics of body issues, money issues, menopause, and personal circumstances that extend beyond the everyday activities or circumstances affecting the participants' clothing and dress choices. Any references to these topics in this paper were voluntary statements made at the discretion of the participants.

Organization of the Study

This research paper is organized in five chapters beginning with Chapter 1, which consists of the following segments: (a) introduction; (b) researcher's background; (c) background of the study; (d) problem statement; (e) purpose for the study; (f) value of the study; (g) theoretical framework; (h) limitations; (i) delimitations; and (j) organization of the study.

Chapter 2 discusses the literature review, which is organized in the following segments:

(a) introduction; (b) embodied dress in everyday life; (c) aging through midlife; (d) beauty ideal; (e) fashioning midlife; (f) self-reflection; and (g) literature review summary.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology and research design using these six segments:

(a) methodology introduction; (b) research design; (c) participants; (d) data collection; (e) data management; and (f) methodology summary.

Chapter 4 presents the analyses and results in the following seven segments: (a) analysis and results introduction; (b) influences; (c) shopping behaviours; (d) creating self-image; (e) building the wardrobe; (f) additional analysis; and (g) analysis and results summary.

Chapter 5 provides the discussion about the research and is organized in six segments as follows: (a) discussion introduction; (b) summary of the study; (c) discussion of the findings; (d) implications for practice; (e) future research; and (d) conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

A number of researchers have studied the relationship between women and self-image; a review of this literature is presented in this chapter. In the context of fashion research and discourse, using personal and experiential research to explore the complex relationships between fashion, the body, the self, and personal wardrobes often reveals social inequities. Current fashion research has not explored what adult women perceive as available clothing options as they experience the biological and social changes associated with midlife. In order to better understand how mature women successfully navigate the fashion system and develop a wardrobe that reflects their personal identity this literature review begins with a summary of research about middle-aged women from various fields of study.

While the literature in the health and social sciences, as well as fashion disciplines has explored women's issues, middle-aged women are underrepresented. Researchers have acknowledged the complexity of this group and the diversity of research methodologies, which create ambiguity and highlight limitations, thus warranting further research for clearer results (Kilpela et al., 2015; Peters, Shelton, & Thomas, 2011). This literature review establishes that research about self-image, dress, and the body is lacking for this age group. Thomas and Peters's (2009) research on senior women revealed that clothing is central to a woman's lifestyle and sense of self. However, the interdisciplinary nature of fashion requires insight from multiple areas of study (Martin & Hanington, 2012). Therefore, my study draws on literature from the fields of psychology, health, social science, visual arts, human-centered design, and business studies, and pools materials relevant to the category of middle-aged women and self-image. Particularly relevant are the theoretical viewpoints of everyday life and researchers' critical reviews and studies in psychology, sociology, and health. This review presents literature

pertaining to women's embodied dress practices, and the use of fashion within the everyday life of a Western social presence. This chapter presents five segments that discuss the following themes: (a) embodied dress in everyday life; (b) aging through midlife; (c) beauty ideal; (d) fashioning midlife; and (e) self-reflection.

Embodied Dress in Everyday Life

Theories and viewpoints of fashion link dress, the body, and social identities with meaningful discourse, amid oppositional schools of thought. Moreover, theories of everyday life bring varying perspectives and fluctuating contextual relevance. Sandywell (2004) explained that everyday life, while appearing mundane and ordinary, is complex and intricate. Highmore's (2002) literature reviews that link everyday life and cultural theories discussed authors' portrayals of the "everyday" as negative or problematic (p. viii). Highmore also maintained that in the context of the everyday, the visual materiality of fashion is obvious. Lefebvre (1988), on the other hand, argued that elusiveness veils the visual everyday form of dress, rendering itself unnoticed. Furthermore, different social conventions have opposing views about the uses and roles of fashion and dress. Social conditions can be wide-ranging and intricate. These contradicting notions of fashion could contribute to indecision when women try to determine what is acceptable in terms of everyday clothing.

Fashion discourse continued to include conflicting opinions about the use of clothing and dress. Practices within the environment of the everyday are illustrated as mundane and boring, and seen as traditional practices, and therefore not modern (Buckley & Clark, 2012). Potentially, the most obvious gauge of one's grasp of modernity could be one's choice of everyday dress. However, everyday fashion and dress in its varying forms is viewed as both visible and invisible by Highmore (2002) and Lefebvre (1988), respectively. Fashion in and of itself is documented

most often in the context of current trends and extremities of the avant-garde, thus making it hyper visible (Buckley & Clark, 2012). Most important though, fashion and dress, within all its visual contradictions, can ultimately be used to define the self, and still continue to create discourse and opposing theoretical perspectives. A critical analysis of literature about everyday life and fashion by Buckley and Clark (2012) provides a comprehensive review, concluding: “as a material and cultural artifact, fashion has been instrumental in defining the self—whether consciously or unconsciously” (p. 28). Woodward (2007) argued that how women’s dressed selves are displayed in public spaces do not reveal the complexity and uncertainty they experience while making dressing choices. Historically, dress in its many forms has been undressed and redressed by using fashion, gender, and feminist perspectives. In addition, social theorists debate the representations and blurred boundaries of fashion, the dressed body, and embodied practices.

Opposing discourse of fashion within feminist studies further complicates the social aspects for this cohort. Twigg (2013) argued that clothing and dress have been strongly gendered by second wave feminist theory that challenges the concept of the positive embodiment of dress. In this framework, Twigg (2013) critically analyzed literature that positions women who decide to conform to fashion directives as oppressed and sexualized because they use modes of dress that display inauthentic self-images (Bartky, 1990; Daly, 1979; Evans & Thornton, 1989; Friedan, 1963; Greer, 1971; Jeffries, 2005). However, some present-day feminists have reassessed the cultural and intricate aspects of the clothing, the body, and appearance, and recognize dress and fashion as permanent and central in women’s culture (Twigg, 2013), and a form of maximizing pleasure (Wilson, 2003). For Twigg (2013), fashion and clothing are an extension of the body that connects the self to others, and to the outside world: “Dress lies on the

margin of the body, marking the boundary between self and others, individual and society; this boundary is intimate and personal, yet also cultural and collective, structured by social and moral pressures” (p. 15). Members of this cohort can be considered as both bound and liberated by the opposing social viewpoints of patriarchy and feminism during their younger years. The transitions during midlife can create additional internal conflicts of dress embodiment in the forms of modesty, and personal expressiveness and creativity that restrict wardrobe choices. Conversely, the midlife metamorphosis that Northrup (2006) spoke about can be used to liberate and enhance open-mindedness, by promoting and elevating aging women’s visibility and prominence in society. Just as Wilson and Entwistle recognized that clothing, dress, and fashion cannot be studied without the studying the body, understanding how women in midlife create their dressed self-images cannot be understood without studying a female body’s implications during this life stage. Northrup (2006) asserted that midlife transformations yield positive changes if consciously embraced by the individual. The onset of this process provides a gateway towards self-actualization that can be maximized through a dressed body. Consequently, the personal metamorphose can be seen as an intrinsic duality of liberation and self-realization. Using embodied dress practices that promote middle-aged social visibility, rather than obscure it, has the potential to epitomize midlife transformations.

Aging Through Midlife

As women transition into and through midlife they simultaneously encounter a decline of social and gender status that is greater than their male counterparts. Sontag (1972) argued that Western social constructs allow men to age in a framework of desired attributes; that is, status, wealth, and wisdom. As men age these attributes are perceived as more entrenched, and consequently more valued. By contrast, women may experience a decline in social status. The

perception is that women are traditionally gentle, passive, and sweet, and maintain “age-old, intuitive knowledge about the emotions,” (Sontag, 1979 p. 5) which is viewed as adding nothing to “feminine” knowledge (Saucier, 2004 p. 420). Likewise, women apparently take a shorter route towards the aging process. Twigg’s (2013) research revealed that practices in media and entertainment are engrained in appearance, and thereby visibly exclude aging women at a younger age and in greater proportions than men. Saucier (2004) agreed that women experience ageism more frequently than men in addition to, expectations of achieving the beauty ideal, and being held to “higher standards of physical attractiveness throughout their lives” (p. 424). These studies suggest that society measures aging for women in three ways: (a) less successfully than men; (b) more quickly than men; and (c) less feminine value beside a decreasing beauty ideal.

Potentially, the most critical aspect for a woman during midlife is the menopausal process, the biological transformation that for many presents uncontrollable physical and emotional challenges. The perimenopausal process is more than just hormone imbalances and lost fertility. Obstetrician/gynecologist, Christiane Northrup (2006) described this time as a reorganization of the body and mind—specifically, the nervous system and the brain undergo rewiring during a female’s midlife transition. Moreover, Northrup (2006) maintained with great assurance that this total transformation is an exciting developmental life stage, leading to deeply healing results for the mind, body, and spirit; however, a positive experience requires conscious participation by the individual. Emotional and psychological changes create a renewed form of personal reflexivity, altering perceptions and wisdom that clarify inequities, injustice and see opportunities for positive change (Northrup, 2006). Nevertheless, consideration also should be given to variables that present themselves in everyday life such as: (a) this process can last for 10 years; (b) an individual may be amid other tenuous life circumstances that often prevail during

midlife; and (c) the beauty ideal is diminishing, as is (potentially) social status.

Transition during midlife affects all aspects of the female body. Women's biological and emotional shifts during midlife come from within, and create disruptions in an otherwise comfortable identity (Northrup, 2006), however the body's wisdom calls for "truth, creative expression, and personal fulfillment" (p. 17). This may include the need for women to improve themselves or create a new self-image, which can be realized through the wardrobe, thereby possibly limiting the age and gender gaps. However, a woman's lack of personal and emotional clarity or confidence at this time could impair this process. Wilson (2003) referred to a person's established social presence through the use of fashion. As an instrument, the wardrobe, when embodied by self-confidence and authenticity of the self, can disseminate not only a positive presence, but also enforces a conspicuous visual existence amid social setting (Wilson, 2003). This may subsequently have the potential to challenge the social devaluation of middle-aged women that currently exists in Western society.

Beauty Ideal

From early on in a woman's life, any transition away from the beauty ideal can internalize anxiety. There is sufficient research that discusses the effects of external gazes and types of objectification that women encounter throughout life. A narrowly defined feminine beauty ideal is a social fact, perpetuating others' judgments or imposed forms of invisibility for those that fall outside of the model (Twigg, 2013). Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) argued that "empirical research demonstrates that how a woman's body appears to others can determine her life experiences" (p. 178). Pressures of conformity experienced by exterior gazes and social constructs can affect women in some way. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) used examples such as pubertal changes that create fat gains in girls noted by McCarthy (1990), and minority

women's anxieties to conform to the Western beauty ideal discussed by Root (1990) can all affect their body image. Kilpela et al.'s (2015) recent study revealed that there appears to be different and deeper forms of body image complexity among women in midlife. Their research examined body-altering changes that resulted from women's life experiences such as pregnancy, menopause, disease, and aging of women from young adulthood to old age.

Statistical and participant reflexive data showed that mature women contend with more body issues since biological changes (the move away from the thin beauty ideal) highly impact her identity (Kilpela et al., 2015). While existing research focuses mainly on the body issues of younger women, Kilpela et al.'s (2015) critical review illustrated that notions of body dissatisfaction and body image issues among mid- and late-life women remain steady and constant. However, the specifics of dissatisfaction remain inconsistent (Kilpela et al., 2015), with one exception. In the case of appearance, Slevec and Tiggemann (2011) and Barrett and Robbins (2008) revealed a regular and significant relationship between the aging process, anxieties experienced as aging effects appearance, and the investments women make in their appearance (Kilpela et al., 2015). Research has shown that in Western culture, there is a significant lack of visual representation of mature women outside of anti-aging advertisements and editorials (Twigg, 2013). Their male counterparts do not experience a comparable threshold; or a midlife demarcation point such as menopause (Rubinstein & Foster, 2013). This could be why findings in Rubinstein and Foster's (2013) study suggest that women express fear and resentment about the thought of becoming socially invisible as they move away from the beauty ideal.

With few exceptions, current research does not tackle dressing complexities or the visual culture that comes with aging. Twigg's (2013) research noted the minimal visibility of middle-aged women in the fashion media; maintaining the socially perpetuated beauty ideal that is

rooted in the media and entertainment industry points out the visual changes women make when they enter that later half of life. Although Twigg's (2013) research tended to focus on women over 60 years of age, her content analysis of Vogue UK (2010) validates concerns expressed by Rubenstein and Foster's (2013) participants. Buckley and Clark (2012) argued that media continue to focus on youth and trends, supporting Twigg's (2010) analogy that the language of fashion is disseminating a new visual culture that now pairs the young adult's aim of extreme thinness with a new middle-aged partner based on the "erasure of age" (p. 475). Consequently, these social attitudes further complicate an already complex relationship between women, society, and fashion. Twigg's (2010) research showed that representational content of middle-aged women in fashion magazines is minimal. In particular, her analysis of Vogue UK in "How does Vogue Negotiate Age?: Fashion, the Body, and the Older Woman" reveals that except for anti-aging content, there is a visible lack of mature women featured in fashion magazines, thereby removing identifiable fashion role models in visual culture.

As fashion magazines are considered traditional primary sources of fashion inspiration for many women, this form of ageism situates women as outliers alongside persons of colour, size, gender variances, persons with disabilities, and elderly women. Paradoxically, research indicates that when advertising is geared towards the celebration of diversity within printed fashion media, fashion sales increase because those represented can identify with the brand or product (Barry, 2007). Similarly, Kozar's (2010) research oriented in consumer behaviour measured mature women's responses to fashion models of similar ages using a scaled questionnaire. Findings revealed that older models were rated significantly higher than younger models in the areas of attractiveness, appearance, and fashion sense and beliefs, in addition to the participants' higher product purchasing intentions (Kozar, 2010). However, one could see the

feminine beauty ideal as hyper exposed by default via the marketing programs of numerous fast paced mini collections of mass-produced fashion trends targeting younger demographics. This fashion industry philosophy further reduces mature women's access to fashion currency. Classic instruments of information such as magazines appear to be dysfunctional for this age group, as they can no longer be relied to provide a range of fashion guidance outside of current trends for more youthful markets.

Fashioning Midlife

Research of specific issues that link middle-aged women and fashion is limited. Findings from published studies often use survey methods that incorporate Likert scale measurements, thereby limiting the content of contextually rich data for this demographic. More specific to this study, fashion within the context of the everyday remains debated. Buckley and Clark (2012) argued that within fashion studies and discourse, it is “the truly ordinary that remains elusive” (p. 18). Barnard (1996) noted that the relationship between an individual, fashion, and clothing depicts a “curious cultural profile” (p. 20), whereas there is a continuous paradox; tensions at play within women's dressing choices. As Barnard explains, fashion and clothing touch upon various areas of study, straddle disciplines, and therefor create different perspectives, often in opposition. Buckley and Clark's (2012) research depicted women's desires and fears of realizing different self-images through the wardrobe, and refer to Tseëlon's (1995) arguments that clothing is vital for expressing the many selves of women's identities.

In the case of mature women, the varied different selves may come together as one, and be seen as the side effect of fulfillment or lack thereof. I agree with those who theorize that what is perceived as everyday fashion by one person may be seen as high fashion for another (Buckley & Clark, 2012, p. 19). However, I argue that, in the case of women transitioning through midlife,

fashion sense has become a sense of personal style. Moreover, fashion and how one chooses to use and interpret it within their everyday wardrobe is not only subjective, but also becomes the self-image, a cumulative and ongoing process, that only becomes stagnant among everyday life challenges.

Embodiment may be seen as an interweaving of one's existence not only to the social world but also to the self that one sees in everyday reflections in the mirror. Buckley and Clark (2012) stressed the important role played by fashion in defining the self, and even through the ordinary, individuals "make sense of their lives given the material and cultural resources available to them" (p. 28). Baudelaire (1972) stated that fashion is positioned alongside modernity and therefore it represents continuous change and fast transitions rather than slower adaptability and longevity. The latter position would be a great disruption to today's fashion system (Zarley Watson & Yan, 2012). Buckley and Clark's (2012) review of fashion within everyday life highlights authors such as Charles Baudelaire (1981), and Thorstein Veblen (1899) who supported George Simmel's (1904) argument that fashion within modern placement "increasingly sharpens our sense of the present" (p. 181). Entwistle (2000) argued that dress and its practice within the framework of the body is the result of social and cultural practices used by the individual, but more explicitly, the typical daily repetition of an individual's fashion interpretations during different fashion cycles, becomes in itself the everyday experience. One could argue that dress in the everyday creates the most unmistakable image of the self, since it is displayed most often, and unless hyper visible becomes the mundane, just as the humdrum concept of the everyday noted by Highmore (2002). Alternatively, Woodward (2007) contended that women "engage with clothing as a means to have sense of who and their place in the world" (p. 157). Therefore, one can conclude that to maintain relevance during midlife's diminishing

beauty ideal and social placement in Western culture, everyday dress must be elevated and embodied to a level of unquestioned visibility.

Today's fashion system portrays conflicting images, either as mandated styles or a plentiful source of fashion choices, both of which can either satisfy an individual's creativity or overwhelm the whole thought process, thus creating confusion. Woodward (2007) explained that the aesthetic look and the sensorial and emotional feeling of clothing link women's experience of the sense of self, thus making them all these components inseparable. Buckley and Clark (2012) stressed the important role played by fashion in defining the self, as even through the ordinary, individuals make sense of their lives by consuming this form of material culture. The age group transitioning through midlife at this time has experienced two different fashion systems: ready-to-wear (RTW)—which emerged in the 1950s, was a mainstay until the early 2000s, and may be considered a form of slow fashion—and the new fast response fashion system which began to emerge in the mid 1990s, but became entrenched approximately 2005 and is referred to as “fast fashion.” Little academic research has been done comparing consumer's perspectives of fast and slow fashion products (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006). The fast-fashion business model responds to catwalk trends in just weeks by producing up to 20 mini collections of cheap and affordable clothing per year (Zarley Watson & Yan, 2013). Described as an ultimate marketing concept of mass-customization, fast fashion provides the purchaser with a constant flow of fast changing trends and novelty (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Christopher, Lowson, & Peck, 2004). However, research has suggested that the global economic crisis and lower disposable incomes are creating a desire for longer lasting apparel (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013).

Existing literature from Clark (2008) and Wood (2008) has provided evidence of a shift towards the production and consumption of *slow fashion* (Leslie, Brail, & Hunt, 2014), which is

propelled by independent designers who adopt local supply chain strategies supporting local entrepreneurs by providing diverse and special design aesthetics for local consumers. For example, secondary markets such as Toronto have adopted antidotal forms of global fashion production noted by Reinach (2005), by producing slow fashion type collections in local settings (Leslie et al., 2014). However, in order to determine the extent and effectiveness of this shift, further research is required.

Buckley and Clark (2012) noted that, as a result of fast fashion, the past 20 years have given those with low incomes more choice and flexibility to consume fashion. Retailers such as Forever 21-in the USA and Primark in England provide inexpensive trend for everyday use en masse. In contrast, Fletcher (2007) coined the term “slow fashion” to denote the international movement (by independent designers) in fashion from quality to quantity, Slow fashion is not time-based, and it uses slower production methods, delivering higher quality products created in an environment with richer interaction and communication between designers, buyers, retailers, and consumers about the impacts of products on workers, communities, and ecosystems. However, literature has suggested that the term slow fashion is used loosely to describe various concepts denoting better quality clothing (than fast fashion) that falls outside the fast-fashion model. Examples include (a) “nothing in excess and everything in balance” by Restore Clothing owners Celeste and Anthony Lilore (“Restore Clothing,” 2009, p. 1), (b) “adaptable, season-less designs” (Cordero, 2008, p. 1), (c) “good quality season-less pieces that can be worn almost year round” (Zarley Watson & Yan, 2012, p. 145), and (d) as a term that contextualizes local and sustainable or environmentally friendly fashion and clothing that is craft based (Clark, 2008). As these two very different fashion systems merged, so did the baby-boomer cohort’s transition through into the second half of life.

Relationships between personal transitions and everyday use of clothing were investigated in Guy and Banim's (2000) research. While the research presents a dynamic relationship between women and their clothing, the everyday use of clothing reveals three aspects or selves in attempts to obtain satisfying images, and exposes a complex and ongoing process of their self-representation. The author argued that "three co-existing views of the self; 'The woman I want to be,' 'The woman I fear I could be,' and 'The woman I am most of the time'" use clothing to hide and reveal aspects of the self, including challenging and subverting conventions (Guy & Banim, 2000, p. 313). These authors argued that midlife's personal transformations are capable of removing confusion of the self. Thus, they suggested that the use of clothing and dressing choices could be used to confidently reveal women's selves, concealing only physical attributes if desired, and thereby establishing "The woman I have become."

This major research paper is an exploratory undertaking, which argues that successful self-actualization during midlife requires a respectful partnership between the body's reconstruction, the emotional and mental reorganizations, and a conscious re-evaluation of material artifacts that are associated with personal representation, particularly the personal wardrobe. Peters et al. (2011) surveyed 200 women in the southern USA about their clothing, self-image, fashion sense, and shopping behaviours. Using established and reliable Likert scales to measure this female-baby-boomer demographic, their research revealed that women aged 50 years and up require more than fit, quality, and price when choosing their clothing. Numeric measures are plentiful, but imbalances within the questionnaire, and the broad senior age range of the participants limits in-depth empirical evidence of how middle-aged women's identities are formed with the use of clothing and fashion choices. The age range and currency of Peters et

al.'s (2011) research provides useful contextual data relevant to embodiment that considers the FEA model developed by Lamb and Kallal (1992). However, the literature included in this review does not relate to the currency of today's blended fashion system and its relationship to women in midlife. The modern influence of fast fashion has not only changed the speed of changing trends but also the volume and quality of clothing available. This review does however consider the aspects of how women may potentially form their self-identity within the parameters and today's modern practices of a blended fashion system.

Self-Reflection

Self-perception is an important component of appearance, but more specifically, it represents a woman's lens of the external gaze that is both complex and problematic. Considering the complex relationship between women in midlife and body image highlighted in Kilpela et al. (2015), the photograph provides empirical evidence that may be used to disentangle idealized or confused self-perceptions. The photographs are not contextualized, but are also not deniable. During the menopausal transition, personal critical reflection becomes a key component of the process. Emotional and psychological changes create a renewed form of personal reflexivity, which alters perceptions, and more importantly, heightens female wisdom. The body and soul's call for truth extends beyond self-fulfillment. The transformation's needs are far reaching, challenging inequities and injustices (Northrup, 2006). Moreover, a woman's newfound intolerance for nonsense and unfairness may now be viewed by others as a loss of patience.

The various elements within midlife transitions become critical factors for a woman, as they can cause her everyday stability to be uprooted. As noted in the introduction, the women's relationship between midlife and identity has not been studied with the exception of Kilpela et

al.'s (2015) research. However, Richards, Warren, and Gott's (2011) study has reminded us that "visual representations of aging play a complex and subtle role in shaping and communicating the experience of old age in everyday life" (p. 66). The enjoyment of dressing, or the comfort of favourite outfits she relies on, is in jeopardy. In her private space—her wardrobe—that is her clothing can provide stimulating emotional uplifts, but during midlife's transitions, she may instead discover the frustration of the wardrobe impasse.

Midlife transitions become critical key factors for a woman, as they can cause her everyday stability to be uprooted. Tseelon's (1995) research revealed conflicting discourse about women's understanding of themselves through their clothing. The enjoyment of dressing, or the comfort of favourite outfits she relies on, is in jeopardy due to body changes that fall alongside Northrup's (2006) explanation of internal reconciliations that come with midlife. Woodward (2007) argued that older women face a heightened level of contemplation during the *wardrobe moment* as the aging process creates body changes, which re-identifies the garment's effectiveness and suitability (p. 23). Woodward's (2007) ethnographic approach studied 20- to 40-year-old women's everyday contemplative processes as they chose what to wear. The wardrobe moment highlights a woman's continual swing of a pendulum between the yes and no, and should I or shouldn't I, is it me or not me? Once again in the privacy of her closet (her wardrobe), her clothing may not provide the sureness she requires, and so she finds solace in something understated, toned down and safe. Twigg (2013) notes that women themselves alter wardrobe choices, using tactics to tone down the visual effect of their clothing by choosing "to cover up and fade ... rather than being in the foreground" (p. 63) to accommodate the aging process. A collaborative analysis of Holliday's (2001), Guy and Banim's (2000), and Entwistle and Wilson's (2001) research could be seen as fundamental and highly significant of establishing

the importance of the relationship between fashion, and the production of identities. However, Wilson (2003) argued that if woman becomes threatened within her modern society such as by a diminishing beauty ideal and the ensuing increased invisibility, her sense of style then becomes her lifeline. However, she could potentially question her sense of style during this life stage.

According to Reisenwitz and Iyer (2007), the variety of life patterns and experiences that accumulate for this age group diminishes the sameness of a cohort as they age, therefore producing many individual variables that can influence one's fashion sense. With this in mind, embracing midlife's transformations and self-evaluations could be instrumental in reversing the flow of the social and fashion system's directives that possibly limit this group's visual representation and clothing choices. Finally, in keeping with self-reflexivity, Nash's (2014) research explored women's body changes and self-image during pregnancy and postpartum using Photovoice methodology. A review of this study is included in the Photovoice section in Chapter 3.

Literature Review Summary

This literature review has outlined major themes that link older women, to self-identity and fashion. Using the three key theories that underpin this research, this chapter presented five themes within the contexts of everyday life and middle age: embodied dress in everyday life; aging through midlife; beauty ideal; fashioning midlife; and self-reflection, all of which have been analyzed and synthesized.

Theories of everyday life and embodied dress practices are introduced in the first segment entitled "Embodied Dress in Everyday Life." From the perspective of women's midlife transitions within the context of Western society, this literature review analyzed women's everyday wardrobe as a fundamental and viable tool to promote the social visibility of the

middle-aged female demographic. In the segment, “Aging through Midlife,” women’s potential use of wardrobe is argued to be an effective instrument of embodied self-confidence and authenticity, which has the potential not only to elevate mature women’s conspicuous visual existence but also to challenge their devaluation in Western society. “The Beauty Ideal” highlighted the fashion system’s omission of adult women. Fashion currency is directed to and representative of trends that cater to the more youthful age groups, and is further explored in the segment “Fashioning Midlife,” which considers women’s midlife transitions amid today’s blended fashion system. Finally, the segment “Self-Reflection,” embraced the concept that women’s midlife’s transformations and self-evaluations through the lens of the wardrobe and Photovoice process could be instrumental in reversing the flow of the visibility and social value that currently exists within the Western social and fashion systems. By embracing the personal confidence and authenticity encouraged by midlife, the wardrobe can become the ultimate vehicle that promotes mature women’s disregarded value. The following chapter outlines the methodology and research design, and includes a short literature review of Photovoice based research.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design

Crafting a research design that would delve into the wardrobes of women transitioning through midlife requires an empathetic approach. I considered the participants' life experiences in depth and then selected a reflective mode of inquiry within a qualitative framework.

Qualitative research approaches provide an ample selection of methodologies that may be used to expand on existing theories and patterns and examine world views. The researcher carries out situated observations; that is, she sees the person in their setting, and the observer herself is located in the world (Creswell, 2007). Since the purpose of this study was to understand how mature women successfully navigate the fashion system and develop a wardrobe that properly reflects their personal identity, I have utilized a methodology that is qualitative and exploratory in nature, with no predetermined outcomes.

The intention is to understand adult women's efforts to self-identify and to remain contextually significant within their society. The three theories discussed in the literature review ground this study. The first theory posits that dress is an embodied practice and social in nature (Entwistle, 2000). Therefore, my study acknowledges "situated body practice ... as a framework for understanding the complex relationship between the body, dress, and culture" (Entwistle, 2000, p. 11), and I review these perspectives within the context of women in midlife. The second theory posits that fashion, within a modern social context, provides physical evidence of the self's existence (Wilson, 2003). Thus, some interview questions probed the participants' self-reflections on the fashion system and personal aesthetics. The third theory suggests that photography provides an important means for personal reflection of one's self-image (Nash, 2014). The use of self-photography to collect reflective data for this study has revealed aspects of the participants' self-image that otherwise would not have been uncovered.

This chapter is organized in four segments that describe the methods and the processes used: (a) the research design, including Photovoice methodology; (b) participant recruitment; (c) data collection, including tools, processes, and the construction of the interview schedule; and (d) data-management and diagnostic formats.

Research Design

Introduction. How women self-identify cannot be unveiled without investigating what influences their clothing and dress choices during midlife. I wanted to understand how women in midlife successfully navigate the fashion system, make wardrobe choices for everyday dressing, and thereby construct their self-image. Similar research by Guy and Banim (2000) and Woodward (2007) has examined women's relationships with their clothing and identity using a qualitative approach. The qualitative methodology used in this study, Photovoice, is a unique procedure for data collection and analysis, and I used it to obtain a rich understanding of adult women's perceptions of their clothing, dress, and fashion within the context of their own self-presentation. The design of the research framework exhibits five key characteristics of qualitative research: (a) interpretation of participant comments; (b) evolving design frames and processes; (c) the use of a theoretical lens; (d) the application of interpretive inquiry by the researcher, who is close to the research topic or subject; (e) and a holistic perspective that reports on multiple perspectives within the big picture (Creswell, 2007). Photovoice is described in detail in the "Methodology" segment.

The Photovoice methodology was modified to consist of three different data-collection techniques. The first source of primary data was the Participant Demographic Survey (see Appendix A). Questions requested details regarding participant age, profession, background, income bracket, and marital status. The second source of data was photographs. The participants,

while wearing their favourite daywear outfits, took full-body *selfies*. A selfie is “a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically using a smartphone or webcam, and is shared via social media” (“Selfie,” n.d., para. 1). The third source of primary data was audio-recorded, one-on-one interviews with the participants to discuss their opinions about fashion, clothing choices, and their photographs. Participants’ full-body selfies became an integral part of the interview process: they were used to encourage dialogue and self-reflection. The next paragraph outlines the interview structure.

I scheduled semi-structured interviews with participants. The interview consisted of 33 open-ended questions, and questions were based on the research question. To answer the first part of the research question, “How do mature women successfully navigate the fashion system?” I queried participants’ fashion knowledge, influences, and shopping behaviours. The second part of the research question, “How do mature women develop a wardrobe that properly reflects their personal identity?” was the basis for two additional areas of inquiry. I asked participants to reflect on their self-image and their preferred aesthetics. As well, I probed them about clothing choices available within the fashion system, particularly their opinions about fast and slow fashion. The three guiding questions listed below were created prior to preparing the semi-structured interviews:

- How do women in midlife navigate the plethora of fashion goods available?
- How do women in midlife maintain, create, modify, and communicate their self-image?
- What are women in midlife’s perceptions of fast and slow fashion, and how is this manifested within their wardrobes?

I managed and analyzed the data using common spreadsheet software and charts. I populated a foundational master data sheet with excerpts of original and synthesized interview data, thematic coding, and my annotations. In addition, I implemented word-analysis techniques to expose interpretations and “linguistic fingerprints” (Pennebaker, Mehl, & Niederhoffer, 2003, p. 568) that participants articulated during the interviews. These word-analysis methods are qualitative, but they provided empirical findings that strengthen the results of this study. The following section outlines Photovoice’s theoretical and practical makeup.

Photovoice. Photovoice is a methodology that combines participant-based photography and semi-structured interviews to elicit values and beliefs. This method has been used in community-based research as an instrument to advocate for positive change (Baker & Wang, 2006; Wang & Burris, 1994; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001) and in health research to capture the everyday experiences of mothers with disabilities (Booth & Booth, 2003). More aligned to this study, Nash (2014, 2015) used Photovoice to explore the relationship that women have with their clothing during pregnancy and postpartum. Figure 1 provides examples of photos taken by participants.



Figure 1. Photovoice. Photos taken by participants in the study. Photo numbers correspond to participant numbers; that is, Photo 1 is of Participant 1, and so on.

Photovoice uses self-photography to gather rich data from the participants' conscious contemplation and reflective thoughts. Their photographs provided the visual tools for critical reflection, which came to the surface during the one-on-one in-depth interviews and through the analysis process, subsequently grounding the results of this study. In this specific case, the concerns and challenges are those of women who are transitioning through menopause as seen through the lens of their wardrobe.

The following section discusses and explains Photovoice. First, I outline its origins, framework, and the modifications made for this study. Second, a literature review provides the rationale for its use. Third, I compare the value of photographs with that of mirror images. Fourth, I analyze reference notes on the Photovoice's limitations and protocol.

Origins and framework. The methodology, established in 1992 by Wang and Burris, consists of participant-taken photographs followed by open-ended interviews with focus groups. To date, this methodology has served as a needs assessment tool in social and health sciences research as well as a form of communication and advocacy research. Traditionally, Photovoice has been used to advocate and instill positive change for marginalized populations. Its uniqueness lies in its grassroots approach, which places primary value on the participant's (photographic) data collection and uses their insight as expertise (Wang & Burris, 1997). Its theoretical underpinnings are empowerment education, feminist theory, and documentary photography (Wang & Burris, 1997). However, it is unlike documentary photography, where researchers and journalists have agency through taking and owning the photographs. Rather, Photovoice puts cameras in the hands of marginalized community members to document everyday life in their world, thereby providing them a voice for advocacy (Wang & Burris, 1994). Third-party facilitators often support this form of community-based research, engaging all stakeholders in sharing their experiences for the purposes of advocacy and change (Photovoice Worldwide). Photovoice is also noted for supplying in-depth, rich data as it recognizes self-photography and lived experiences as contextual expert knowledge. As Wang and Burris (1997) explained, the photographs become the tools to discuss and plan the next steps for advocacy for positive change.

I chose Photovoice for this study because of its innovative and self-reporting aspects and because it keeps analytical perspectives genuine by providing visual references. The photographic data collection framed each participant as her own curator, affording exclusivity within the interview process. In addition to the personal information provided within the

photographs, the interview process drew on the participants' reflexivity, revealing hidden nuances that could not be discovered through Likert-scale-type research.

To achieve this study's goals, I modified Photovoice's framework in three ways. First, since I coordinated the project, a third-party facilitator was not required. Secondly, focus groups were replaced by one-on-one interviews. Thirdly, the participants in this study were not a marginalized group. While much research points to the marginalization of women in Western culture, the all-female participants in this study had various levels of education and socioeconomic status and therefore were not considered a marginalized group. With these modifications, the underpinnings of Photovoice—to educate, empower, and instill positive change—remained the same.

Value of photographs in research. The purpose for using photographs in this study was to highlight the participants' personal perspectives, which are derived from their real-life experiences through the lens of fashion. Lister and Wells (2013) argued that photographs depict a reflection of the reality in an automatic and immediate environment. Thus, the photographs in this study can be seen as an instantaneous depiction of trueness of the self, which may or may not be altered for any given period after the photograph is taken.

I argue that the value of a photograph is unique. The assessments and explanations derived from one's self-taken photographs provide a clearer understanding of the personal impact of one's self-image. In the context of visual and exploratory research, photographs are not only a precursor used to stimulate rich data during interviews, but they can also provide the design researcher with visual insights (Martin & Hanington, 2012). Thus, the photographic process and its reflective nature can also stimulate participants' internal scrutiny and the desire to maintain or improve their self-image.

Other visual research studies using self-photography have tested Photovoice's effectiveness in extracting women's concepts of self-image during times of body change and life transition. Nash's research (2014, 2015) examined women's perspectives of their pregnancy and postnatal body image by using the feminist and social science theories that underpin Photovoice's framework. Nash (2014) argued that photography is a powerful form of articulation, and photographs are a "core way of conceptualizing the self" (p. 242). Although Nash's analyses do not emphasize fashion, her study does reveal women's feelings of loss of their pre-pregnancy identities, particularly when they can no longer fit into their previous clothing. Nash's use of photographs and in-depth interviews analyzed "subjectivities and bodily boundaries [that] are reframed in the postpartum period" (p. 116), and to what extent the images were a reflection of their current cultural expectations. Nash (2013) argued that using digital cameras for self-portrayal allowed women in her research study to express their experiences in ways that would otherwise be impossible, keeping in mind that the photographs would be meaningless without their attached narratives. This aligns with Kuhn (1985), Stanczak (2007), Sontag (1978), and Barthes's (1977) contention that a photograph without a narrative, inference, or a coded intervention represents only the immediate empirical data at a precise moment. Thus, the portrayal of truth and authenticity (Kuhn, 1985) provided by a photograph allows the viewer only a limited understanding of its meaning. The integral use of the interview in Photovoice eliminates this weakness.

The one-on-one interview is the fundamental source of primary data in this study. Yet alone, just like the photograph, its effectiveness is incomplete. Anthropologist John Collier (1986) argued that images combined with personal interviews offer a "gratifying sense of self-expression" (p. 106). In the context of this fashion study, I viewed the Photovoice process as

having the potential to be highly effective in obtaining rich data. Furthermore, the participants could take part in a novel and exciting research experience.

I invited participants to self-report by documenting their wardrobe in the form of photos. Hopefully, through the lens of their everyday wardrobe, the visual messages and codes would convey aspects of their everyday lived experiences not provided by textual or verbal communication (Lister & Wells, 2001). Weber & Mitchell (2004a, 2004b) developed the notion of *dress stories* as autobiographical narratives using a garment or item to prompt critical reflective detail or memoir of life events, thereby making the past usable and of service for future action. In this study, recounting dress stories through visual prompts using Photovoice methodology encouraged detail retrieval that would otherwise have been unlikely.

Participatory photographic conventions allow the participants to frame themselves within the photographs as well as to communicate visually framed messages through their clothing, thereby creating a reflective self-gaze as both viewer and wearer (Lister & Wells, 2001). This, however, can also challenge the participants' perspectives as they compare their mirror images and the ensuing empirical photographs.

Viewing one's mirror image is not the same as viewing one's photograph. In this context, we consider two viewpoints. First, the mirror provides a true reflection; however, it also permits one to have biased perceptions of self-actualization. Second, a person's self-image is based on their understanding of how others perceive him or her. Thus, the identity, or self, is the result learning to see ourselves as others do (Yeung & Martin, 2003). According to the concept of the *looking-glass self*, coined by Charles Horton Cooley in 1902, a person's self grows out of society's interpersonal interactions and the perceptions of others. Therefore, the looking-glass self is the self-image an individual forms by imagining what others think of his or her behaviour

and appearance. This study considered the complexity of the looking-glass self, the mirror's reflection, and the photograph as they relate to women's self-actualization and self-image during midlife.

In everyday life women use the mirror to facilitate the negotiations required to construct the day's wardrobe. Woodward (2007) defined the *wardrobe moment* as the process that a woman undergoes when choosing her day's attire. The process considers not only the visual aspects of her choices, but also how the clothing will be embodied to create a sense of self (Twigg, 2013; Woodward, 2007). This study considers what happens when, or if, the wardrobe moment becomes an obstacle. What if the wardrobe moment becomes a wardrobe hour or perhaps a wardrobe day, thereby leading to greater wardrobe challenges? Ultimately, a woman might reach a wardrobe impasse. This visual and symbolic clothing side effect, synonymous with midlife challenges such as menopause, family breakups, or a loved one's death, may only reveal itself during a comparative self-reflective assessment and a comparison of mirror and photographic images.

Limitations and ethical considerations. Confidentiality is a concern within photographic research. The Photovoice framework includes a formal protocol that provides confidentiality and gives agency to participants (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). To encourage sharing of full photograph data sets by participants, I provided options that increased confidentiality, such as the use of blurring techniques or of omissions. (See the Participant Information Letter in Appendix B). I also confirmed that the photographs provided would not be shared on the Internet.

A limitation of self-photography within the scope of this study is the temptation of participants to self-curate and so share an enhanced representation of their wardrobe. I address this factor in the "Data Collection" segment of this chapter.

For a detailed explanation of risks to participants, see the Participant Information Letter (Appendix B). For best practices and ethical concerns with regard to Photovoice, see Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001). The following segment of this chapter discusses participant recruitment.

Participants

Recruitment. I recruited participants by using a non-random, purposive, snowball strategy. As a starting point, I targeted women who worked in different professions or settings and displayed habits of dress that varied from one to another (Spencer, Ritchie & O'Connor, 2003). The goal was to build a heterogeneous group that could potentially represent an assortment of daywear clothing sources and a mixture of body shapes. I introduced this study to friends, acquaintances, and business contacts during one-on-one casual conversations and telephone calls using the Telephone Recruitment Script (see Appendix C). I sent email invitations to those who expressed interest. The emails contained the Recruitment Poster (see Appendix D) and the Participant Information Letter, which explained the study in detail, including the possible risks. Further communication through telephone calls and emails informed each participant about the study's objective and details and clarified any ambiguities.

Women who agreed to participate received an email that included the consent form (see Appendix E) and the Participant Demographic Survey, as well as detailed instructions about the photography process. A follow-up phone call clarified the photography process and criteria for taking seven full-body selfies. At the end of the discussion, I advised participants that I would contact them in two weeks in order to arrange an interview. Those who declined the invitation to participate were thanked by email or a telephone call. I used the snowball technique after I had exhausted all other candidate recruitment options. Participants were asked to approach other

women who might be interested in participating. This snowball process secured two of the 11 participants.

Characteristics. The non-random process recruited a small group of women with diverse style aesthetics. The snowball process recruited participants whose style aesthetic was unknown. The intention of this recruitment method was to create a group of participants that shopped at apparel retailers of different types. In keeping with the purposive snowball sampling used in Guy and Banim's (2000) research, I wanted to recruit participants who considered themselves "interested in clothes," thus providing "a shared characteristic to help focus the sample while being sufficiently broad to include those women who may not define themselves as fashion conscious or having good fashion sense" (p. 315). The midlife age range of 45 to 59 was chosen in order to place focus on women who are usually (but not always) experiencing menopausal transitions. However, being in any stage of the menopausal process did not affect participant selection nor was it an interview question. References to menopause within this paper stem from the literature reviewed and participants' voluntary contributions during the interviews.

This cohort is a large and diverse group, and narrow parameters were required to limit the study's focus. Participation was restricted to women working or living within the Greater Toronto Area. The size range was limited to participants who did not require apparel sized as petite, plus, and/or tall. Women employed in the fashion and beauty industries were ineligible because continuous visual and physical accessibility to new trends, employee discounts, and company shopping dollar allowances would impact the heterogeneity of the group. Those who study and teach in these areas were also ineligible since their advanced theoretical and practical fashion knowledge would potentially skew results. Individuals that wore uniforms and adhered to stringent workplace or personal dress codes were not recruited.

A group of women (n=11) women between the ages of 45 and 55 of varying occupations, lifestyles, and education levels were recruited. My relationship with them varied. Two were very close friends, one was a business contact, four were casual friends or business contacts, and four were previously unknown to me. The group consisted of a pharmacist, a telecommunications business owner, three executive assistants in different fields, a restaurant server, a bank mortgage representative, a part-time travel sales representative, a computer-programming sales representative, a chain supply analyst, and a homebuilder customer-service liaison.² The following segment outlines the data-collection process.

Data Collection

As I explained above, a modified Photovoice protocol governed the majority of the data collection. The full data set was comprised of three primary-data types and one administrative requirement. This segment reviews the instructions to the participants and outlines the complete data-collection process, supported by charts for visual reference.

I describe the primary data sets in the order that they were introduced to the participant (see Table 1). The first data set was minimal statistical data supplied by the participants in the Participant Demographic Survey. The second data set comprised full-body selfies of participants' daywear. The third data set consisted of audio-recorded interviews. The complete data-collection process is outlined below.

² When I recruited one of the oldest participants, I knew that she has a post-secondary fashion diploma and related work experience. However, she had not worked in the industry for approximately 20 years. It was only during the interview process that some others disclosed a previous fashion background.

Table 1

Data collection

Data set stage	Data collection (in the order presented to each participant)	How data was collected
Admin	Participant consent form completed and signed (see Appendix E)	Signed hard copy given to the researcher before the exchange of any data at the interview
1	Statistical data in Participant Demographic Survey	Completed hard copy given to the researcher before the interview began
2	Complete set of full-body selfies as per Photovoice methodology	Emailed to researcher as the interview began
3	Audio-recorded interviews as per Photovoice methodology	Throughout the entire interview including pre- and post-run off conversations

Participant Demographic Survey. The first stage of data collection consisted of the Participant Demographic Survey that participants received by email during the recruitment stage. The survey was designed to establish possible associations between ensuing themes and the group demographics. Participants answered questions about age, cultural background, profession, marital status, and household income. The surveys were collected at the beginning of the one-on-one interview. The survey data are presented and analyzed in Chapter 4.

Photographs. The second stage of data collection was based on Photovoice's framework. In the Participant Information Letter, participants received instructions on how to take seven full-body selfies. I clarified these in a conversation before each participant started the photography process. Given that full-body selfies may be difficult to execute, I suggested how to facilitate the process, either by taking photographs using a mirror or asking someone else to take the

photograph. Participants had two weeks to complete the process before I contacted them to arrange an interview.

As outlined in the Participant Information Letter, photographs had to be of the participant's full body, preferably including footwear. Participants were to take photographs every day over the course of seven days, thereby creating a short personal fashion diary or wardrobe story. Participants were to photograph favourite daywear that they wore in their everyday environment.

Some stated that they did not have seven favourite outfits. I reassured these participants, saying that my study was not designed to judge their clothing or personal style, asking them to photograph their everyday attire. Some participants also implied that this process would require some thought. I stressed the everyday context with each participant, both verbally and in writing in the Participant Information Letter. Thus, I hoped that the temptation for participants to over-curate would be minimized; however, this possibility is noted in the "Limitations" section of this paper.

The participants kept all the photographs until the interview took place. At the end of the two-week period, I contacted each participant to schedule an interview at a mutually agreeable time and location. This decision was left to the discretion of each participant. The locations selected by the participants consisted of coffee shops, participants' homes, boardrooms, and restaurants. The last section of the "Data Collection" segment outlines the interview structure, the interview pilot, and the interview process. Charts provide visual references to support the narrative.

Interviews. The principles underlying the interview schedule (see Appendix F) were introduced in the "Research Design" segment of this chapter. The semi-structured open-ended

format consisted of 33 questions and 23 follow-up questions. The interview schedule systematically divides overarching areas of inquiry into concise and focused topics. Table 2 illustrates the division of the areas of inquiry.

Table 2

Areas of inquiry

	RQ part 1 & Gq 1	RQ part 2 & Gq 2	RQ part 2 & Gq 3
Research question (divided into two parts)	How do mature women successfully navigate the fashion system?	And develop a wardrobe that properly reflections their personal identity?	And develop a wardrobe that properly reflections their personal identity?
Guiding questions	How do women in midlife navigate the plethora of fashion goods available?	How do women in midlife maintain, create, modify, and communicate their self-image?	How do women in midlife perceive fast and slow fashion, and how is this manifested within their wardrobes?

Note. RQ = research question; Gq = guiding question.

Interview design. I began by dividing the research question, “How do women navigate the fashion system and develop a wardrobe that reflects their personal identity?” into two overarching areas of investigation. Next, I created three guiding questions that encompassed a variety of topics within three areas of inquiry. I used the guiding questions to prepare the interview questions for each overarching theme. Ultimately, the interview questions became a schedule that consisted of 33 questions and 23 follow-up questions. Thus, each interview conversation contributed a minimum of 56 points to the data set.

The interview questions were structured to provide rich data about participants’ personal viewpoints and their wardrobes. Questions probed participants about their fashion sources, who or what influenced these, how they chose their wardrobe items, and how they viewed their

photographs. Decades of practice had made this cohort an experienced group of shoppers. Therefore, I asked questions about the new concepts of fast and slow fashion in the hopes that the answers would yield unique and rich data about participants' fashion beliefs and values.

Piloting the interview schedule. The interview schedule was structured not only to answer the research question but also to allow flexibility for discussions to deviate, for new paradigmatic or theoretical lenses to surface (Creswell, 2007). I piloted and revised the interview schedule three times prior to implementation. The first field test was completed with a Master of Arts in Fashion graduate with a fine arts background. This showed that some questions did not yield rich data. I revised the interview schedule, and the same volunteer participated in a second field test. This proved to be a key component of the interview's development. Important fashion discourse elevated the validity of the questions and the interview's fluidity. However, it also proved that the interview could be too long and possibly covered too many topics. These issues had the potential to create unintended ambiguity; therefore, I piloted the interview schedule for the third and final time with a volunteer MBA student from a social science background. Minor adjustments were required; however, the interview fell within an acceptable timeframe of one hour. The following section details the interview process.

Carrying out the interviews. All the interviews followed the same protocol and were audio-recorded using an iPhone. After I collected the required documents, I asked the participant to email me the complete set of full-body selfies for the first viewing. I accessed the email and the attached photographs and displayed them on my laptop computer for the duration of the interview.

During the interview, the photographs provided visual references that generated in-depth reflections, memories, and dialogue between the participant and me. The first half of the

interview inquired about participants' fashion knowledge, fashion influences, shopping behaviours, and opinions of available clothing choices. During the second half of the interview, we discussed the participant's photographs using the following questions: Which three photos of yourself do you like most? Which three outfits do you like most? Which three photographs do you feel best represent you? If you could, what would you change? I often followed up answers with the question "Why?" in order to encourage reflective and in-depth replies, and this technique often revealed new themes. In this way, I attempted to flesh out contextual dialogue about the experiences and feelings that might have been underlying influences or inhibitors when choosing how to dress and portray their self-image. Possibly, this approach would expose their conscious thoughts while purchasing clothing. I also asked participants to consider what stimulated their creativity and to describe the sensations they felt while wearing their clothing. I probed for insightful responses to questions such as what comfort meant to them. Some questions were forthright and delved into participants' reflective opinions about their self-image from the perspectives of both the self-gaze and observers' gazes.

Since most of the questions were open-ended, participants had the freedom to express their thoughts. At times, their answers were interesting departures from the question asked. This permitted fresh theoretical lenses and new paradigms to appear (Creswell, 2007). Nonetheless, I curtailed dialogue that strayed too far off topic, returning consciously to the interview schedule by always posing the questions in the same order. Most importantly, I maintained Guy and Banim's (2000) approach, which highlights "careful listening to and learning from what women have to say" (p. 40). Interviews ran between 47 minutes and 135 minutes, averaging at approximately 110 minutes. At the end of each interview, I thanked the participant and told her that she would receive follow-up information and access to the completed research paper.

The audio recordings of the completed interviews were copied and archived in their original format before being sent to a professional transcribing service. The following segment explains the data management strategies and analysis process.

Data Management

To manage the data collected, I used conventional multi-page spreadsheet and word-processing documents in both electronic and hard-copy formats. I created master data sheets containing participant demographic data and interview dialogue. For spreadsheet documents, I used linked worksheets to organize data categories, reduce the volume of data, apply themes, and establish relationships between information. (The data entered in the master documents automatically populated the linked worksheets.)

All the data collected was stored in locked or password-protected systems. Photographs, audio recordings, interview transcripts, and the data files were stored electronically on a computer laptop. Hard copies of the Participant Demographic Survey, Participant Consent Form, and any printed materials used for data analysis were stored in a locked filing cabinet. A copy of the complete research data set was stored on an external backup drive. The remainder of this segment outlines and explains the organization of the data in a database system as well as data-analysis procedures.

Database design. I began by transforming the original interview schedule into spreadsheet format. I numbered the interview questions using an outlined list style and transposed them onto the master data sheet in column format: each of the 56 questions had its own column. I added the research question and three guiding questions at the top of the master data sheet for easy reference. In the cell above each question, I inserted the appropriate guiding question(s) number(s). Data entry on the master data sheet began after I had completely analyzed

the first interview using the six-step Read, Edit, Analyze, and Describe (READ) process that I had developed. (This process is outlined in the “Interview Analysis” section below.) Figure 1 illustrates the format of the master data sheet.

	gq2	gq2	gq2	gq2
	12.1. How would you define fast fashion?	12.2. What are your experiences when shopping for fast fashion?(Do you intentionally shop for fast fashion, and why?)	12.3. Describe for me your satisfaction of fast fashion items?	13. What does the term slow fashion mean to you?
main theme 1	Fast Fashion	Fast Fashion	Fast Fashion	Slow Fashion
Participant 1	Disposable.	It's junk. I think it's for young people. I don't think it's for people of my age group b/c honestly by the time I watch it come, it's already gone. If it's the big build mass fahion that everyone is really trending into, I don't want to wear it. Too mainstream.	I wouldn't intentionally shop for it. If I came across it and it was cheap and I bought it for myself, sure why not but I don't do it very often.	I've never heard of it.
Participant 01	disposable, fleeting so not worth it, doesnt last long enough to enjoy	junk; good for young gen; doesnt last long enough to enjoy; too common	incidental minimal purchases	unaware
Participant 2	After interviewer explained. My daughter to those, like H&M. It's so cheap... she wants them. You wouldn't catch me in there... I don't buy skirts without a lining and I find a lot of those stores do not have lining in their dresses, skirts and to me, things fall nicely when there's lining.	Referring to her daughter going in, not her. Somebody's got to pay for it... it's the truth. She wanted a certain type of hell. I didn't think it was appropriate... by the end of the night, she was like oh mom, my feet are killing me, she goes did you bring me flats, no sorry. Interviewer: like, you don't go for yourself but you go for your daughter because you have to. She dragged you in, right? Respondent: Well, somebody's got to pay for it... It's the truth. But I leaving wanting a drink and she's happy.	For me, there is not satifaction. I don't go to the Zara's or the H&M's, my daughter does... She's ahhpy because she's not going ot wear it for long. I keep my things for a long time.	Timeless stuff.
Participant 041	cheap - unlined - "You wouldn't catch me in there... I don't buy skirts without a lining..."	dissatisfied	no satisfaction - daughter enjoys	somewhat aware - timeless
Participant 3	Fast fashion is Zaras and the H&Ms. Cheap... You want to sure have fun but you don't wanted to look tacky either. Additional comment, see partnt07, 03.	I don't intentionally shop for it. For example, Zara is an interesting place to go to see what's updated... I'm going to buy only a couple of pieces.	I like the trend but at the same time I guess I like a classic that maybe what I do it my colours were depending like a cobalt blue is the biggest thing I may have one piece, I don't go crazy when I'm doing like four pieces of it or — YOU MIGHT NEED TO GO OVER THE RECORDINGS AGAIN, THIS DOESN'T MAKE sense...	More classic.
Participant 071	fun - but careful can be tacky	some purchases - interesting	splashes of trend	somewhat aware - classic

Figure 2. Interview database: master data sheet.

The master data sheet was colour-coded, and I expanded and revised it on numerous occasions during the data entry and analysis stages. Ultimately, it contained all the synthesis data, thematic coding, participants’ insightful quotes, keywords and comments, and my observations and annotations.

I created linked worksheets to contain summarized groups of data from the master data sheet: six topic worksheets and 11 individual interview worksheets. Figure 2 illustrates a worksheet for the topic “Fashion Information.” This worksheet includes the data about where and how participants acquire their fashion information. The worksheet was automatically populated with data from the master data sheet.

	0 Her wardrobe - & personality	1. Please explain how and where you find fashion information, and how	1.1 When you really need to purchase a specific piece? (searches - approaches and boundaries) either a purposeful	1.2 Do you read the fashion section of newspapers?	1.3 Do you buy and/or read fashion magazines?	1.4 Do you use the Internet to search out brands' or clothing stores' selections?	1.5 Do you follow any blogs? If yes, which ones.
main theme		0 current fashion info	purposeful shopping	current fashion info - print news	current fashion info - print mags	current fashion info - brands/retailers	current fashion info
Participant	TRAVEL influences WHAT I LIKE	media tv; TRAVEL	purposeful - based on TRAVEL; purposeful - notes void of staple items of quality (ei: fitted turtle necks)	no newspaper	mags occasionally	no internet	no blogs
Participant	I KNOW WHAT I LIKE	online; window shp; brand fit/style loyalty;	purposeful - searches stay in price range	no newspaper	no mags	yes - internet purchasing-fit/brand loyalty	none
Participant	I CHOOSE WHAT I LIKE	print mags; media tv; put pieces together	convenience shopper - scouts during errands	N/A	mags yes	yes - internet research	only this participant - consider answer as no
Participant	STRONG ENOUGH TO KNOW WHAT I LIKE	print mags; media tv; stores	purposeful shopping - based on TRAVEL	confirmed N/A	confirmed N/A	no internet	No.
Participant	I CAN WEAR WHAT I LIKE	print mags; online alerts; emails fav stores	shops by season - mother influence - wholesaler collection - one big buy	N/A	N/A	yes internet -Email alerts	N/A
Participant	I KNOW WHAT I LIKE	stores; print mags; media tv	n/a	yes - print news	fashion events	no internet	No.
Participant	I KNOW WHAT I LIKE	print mags; mail coupons; daughter	n/a - travel is incidental	yes - print news (coupons/flyers)	mags occasionally	no internet	No.

Figure 3. Interview database: “Fashion information” worksheet.

Interview analysis. Data analysis began when I received the first verbatim interview transcript. I read and analyzed each transcribed interview by carrying out six to seven READ sequences, each with a distinct purpose (Spencer et al., 2003). The first interview also initiated the coding and indexing systems used to establish main themes (Spencer et al., 2003). Table 3 outlines the four phases of interview data analysis.

Table 3

Phases of interview analysis

Phase	Activity
1	Verify and code the transcribed interviews
2	Synthesize and/or transfer original text data to the master data sheet (spreadsheet)
3	Synthesize and reduce data using categorized worksheets linked to the master data sheet
4	Word analysis

I analyzed the interview data in four phases. In the first phase, I reviewed, verified, and coded the verbatim transcripts. In the second phase, I synthesized participants' answers and/or directly copied their comments into the master data sheet. In the third phase, I reviewed the original or synthesized data and further reduced them if needed. I also reviewed the linked worksheets for accuracy and completeness. During the fourth phase of analysis, I used two methods, keywords in context, and word counting (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Pennebaker et al., 2003). I created a separate worksheet with some links to the master data sheet to contain that data.

It is important to clarify at this time that each interview underwent the complete READ process before the analysis process began on the next interview. Also, within each phase, I analyzed and processed the complete interview data set before moving onto the next phase. Prior to reading the detailed description of the six-step READ process used in Phase 1 of the data analysis process, it will be beneficial to review the procedure in a simplified chart format (See Table 4).

Phase 1 – the organizing process. Prior to editing, I archived all verbatim transcripts electronically in their original format. Then, I reformatted each transcript into a legal landscape two-page view with a whitespace column for coding and annotations. Table 4 outlines Phase 1 of data analysis.

Table 4

Phase 1 of data analysis: READ

Step	Tools/ medium used	Task
1	Hard copy of interview transcripts, armchair reading	Remove repetitive dialogue, casual comments such as “yeah”, “ok”, and “oh;” highlight insightful quotes, interesting words and descriptors; note main themes; apply colour coding
2	Computer edit, detailed compare and contrast with audio recording	Confirm transcript accuracy against audio recording, highlight and annotate content as per first read and edits
3	Computer edit, with or without audio recording	Insert participants’ three favourite photographs; review and highlight participants’ good quotes, favourite descriptors, unique analogies, and interesting observations; search out missed coding
4	Hard copy of interview transcripts, combine print and computer edits	Refine Step 3; verify the main themes and coded sub-themes
5	Computer edit	If required; review for sub-themes, observations, and any notations; refine notations made throughout the entire process
6	Printed colour coded interview transcript	Overview of all sub-themes, observations, and any notations
7	Summary, handwritten by researcher and attached to printed interview	One-page memo about participant

In Step 2 (the second READ), I reviewed the edited transcript against the original audio recording to confirm its accuracy. I did this on the computer to make handling of the audio file easier. I constantly compared the audio file, the electronic transcript document, and the annotated hard copy transcript of the interview. During this stage, I pared the dialogue down further, where

required, and I reinserted previously deleted content when the audio recording supported its importance. I noted dialogue that was very off topic and then time-stamped and removed it. I entered a few random time stamps for quick future reference, and I added colour-coded highlights and annotations to the electronic version of the transcript.

Prior to beginning Step 3 (the third READ), I inserted the three favourite photographs chosen by each participants at the beginning of the electronic interview transcript. The third READ consisted of reviewing and verifying participants' insightful quotes, favourite descriptors, personal analogies, and my observations. I reviewed and noted main themes, and I searched dialogue content for any missed coding.

In Step 4 (the fourth READ), I added sub-themes, and I reviewed, verified, and refined main themes and annotations. I completed Step 5 (the fifth READ) for some interviews only when required, repeating the tasks in the third and fourth READs. In Step 6 (the sixth READ), I performed a final review of sub-themes, observations, and annotations made throughout the entire process. In Step 7 (the final READ), I wrote a one-page descriptive memo about whatever came to mind about the interview experience with the participant. The following section will outline Phase 2 of the data management process.

Phase 2 – the transfer process. The second phase of analysis consisted of synthesizing and transferring the interview data into the master data sheet. The final interview transcripts were used for this phase of analysis. The length and context of the dialogue determined whether I synthesized or copied original content. I entered synthesized data directly into the master data sheet in the appropriate location. This lengthy process required careful scrutiny and editing to maintain the contextual, factual, and thematic integrity of the data. Throughout the data entry process, I added themes to new columns under headings labelled as “Participant Comment #.” I

checked the linked worksheets on a regular basis to confirm accurate updating. Figure 3 shows a linked worksheet that summarizes one participant's interview. In this example, the data are grouped according to guiding questions.

01n	1. But you always look pulled together.	3. I noticed you wear hats.	4. Comment on conformist	5. simply additional comment	6. so you like the classics? As much as you like quirky though, you mentioned a lot
Participant 1	Participant 1				
Participant 1	It has nothing to do with. That's just my -- what I put together has nothing to do with what's available in fashion. I have no idea if it's in style. I have clothes that are so old that I pull out again. Like, I'll put them aside because they're classic and I'll goE.	None of these happened to be (with hats) because it's too warm at this time of the year. And jewelry, I love jewelry. See, this is me at my cottage. This is what I always look like, something like that at my cottageE.. that's a pretty typical look for up northEOr a	I know because we live in such a conformist society but you know, like -- and I'm wondering what -- like, it's nice when people	But a lot of clothes don't -- And if anything you were asking about changing, the only thing I ever have to do if I do anything is I have my pants taken in at the	I'll tell you why because I think if you look at all of these pieces for all they're worth. They're all classic. Classic designers really are quirky if you think about it. Pant like I love those tailor pants slits with the high waist thing and a bla...
RE: RQ1	1. Please explain how and where you find fashion information, and how frequently	1.1 When you really need to purchase a specific piece? (searches - approaches and boundaries)	1.2 Do you read the fashion section of	1.3 Do you buy and/or read fashion magazines?	1.4 Do you use the Internet to search out brands' or clothing
culturally diverse - all about TRAVEL	Television, street style... When I TRAVEL, I love to buy... I love to pick up clothes in other countries because I think they're quirky.	Sometimes the practical items that you want, don't exist at the current market, [for example] fitted turtle necks made out of a great fabric that lasts forever. Who makes those anymore? No one. Additional Comment, see partnt01 q.7 Sometimes I'll catch stuff like fashion television. I mean, not for anything.	No	I only buy fashion magazines when I have a long flight.	No.
RE: RQ3 & RQ 2/3	4. Do you follow 'rules'? when choosing what to wear?(Woodward printout notes p.??) (these answers are often perceptions/beliefs)	5. Are you worried about what is 'in' fashion?	6. Do you feel pressure to conform or to be individual?	7. What brands do you like to wear, and why?	7.1 Have you always worn this brand or is it new for you?
	Probably, well, the 'rules'? -- once you know the 'rules'? are made to be broken. Additional comment, See partnt01 q.2 (see I push the boundaries re: workplace)	No, I dress for myself... Part of it is comfort b/c you have to work in it. I like to dress up, it's fun. I actually enjoy fashion, but I have no clue what's in fashion or what's fashion. I just dress for what I	No, no. I never felt any need to conform. [Even when I was younger] I wore caftans and weird	Dahlia, Mazria, BCBG, Tahari. What I find is, certain brands, I can't wear because I have a more womanly figure, I have a	No, those are lots of brands I consistently wear. I know they all suit my figure type.
RE: RQ 2	12. Does the term fast fashion mean anything to you?	12.1. How would you define fast fashion?	12.2. What are your experiences when shopping for fast fashion? Do you	12.3. Describe for me your satisfaction of fast fashion items?	13. What does the term slow fashion mean to you?
	Disposable fashion. It's too fast for me. By the time I got to look for it, it's already past me by. It's not worth it... If I'm going to end up buying one, I'm going to buy one that that I'm going to... wear for 20 years... because it will be a classic, fleeting -	Disposable.	it's junk. I think it's for young people. I don't think it's for people of my age group b/c honestly by the time I watch it come, it's	I wouldn't intentionally shop for it. If I came across it and it was cheap and I bought it for myself, sure why not but I don't do it very often.	I've never heard of it.
RE: RQ3	9. What or whom would you say is your biggest fashion influence?	11. What would you say is your biggest fashion obstacle?...why?	16. Which three photographs do you feel best represent you?	16.1. Please explain why.	16.2. What three words best describes that represents you in these photographs)

Figure 4. Interview database: participant interview summary

The following section will describe how I organized and managed the interview in preparation for analysis. In the first half of the interview, the interview questions predetermined many of the broad themes. I labelled these themes as topic groups (see Figure 4). The following section outlines Phase 3 of the interview-analysis process.

Phase 3 – thematic coding. I coded the data on the hard copy of the interview transcript, and then synthesized comments and breakdowns in the master data sheet. I organized the first half of the interview (16 questions) using six linked worksheets, one for each overarching theme: (a) fashion knowledge; (b) rules and conformity; (c) brands and retailers; (d) fast fashion; (e) slow fashion; and (f) fashion choices and influences (see Figure 4). If a question applied to two topics, both worksheets were populated. Linked worksheets automatically update when the master data sheet is revised, thereby maintaining the integrity of the data. I expanded the master

[illegible]

The data from the second half of the interview proved to be more difficult to read and analyze from the master data sheet. The interview questions (17-33) that inquired about the participants' photographs revealed reflective and individual data. For easier analysis, I created linked worksheets that summarized each interview. The summaries included themes and sub-themes documented on the master data sheet.

58

During Phase 3, I deciphered extensive individual data, and commonalities were difficult to pinpoint. Differences in self-image came from a wide range of influences, behaviours, and everyday circumstances. Consequently, these data were diverse and complex. I gave thoughtful deliberation to conducting more interviews; however, two questions remained: would additional participants have a significant impact on the data; and was there a different way that the data set could be analyzed? I reviewed anecdotal notes derived from casual conversations with women not eligible to participate and considered potential candidates. This process resulted in further ambiguity, and therefore the remaining option was to consider other forms of analyses. The following section outlines the rationale and objective for applying word analyses in this study.

Phase 4 – word analysis. A review of the interview transcripts revealed a few common descriptors buried within the dialogue; however, establishing conclusive connections was difficult. Since descriptive words were interesting and wide-ranging elements of the data set, I decided to pilot word analyses techniques (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). I combined a few final interview transcripts into one document to start the pilot. The first word search used the three words that participants used to describe their wardrobe. The data revealed that two persons used the same three words. However, it must be emphasized that their dressing choices were derived from entirely different influences and sources and so achieved very different aesthetics. I then carried out additional searches to review participants' keywords and descriptors. These searches began to expose possible linguistic fingerprints (Pennebaker et al., 2003) for each participant. Some common themes began to emerge across all the interviews. Therefore, I implemented the in-depth word analyses process described in the next paragraph.

To prepare the data for the word analysis, I coded each interviewer and respondent comment with a participant code. I then combined the interviews into one electronic document. I

began by comparing the three words participants had chosen to describe their wardrobe. Subsequent searches targeted participants' keywords and descriptors. I reviewed each word for relevance, counted the number of occurrences, and documented these results in a spreadsheet (see Figure 5). The linguistic fingerprints that were revealed for each participant began to ground common themes such as "classic" and "comfort" (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

top words used	as they describe their wardrobe / personality /shopping habits /self perception / others perceived perception													top words used			
	Participant 01n	Participant 04l	Participant 07t	Participant 08s	Participant 10p	Participant 11l	Participant 13h	Participant 15d	Participant 17n	Participant 18a	Participant 20d	most used in conversation as subjective	most used re fashion	# of parnts	% based on highest user(s)	doing / thinking / feeling	
buzzwords																buzzwords/topics	
children	0	d	d-s-s		0	d-s	d-d	d-s	s	d-s	0		-			children	
trendy/(fast)fashionforward	0		y - ?		0	y - y	y - y	n - ?	y - ?	y	n - ?	0				trendy/(fast)fashionforward	
daughters/sons over 17yrs													-			daughters/sons over 17yrs	
trendy/fashionforward	0	y	?		0						0					trendy/fashionforward	
daughters/sons young teens													-			daughters/sons young teens	
	east eu	it	it	it	it	ieb	br	it	east eu	it	br						
measurements based in %	11	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11					
% of participant	9%	18%	27%	36%	45%	55%	64%	73%	82%	91%	100%						
very even #s						median										very even #s	
highest use used by all participant	Participant 01n	Participant 04l	Participant 07t	Participant 08s	Participant 10p	Participant 11l	Participant 13h	Participant 15d	Participant 17n	Participant 18a	Participant 20d					highest use used by all participant	
	in every single case except 1 participant - the word love was the most used word														# of parnt	%	
love	75	10	26	18	26	56	28	78	35	34	35	414	414	11	36.96	love	feeling
comfort	3	5	11	33	6	2	15	12	11	14	12	180	124	11	26.61	comfort	feeling
classic (some use this interchangeably with classy but left separate in stats/research #s)	19	4	18	8	6	2	2	8	4	5	8	106	84	11	44.05	classic (some use this interchangeably with classy but left separate in stats/research #s)	doing

Figure 6. Interview database: key words

Methodology Summary

In this chapter the study's research design was reviewed in its entirety, beginning with its purpose and the research question. The clarification and use of the guiding questions and the subsequent framework of inquiry were outlined. The participant recruitment process was described: a purposive non-random snowball method was used to find women who were moving through midlife and who represented of a variety of everyday environments. Data-collection methods, including a demographic survey, participant photographs, and semi-structured interviews, were explained. An extensive outline of the data-collection framework was presented, including modifications made to original methodologies. The research design was

validated with references to the literature and field testing. The data analysis procedures were presented, explained, and supported by visual references. All the data were filed electronically in specified folders before any printing occurred. After printing, they were filed in binders and folders ready for analysis. Upon completion of the analysis, all binders and file folders were stored in a locked filing cabinet. The following chapter presents the results of the data analysis.

Chapter 4: Analysis

This study investigated how women use clothing to construct their self-image as they experience the transitions of midlife. Collecting and examining the personal and fashion viewpoints of participants using Photovoice achieved the goals of this study. In this chapter, I present the results, supported by quotes from participants, statistical information, and visual references.

The analysis revealed extensive differences within this group of participants, and thus made commonalities difficult to uncover. However, within the numerous juxtapositions provided by participants' personal and unique anecdotes, a short list of common themes emerged from the interview data. These themes reveal women's perspectives, and a number of these ideas and beliefs unify this group. Throughout this chapter, I identify and explain these common themes, supported with factual data. I also discuss outliers and, in so doing, establish the diversity and contrasts within this group, thus strengthening the cohesion of the common themes identified.

This chapter is organized into five segments of analysis: (a) influences; (b) shopping behaviours; (c) creating self-image; (d) building the wardrobe; and (e) the woman and her wardrobe. It concludes with additional analysis and the chapter summary. The following section begins with a short introduction, followed by the past and present influences that affect the clothing and dress choices of women in midlife.

Influences

Evidence drawn from the data suggests that women in midlife have developed strong beliefs and viewpoints about clothing and fashion. However, each participant expressed a distinctive approach to dressing, thereby reinforcing the complexity of this group of women (Kilpela, et al., 2015). The common core philosophies that determined participant attitudes may

be illustrated by this phrase, “I know what I like” (Participants 2, 6, 7, and 8). The wardrobe philosophies of participants developed from a combination of past and present influences. Interview questions did not specifically inquire about past or present influences, but I intentionally repeated questions to obtain confirmation of participants’ values and beliefs. Open-ended questions allowed the women to delve into any topic they felt relevant. Here, the emerging main topics ranged from participants’ past experiences to their present-day environments. Past influences consist of fashion idols and fashion experience. Current influences include window-shopping, retailers’ collections, and people-watching. In the next section, I describe the past and present influences that affect the clothing and dress choices of women in midlife.

Past influences. The interview encouraged participants to reflect, and it provided many opportunities to discuss their fashion influences. Sub-themes within this category emerged as participants shared personal stories, sharing feelings of enjoyment, admiration, and accomplishment.

Past fashion idols. Many participants (n=7) credited the stylish role models in their lives while they were growing up. In particular, they spoke of fond fashion memories associated with their mothers and elegantly dressed movie stars. In the second part of the interview, participants (n=4) referenced their mothers as significant contributors to the fashion and clothing knowledge they have developed. These mothers often had sewing skills, and/or they had worked in Toronto’s fashion industry. Two participants stated they had not had a privileged lifestyle so their mothers would often make clothing. As one woman reminisced, “I remember just being in awe of the fact that she could take this piece of material and make me this beautiful [red] skirt” (Participant 8). Another woman remembered, “We didn’t have H&M back then, and my mom sewed a lot so we always had unique things. Then she owned a high-end boutique, and I did a lot

of buying [for the boutique] with her. She was my biggest influence” (Participant 5). However, the fashion influences of mothers were not solely limited to sewing skills.

Two of the participants marveled at their mother’s sense of style. One participant said, “When I look back at her pictures; my dad always dressed nice, but my mom, phenomenal!” (Participant 3). If mothers were not mentioned, some participants (n=4) reflected on the movie stars they admired, describing them as classic stars who were beautifully dressed. A few participants (n=3) referred to Audrey Hepburn as their style icon, noting her elegance and femininity. One woman said, “When I was growing up, Lucille Ball always looked good to me. She had the little cropped pants and tailored-type tops. I like that era a lot” (Participant 11). Finally, one participant credited her mother for her ability to maintain a wardrobe that looked new for a great length of time. She stated, “That’s what my mother did. We hand-washed everything” (Participant 2). This further establishes the significance of a childhood role model in the context of clothing and dress.

Past fashion work experience. Some participants (n=4) credited their jobs in fashion retail during their school and younger adult years as meaningful experiences that developed their fashion sense and dress choices. When I asked these participants if they considered themselves knowledgeable about fashion, they readily answered yes. They highlighted theoretical and practical skills, such as, “I know how to match, coordinate” (Participant 4), and their understanding of quality, as in “I worked at Creeds so all of the high-end designers were at my fingertips” (Participant 6).

Past shopping experience. One woman noted the valuable experience she had gained over many years of personal shopping, “Well, I know what I like because of all the years that I’ve been shopping” (Participant 8). Although only one participant verbalized this, the

knowledge and experience gained from previous shopping experience was evident during all the interviews.

Present influences. The data revealed that the many forms of visual and material culture they encountered everyday influenced and inspired participants' clothing and dress. Participants also commented on personal circumstances that influenced their purchasing and dressing decisions. I now discuss the four most relevant themes of present influences: (a) print, television and Internet media; (b) people-watching; (c) window-shopping; and (d) inspiration from children.

Print, television, and Internet media. When asked where they obtain current fashion information, many participants (n=8) mentioned traditional media sources such as magazines and television. Although these were still the most influential forms of media, their use can be classified as low to average and random in nature. Within these media formats, participants (n=3) noted that celebrities provided visual fashion cues. Only one woman subscribed to magazines, specifically noting a gossip publication. Additionally, participants used the Internet for fashion information only moderately. A few participants (n=3) stated that they sometimes used the Internet to research current trends and receive retailers' email alerts.

People-watching. Many participants (n=8) acknowledged that people-watching was a key source of fashion information. From workplaces to the street, social functions to family life, many said that they observed the dressed bodies around them. Two participants credited high-end luxury consumers at their workplaces with providing great fashion currency. Male-dominated office settings were reported as being uninteresting and conservative, even if the attire was expensive. In one workplace, a casual dress code restricted a participant's desire to dress in a business-like fashion:

I was at a breakfast [with] the CFO [chief financial officer], the president of the company, director, and general manager, and I think most of them are wearing jeans. Nobody was dressed up in suits. That's just not the way we are. If I did show up like that, everyone would assume I was going for a [job] interview. (Participant 7)

Participants (n=3) who worked in environments with limited fashion interest tended to look to friends or stores for inspiration, particularly if their children did not provide fashion cues.

Window-shopping. Window-shopping was found to be the biggest visual influence for this group. Many participants (n=9) used various amounts of window-shopping as fashion sourcing. Participants commented about using window-shopping as a source of wardrobe ideas, clarifying that they would visit the store if something “catches their eye” (Participant 8). One participant enjoyed scouting fast-fashion stores to observe trend updates, stating that “Zara is an interesting place to go to see what’s updated” (Participant 3). Another woman happily window-shopped but would not enter a store that was beyond her price range: “I just walk by and look at the mannequins and wish I could go in there, but I’ve got to walk right by” (Participant 2). Lastly, one participant stated quite joyfully, “I love window-shopping, it’s one of my favourite pastimes” (Participant 8). Only two participants fell outside the window-shopping group. One participant claimed, “I don’t window-shop. I find it a waste of time. I go there for a purpose because I need something” (Participant 4). The other participant stated, “I window-shop only in foreign countries” (Participant 1), and she explored new venues extensively. These participants spoke about window-shopping with feelings of gratification and smiles of happiness.

Wardrobe inspiration from children. The fourth theme of present fashion influence revealed by the participants was inspiration from their children’s wardrobe. A number of participants (n=6) credited their children as being significant sources of fashion influence. This

theme surfaced in two ways: participants reported shopping with their child (under 17 years old) or observing how their children (over 17) and their friends dressed. Many participants (n=8) who had children, regardless of the child's age, commented in some way on their children's sense of style and use of fashion.

The data revealed a mother-daughter correlation in reverse. Daughters in particular provided visual fashion cues for their mothers. Participants (n=3) with young adult daughters who purchased trendy clothing and/or shopped for fast fashion enjoyed the visual cues of this age group. One woman stated, "The young kids got it together. There are some young kids that really know how to put things together and look like wow" (Participant 3). Participants (n=4) whose daughters wore fast-fashion were often provided with trend updates and ideas. However, the data revealed that most of the participants (n=10) used fast fashion only sparingly, if at all. The participants (n=3) who followed trend the most had young adult daughters (17 years and over) who were fast-fashion consumers. At times fast-fashion items would make their way into the mother's wardrobe through the act of sharing. One participant said, "There is the odd [item] that my daughter and I actually end up sharing. She likes the H&Ms of the world" (Participant 5).

In contrast, participants with daughters who were not trend-conscious were even more inclined to rely on their friends and store collections for fashion currency. Participants with younger teenage daughters were little influenced, if at all. As one participant explained, "I accessorize a little bit, but my daughter is getting me into some costume jewelry, or I'll borrow hers" (Participant 2). Two participants did not think that their children influenced their dress choices, but further analysis revealed that, in many cases, the descriptions of their children's style sense directly correlated to their own wardrobe. The data also pointed to a greater gap

between the younger age group and their mothers. Although these participants (n=3) were still exposed to fast fashion, they were among those who included it least in their wardrobes.

Visual culture. Certain participants enjoyed a wide variety of visual culture. One said, "I guess I absorb it from everything. I don't specifically read or pick up anything. I know that culottes are in this year, but where did I pick that up? I have no clue" (Participant 1). Similarly, one participant reflected about how she enjoys many visual inspirations: "I look at kind of everything" (Participant 3). These two participants were among the most incidental and sporadic shoppers, used the same words to describe their wardrobes, and yet had very different personal aesthetics.

Determining ratios and statistical information about the four main influences affecting the women is not possible for two reasons. First, as I noted above, the data revealed that this group was not homogenous in the context of fashion (Christopher, 2004). Secondly, the research design was not structured to obtain extensive quantitative data. Nonetheless, Figure 6 provides a visual representation of the four key influences on the creativity and inspiration of women in midlife with regard to their clothing choices.

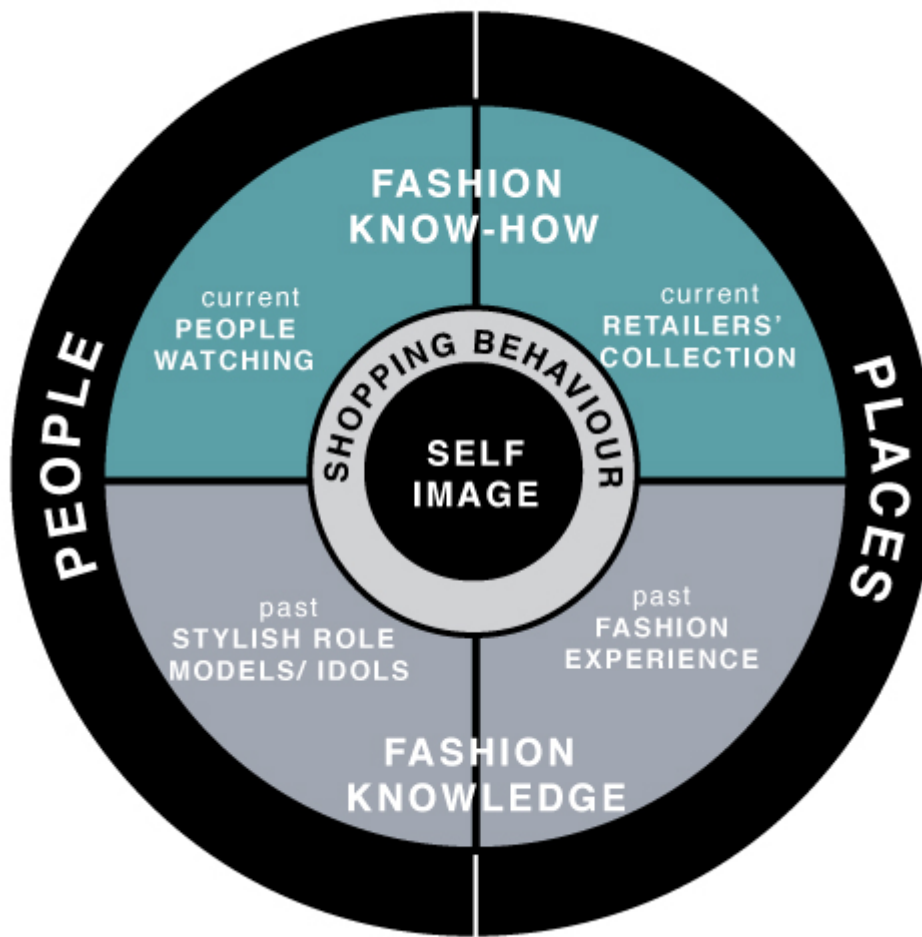


Figure 7. Circle of influences

Shopping Behaviours

In this study, I wanted to understand what drives adult women's clothing choices in the context of self-image and so I did not tease out statistics about brands and retailers. The evidence in the data suggests that shopping behaviours comprise two main components, physical shopping patterns and the individual's confidence. The data revealed that each participant had established an individual shopping pattern. All the participants (n=11) noted that time and/or money in some way influenced their shopping options and clothing. Time was discussed in detail; however,

observations about money are based only on the participants' voluntary contributions during the interviews.

Many participants (n=9) shopped only at brick-and-mortar locations. Two participants shopped online periodically. One did so because she was knowledgeable about retailers' sizing. Others enjoyed sourcing less common items made by clothing artisans and designers. The data showed that clothing styles, price points, and store types frequented by these women were wide-ranging and varied greatly. However, according to the data, two factors, convenience and confidence underpinned shopping behaviours.

The following sections discuss two broad themes. The first outlines the participants' shopping patterns, which are primarily determined by convenience. The second analyzes confidence from the perspective of participants' self-confidence and fashion confidence.

Shopping Patterns. For the participants in this study, convenience is a key factor in determining shopping patterns. The study revealed that each woman had developed her own strategy to shop effectively within her time and geographical constraints. While individual shopping time frames and settings were diverse, I identified two patterns of shopping behaviours: purposeful and incidental. *Purposeful* shopping trips are planned with a set purchase in mind. *Incidental* shopping trips involve random shopping without any set purchase or predetermined goal in mind.

Whether the participants used purposeful or incidental shopping patterns, they had developed strategies to maximize shopping productivity. They spoke of retailers that were easily accessible, either close to their homes and workplaces (n=3), grouped in one location (n=2), located at a travel destination (n=3), or in combination. These patterns often determined loyalty to the shopping venue.

Most participants (n=9) stated that shopping while travelling was a convenient way to shop successfully. Although this varied greatly based on the purpose of the trip, for a few participants (n=3) purchases while travelling were the largest contributions to their wardrobe: for example, “I’ve never been into what’s in fashion but I do like fashion. It’s a convenience factor now more than fashion factor” (Participant 9). These participants added that time, variety, and creativity were the greatest benefits of this shopping pattern.

Some participants (n=4) had predetermined wardrobe goals and shopped at regularly timed intervals. One-stop shopping and retailer loyalty often led to successful outcomes. These participants shopped at venues such as department stores and a few selected chain retailers in a mall or regularly frequented the same shops when travelling. They tended to shop at regular intervals at a specific range of shopping sources with the sole objective of establishing or updating their everyday wardrobe. For example, due to time constraints, one participant stated, “Time is my essence. I just don’t have the time. When I’m travelling is when I have time” (Participant 4). If she revisited a destination, this participant would revisit the same favourite retailers: “We’ve become like family. It’s nice to build relationships and support them” (Participant 4). She consciously had maintained retailer loyalty and formed long-term relationships, an important aspect of both her personal and business philosophies.

Conversely, some participants (n=3) had a frequent and sporadic shopping pattern that had no predetermined objectives. These participants maximized their shopping productivity by scouting retailers while in transit. They intentionally investigated store inventories often and quickly in order to stay abreast of fashion options. These participants were more inclined to include a few low-priced and/or fast-fashion pieces in their wardrobes. For example,

if I have an errand to run, I'll go whizzing through stores... [referring to her scouting purchases] I'm sure I will have something come up where I can use that [dress], and that [top] will work with something I have at home. (Participant 3)

Another participant commented, "It has to be convenient. I'm not going out of my way to find a sweater" (Participant 11). Also, the participants in this category were adept at scouting, experimenting, and seeking out new or undiscovered stores: "I usually come across my finds when I'm just running errands. I will think this store looks kind of interesting, and I'll buy something that works with everything" (Participant 3).

Finally, a few participants enjoyed both approaches, also enjoying frequent incidental shopping. This participant stated, "I love fashion. That's why I have to keep working [suggesting it is her vice]. I don't drink. For me it's shopping; it's one of those things that makes me happy" (Participant 5). Two other participants, who made special clothing purchases that satisfied their hobbies or social interests revealed the same sentiment of happiness.

Regardless of how or where these participants shopped, almost all (n=10) preferred to shop alone for various reasons. One participant explained, "I do [prefer to shop alone]. It's faster" (Participant 11). The participants explained that maximizing success was a key factor. This meant making good use of their time and making good purchases. Although some participants said they enjoyed shopping with family members and friends, there were times when they excluded themselves from the shopping process, stating, "I'll go shopping with somebody, but then I'll find that I'm shopping for them instead of doing it for myself" (Participant 3). Maximizing productivity also meant not being distracted or being influenced by others. One participant stated, "I do shop alone. I don't like people trying to convince me about my fashion choices because then it sits in my closet" (Participant 2). Another participant said, "I can think

far clearer when I'm shopping alone" (Participant 6). Some participants suggested that shopping alone was a form of retail therapy: "I feel that I'm most productive when I'm on my own. It's peaceful for me, to be quite honest, kind of like therapy" (Participant 5). Another stated, "That's my therapy, I only like to shop alone. 'I know what I like' and I don't want another person's influence" (Participant 6). One participant explained, "If we do a girls' trip, it becomes more about just having some fun versus just shopping" (Participant 8). This group comprises women who are confident in making wardrobe choices without the influence of those around them.

Confidence. Whatever the participant's individual sense of style, two distinct but related forms of confidence were prominent, self-confidence and fashion confidence. Whether casual or dressy, classic or trendy, minimalistic or elaborate, or even chameleon-like, these women in midlife not only acknowledged their personal aesthetic but also had a deep commitment to it. This section discusses self-confidence first and then fashion confidence.

Surprisingly, the *I-know-what-I-like* category also included women who revealed a lack of personal confidence or a loss of self during demanding times. Some participants pointed to specific body parts as obstacles that affected their wardrobe choices. However, they saw these obstacles as shopping challenges and not limitations to their sense of style. The participant's level of commitment to her personal sense of style was undiminished even when she acknowledged a lack of personal or fashion confidence. For example, one participant stated, "Most of the clothing I have pretty much covers me up. I have a lot of insecurities with my body" (Participant 2). Another participant acknowledged that she missed the fun way in which she had used to dress and admitted, "I find my fashion boring compared to what it used to be. I'm not totally boring compared to a lot of people, but I find myself boring" (Participant 9). While these

participants acknowledged challenges they faced, they were no less vocal about or committed to their style preferences.

When asked if they were knowledgeable about fashion, some participants (n= 6) answered with a definite “yes” or “no.” These answers correlated to perceived fashion know-how. Participants evaluated their fashion knowledge through comments such as, “I think I'm very good at putting things together, so from a success perspective, I think I'm pretty good at knowing what looks good on me and putting it together” (Participant 5), and “I think I'm strong enough to know what I like and what I dislike” (Participant 4). In contrast, some participants (n=3) relied on retailers’ collections and experienced sales staff. For example, one participant explained, “I go to the similar stores all the time, I look to see what they're bringing out, and that does influence what I might pay attention to. I do rely a little bit on my window-shopping because I go to the same stores” (Participant 10). Another participant stated confidently, “Every time I go in La Cherie, I always come out with something. The owner gives me fashion advice and an honest opinion. I really trust her” (Participant 7). These participants often felt they lacked knowledge or were not very conscious about fashion. Nevertheless, each still clearly communicated an I-know-what-I-like attitude when discussing personal style.

Creating Self-Image

The evidence from this study suggests that the self-image of women in midlife stems from a wide range of influences, including notions of conformity and their own personal everyday circumstances. These results reinforce the diversity and complexity of individualism within this participant group and also reveal some noteworthy consistencies. Although commonalities were difficult to pinpoint, the I-know-what-I-like attitude about clothing underpins an interesting oxymoron about this group, a collective individualism. The participants’

answers revealed numerous facets of aesthetic individuality. However, the analysis also revealed four fundamental features that lead to the development of individual self-images.

What essentially unifies this group of participants is a collective individualism that has four key features: comfort, classic styling, quality construction, and creativity. Certain interview questions (n=3) required that participants provide a synthesis of how they viewed themselves and their wardrobes, while other open-ended questions encouraged them to reflect, self-analyze, and share anything they felt worthy. The following sections will discuss the participants' views on age appropriateness, rules and conformity, and the ability to demonstrate authenticity of self through their wardrobes. The qualities that participants require from their clothing are presented in the context of self-realizing ideas, strategies, values, and beliefs in the "Building the Wardrobe" segment of this chapter.

Age appropriateness. Many of the participants (n=9) acknowledged their age and the aging process while discussing their clothing choices. They stated their desire to portray an appearance and attitude more youthful than those associated with their chronological age. The participants did not aspire to look young like their daughters, but they did not want to be viewed as old or be dismissed as stereotypical middle-aged women. Most participants noted that age appropriateness in regard to modesty was a continuous consideration when making clothing choices. These participants also evaluated their wardrobes and bodies in the context of their earlier years. They not only considered their everyday environment but also the physical changes that their bodies had undergone. For example, they mentioned skirt lengths, crop tops, and garments that were too risqué and no longer appropriate for their mature body and age bracket: "I do think age appropriate is always in the back of my mind now because I'm a 48-year-old woman. I buy clothes based on my body, and my body doesn't look the same" (Participant 8).

Participant 6 said, “I’m pushing 50 so I don’t wear micro-minis. There are certain things that are just not appropriate.” Some spoke about camouflaging certain areas of the body: “This top suits me, and it covers my big muffin top” (Participant 10), and “I’m covered up pretty much because I have a lot of insecurities with my body. It’s a rarity that this photograph is showing some arms there because I hate my arms” (Participant 2). In contrast, some enjoyed pushing boundaries. Participant 5 noted, “My kids will say, ‘you know, age appropriate[ness], mom.’ They feel sometimes that I’m not age appropriate.” Ultimately, the participants were aware that there exists a stereotypical dress code and corresponding visual cues of appropriateness for middle-aged women.

Rules and conformity. A few participants (n=3) habitually re-interpreted any imposed or perceived dress codes. For example, one participant spoke of her workplace and stated,

Our boss gives us a lot of flexibility... and I want to look attractive but not too sexual.

We have to wear black, or black and white, but he gives us a lot of freedom but I really push the boundaries. (Participant 1)

Another participant said,

Fashion wise, I am probably the least corporate person I know unless I have to do a presentation; then I wear a jacket. It makes me feel confident and professional, but it is conservative, and I am not conservative. That’s not me. (Participant 5)

Similarly, the data revealed that the individual attitude and desired self-image of participants dictated their clothing purchases and choices of dress, thereby trumping the expectations of the workplace environment. Also, very often, personal style choices of these women in midlife were reflections of a genuine desire to portray their authenticity.

Authenticity of self. Each participant, on some level, felt her style of dress needed to be an authentic representation of herself. Authenticity was referred to in many ways. These participants knew what they liked; but they also knew innately what “was not them.” They explicitly referenced their personality when speaking about components of their wardrobe and their individual style of dress; for example, “I can’t wear that—as much as I love it—it’s not me” (Participant 8). Another participant acknowledged, “I want to come across as being me” (Participant 4). Finally, one participant explained the theme of authenticity as follows: “I don’t want people to see me as sexy, and I want people to see me as an innately good human being. I want people to see the genuine—compassion, the empathy, the genuineness of who I am.” She continued, “My fashion choices will reflect who I am” (Participant 6). This participant built her wardrobe by not only considering her aesthetic choices and current trends but also by dressing in a way that she felt portrayed a visual and truthful articulation of self.



Figure 8. Examples of participant's self-image: (1) Age appropriateness – Participant 5 mentioned that her daughter pointed out the shortness of her skirts, especially for someone of her age. (2) Rules and conformity – Participant 1 pushed the boundaries of her workplace. (3) Authenticity of self – Participant 9 had an affinity for textures, particularly from artisan and sustainable clothing, thereby portraying her concerns for the environment as a true self.

The following section explains the two wardrobe-building themes that emerged during this data analysis, (a) key features and (b) updating strategies. Participants, although influenced by many factors, easily dismissed current trends that did not fit personal tastes and styling; for example, “I would not go and purchase something because a famous actress has it” (Participant 2). Most women agreed with a participant who stated, “If it’s not me, I won’t put it on just because it’s trendy” (Participant 5). Another commented, “I don’t bother going into Versace because I know I’m not going to buy it. It’s not my style” (Participant 10). The data

revealed ways in which participants contemplated whether clothing was an authentic representation of their persona.

Next, I detail the four key characteristics (comfort, classic styling, quality construction, and creativity), and provide examples of the updating strategies that participants used to achieve *wardrobe readiness*. Wardrobe readiness indicates the extent to which a wardrobe is able to effectively represent a person's self-image in everyday life on a regular basis. That is, the person is happy with the wardrobe, can enjoy it the majority of the time, and keeps challenging wardrobe moments to a minimum.

Building the Wardrobe

The results presented in this segment reveal how participants created a daywear wardrobe. They reflected on the ways they chose clothing to accommodate their need for both functionalism and self-expression. In the first section, "Key Features," I describe the attributes that the participants required in their clothing. The second section, "Updating Strategies," outlines the ways in which the participants built and maintained their wardrobes. The objective here is to illustrate the various approaches that participants use to achieve wardrobe readiness.

Most of the participants acknowledged that they possessed extensive wardrobes. Some infused their wardrobes with many new items each season, while others expanded their wardrobe more slowly. For example, "Every season I have bags of stuff that I give to people because I get tired of it" (Participant 5), in contrast to "I have this jacket on here. It is probably 12 years old, at least" (Participant 11). Another participant stated, "I'll purchase something of good quality because I tend to keep it—it lasts a lot longer. I have had this suit for three years now. I tend to buy things that are timeless" (Participant 2).

Key features. The evidence in the data collected suggests that participants had defined criteria for their clothing choices. This first area of contemplation consists of four key features identified by participants as they spoke about their wardrobes and their most successful or favourite outfits: (a) comfort, (b) classic style, (c) construction, and (d) creativity (see Figure 7).

Comfort. Participants identified *comfort* as the most desirable feature in daywear clothing; however, comfort meant something different to each participant. Regardless of style, aesthetics, and physique, all participants prioritized fit and ease of movement when performing everyday tasks. Comfort was described as not being tight: “I can work in it, bend up and down, and file because the job does require that” (Participant 2).

Comfort in relation to individual expressive and aesthetic desires was a side effect of feeling good. This type of comfort came in many forms. For example, when wearing a particular colour, one participant stated, “Colours and patterns, I have to always have my leopard print” (Participant 3). For others, *fabric hand* (the sensation next to the skin) was important: “I do like the way clothes feel on me. I like cotton and silks, things that that feel nice” (Participant 10). Comfort was described in many ways and was linked to the sense of feeling good, often referring to the general aesthetic of an outfit or look.

According to the participants, comfort was based on the feelings and emotions that they experienced when wearing particular pieces of clothing. One participant described this as having a sense of energy: “When I feel happy I have all this energy. It’s just the way I get up in the morning, I get myself dressed and out the door I go, and people compliment me all the time” (Participant 4). Another participant stated, “When I put it [any item in her wardrobe] on it’s the confidence [that] it gives me. It makes me feel like I’ve made the right choices because I just feel so good” (Participant 8). Still another participant said, “I have those particular suits [for those

days that I have presentations] that makes me feel like—wow. I just feel like this is my power suit” (Participant 5). Finally, Participant 8 noted, “I pick out a dress, a pair of shoes, grab the earrings, and after I put everything on it's like—wow! I feel like going dancing!” Throughout the interviews, the photograph collection elicited dialogue that revealed a broad range of sensations and emotions linked to comfort and feeling good in different outfits.

Classic. The term *classic* was consistently used to describe styles, silhouettes, and colours, but it did not refer to staples and basic items. Participant responses often included the word “classic,” which sometimes referred to quality and other times to styling. According to the participants, classic styles enhanced the longevity of clothing, enabling transitional wear through multiple seasons. Some participants defined classics as timeless and as investment pieces; for example, “I have invested in some cashmere because I like the feel of cashmere, and it doesn’t make me feel itchy... and I’ll wear them for a few seasons” (Participant a 10). Even the participants who followed trend the most, or regularly make large changes to their wardrobes, noted the classic pieces that they had enjoyed for years.

Quality – Construction. I chose *construction* as a replacement for the word “quality.” Quality was the key feature most often mentioned by participants when considering clothing purchases. Quality, however, was a highly subjective term in the context of their clothing and personal wardrobes. Participants spoke about the quality of fabric, design, and sewing construction. Synonyms or phrases, such as “well made,” “nice fabric,” and “hangs well.” were also used when referring to quality. Therefore, to minimize ambiguity, I have used the term “construction” to denote quality.

One participant explained quality construction this way: “When I put that jacket on, it just hangs beautifully and it's cut beautifully” (Participant 9). Another stated, “If you buy

something that's really well made, it just lasts longer" (Participant 8). Many participants (n=10) spoke about quality in the context of garment longevity; for example, "It's about knowing that I'm buying something that I know is good quality, something that I can keep for a longer period of time" (Participant 8). However, the level of quality purchased was highly influenced by the priority participants placed on clothing and fashion, and also on how much they were willing to spend on their apparel. Two participants who did not spend a lot of money on their everyday wardrobe noted that looking shabby was not an option; in fact, they reported no longer shopping at their preferred retailers because the quality of clothing merchandise had diminished. All the participants recognized that garment durability depends on its quality. One participant stated clearly, "You pay for what you get" (Participant 4). Moreover, all but one of the participants stated that they would purchase better quality items if their budgets permitted.

Creativity. *Creativity* was the fourth key feature most noted by the participants (n=6). Examples of creativity noted by the participants were wide-ranging and spoken about as fun. Although many participants shopped creatively, in this context "creativity" refers to the participants' splashes of individual creative expression by which participants expressed their self-image and individuality through their wardrobe. They spoke about purchasing quirky items while travelling and about being a "hat-aholic," wearing funky shoes, shopping at second-hand retailers that offered great finds, layering an assortment of items to create interesting textures, mixing and matching many different separates, and coordinating lingerie. Wardrobe updating tactics that added splashes of creativity ranged from adding just one very expensive handbag to a collection of classic suits to mixing inexpensive fast-fashion pieces with many separates. Two participants did not specifically mention creativity but referred to their purchases of high-end shoes and handbags with enjoyment and referred to their purchases as "splurging."



Figure 9. Participants' expressions of the 4 C's. (1) Comfort – Participant 4 required comfort and flexibility for her business; this outfit also allowed her to bend and move with ease. (2) Classic – Participant 2 liked classic clean lines and simple design. (3) Construction – Participant 7 had a casual work setting but wanted better-constructed clothing when 'dressing up'. (4) Creativity – Participant 3 was influenced by “everything” and liked to get creative.

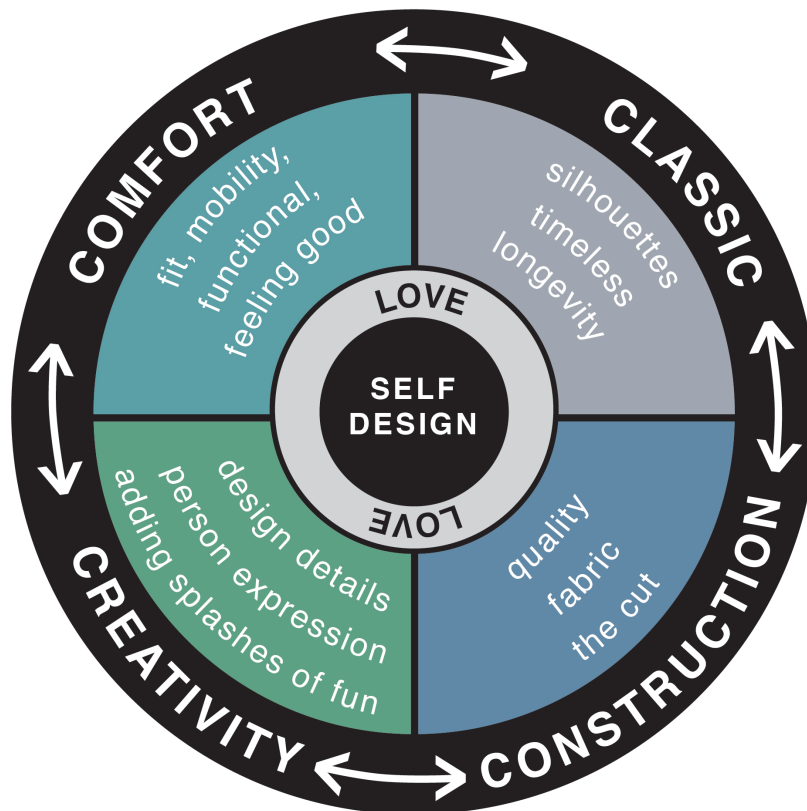


Figure 10. The 4 C's – key features of clothing items.

Updating strategies. The second area of contemplation that participants used to build their wardrobes was *updating strategies*, splashes of creativity that led to injections of long- or short-term items of clothing or accessories). However, building and updating a wardrobe is based on the cumulative fashion know-how that a woman in midlife has developed over years of shopping, wearing, and maintaining clothing. Most of the participants wanted to maintain garment longevity in tandem with an updated look. Each participant's personal philosophies underpinned her wardrobe updating strategies. Although this participant group was not overly concerned about following trends, a few participants commented that they did not want to look outdated and routinely scouted their preferred retailers for new inventory.

Updating strategies can be highly reliant on personal shopping behaviours, ranging from one big buy to extensive scouting. These behaviours permit participants to replenish items on a need or want basis. Other participants revealed less conventional updating approaches. One participant explained, “Whenever I feel like I’m overweight, I buy shoes and not clothes. I buy an unusual colour, and then forget I have them, so now I have two pairs of orange shoes” (Participant 7). Another participant stated, “Once I accessorize the outfit, it looks different. If you’re in business, and have to go out at night, I put on some jewelry and make it as if you’re going out for the evening” (Participant 4). Another participant added, “I’ll take this classic dress and I’ve worn it 16 times to different functions with different accessories. Accessories don’t make identity all the time. It usually starts with the clothing” (Participant 6). Another commented, “To me, accessories like a nice bag finishes your whole outfit” (Participant 3). A few participants purchased separates so they could mix and match their garments. One woman changed the buttons on garments to freshen up the look: “I still have some gorgeous suits from Lipton’s. They’re good quality, and I know that they will come back in again, so then I’ll put big beautiful buttons on them” (Participant 4)” The majority of these participants purchased clothing to last and transition through many seasons.



Figure 11. Fast fashion vs. slow fashion. (1) The dress Participant 8 is wearing demonstrates her personal idea of slow fashion. (2) Participant 11 purchased this dress from a fast-fashion retailer.

Participants referred to timeless good quality as *slow fashion*, which made up much of their wardrobes. In contrast, participants made minimal use of *fast fashion*. For example, one participant stated, “For me, there is no satisfaction [from fast fashion], I don't frequent [those] stores” (Participant 2). Another participant commented, “I wouldn't invest a lot of time or money in the fast-fashion pieces” (Participant 8). For the most part, women in this study did not like fast fashion. One participant explained, “I never buy into [fast fashion] because, for me, by the time I go to look for and decide what it is, it's already passed me by; it's not worth it” (Participant 1). Another participant commented, “I still want it to be of decent quality, because I want have fun,

but I don't want to look tacky either” (Participant 3). Two other participants would purchase fast fashion for their children but not for themselves: “It's great for my kids, and I appreciate that it's there. Maybe for me, I may purchase some accessories. The fast fashion is great because I can buy really amazing fashion pieces of the moment, including little clutches or bags, it's fun” (Participant 8). One participant who predominantly shopped for fast fashion stated, “I don't have an issue with [it], because clearly I will shop there” (Participant 6). However, this participant also noted that she had numerous items in her wardrobe that had never been worn.

Some participants also wore gently used clothing. One participant stated, “I love Value Village because it's all about scoring that deal, that Prada jacket that I picked up last week for \$10, brand new” (Participant 6). Another participant said, “I actually bought that vest there at a consignment store. I don't mind shopping at higher end consignment stores either. You can find good things, they're gently used and why not?” (Participant 11). Additionally, some participants keep some garments for the sole purpose of copying, altering, revamping, or fitting into them again; for example, “I've never found a women's tailor who can replicate my pant suit that doesn't fit anymore” (Participant 1).

The participants also acknowledged the huge selection available. Some claimed that having lots of selection was great: “There is everything for everybody” (Participant 6). Another participant said, “There is a lot available now. I will be much more choosy because I have the option” (Participant 3). Others felt that there was far too much choice, making shopping overwhelming: “There is a lot out there. Sometimes there is too much.” (Participant 2). Another participant admitted, “I find it overwhelming. I have my blinders on a little bit and stick to certain stores. I try to ignore the rest and don't go into H&M because I don't want to be distracted by the fast fashion” (Participant 10). These participants were the ones who often used

a uniform approach for everyday dressing. For example, Participant 10 said, “I do have some pants, Black Market and Ann Taylor. For example, in the winter I have my grey, my blue, and my black pants. I have a couple of pairs of each colour and I just rotate my bottoms with different tops” (see Figure 1-5). These participants were found to be the least experimental with fashion trend, and they maintained retailer loyalty.

Wardrobe maintenance. Although many participants spoke about garment longevity, they stressed the importance of not looking dated. Two participants discussed their procedures for garment care, particularly hand-washing as a means of keeping items looking new, “If you dry clean or hand-wash it will last you for years” (Participant 2). Participant 5 stated, “I hand-wash a lot of stuff and I don't put anything in the dryer.” Some participants described specific rotations for wearing their garments, which varied from weekly or bi-weekly uniform schedule to cycles that extended over the course of months. For example, one participant stated, “I tend to wear the same things at least once a month. I have a rotation system over every other week, and I wear more slips and things that added extra layers to protect my clothes” (Participant 11). Another participant said that she wore items for a short period, stopped, and wore them again after a few months: “I'll put them aside [in storage] because they're classic” (Participant 1). This technique was mentioned most often with regard to cherished, high quality items. Additionally, some participants favoured alterations and mending rather than making new purchases. The consensus among this group was to properly care for and preserve their much-loved items for as much future use as possible.



Figure 12. Uniform approach vs investment pieces. (1) Participant 10’s everyday wardrobe consists that she rotated over two weeks. (2) Participant 11 purchased investment pieces and rotated her garments over two months.

The Woman and the Wardrobe

These participants expressed immense emotional connections to the clothing and accessories within their wardrobes. “Love” was the word most used by participants to describe their relationships with their wardrobes, choice of dress, influences, and shopping behaviours. Women loving fashion is not a new phenomenon. However, the evidence in the data indicates that even women who do not necessarily love fashion, or place it high on the priority list, at least love certain aspects of clothing and fashion. For example, “I love Yorkdale. I love, love Yorkdale” (Participant 2). Each participant expressed love in reflection of the creativity within

her wardrobe that punctuated her personal style. Participant 9 gleefully expressed her love for sustainable and local fashion, and Participant 7 loved her funky shoes. Comments such as these reveal the love affairs that these women had with their wardrobe or at least some aspect(s) of it. They spoke about their much-loved, worn out, and non-fitting garments with joy and happiness, “I bought these [jeans] three or four years ago and I just added [the white under-patches] now because they were really majorly ripped” (Participant 3). This group all spoke about what feeling good in their clothing meant to them. The feel-good concept ranged from comfort to confidence, being energized, wanting to dance, and feeling euphoric. One participant stated, “I dress however I feel everyday” (Participant 1), describing her wardrobe as classically eclectic.

When these participants were asked how they saw themselves, many had positive responses. They spoke about being happy with their clothing choices. Most responses related very closely to the interview’s linguistic fingerprints, and to the visual content of their photographs. When asked how they thought others saw them, all (n=11) thought or hoped that they were perceived as well or better than they saw themselves. However, within these results, some participants (n=2) were self-deprecating.

The data also revealed that a few participants’ (n=3) answers pointed to a disconnect between their everyday mirror images and their photographs. For example, one stated, “I’m looking at it now, it’s boring. When I put it on in the morning, it is not so bad, but looking at them now, it’s boring; it’s safe” (Participant 2). The other two noted that they were unhappy with their images and/or their wardrobes, using words such as “boring” and “frumpy.” Towards the end of the interview, I asked each participant how she measured her dress success. Each participant’s level of dress success became a self-evaluated measure that ranged from “something has got to change” to “10 out of 10.” I derived Table 5 from this analysis, which

used the participant's answers, linguistic fingerprints, photographic content, and self-evaluations to consider whether a person had obtained dress success or was at a wardrobe impasse.

Table 5

Dress success vs. wardrobe impasse.

Dress success	Wardrobe impasse
Positive dialogue / comments	Negative dialogue / comments
Admitted happiness with garment(s), dress choices.	Admitted unhappiness with garment(s), dress choices
Person sees the photographs as similar (positive context) to the mirror images they remember.	Person sees the photographs as dissimilar (negative context) to the mirror images they remember.
There is overall unity in the dialogue when self-assessing personality, wardrobe, portrayal of self-image.	There is disconnection in the dialogue when self-assessing personality, wardrobe, portrayal of self-image.
6/11 Most dialogue matches linguistic fingerprints	4/11 Some dialogue matches linguistic fingerprints
7/11 Self-assessed: Success	2/11 Self-assessed: Needs improvement
7	4
11	11
64%	36%
<i>Note.</i> Of the participants, 64% of the participants felt they achieved dress success. The remaining 34% were disappointed with their wardrobes and/or photographs.	

Descriptions that were disconnected did not necessarily imply a wardrobe impasse because at times responses were based on participants' interpretations of the question. The participant herself discovered the wardrobe impasse, which was seen primarily as an unhappy evaluation of the self that was being projected through the lens of everyday dress.

The last question of the interview, "How did you feel about doing this [participating in this research]?" considered anthropologist John Collier's (1986) argument that images

(photographs) combined with personal interviews offer a “gratifying sense of self-expression” (p. 106). Positive responses came from participants (n=8) who stated that the process was creative, interesting, and “made [them] think” (n=3). Some participants (n=3) remained neutral but were openly disappointed about the self-image their photographs portrayed. One participant was grateful that she had become aware of the wardrobe impasse she was experiencing.

Additional Analysis

Three participants stated that there is a void of clothing for women in their age group. For example, “Fit in a box” (Participant 7), “There is a void” (Participant 8), “Quality is not there like before” (Participant 2). These participants differ significantly in clothing needs, aesthetics, and lifestyles, making it difficult to arrive at general conclusions. These voids require further investigation, as noted in the “Future Research” section of this research paper.

Summary

This chapter presented the analysis of the results of this study in four segments. I explained how the participants had established their fashion know-how by describing their past and present influences and their shopping behaviours. I also explained and contextualized the participants’ I-know-what-I-like attitude. As a main theme, it supports and illustrates how women in midlife use their acquired fashion know-how to navigate the current fashion system by maximizing productivity, with the goal of developing a wardrobe that successfully reflects their self-image. I explained the philosophies that underpin self-image development of women in midlife in three sections: (a) age appropriateness, (b) rules and conformity, and (c) the authenticity of self. The I-know-what-I-like attitude supported the fourth section of this chapter, which discussed the practical, psychological, and social processes and considerations that women in midlife use to build and maintain wardrobe readiness. The last section, “The Woman and the Wardrobe,”

presented the results of participants' self-evaluated responses to questions about (a) how they perceive themselves, (b) how they think others perceive them, (c) what they would like to portray, and (d) how they gauged their dress success. I used these responses, in conjunction with linguistic fingerprints and other in-depth answers, to establish a self-evaluating instrument (a comparison chart of dress success and the wardrobe impasse) that could be used to improve any person's wardrobe readiness. The following chapter will present the cumulative interpreted analysis derived from the results of the qualitative data gathered for this research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In Chapter 4, I explained the results of the data analysis process. In this chapter I present the findings in five segments, beginning with a summary of the study and followed by a discussion of the findings, the implications for practice, recommendations for future research, and the conclusion. In each segment, I make connections to the theories and concepts about women in midlife, their wardrobe, and their self-image that were analyzed in the literature review.

The results suggest that the participants' wardrobes are a result of fashion know-how that has developed over many years. The female participants in this study have amalgamated past influences into their current fashion choices. Such influences include fashion idols, fashion work experience, and personal shopping as well as current visual culture stimulated by the dressed bodies around them and by retailers' collections. The results further suggest that study participants are members of a special group that is not easily dictated to by the fashion system. Rather, the fashion sense of women in midlife is a result of their deep commitment to their personal aesthetic and their emotional connections to their clothing. Individuality is realized with personal confidence through various modes of shopping patterns and creativity. This chapter presents the conclusions captured from the participants' wardrobe stories, which reveal the philosophies about clothing and style of dress that underpin their self-image. The conclusion provides a concise overview of the goals and results of this research.

Summary of the Study

This study explored the possibility of the wardrobe impasse by using Photovoice methodology in combination with linguistic fingerprints to assess interview data from women (n=11) who are transitioning through midlife. The investigation of participants' perspectives on

clothing, fashion, and self-image has possibly provided a means to achieve greater clarity about the shopping behaviours and embodied dress practices of this diverse group.

A wardrobe impasse can be seen as a side effect for a woman who is experiencing a decentered sense of self—a disconnection or lack of understanding of the familiar stranger she sees in the mirror. Attempting to deal with a wardrobe impasse during midlife's physical, emotional and psychological changes can become a daunting experience for a woman. For example, garments that previously prompted very positive and motivating qualities of embodiment may now produce feelings of sadness or anxiety because they no longer fit in the same way, if at all. These bodily changes (Northrup, 2006) are a defining physical marker (Rubinstein & Foster, 2013), reaffirming that when women cross the midlife threshold, achieving the thin and youthful patriarchal ideal of feminine beauty is no longer possible. I refer to Twigg's (2010, 2013) research to clarify the social losses that women in midlife may experience as their visibility diminishes in relation to that of males of similar age and of their younger female counterparts. Northrup's (2006) research explained that midlife comes with significant life changes often associated with loss, such as the departure of a child for post-secondary education or marriage, the death of a parent or family member, the end of a career, or divorce. On the other hand, Northrup (2006) explained, this transformative journey can be a deeply healing process. Through the lens of personal wardrobes, this study investigated women's perceptions of their self-image amid a life stage that generates losses alongside positive self-actualizing gains.

I framed a new qualitative methodology to answer the question, "How do mature women successfully navigate the fashion system and develop a wardrobe that reflects their personal identity?" The use of full-body selfies (self-taken photographs) was an integral component of the investigation, prompting rich dialogue during the participant interviews (n=11). This major

research paper marks Photovoice's debut in fashion research by eliciting participants' reflective perceptions about their clothing and dress choices and their self-image.

The interview focused on how women navigate the fashion system and on the ways they maintain, create, modify, and communicate their self-image, their perceptions of fast and slow fashion, and how these are manifested in their wardrobes. The participants' three favourite photographs were viewed during the interview, eliciting expressions of feelings, values, and beliefs. I thematically coded the transcribed interview data, and I logged it in a database. I then applied two word-analysis techniques, word counting and key words in context, to create measurable linguistic fingerprints that supported the themes derived from the Photovoice approach (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Pennebaker et al., 2003). Each participant also completed a short demographic survey for statistical purposes (see Appendix A).

Analytical processes identified the common themes, philosophies, and strategies that the participants used to navigate a quick-response fashion system in order to establish a wardrobe that reflected their self-image. These women's viewpoints and comparisons of fast and slow fashion helped me understand how participants created, modified, and maintained their wardrobes. Participants' personal perspectives and self-evaluated clothing choices revealed whether their everyday wardrobe supported or compromised their desired self-image, whether it promoted dress success or wardrobe impasse.

Discussion of Findings

The primary data derived from the Photovoice process point to the participant characteristics used to create their self-image: individuality, authenticity, and personal confidence. Moreover, these characteristics appear to be intrinsically bound with participants' progress towards self-actualization in midlife. Although the participant pool drew from a narrow

demographic range, the results reveal wide-ranging individuality and diversity of clothing and fashion use.

The results suggest that each participant has a particular *look*, or personal dress code derived from a culmination of influences and self-negotiated shopping and dressing practices. Each participant's authenticity can be interpreted as the continuum of elements worn everyday—an everyday visual portrayal that may possibly be less elusive than Lefebvre (1988) implies, even when the clothing is toned down (Twigg, 2013). This conclusion challenges previous perspectives that the combination of fashion system and patriarchal social system have caused women to display inauthentic self-images (MacCanell & MacCannell, 1987).

Each journey to self-actualization was portrayed through the participant's personal aesthetic and her attitude towards dress. Dress choices reflected levels of modesty and perceptions of age appropriateness. Since fashion and dress are central to women's culture (Twigg, 2013; Wilson, 1985), the I-know-what-I-like attitude suggests a recognized personal confidence that is synonymous with midlife's self-actualizing process. The deep commitment to the self-aesthetic may also be a result of an elevated wisdom that no longer tolerates self-denial, inequities, and injustice (Northrup, 2006).

The individuality of each participant could be perceived as a space or area within her self-image that is derived from personal creativity, a grounded consistency of personal beliefs and values, or a combination of both. At times, this is where the participant overspends, or highly exceeds normal budget parameters, for a wardrobe "love". This is theoretically possible of every person or special group; however, the demographic of participants in this study combines dress and creative strategies with their aging bodies, wrinkles, and a conscious awareness that fashion choices do diminish with age. To that end, the findings suggest that the individualism of these

women is rooted in authenticity: their true selves are represented visually using authentic dressing stories that display their values and beliefs.

This study has revealed that women in midlife may frequent a breadth of shopping venues to satisfy a personal aesthetic that fits within their budget. Over the previous 20 years, the participants in this study had learned to adapt to a changing fashion system, as the new fast-fashion business model integrated into the previous ready-to-wear season-oriented system (Buckley & Clark, 2012). While they did not feel compelled to follow fashion trends, maintaining a fashionable image held some importance for these women. This conclusion is validated by their expressed desires to enjoy current fashion trends, even if in small amounts. Regardless of income and wardrobe expenditures, almost all the women claimed they would spend more money to upgrade or enhance their wardrobe if their budget permitted. Those who did not have or allude to such a mindset already purchase clothing and accessories that satisfy their personal wardrobe criteria.

Most of the participants were happy with their wardrobe outcomes, and they expressed satisfaction with their everyday dress choices and the photographic reflection of their self-image. Participants revealed desired attributes of their clothing—comfort, classic style, and quality (referenced as construction)—which appear to be most influenced by childhood fashion idols and fashion experience. Comfort and classic style also reflect the functional and expressive components, respectively, of the FEA human-centered design model introduced by Lamb and Kallal (1992). The data from this study suggest that clothing choices, even in the most casual settings, have to meet an acceptable level of quality. The participants' responses revealed that cheap and shabby clothing did not blend well with wrinkles earned from their lived experiences. This does not mean the clothing had to be expensive or exceed their budgets, but rather that it

should portray a level of quality that reflected their values, beliefs, and age status (Lamb & Kallal, 1992). This aligns quality with classic and expressive attributes within the context of garment design.

Fun, which is referred to as creativity, appears to be linked to and reflective of the participants' current influences; people-watching, retailers' collections, and when possible their children. These women's notions of fun wardrobe elements suggest an interpretation of their personal attitude as they approach the latter half of life. Purchases relating to creativity can also be perceived as stemming from clearer understanding of themselves, learned through the cumulative lessons of lived experience and the pursuit and portrayal of self-actualization.

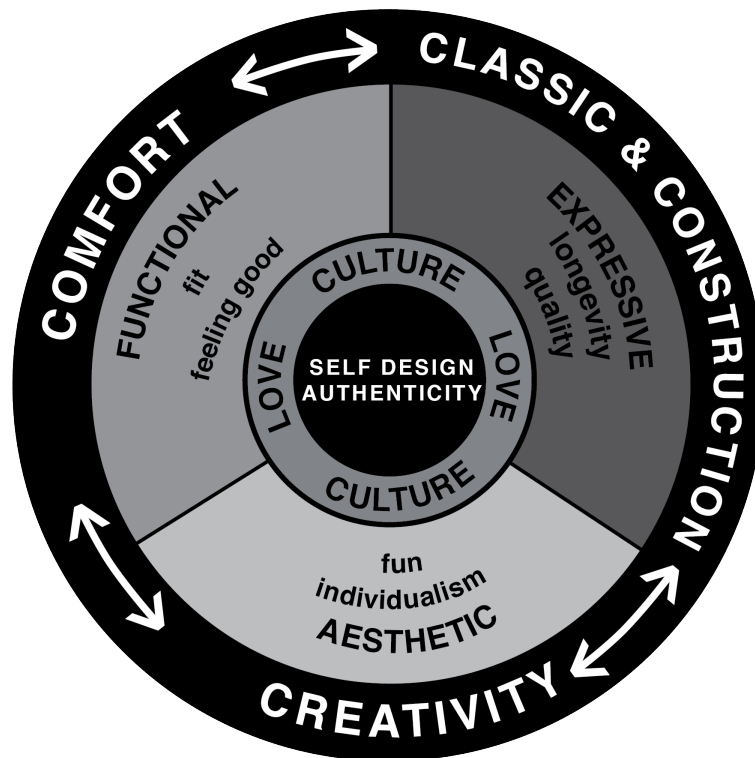


Figure 13. The circle of self-design

Self-Reflection

The participants added splashes of fun (creativity) to their wardrobe in different ways, but they always spoke about these injections with happiness, smiles, and admiration, often characterizing them as the “loves” within their wardrobe. Even the participants who described themselves as most conservative mentioned the ways they had fun with their wardrobe. The expensive designer handbag, the excessive shoe collection, or the distinctive travel purchases could be seen as indulgent rewards after decades of selflessness and commitments elsewhere. One participant used a uniform approach and was very economical when shopping for her everyday dress; however, she also purchased unneeded footwear, from Uggs and Thoms to Christian Louboutin: “I have quite the collection of shoes; I’m quite happy with it” (Participant 10). Another participant commented, “For work, it is me, with my suit, and my Louis Vuitton handbag” (Participant 2). These splurges may be the punctuating element of individuality that links the aspects of embodiment, self-realization, and human-centered design, connecting their loves and emotions to a grounded authentic self-image.

Participants described deep emotional connections to their personal clothing, the “love affairs” within their wardrobe. Potentially, these love affairs are the visual catalysts that link midlife’s internal surge to achieve “true freedom and joy” (Northrup, 2006, p. 17), with the external’s self-image that articulates the soul (Wilson, 2003). Moreover, the emotional ties to garments often reflect the positive feelings that a woman experiences when wearing these pieces (Woodward, 2007). This may explain why participants held on to the notion that in some way previously love items would service them again. At times, they were correct, at other times not, but this did not mean that they would dismiss replenishing their wardrobes with current pieces.

Self-Design

Ultimately, whether by choice or by default, each participant had seemingly become her own designer. In order to achieve and maintain her own personal identity through clothing she innately used the FEA model (Lamb & Kallal, 1992) to approach design from a human-centered perspective. Subsequently, this created a circular relationship between Buckley and Clark's (2012) conscious or unconscious definition of the self through fashion, the negotiations made during the mirror moments (Woodward (2007), and the social conventions that women in midlife consider as they use their wardrobes as conscious displays of embodied authenticity, individuality, and social relevance (Entwistle, 2000; Twigg, 2013; Wilson, 1985). The participants instinctively assembled their wardrobes according to the FEA attribute categories: function, expression, and aesthetic. Replacing the FEA model's target consumer component with the wardrobe of the individual, aligns and validates this group's clothing and dressing philosophies. However, this concept can be more clearly contextualized using the participants' key descriptors; the four C's of creating self-image.

Comfort was described variously by participants, from fit through to feeling good, The intensity or range of comfort was possibly as a metaphor, and by extension the comfort and good feeling of being in one's own skin. Classic, formally defined as "considered one of the best of its kind" and "an example of excellence," is closely connected to quality. Quality can be defined as "how good or bad something is;" however, the participants referred to quality as a "high level of value and excellence" ("Classic," n.d., para. 1). These attributes convey a sense of timelessness and excellence, possibly seen as the dressed self-image that embodies the value of age, wisdom, and a proven sense of social worth. This aligns with Northrup's (2006) argument of truth and justice and with the participants' intuitive desire to display an authentic self-image. The dress

choices within fast and slow fashion, wardrobe loves, individual expression, and the participants' subtle references during the interviews suggest their philosophies of dress reflected the concerns and care they placed on other aspects of their lives.

Self-Analysis

The Photovoice process encouraged in-depth dialogue and reflective thought as participants explored the concepts of wardrobe impasse and dress success. Participants were asked to measure their dress success (not to be confused with “dress for success,” which refers to wearing empowering business attire). What is “dress success” or “wardrobe impasse,” and what is their relevance for women in midlife? Dress success in this study refers to how successfully everyday outfits portray the individual's desired self-image. In other words, how happy is the person when wearing her everyday daywear? Some participants measured dress success using numeric scales, while others used descriptive language. Throughout the interview process, participants were able to self-analyze and reveal opinions, perceptions, and conclusions about their everyday wardrobe and self-image. Therefore, in this study the participant decided whether she experienced dress success or a wardrobe impasse. She herself mainly determined the effectiveness of her wardrobe with regard to her awareness of her self-image, obstacles, likes, and dislikes.

Some participants communicated contradictory or confusing statements, actions, and feelings. This occurred with a participant who did not feel full dress success but was not experiencing a wardrobe impasse. At times, obstacles were discovered, or rather revealed, unconsciously. Based on reflective statements made during the review of the photographs, not all participants felt that they had realized dress success as defined in this study. The photographs, particularly as a set, provided evidence that highlighted the participants' possible disconnection

to the image they believed they were portraying (Kuhn, 1985). This disconnection may be indicative of a wardrobe impasse, displayed as a gap between the mirror image they viewed before leaving their home and the image they saw in the photograph. In its most obvious form, that is, obvious to the individual with the use of images, the wardrobe impasse could be a side effect of a woman's state of misconstruction.

This study has revealed the possibility of the concept of wardrobe readiness. This was most evident when participants described their wardrobes as a whole, and when we viewed each participant's full-body selfies as a set. This concept requires further development and exploration; however, an initial analysis proposes that dress success does not mean wardrobe readiness. Conversely, a wardrobe impasse does not mean that no wardrobe readiness exists. Rather, these descriptors can help a woman evaluate if and how components of her wardrobe succeed or fall short, allowing her to portray a desired self-image. The I-know-what-I-like attitude can be seen as the evolutionary process of establishing "the woman I have become." Fashion sense has become a sense of personal style.

The study results suggest that women achieve dress success because of their fashion knowledge, accumulated through their life experiences and current influences and leading to savvy fashion know-how. However, participants who considered fun or creativity the least were closer to wardrobe impasse. Therefore, I suggest that creativity (characterized as "fun" by the participants) is a key factor of the wardrobe, thus aligning with the FEA model's aesthetic requirement (Guy & Banim, 1992), and Northrup's (2006) argument that during perimenopause "the body's wisdom ... calls for truth, creative expression, and personal fulfillment" (p. 17). Dress and wardrobe can be seen and used in the creative process of self-actualization by manifesting and communicating a desired self-image.

These participants embraced their individuality and authenticity. Regardless of the level of personal fashion confidence, the fashion system did not dictate to them. Moreover, they were unapologetic about their established sense of style and their dedication to it. Those who expressed contentment with their choices had achieved dress success and seemed to have established a form of wardrobe readiness. Those who did not feel successful acknowledged shortcomings within their wardrobes. These women, potentially experiencing a wardrobe impasse, did not verbalize or appear to conclude that a complete wardrobe or image change was required. Rather, they noted that they must apply more thought and consideration during the wardrobe-building process in order to achieve an optimum portrayal of their self-image.

The concepts that participants spoke of were congruent with theories of embodiment and self-actualization (Entwistle, 2000; Northrup, 2006; Wilson, 1985, 2003; Woodward, 2007). However, their openness during the interviews provided unexpected large amounts of in-depth data that answered conceptual inquiries such as, What do women in midlife need from their wardrobes? What makes their wardrobe a success? Do they feel successful or happy about the self-image they portray? Is it the self-image they want? In choosing how to dress, these women aimed to maintain youthfulness and age appropriateness with regard to modesty, while benefiting from their age status. Since midlife transitions encourage reflexivity and re-evaluation of the many aspects of a woman's life, the wardrobe may possibly be an unthreatening but validating way of measuring "the woman I have become."

This statement can be restructured in several ways to analyze the self. For example, "At this age, I know and show who I am" or "At this age, is what I show what I really am or want to be?" Nonetheless, the results of this study suggest that if women in midlife consciously embrace

change and seek trueness of self, their wardrobe will ultimately lead them to a self-image that reflects authenticity and self-fulfillment to a far greater degree than previously anticipated.

The results further show that the participants aimed to express their authenticity and subsequently their individuality, thereby solidifying their self-images. In other words, rather than purchasing and dressing according to conventional workplace and traditional social constructs, they developed wardrobes that they felt echoed their personal sense of style, while maintaining the appropriateness they thought necessary within their everyday environments. Most of their interview data validated existing theories about fashion; however, some were challenged. The challenges open the door for future research in the fields of fashion studies, social sciences, psychology, women and gender studies, and possibly health, as reviewed in Chapter 2.

Implications for Practice

The implications of this study are broad and transferable, both in academia and in the marketplace. With appropriate modification, the Photovoice methodology could prove useful for consumer research and marketing. For example, the creation of new survey formats for use on-site or in-store could potentially clarify consumer needs and educate sales staff. Marketing programs could be re-evaluated and disseminated using modern approaches that align with the FEA model of design.

In addition, practical possibilities include addressing the voids or misaligned consumer targets in the marketplace. Three participants identified a lack of clothing options for women transitioning through midlife, and therefore this marketing opportunity could be further explored.

The modified Photovoice methodology is transferable and is thereby useful for investigating other micro-social demographics or geographical regions in order to cater more effectively to local markets. In addition to providing market researchers or designers with a

deeper understanding of the issues and concerns of consumers, this exploratory method can be a fundamental motivator for design inspiration and its implications (Martin & Hanington, 2012).

The possibilities of adapting the dress success and wardrobe impasse analysis for individual applications are wide-ranging. Modifying this method for personal use could prove beneficial for individuals, giving them a professional but hands-on technique to self-assess possible wardrobe improvements.

Future Research

This research builds on Guy and Banim's (2000) and Woodward's (2007) analyses of women's relationships with clothing. Further in-depth research focusing on "the woman I have become" would add knowledge to fields such as women's studies, fashion studies, and business studies by examining women in a later life stage who are affected by current and varied global, social, and personal circumstances.

The concept of wardrobe readiness might also be further explored, since building a wardrobe requires a significant amount of effort (Guy & Banim, 2000), and the process to self-identify is ongoing. Additionally, analysis of the relationship between the dress success/wardrobe impasse analysis and Woodward's (2007) mirrored dressing negotiations may have the potential to reduce or minimize anxious mirror moments. Subsequently, such an analysis could lead to ways of enhancing dress success and wardrobe readiness.

Conclusion

This study provides evidence that the participants have developed extensive fashion know-how and have adapted to the current blended fashion system by applying the skills and knowledge acquired over decades of engaging with clothing. They have also experienced and transitioned through both the fast-fashion and seasonal (or slow) fashion business models and are

navigating them skillfully. The diversity within this narrow demographic group does validate the complex and ambiguous findings of previous research; nevertheless, I have discovered underlying commonalities that may hold significant value for future research and have practical implications. That being said, any difficulty that retailers and designers may have in accommodating this age group is not dismissed. For the study participants, diversity and personal purpose override the voice of the fashion system and the choices provided by retailers and brand collections. Although research indicates that media and the fashion system dismiss their age group, these women have provided confirmation that their philosophies about dress during midlife are grounded in personal values and beliefs and in their desire to communicate their individuality, authenticity, and self-worth.

Appendix A: Participant Demographic Survey

What is 'in' in the wardrobes of adult women: transitions of self-image in midlife.

Please tell us about yourself by checking the box that best describes you.

1. How old are you? _____
2. What is your ethnicity? _____
3. What is your profession? _____
4. What is your family/household status? (Please check the one that applies)
 - ☐ Married/living with partner
 - ☐ Living alone
 - ☐ Living with relatives
 - ☐ Living with friends/roommates
5. What is the highest level of education that you have ever attained?
 - ☐ Some elementary or high school education
 - ☐ High school diploma
 - ☐ Some post-secondary education
 - ☐ Post-secondary degree, or certificate, or diploma
 - ☐ Graduate Degree
6. Are you currently employed?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
7. What is your total income (2014) from all sources, before taxes or other deductions?
 - ☐ Less than \$20,000
 - ☐ \$21,000 - \$ 50,000
 - ☐ \$51,000 - \$70,000
 - ☐ \$71,000 - \$100,000
 - ☐ Greater than \$100,000

Thank you for your participation

Appendix B: Participant Information Letter

TITLE: What is 'in' in the wardrobes of adult women: transitions of self-image in midlife.

INVESTIGATORS: This research is being conducted by Maria R. Dal Cin (Principal Investigator), a MA graduate student in the School of Fashion, Faculty of Communication and Design (FCAD) at Ryerson University (RU). This research is being supervised by Sandra Tullio-Pow (Supervisor), Associate Professor in FCAD at RU.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research now or at a later date, please feel free to contact any of the resources listed on page 3 of this document.

Hello, you are being invited to participate in a research study. Please read all the information in this letter so that you understand what your participation will involve. You are under no obligation to take part in this research; it is strictly your choice. Also, should you have any questions regarding this study and/or your participation, please contact me at your convenience. You can then sign the consent form. Your signature consenting to participate in this research does NOT mean you are giving up any of your legal rights.

PURPOSE of the study:

This research will explore women's perceptions of the clothing available to them as they go through midlife. This study will recruit 7-16 women who consider themselves interested in fashion, are between the ages of 45-59, and living or working in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). However, those employed in the fashion and beauty sectors, and corresponding academic fields are not eligible to participate in this study. This research will contribute to a Major Research Project (MRP) as part of my enrollment in the MA Fashion Program.

Your INVOLVEMENT as a PARTICIPANT.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be required to review this document and sign the necessary consent form(s). This will require ½ hour of your time. The total expected time commitment to participate in this study is about three (3) hours. You may choose to refuse to give your consent. This will not affect or influence your future relations with RU, the Supervisor, or the Principal Investigator involved in the research, Maria R. Dal Cin.

As part of this study you will be asked to take full-body photographs - 'selfies' - of yourself dressed in seven of your favourite daywear outfits (including shoes), using your mobile phone. These outfits may include clothes that you wear to work, while shopping or going out with friends, but should not include a company uniform, workout wear and evening wear. These photographs must be taken within a one-week period and you must be the only person in the photograph. Since full-body selfies may prove physically difficult to obtain, you may choose to ask another person, with whom you feel comfortable, to take your photograph (you do not need to disclose why you are taking the photograph). You may also use a full-length mirror to photograph your reflection. This process is expected to take one (1) hour in total.

At the end of the one-week period, you will be contacted by the Principal Investigator to set up a mutually agreeable time and place to meet and complete a 60-90 minute audio-recorded interview. During this interview, we will first review the photos and discuss the clothing and I will ask questions about your choices. Questions will also focus on your 3 favourite photos or outfits so that we may have a more in-depth discussion about your wardrobe. You may select an interview location that best minimizes travel time and costs, ensures audio and visual privacy for

a one-on-one interview, and provides you with a comfortable setting. Possible options include a private room booked at a local library, a private room booked at the RU Library or the RU Student Learning Center, your private office, or your home. Please take note that there will be no reimbursement for any travel costs you may incur.

What are the POTENTIAL BENEFITS to you as a Participant?

The benefit of sharing your personal insights about fashion as it relates to your life experiences is that you are providing a voice for middle-aged women. This will also provide the fashion industry with a better understanding of how to service the needs of women within the midlife demographic. I cannot guarantee, however, that you will receive any personal and/or direct benefits from participating in this study.

What are the POTENTIAL RISKS to you as a Participant?

Generally, talking about your clothing is a low risk activity. However, should you become uncomfortable during the photography or interview process, at your discretion, you may choose to skip over any photograph or question, or temporarily stop, or not finish the activity, or withdraw from the study at any point.

Some of your photographs and interview comments will be included in the Principal Investigator's final MRP document, may potentially be published in academic journals, and will be used in academic presentations. Options to maintain your confidentiality are available and noted below, however there is a potential risk that you will be unintentionally identified.

How will your CONFIDENTIALITY be assured?

The confidentiality of your identity is your personal choice and every effort will be made to maintain complete confidentiality if this is what you choose. However, since this research will use photographs, there is no way to guarantee you – the Participant – full and complete confidentiality of your identity because the risk of unintentional recognition may exist.

The final MRP will require some way to refer to participants; this may be your first name or a pseudonym along with a short personal description. Identifying features (such as your face, birthmark, tattoo, jewellery, etc.) may be digitally altered using software however the possibility of identification may still exist because a body is unique to each person and therefore may be recognized. Additionally, clothing may be recognized. What can be altered will be discussed during the interview after selecting the photographs that may be included in the final MRP document.

In order to best minimize the possibility of unintentional identification you must be the only person in the photograph, and you should avoid including any setting that may identify your location, for example furniture, or signs.

You may choose options for confidentiality that are listed on the PARTICIPANT CONSENT form attached to this PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER, or you may also discuss alternatives with the Principal Investigator.

Our interview and your photographs will be confidential. The interview will be digitally recorded and a transcript made of our conversation. Due to time constraints, a third-party transcriber, editor, and/or graphic designer may be used. If this is the case, the third party will sign a confidentiality agreement and all the information will be returned to the Principal Investigator in its entirety upon completion. There will be no public discussion with the other women enrolled in the study. All participants have the right to review and approve the

photographs and any interview quotations that will be included in the final MRP document. All participants also have the right to review the transcription of their interview upon request.

Please note that the photographs, transcripts and other written materials will be retained indefinitely as this data may inform future garment design and we may wish to use this data in combination with future studies. If this occurs, the Ethics Board will first review the project to make sure that the information will be used ethically. Your name, or any other identifying information, will not be included with the data and will be destroyed according to the data storage protocol outlined in the paragraph below. Your name will not be used in any presentations or publications of the study results without your permission. If you want to, you can choose a false name (pseudonym) to refer to yourself in the research study.

How is your DATA being stored?

All electronic data will be stored on a password-protected USB portable drive that remains at the Principal Investigator's premises until the research is completed. The expected completion date is December 31, 2015. All hard-copy data and consent documents will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the Principal Investigator's premises. Hard copies will be transported to the storage location upon completion of all consent signatures and will not be removed unless RU requires them to be reviewed.

Upon completion of the MRP, the Principal Investigator will archive and store the interview audio recordings and transcripts, interview notes, signed consent forms, and photographs on a password-protected USB key and/or in a locked filing cabinet for the period of one year, after which any information identifying the participants will be destroyed. Your transcript will use a code (not your name) and be stored separately from your personal information, consent forms, and from the coding list in order to protect your identity. No person will have access to your consent form and data except the Principal Investigator and the Supervisor. The photographs are your property and you will retain the copyrights.

VOLUNTARY Participation, INCENTIVES, and WITHDRAWAL:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please be aware that there are no reimbursements of expenses and no financial incentives for participating in this research. You can choose to participate in this study or not. You may choose to skip over any photograph or question, or temporarily stop, or not finish the activity, if you are feeling uncomfortable. Also, note that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. No data will be collected after the point of withdrawal, but data already collected before your withdrawal, which has already been included in the MRP cannot be removed from the data set after the date October 30, 2015.

QUESTIONS about the Study:

If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have any further questions about the research, feel free to contact any of the following:

Principal Investigator:
Maria R. Dal Cin,
mrdalcin@ryerson.ca
MA Fashion Grad Student, FCAD
Tel: 416 979 5000 ext.6528
Supervisor:
Prof. Sandra Tullio-Pow,

stullio@ryerson.ca
Ryerson University, FCAD
Tel: 416 979 5000 ext.65

The Research Ethics Board of Ryerson University has reviewed this study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study, please contact:

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University, 350 Victoria St., Toronto, ON, M5B 2K3
416-979-5042 rebchair@ryerson.ca

Appendix C: Telephone Recruitment Script

TITLE: What is 'in' in the wardrobes of adult women: transitions of self-image in midlife.

Hello _____,

“Thank you for your interest in this research study. Some middle-aged women have remarked to me that they are having a difficult time finding clothing that fits their needs. Are you between the ages of 45 and 59?” [If the person falls within this age range I will continue, if no, I will thank her for their interest but explain that at this time the study includes only this age group, but that I will keep her contact information for the future, in case the research study is expanded.]

“This project requires you to take photographs of yourself dressed in seven of your favourite outfits. What do you normally wear throughout the week (daywear, uniform, religious attire, workout wear, etc.)?” [If the person answers daywear I will continue, if no, I will explain that the study is exploring daywear only and ask, “Are you comfortable with providing photos of yourself in only daywear clothing?”] [If yes, then I will continue, if no then I will thank her for taking the time to meet/speak with me and that I will keep her contact information for the future, in case the research study is expanded.]

“After the photographs are taken you will be required to participate in a one-on-one interview with me to talk about the clothing. I’d like to give you the information package about this study so that you can review it. Can I give you/drop off a hard copy or send it to you by email?” [If she answers yes. I will continue to make the necessary arrangements with her, if no, I will thank her for taking the time to meet/speak with me].

“Please take some time to read it over and I will call you in three days to discuss it with you. I will answer any questions that you may have, so you may make an informed decision about participating”.

[At day three] Hello, this is Mary. I am calling to follow up on the study package I sent to you a few days ago. Did you have a few moments to review the information about study?” [If yes, “Do you have any questions that I may answer for you?” if no, “is there a time we might meet to discuss the consent form in more detail so that you are comfortable signing it, so that we can begin?”].

Thank you so much, I look forward to meeting/working with you.

Appendix D: Recruitment Poster

Inviting Women to Take Part in a Fashion Study

Are you a woman between the ages of 45-59 who enjoys fashion but sometimes can't find the types of clothes you're looking for?

If yes, then please consider taking part in a research study that is interested in your perceptions of clothing and fashion.



You will be asked to take selfies dressed in seven of your favourite daywear outfits. You will then be required to do a 60-90 minute audio-recorded interview with the researcher to discuss your clothing. The total expected time commitment to participate in this study is about three (3) hours.

For further information, please contact:

Maria Dal Cin: mrDALCIN@ryerson.ca— MA Fashion Graduate Student
School of Fashion Communication and Design (FCAD), Ryerson University
“This study has been approved by the Ryerson Research Ethic Board - REB 2015-228.”

Appendix E: Consent Form

Please answer the following questions by checking the Yes or No box.	Yes	No
1 Do you understand that you have been asked to participate in a research study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Have you read the attached Information Sheet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this research study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time and that you can let the Principal investigator know by email, telephone, or in person. No data will be collected after the point of withdrawal, but data collected while a valid consent was in place and before your withdrawal, which has already been compiled in the MRP cannot be removed from the data set after October 30, 2015. Data already collected prior to withdrawal will be destroyed or returned to you.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Do you understand who will have access to these files?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 Do you understand that your participant is voluntary?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

☐ **I agree to take part in this study.**

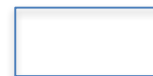
Signature of Research Participant

Consent for photography, interview, audio taping, academic publishing and presentations

If you agree with the following conditions, please indicate yes by checking the boxes below, as well as signing your initials in the large box to the right of the statement.

<input type="checkbox"/> I agree to the audio taping of the interview, I understand I can review the transcript of the interview to verify the information and give additional consent to any comments that may be considered for publication.	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 30px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>
<input type="checkbox"/> I agree to allow my own photographs to be used. I understand that I may choose to not have my face and/or other identifying markers shown in the photograph(s) used and/or that it will be blurred out using computer software so that I cannot be identified.	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 30px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>
<input type="checkbox"/> My first name may be used. <u>Yes</u> OR <u>No</u> (please circle one)	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 30px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>
<input type="checkbox"/> My name may not be used and I request an alternate first name be used	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 30px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>

- _____.
- ☐ I request confidentiality and that my _____
be blurred using computer software. (Examples are face, birthmark, tattoo,
and jewelry.)



Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to participate in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement and the information sheet.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Print Name Phone number Email

FOR THE RESEARCH ADMINISTRATOR

☐ I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Future Consent

Phone: 416.979.5042

Consent for future contact in the event of an expanded research study.

I (Maria R. Dal Cin) may extend this research to include in-depth wardrobe interviews and would like to include you. Would you permit me to contact you if I pursue this study?

I _____ agree to allow Maria R. Dal Cin to contact me in regards to future research.

Phone number _____ Email _____

Signature _____

Appendix F: Interview Schedule

- 1) Please explain how and where you find fashion information, and how frequently you look for it? (The list below includes possible prompts for deeper explanations, which may be used based on the participant's response.)
 - o When you really need to purchase a specific piece?
 - o Do you read the fashion section of newspapers?
 - o Do you buy fashion magazines, or read them in the doctor's office/salon appointments?
 - o Do you use the Internet to search out brands' or clothing stores' selections?
 - o Do you follow any blogs? If yes, which ones.
 - o Do you 'people watch' and/or get suggestions from friends, co-workers (i.e.: you like what they are wearing and ask where they shop)
 - o Do you 'window-shop'? Do any windows catch (or what catches) your eye when you are out walking or driving?
 - o Do you go into the shop or do you use it for ideas?
- 2) What or who influences your clothing choices? ...and how much?
- 3) Do you consider yourself knowledgeable about fashion?
- 4) Do you follow 'rules' when choosing what to wear?
- 5) Are you worried about what is 'in' fashion? (Woodward printout notes p.28)
- 6) Do you feel pressure to conform or to be individual?
- 7) What brands do you like to wear, and why?
 - a) Have you always worn this brand or is it new for you?
 - b) Is there a favourite brand that you cannot wear anymore, and why?
 - c) Is there a brand you've never worn but want to wear, and why?
- 8) Where do you like to shop for fashion (may be clothing, footwear or accessories), and why? (Retail stores, catalogue or online?)
- 9) What or whom would you say is your biggest fashion influence?
- 10) Do you shop alone
- 11) What would you say is your biggest fashion obstacle?....why?
- 12) Does the term "fast fashion" mean anything to you?
 - a) If so, please explain.
 - b) How would you define "fast fashion"?
 - c) What, if any, is your opinion about fast fashion?
 - d) What are your experiences when shopping for fast fashion? (Do you intentionally shop for fast fashion, and why?)
 - e) Describe for me your satisfaction of fast-fashion items?
- 13) Does the term slow fashion mean to you?
 - a) What do you consider to be slow fashion? (What brands or types of clothing, or designers do you consider to be slow fashion?)
 - b) What is your opinion about slow fashion?

- c) What are your experiences when shopping for slow fashion? (Do you intentionally shop for slow fashion, and why?)
 - d) Describe for me your satisfaction of slow fashion items?
 - e) How would you define slow fashion
- 14) How do you feel about all the fashion choices that are available?

Let's talk about your photos now,

- 15) Which three photographs do you feel best represent you?
 - a) Please explain why.
- 16) Which three photos of yourself do you like most?
 - a) Why did you choose these three?
- 17) Which three garments do you like most?
- 18) How do you see yourself?
- 19) How do you think others see you?
- 20) What do you really want to represent to others?
- 21) Tell me about these garments.
 - a) Tell me how these garments came into your closet.
- 22) How do you feel and what are some of the sensations when wearing these clothes.
 - a) What is it about these garments that connect how you look and feel when wearing them
- 23) What is your definition of comfort?
- 24) What sparks your fashion sense, or sense of style, or dress?...your creativity?
- 25) After discussing these photographs, how do you think your fashion sources influences your clothing choices/wardrobe or more accurately, what you wear?
- 26) How would you measure your dress success?
- 27) Is there anything else you would like to add or share about this topic that I have not asked?
 - a) Comments, observations?
- 28) Pretend you have to describe your wardrobe to someone who can't see it. What three words would you use?
- 29) Were you always like this with your wardrobe?
- 30) How have things changed over the years?
- 31) How did you feel about the experience of taking these pictures

References

- Attfield, J. (2000). *Wild things: The material culture of everyday life*. Oxford; New York : Berg.
- Baker, T. A., & Wang, C. C. (2006). Photovoice: Use of a participatory action research method to explore the chronic pain experience in older adults. *Qualitative Health Research*, 16(10), 1405 –1413. doi:10.1177/1049732306294118
- Barnard, M. (1996). *Fashion in communication*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Barnes, L., & Lea-Greenwood, G. (2006). Fast fashioning the supply chain: Shaping the research agenda. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 10(3), 259 –271. doi:10.1108/13612020610679259
- Barrett, A. E., & Robbins, C. (2008). The multiple sources of women's aging anxiety and their relationship with psychological distress. *Journal of Aging Health*, 20(1), 32–65. doi:10.1177/0898264307309932
- Barry, B. (2007). *Fashioning reality: A new generation of entrepreneurship*. Toronto, ON: Key Porter Books.
- Barthes, R. (1977). *Roland Barthes* (R. Howard, Trans.). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bartky, S. L. (1990). *Femininity and domination: Studies in the phenomenology of oppression*. New York, US: Psychology Press.
- Baudelaire, C. (1981). *Baudelaire: Selected writings on art and artists* (P. E. Charvet, Trans.). London, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Body image. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster*. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/medical/body%20image>
- Buckley, C., & Clark, H. (2012). Conceptualizing fashion in everyday lives. *Design Issues*, 28(4), 18–28. doi:10.1162/DESI_a_00172

- Christopher, M., Lowson, R., & Peck, H. (2004). Creating agile supply chains in the fashion industry. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 32(8), 50–61.
doi:10.1108/09590550410546188
- Classic. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster*. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/clothing>
- Clothing. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster*. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/classic>
- Collier, J., & Collier, M. (1986). *Visual anthropology: Photography as a research method*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.
- Cooley, C. H. (1902). *Human nature and the social order*. New York, NY: Scribner's.
- Cordero, R. (2008). A seasonless era approaches. Retrieved from <http://jcreport.com/intelligence/>
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Sage.
- Daly, M. (1979). *Gyn/ecology: The metaethics of radical feminism*. London, UK: Women's Press.
- Davis, K. (1991). Remaking the she-devil: A critical look at feminist approaches to beauty. *Hypatia*, 6(2), 21–43. DOI: 10.1111/j.1527-2001.1991.tb01391.x
- Entwistle, J. (2000a). Fashion and the fleshy body: Dress as embodied practice. *Fashion Theory*, 4(3), 323–347. doi:10.2752/136270400778995471
- Entwistle, J. (2000b). *The fashioned body: Fashion, dress and modern social theory*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Entwistle, J., & Wilson, E. (2001). *Body dressing*. Oxford, UK: Berg.
- Evans, C., & Thornton, M. (1989). *Women & fashion*. London, UK: Quarter Books.

- Fast fashion, (n.d.). In *MacMillan*. Retrieved from
<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/fast-fashion>
- Featherstone, M., & Wernick, A. (1995). *Images of aging: Cultural representations of later life*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Fletcher, K. (2007). Slow fashion. *The Ecologist*, 37(5), 61. Retrieved from
www.theecologist.org/green_green_iving/clothing/269245/slow_fashion.html
- Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T. A. (1997). Objectification theory. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21(2), 173–206. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00108.x
- Friedan, B. (1963). *The feminine mystique*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.
- Greer, G. (1971). *The female eunuch*. London, UK: Paladin.
- Guy, A., & Banim, M. (2000). Personal collections: Women's clothing use and identity. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 9(3), 313–327. doi:10.1080/713678000
- Highmore, B. (2002). *Everyday life and cultural theory: An introduction*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Holliday, R. (2001). Fashioning the queer self. In J. Entwistle & E. Wilson (Eds.), *Body dressing* (pp. 215–231). Oxford, UK: Berg.
- Jeffreys, S. (2005). *Beauty and misogyny: Harmful cultural practices in the West*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kilpela, L. S., Becker, C. B., Wesley, N., & Stewart, T. (2015). Body image in adult women: Moving beyond the younger years. *Advances in Eating Disorders: Theory, Research and Practice*, 3(2), 1–21. doi:10.1080/21662630.2015.1012728

- Kozar, J. M. (2010). Women's responses to fashion media images: A study of female consumers aged 30-59. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 34(3), 272–278.
doi:10.1111/j.1470-6431.2009.00854.x
- Kuhn, A. (1985). *The power of the image: Essays on representation and sexuality*. New York, NY: Routledge/Kegan Paul.
- Lamb, J. M., & Kallal, M. J. (1992). A conceptual framework for apparel design. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 10(2), 42–47. doi:10.1177/0887302X9201000207
- Leech, N. L., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2007). An array of qualitative data analysis tools: A call for data analysis triangulation. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 22, 557–584.
doi:10.1037/1045-3830.22.4.557
- Lefebvre, H. (1988). Toward a leftist cultural politics: Remarks occasioned by the centenary of Marx's death. In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 75–88). doi:10.1007/978-1-349-19059-1_6
- Leslie, D., Brail, S., & Hunt, M. (2014). Crafting an antidote to fast fashion: The case of Toronto's independent fashion design sector. *Growth and Change*, 45(2), 222–239.
doi:10.1111/grow.12041
- Lister, M., & Wells, L. (2004). Seeing beyond belief: Cultural studies as an approach to analysing the visual. In T. Van Leeuwen & C. Jewitt (Eds.), *The handbook of visual analysis* (pp. 61–92). London, UK: Sage. doi:10.4135/9780857020062.n4
- MacCannell, D., & MacCannell, J. F. (1987). The beauty system. In N. Armstrong & L. Tennenhouse (Eds.), *The ideology of conduct: Essays on literature and the history of sexuality* (pp. 206–238). London, UK: Routledge.

- Madden, L. T., & Smith, A. D. (2013). Using photographs to integrate liberal arts learning in business education. *Journal of Management Education*, 39(1), 116–140.
doi:10.1177/1052562913512487
- Marshall, G. (1998). Looking-glass self. *A dictionary of sociology*. Retrieved from Encyclopedia.com: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O88-lookingglassself.html>
- Martin, B., & Hanington, B. (2012). *Universal methods of design: 100 ways to research complex problems, develop innovative ideas, and design effective solutions*. Beverly, MA: Rockport.
- McCarthy, M. (1990). The thin ideal, depression and eating disorders in women. *Behavior Research and Therapy*, 28(3), 205–215. doi:10.1016/0005-7967(90)90003-2
- McIntyre, L. (2006). *The practical skeptic: Core concepts in sociology* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- McRobbie, A. (1989). *Zoot suits and second-hand dresses: Anthology of fashion and music*. London, UK: Macmillan.
- Nash, M. (2014a). Picturing mothers: A photovoice study of body image in pregnancy. *Health Sociology Review*, 23(3), 242–253. doi:10.1080/14461242.2014.11081977
- Nash, M. (2014b). Picturing postpartum body image: A photovoice study. In M. Mash (Ed.), *Reframing reproduction: Conceiving gendered experiences* (pp. 115–134). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. doi:10.1057/9781137267139_8
- Nash, M. (2015). Shapes of motherhood: Exploring postnatal body image through photographs. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 24(1), 18–37. doi:10.1080/09589236.2013.797340
- Northrup, C. (2006). *The wisdom of menopause: Creating physical and emotional health during the change*. New York, NY: Bantam.

- Palmer, A., & Clark, H. (2005). *Old clothes, new looks: Second-hand fashion*. London, UK: Bloomsbury.
- Pennebaker, J. W., Mehl, M. R., & Niederhoffer, K. G. (2003). Psychological aspects of natural language use: Our words, our selves. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54, 547–577.
doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.54.101601.145041
- Peters, C., Shelton, J. A., & Thomas, J. B. (2011). Self-concept and the fashion behavior of women over 50. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 15(3), 291-305.
doi:10.1108/13612021111151905
- Pookulangara, S., & Shephard, A. (2013). Slow fashion movement: Understanding consumer perceptions—An exploratory study. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 20(2), 200–206. doi:10.1016/j.jretconser.2012.12.002
- Reinach, S. 2005. China and Italy: Fast fashion versus prêt a porter. Towards a new culture of fashion. *Fashion Theory* 9(1), 43–56.
- Reisenwitz, T., & Iyer, R. (2007). A comparison of younger and older baby boomers: Investigating the viability of cohort segmentation. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 24(4), 202–213. doi:10.1108/07363760710755995
- Restore Clothing. (2009, May). *Apparel Magazine*, 10-11. Retrieved from http://blog.restoreclothing.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/top_innovators.jpg
- Richards, N., Warren, L., & Gott, M. (2011). The challenge of creating “alternative” images of ageing: Lessons from a project with older women. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 26(1), 65–78. doi:10.1016/j.jaging.2011.08.001
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls C. M., & Ormston, R. (2003). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. London, UK: Sage.

- Root, M. P. P. (1990). Disordered eating in women of color. *Sex Roles*, 22(7), 525–536.
doi:10.1007/BF00288168
- Rubinstein, H. R., & Foster, J. L. (2013). “I don’t know whether it is to do with age or to do with hormones and whether it is do with a stage in your life”: Making sense of menopause and the body. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 18(2), 292–307.
doi:10.1177/1359105312454040
- Sandywell, B. (2004). The myth of everyday life: Toward a heterology of the ordinary. *Cultural Studies*, 18, 160–180. doi:10.1080/0950238042000201464
- Saucier, M. G. (2004). Midlife and beyond: Issues for aging women. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 82(4), 420–425. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6678.2004.tb00329.
- Self-image, (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster*. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/self%E2%80%93image>
- Selfie, (n.d.). In *Oxford*. Retrieved from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/selfie>
- Simmel, G. (1904). 1985. Fashion. *International Quarterly*, 10, 130–155.
- Slevec, J. H., & Tiggemann, M. (2011). Predictors of body dissatisfaction and disordered eating in middle-aged women. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 31(4), 515–524.
doi:10.1016/j.cpr.2010.12.002
- Sontag, S. (1972, September 23). The double standard of aging. *The Saturday Review*, September 23, 1972 Issue, 29–38. Retrieved from <https://www.unz.org/Pub/SaturdayRev-1972sep23-00029>

- Spencer, L., Ritchie, J., & O'Connor, W. (2003). Analysis: Practices, principles and processes. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 199–218). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stanczak, G. C. (Ed.). (2007). *Visual research methods: Image, society, and representation*. Thousand Oak, CA: Sage.
- Thomas, J., & Peters, C. (2009). Silver seniors: Exploring the self-concept, lifestyles, and apparel consumption of women over age 65. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 37(12), 1018–1040. doi:10.1108/09590550911005001
- Tseëlon, E. (1995). *The masque of femininity: The presentation of woman in everyday life*. London, UK: Sage.
- Twigg, J. (2010). How does vogue negotiate age? Fashion, the body, and the older woman. *Fashion Theory*, 14(4), 471–490. doi:10.2752/175174110X12792058833898
- Twigg, J. (2013). *Fashion and age: Dress, the body and later life*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Veblen, T. (1899). *The theory of the leisure class: An economic study in the evolution of institutions*.
- Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1994). Empowerment through photo novella: Portraits of participation. *Health Education & Behavior*, 21(2), 171–186. doi:10.1177/109019819402100204
- Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 24(3), 369–387. doi:10.1177/109019819702400309

- Wang, C., & Redwood-Jones, Y. A. (2001). Photovoice ethics: Perspectives from Flint Photovoice. *Health Education & Behavior*, 28(5), 560–572.
doi:10.1177/109019810102800504
- Weber, S., & Mitchell, C. (2004a). Dress stories. In S. Weber & C. Mitchell (Eds.), *Not just any dress: Narratives of memory, body, and identity* (pp. 3–9). Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang.
- Weber, S., & Mitchell, C. (2004b). Theorizing dress stories. In S. Weber & C. Mitchell (Eds.), *Not just any dress: Narratives of memory, body, and identity* (pp. 251–272). Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang.
- Wilson, E. (1985). *Adorned in dreams: Fashion and modernity*. Rutgers University Press.
- Wilson, E. (1992). *The sphinx in the city: Urban life, the control of disorder, and women*. University of California Press.
- Wilson, E. (2003). *Adorned in dreams: Fashion and modernity*. London, UK: IB Tauris.
womenswear/010708/seasonless-era-approaches (accessed 14 November 2009).
- Woodward, S. (2007). *Why women wear what they wear* (eBook). doi:10.2752/9781847883483
- Yeung, K., & Martin, J. L. (2003). The looking glass self: An empirical test and elaboration. *Social Forces*, 81(3), 853–879. doi:10.1353/sof.2003.0048
- Zarley Watson, M., & Yan, R. N. (2013). An exploratory study of the decision processes of fast versus slow fashion consumers. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 17(2), 141–159. doi:10.1108/JFMM-02-2011-0045