

I DRESS FOR ME:
A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF CLOTHING, AGE AND IDENTITY

by

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Abstract

I Dress for Me: A Photographic Exploration of Clothing, Age and Identity, Master of Arts 2017, Gabrielle Trach, Program of Fashion, Ryerson University

For this major research project, *I Dress for Me*, I investigated the relationship between clothing and life narratives for senior women through interviews and documentary-style photographs of the women's wardrobes. Based on theories of identity and everyday dress by Irving Goffman and Efrat Tseelon; fashion and age by Julia Twigg; and the practice of wardrobe interviews by Sophie Woodward, I set out to draw upon the life experiences of participants to gain a better understanding of how an individual's relationship with clothing changes over time. The motivation for this project was to create a diverse representation of senior women within fashion. The result was gaining intimate accounts of women's experiences and relationships with clothing and how they connected to life transitions, the aging body, life narratives and memory. Each woman's relationship with clothing is complex and layered, as shown through their varied and diverse wardrobes that reflect their life narratives.

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Introduction

For this major research project, *I Dress for Me*, I investigated the relationship between clothing and life narratives for senior women through interviews and documentary-style photographs of the women's wardrobes. Based on theories of identity and everyday dress by Irving Goffman and Efrat Tseelon; fashion and age by Julia Twig; and the practice of wardrobe interviews by Sophie Woodward, I set out to draw upon the life experiences of participants to gain a better understanding of how an individual's relationship with clothing can change over time. The motivation for this project was to create a diverse representation of senior women within fashion. The result was gaining intimate accounts of women's experiences and relationships with clothing and how they connected to life transitions, the aging body, life narratives and memory. Each woman's relationship with clothing is complex and layered, as shown through their varied and diverse wardrobes that reflect their life narratives. Through a mixed methods approach of conducting semi-structured interviews, followed by a photo shoot, I engaged with the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between clothing, identity and the aging female body?
2. How has this relationship changed over time, as the body has aged?
3. What is the relationship between garments and life narratives?
4. What does an individual's clothing say about them when they are absent from the image?
5. What is the effect when the subject is also a collaborator in the final creative work?

In collaboration with each participant I have created documentary-style photographs of their wardrobes based on their experiences with clothing and aging.

Background

Within the fashion industry, there is an overwhelming representation of young bodies, particularly young women (Twigg, *Fashion and Age: Dress, the Body and Later Life* 1). Due to this fixation with youth, there is little to no representation of older and aging women in fashion (Halls 105; Twigg, “How Does Vogue Negotiate Age?: Fashion, the Body, and the Older Woman” 5). Unlike *Vogue* magazine in the 1950s, with the character of Mrs. Exeter (Halls 105-12; Twigg 11), there is an underrepresentation of the aging woman and a lack of guidance for her on how to navigate the changes in her body in relation to fashion and clothing (Lemish and Muhlbauer 126). When aging is acknowledged within fashion it is most often in the form of cosmetic ads for “anti-aging” or “pro-aging” products, such as face creams and serums. These ads are focused on extending the appearance of youth, through slowing or diminishing visible signs of aging, most often in the form of face wrinkles. These kinds of ad campaigns only further the fashion industry’s obsession with youth, rather than giving positive representations of aging for women.

The work of Irving Goffman posits that clothing is intimately linked to the expression and performance of identity (6). The way one dresses on a daily basis will inform their interaction with others and inform how they might carry and present themselves in public spaces. However, identity and its expression through dress can change as one ages. There are physical considerations, in that one’s body may not have the same capabilities as it once did, which may affect clothing choices and one’s relationship to their existing garments. There are also external influences of being told what is “age appropriate”, and whether one will subscribe to these rules. These factors, among others, inform how identity is expressed through clothing on an aging body.

Just as clothing and dress are linked to the expression of identity, they are also linked to life narratives (Slater 126). Due to the nature of clothing being so close to the body – a second skin – clothing can be very charged and personal, holding stories and experiences. Wardrobes are filled with garments, some carrying memories and experiences, from positive to negative. The nature and tone of these memories and experiences can help to inform whether an individual will hold onto a garment past its usefulness or whether the garment will be discarded despite being in good condition. The individual's life narrative is not only kept in their mind but is also stored in the clothing that they have owned throughout the course of their life.

The practice of documentary photography has a history of being exploitative and objectifying of its subjects (Aubert 5). This has been perpetuated by photographers acting as passive observers, merely documenting events or situations where they are apparently free of bias or personal agenda. Over time, there have been photographers who challenge the exploitative nature of documentary photography by including their subjects in the image-making process so that their views and experiences are being shared through the final works. Similarly, the fashion industry claims a passive stance with its heavily sexualized, youth-obsessed images. The fashion industry preaches artistic license and freedom, absolving it from any political or social issues it is creating or perpetuating. Fashion photography will state that it is merely giving the public what it wants, and is incapable of changing the imagery that it produces (Stansfield; Illingworth).

Through my work, I have explored and investigated the intersection of the aging female body, fashion, and documentary photography. This MRP engages with the relationship between such topics and aims to provide representations of the aging female body that are more authentic,

positive, diverse and complex. Through this project, the viewer is offered a glimpse at the senior woman's experiences of aging in relation to clothing.

Literature Review

Fashion, Age and Life Narratives

For decades the fashion industry has been focused on youth (Twigg, 5), using almost exclusively young models in fashion advertisements and editorials. The focus on youth reached new heights with the Youthquake of the 1960s (Halls, 110) which has left a lasting effect on the fashion industry and how it engages with age and aging. The Youthquake of the 1960s was a dramatic shift in culture, and fashion, that focused on and catered to youth subcultures ("Youthquake! The 1960s Fashion Revolution"). Within the current fashion industry there is a general lack of representation of older women, where "older women in *Vogue* only feature sporadically" (Twigg, "How Does Vogue Negotiate Age?: Fashion, the Body, and the Older Woman" 1). This was not always the case, specifically when examining the 1950s and *Vogue* magazine's negotiation of age and aging for women in the form of a regular lifestyle column: Mrs. Exeter. The character of Mrs. Exeter was a direct response to women who were aging – 50s and older – but wanted to remain fashionable (Twigg, "How Does Vogue Negotiate Age?: Fashion, the Body, and the Older Woman"; Halls). It was a successful column, from 1955-65, until the arrival of the Youthquake, a fashion craze that focused on teenagers, in the 1960s. From the 60s onward a change in the fashionable silhouette for women favoured a slimmer, more boyish figure, in contrast to the previously favoured "hourglass" silhouette, best known through Dior's New Look. Mrs. Exeter was a positive voice for older women, offering tips and advice on how to remain current while also dressing in a way that was flattering. There was even a spread

on how a dress, worn by a younger woman, could be worn by the Mrs. Exeter reader in a flattering, yet age-appropriate way so that she did not look like “mutton dressed as lamb” (Twigg, "How Does Vogue Negotiate Age?: Fashion, the Body, and the Older Woman” 8).

In her article "How Does Vogue Negotiate Age?: Fashion, the Body, and the Older Woman”, Julia Twigg lays out the many strategies that *Vogue*, and the fashion industry at large, address age and aging while maintaining their status quo of a youth-obsessed industry. Twigg refers to these methods as “dilution strategies” since they address and acknowledge age and aging within the pages of *Vogue* but they are often masked under themes such as the “Decades approach”, “generations” and “personalisation” (Twigg, "How Does Vogue Negotiate Age?: Fashion, the Body, and the Older Woman” 9-10). These strategies, while acknowledging the women’s age, often only represent age up to a certain point; such as the “decades” approach, which only goes up to the 50s (Twigg, "How Does Vogue Negotiate Age?: Fashion, the Body, and the Older Woman” 9). Another approach to representing age is having generations of a family in a spread with the younger relative’s compliance with the magazine’s fixation on youth making the older relative’s presence in the spread more acceptable. The dilution strategies used by *Vogue* are representative of the fashion industry at large, creating a lack of representation of older and aging women within media. Twigg makes a significant distinction that, when real women – not models – are featured within fashion magazines, they are women with “*Vogue* lives and, as a result, far from the lived reality of most people” (Twigg, "How Does Vogue Negotiate Age?: Fashion, the Body, and the Older Woman” 10). Even when older women are featured within fashion magazines, they are still of a specific lifestyle and often socio-economic bracket, which is not representative of the larger population of older and aging women. This can be seen in the coverage of beauty entrepreneur, Linda Rodin While she is in her 60s, Rodin is thin and has been

deemed “stylish” and “fashionable” by multiple publications (“Linda Rodin on Aging, Eating & the Mascara She’s Used Since She Was a Teen”; Satran). Rodin is the poster-woman for aging gracefully and stylishly, but she is not necessarily exemplary of every woman’s experience of aging, leaving gaps in representation of senior women within the fashion industry.

This uneven representation of older women based on socio-economic background can also be seen in the fashion blog *Advanced Style*. This blog advocates that personal style does not have to end as you age and its creator, Ari Seth Cohen, sets out to capture and represent stylish senior citizens (Cohen). While *Advanced Style* is made with good intentions and does create an alternative representation of older and aging women to the mainstream fashion industry, it favours those who are fashion conscious and fashion literate. There is a lack of representation of those who may not have the means or interest to participate within fashion, limiting the project’s scope.

One of the recurring themes within the study of aging, women and dress is that if a person dresses or looks old, they will be treated as such regardless of how that person feels on the inside. In the article “Clothing, Age and the Body: A Critical Review”, Julia Twigg draws connections between age, body, and identity and how as the body ages, the expression of identity can change accordingly (290). In their article “Bat Wings, Bunions, and Turkey Wattles: Body Transgressions and Older Women’s Strategic Clothing Choices”, Clarke, Griffin and Maliha look into the various ways that older women negotiate aging bodies and the “appropriate” ways to dress and adorn them. Within their study they discovered that “many of the women described their clothing choices as a strategic means of masking or compensating for changes that had occurred in their bodies over time” (716). As women age, not only is clothing used as a way of expressing identity, it is also used as a corrective measure so that the body is more acceptable

within a society that is focused on youth and appearing as young as possible for as long as possible.

The link between everyday dress, identity expression and performance has been well-established, most notably in the works of Erving Goffman and Efrat Tseëlon. Both have established that the way an individual chooses to dress is informed by environment – public vs private – as well as company – friends or strangers. Both Goffman and Tseëlon focus their work on the ordinary and everyday experiences of clothing. In her article, “Erving Goffman, Social Science as an Art of Cultural Observation”, Tseëlon states that “[this] approach privileges ordinary clothes instead of historical costume or designer garments” (154). Goffman and Tseëlon’s work created a space within the study of fashion to examine and investigate everyday dress and its relationship to the individual’s expression of self. However, one aspect of identity that was neglected was how age and aging affects how the individual expresses and performs their identity.

While clothing is linked to the expression of identity, clothing is also closely linked to life narratives and memory. Clothing can be described as a “second skin” which points to the everyday, yet personal nature of clothing (Twigg, *Fashion and Age: Dress, the Body and Later Life* 15). An individual with a deeply personal connection to their clothing may cause them to keep their clothes beyond their wearability. Conversely, it can also cause an individual to discard a garment even though it is in perfectly good condition. If a single garment can elicit strong emotions and memories, then the wardrobe can be looked at as a site of memory collection and storage. In *Women in Clothes* Julavits, Shapton and Heti directly engage with life narratives connected to clothing, drawing on individual stories from participants. Stories in the anthology of sartorial memories, *Worn Stories*, range from the ordinary favourite dress shirt to the

extraordinary Holocaust survivor who, after World War II, only had a bolt of fabric leftover from her family's store that was used to make a suit (Spivak 83-4). These stories illustrate the emotional links that exist between clothing and life narratives. Similarly, in her book, *Girl Culture*, Lauren Greenfield documents the everyday experiences of girls and women across America. This work is a very honest and intimate exploration into the lives of many women throughout America, documenting many different experiences, from teen girls at a weight loss camp, to female celebrities, to mother-daughter relationships, and coming-of-age events (birthdays, proms and debutante balls). This work shows the many ways that women express themselves through their clothing and overall appearance.

The strong emotional ties to clothing can affect the way that an individual stores and disposes of garments. As Bye and McKinney uncover in the article "Sizing Up the Wardrobe – Why We Keep Clothes That Do Not Fit", "while there is little practical reason to keep clothes that are physically impossible to wear, there may be other connections that prevent their discard" (483). The storing and keeping of clothing that has a strong emotional connection to the individual's life narrative is directly linked to clothing's relationship to identity (Bye and McKinney 484). As the individual ages, their body will inevitably shift and change, impacting the individual's ability to continue wearing a particular garment. If the garment is no longer wearable but holds strong memories from the owner's past, it may be kept for fear of memory loss or want for a physical memento from a particular life event (Bye and McKinney 484). Bye and McKinney have categorized reasons for keeping a garment past its usefulness, including: weight management, investment value, sentimental value and aesthetic object. This categorization offers a starting-off point for future work focused on the wardrobe as a place of personal expression and storage of personal memories and life narratives.

Fashion has always been politically charged, whether through explicit distinguishing between socio-economic classes or implicit distinguishing between those who are “in” or “out” of the fashion know through seasonal clothing trends and styles. Since the time of the male renunciation of fashion, when men did away with overly ornate and flamboyant fashions, clothing has been associated with the feminine, and the frivolous (Breward 170-1). This created a negative association with clothing and fashion. This negative association of femininity and frivolity has given fashion a new politically charged facet, making it a site of oppression, but also resistance (Twigg, “Clothing, Age and The Body: A Critical Review” 288). While the fashion industry tells women how they should look, women are reclaiming agency when it comes to fashion, and rejecting what the fashion industry dictates to them through the media.

Another politically charged aspect of fashion and clothing is age and aging female body. Once women reach a certain age they are commonly deemed no longer sexually desirable by the opposite sex and are invisible to the fashion industry. Often, their clothing choices become significantly limited compared to when they were younger, with most of their choices being boxy cuts in neutral shades and colours (Clarke, Griffin and Maliha 721; Twigg, 293). People develop their wardrobes based on the garments that are made available to them by the fashion industry. Thus, many older women are limited by their age and the industry’s idea of what is “age appropriate” when it comes to making sartorial decisions (Twigg, “Clothing, Age and The Body: A Critical Review” 297).

Clothing continues to be used as a form of resistance against the status quo. In their study, Clarke, Griffin and Maliha found that “... women referred to another socially motivated usage of clothing, and indicated that they dressed to resist ageist assumptions” (721). Not only can clothing be used as a site of resistance, combatting notions of age and the aging body, it can

also be a way of retaining agency (Twigg, “Clothing, Age and The Body: A Critical Review” 285). As an individual ages and deals with issues such as a loss of mobility, or sight, making them reliant upon others, they can still choose their clothing and choose how to express themselves. The rejection of “age appropriate” clothing most often takes form in what is called “age-resistance” where older women refuse to accept the drab, shapeless garments that are handed to them from the fashion industry (Twigg, “Clothing, Age and The Body: A Critical Review” 299). Ultimately, even as you age, and are deemed undesirable or invisible by society, clothing can be used as a vehicle of resistance, maintaining the political nature of clothing and dress. Clothing is already a heavily politically charged site and is made even more politically potent when the issue of age and ageism is brought into consideration.

Documentary Photography

There is a long history of subject exploitation within the practice of documentary photography. Most notably was the Farm Security Administration (FSA) Photographic Project who, during the Great Depression, documented the devastation and living situations through what was referred to as the Dust Bowl (Curtis 4; Aubert 5). This project was meant to document the devastation by those most hardly hit by the depression, to raise awareness, and ultimately help those in need. However, little was actually done to help those who were documented, making them exploited subjects to be gazed at from a distance (Aubert 3). This lack of action to help the subjects and ultimately exploit them for the benefit of the photographers comes from the belief that documentary photographers are “skilled technicians ... but passive observers of the social scene” (Curtis 2). Documentary photographers are also believed to be bias-free when taking a photograph which is based on the idea that the “photographic image is grounded in a

belief that a photograph is a mechanical reproduction of reality” (Curtis 2). This is, in fact, false. When taking a photograph, the choice is made as to what is included and excluded from the frame. The deliberate manipulation and construction of what is inside the photographic frame disproves the notion that the photograph is merely a mechanical reproduction, and that the documentary photographer is a bias-free observer.

In the article *The Doorstep Portrait: Intrusion and Performance in Mainstream American Documentary Photography*, Didier Aubert outlines many key elements of documentary photography and how to ensure that the resulting work is not another exploitation of subjects, including access vs intrusion, decorum and self-presentation, and the usefulness of visual conventions. Didier aims to analyse and challenge conventions in hopes that the practice of documentary photography will end its habit of subject exploitation and instead make subjects active participants in the image-making process. This article draws on past photo-documentary work showing the ways that subjects have been exploited but also how various photographers, like Lewis Hine, consciously worked against the normalized exploitation of subjects in documentary photography. In his work, Hine rarely took candid images, but instead “... encouraged eye contact between the camera lens and the subject ... Hine welcomed it as an opportunity for them to collaborate in their portrait” (Aubert 10). Rather than both parties involved being seen as passive, they are instead engaging with each other to create the photograph. Similarly, documentary photographer Lauren Greenfield collaborates with the subjects within her work, most notably in the book and series *Girl Culture*. Not only does Greenfield work in collaboration with her subjects but there are essays throughout the book written by the participants. These girls and women are given space for their voices to be heard within a larger work; they are explicit collaborators in this work, rather than passive subjects.

Methodology

This MRP is based in research-led practice, a term that is sometimes used interchangeably with practice-led research, creative research, and practice as research. Research-led practice, in this context, simply means that creative work is informed by, or grounded in, academic research and theory (Smith and Dean 2). Terms like research-led practice have been developed, and argued for by creative practitioners who believe that their methods of knowledge creation are just as valid and important within the world of academia as “more traditionally, critically or empirically based research methods” (Smith and Dean⁸ 2). The series *I Dress for Me* is classified as research-led practice as it is a creative piece that is based in academic research and theories that encounter the links between dress, identity and life narratives. The final creative work is the focus of this project, with the research acting as a support.

This project is based on Sophie Woodward’s research method of wardrobe interviews, where the researcher and interviewee go into the wardrobe of the interviewee to look through and discuss the individual’s wardrobe (31-2). By going through the wardrobe as part of the interview, through handling and touching garments, memories associated with each garment will be recalled (32). This project extends from Woodward’s methods, and encourages participants to become collaborators within the project. Prior to the interviews participants were asked to select garments that they would deem significant (see appendix E). This prompt was meant as a guide for participants when selecting garments to be photographed.

I Dress for Me is based on senior women’s first-hand experiences of clothing and aging, and therefore required participants that identified as female aged 65+. This project included a small sampling of women living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), initially aiming for between

10 and 15 participants, with the final number being 10. The participants were sourced through mixed methods of random sampling including postering, email lists, and snowball sampling. When postering (see appendix D) I made a concerted effort to poster in areas geared towards groups that are often ignored by the fashion industry, such as women of colour, and the LGBTQ+ community, in order to have a diverse sampling of participants. Sending out my call for participants through the Ryerson University fashion department bulk mailer yielded some of the best results from interested participants, as did snowball sampling through faculty, colleagues and participants of the study.

Interested participants were directed to contact me via email to gain more information about the project and to set up a time to conduct the interview and photo shoot. Sessions started with the interview followed by the photo shoot. The interview allowed for participants to speak about their experiences with clothing and age, possibly discussing items that had been selected to be photographed. Subsequently, the photo shoot occurred where participants were involved in the photographic process, from garment selection, to the positioning and placement of garments for photographing. Prior to the session, each participant was asked, via email, to select approximately five garments and five accessories that were significant to them (see appendix D). The selection could be interpreted as something that carries emotional importance, a memory, or something the participant wears regularly. The items would then be photographed and discussed on the day of the interview. By having the participants select garments and accessories the participants are directly influencing the final creative work. Rather than selecting garments or objects that I find interesting, each participant selected items what they would like to be represented by in the final images. The interviews were primary research, where the participants could speak about their experiences with clothing and how that relationship may have changed as

they have gotten older. The photo shoots resulted in 24-36 images per participant, resulting in approximately 275 images total to be selected for the final compositions.

Before starting to source participants, I went through the process of acquiring ethics approval from the Ryerson Ethics Board (REB). By going through the REB form, each step of this project - from how participants were sourced to interview questions - was planned out ahead of time. Receiving REB approval ensured that participants and researcher were safe throughout the interview process, and that participants could give informed consent (see appendix F) prior to starting the interview process.

The research questions were developed to ease participants into a discussion about their relationship with clothing, age, identity, and life narratives (see appendix B). Starting with simple questions about their current outfit and shopping habits, I developed a rapport with the participants as they settled into the mindset of talking about clothing. The first eight questions dealt with the individual's relationship with everyday clothing, and how they might perform their identity through their clothing. The next five questions engaged with clothing, memory and life narratives. These questions allowed participants to reflect on how their relationship with clothing might have changed throughout their lives, and why those changes might have occurred. Through this series of questions, I gained a better understanding of the layered and complex relationship that senior women have with clothing and fashion.

When making the image compositions I drew inspiration from the interviews. By using the interviews as a starting point for the compositions, my goal was to create authentic representations of each woman. In reflecting upon the interviews, I decided to make the compositions based on each woman a representation of their more typical or everyday-wear. Each woman selected varied garments, from formalwear to family hand-me-downs, but everyday

clothing was a common theme amongst these women's selections. Another common theme that came up through garment selections and in the interviews, was sentimental objects, or objects attached to life narratives and memories. This inspired me to make a composition based on these objects linked to life narratives. From garment selection, to posing and styling garments, to interviews, to final image compositions, I included and considered my participants throughout the many stages and making of this project.

Theoretical Framework

This project intersects with multiple theories related to dress and fashion. These theories include age and clothing (Twigg), identity performance through clothing (Goffman, Tseëlon), and the relationship between clothing and life narratives (Woodward). Theories of identity performance through dress and adornment have been written about extensively, most notably by Erving Goffman and Efrat Tseëlon. Goffman's work examined the role that clothing and dress play in everyday life, speaking about notions of "front stage" and "back stage" performances of identity. The idea of "front stage" and "back stage" performances through clothing can be best summed up by as the belief that "... front stage is a public mask, and back stage is where the 'real face' is revealed" (Tseëlon, "Erving Goffman, Social Science as an Art of Cultural Observation" 154). Tseëlon goes on to explain that, to Goffman, one form of performance is not more authentic than the other, but rather "both are different kinds of stage, with different expectations" (Tseëlon, "Erving Goffman, Social Science as an Art of Cultural Observation" 154). These ideas of "front stage" and "back stage" identities and performances can be translated into ideas of private vs public, which this project engages with. By going into homes and wardrobe spaces of these women – private spaces – I am crossing over the threshold of public

persona and identity into the private sphere. I then in turn take images of these private spaces and personal objects, as well as recordings of their stories and memories behind these objects, and then take those images and stories and share them in public spaces through presentations, exhibits, conferences, etc.

Both Goffman and Tsečlon examine everyday dress and how it is used by individuals to express their own identity. In everyday life people perform their identities through the ways that they dress and adorn their bodies (Goffman 11). This is managed based on setting and company; whether they will be in a formal setting, requiring one type of dress, or in a more casual, familiar setting, requiring a different kind of dress. People are constantly assessing and managing their appearances and how they are dressed (Tsečlon, “How Successful is Communication via Clothing? Thoughts and Evidence on an Unexamined Paradigm” 121). One aspect of identity that Goffman and Tsečlon neglect to investigate is age and its effect on expression through clothing. Aging can cause physical changes such as decreased mobility and motor skills, as well as changes in shape and weight. These changes, as well as many more, can affect how one dresses and presents themselves in public. Twigg’s work focuses how age is negotiated within the fashion industry, focusing on the aging female body. Through interviewing senior women, as well as researching how the fashion industry, both past and present, negotiates age, Twigg’s research engages with fashion and the aging female body. Twigg found that, despite the lack of acknowledgement from the fashion industry and societal ideas of aging, clothing is still a source of enjoyment and expression for senior women (Twigg, *Fashion and Age: Dress, the Body and Later Life* 151). This has created a starting point for my own research, investigating the average woman’s relationship with clothing in relation to aging.

Clothing can be linked to memory and life narratives, as seen in Sophie Woodward's research in *Why Women Wear What They Wear*. Through the method of wardrobe interviews, where the interviewer and interviewee go into the wardrobe space of the interviewee, Woodward is able to have her participants engage with their clothing, and the memories attached to them in a way that is deeper than merely recalling a memory. By handling their garments, the interviewee's memory is jogged, causing them to recall stories specifically related to certain garments. By going into the wardrobe space with her participants Woodward is able to gain a more intimate understanding of the individual's relationship with their clothing.

Analysis and Discussion

There is a misconception that once people, specifically women, reach senior years they no longer care about clothing or their appearance (Twigg, *Fashion and Age: Dress, the Body and Later Life* 1). This assumption comes from the lack of representations in popular culture and mass media of older people, and in turn influences the common opinion. Over the years, the idea that older people are not invested in their appearance has been challenged with style blogs such as *Advanced Style* and documentaries like *Iris*. *Advanced Style* is a fashion blog that is focused on "capturing the sartorial savvy of the senior set" (Cohen) through photographing and posting images of fashionable senior women. This project has been turned into two books, as well as a documentary film. Similarly, the documentary *Iris* examines the fashion and style of the nonagenarian fashion icon and interior designer, Iris Apfel. Apfel has become well-known for her larger-than-life, exuberant fashion choices involving bright colours, loud prints, and layered bangles and necklaces. These projects show that senior women are still interested in fashion, and looking as vibrant as they feel. These projects, however, favour women who live privileged lives

where they can afford to shop and create elaborate outfits, whether through financial means or the affordance of leisure time. *I Dress for Me* explores the relationship between clothing, age and identity, showing an honest and authentic representation of the average women's experiences with clothing, in relation to aging.

This misconception of women no longer caring about their appearance as they age brings about mental images of frail, old ladies wearing nightgowns as everyday wear: "My horror is turning into an old lady with food stains all down the front of your shirt, or your apron. You know your day dress" (Participant 4 1). Through interviewing my ten participants it has become abundantly clear that they most certainly care about how they present themselves in public. Each participant expressed that they do take some care and consideration each day when deciding what to put on their bodies, although responses varied from person to person about what would be deemed "acceptable" to wear in public.

My participants for this project had varied interest in clothing and fashion, from self-proclaimed clothes horses to simple clothing tastes. Having a broad range of interest in clothing and fashion was key to this project, as I am seeking to create a genuine representation of older women's experiences of clothing in relation to age. While there is a historic connection to fashion and women/the feminine (Breward 170-1; Twigg, "Clothing, Age and The Body: A Critical Review" 288) not all women care about or follow the latest trends. Furthermore, many older women feel as though they are being done a disservice by the fashion industry. Largely this is felt through a lack of acknowledgement from the fashion industry through large gaps in the retail market: "...when I said I was doing this interview with you, a lot of [my friends] said, yeah, make sure you tell them that we need clothing that's comfortable and still fashionable!"

(Participant 9 8). These women find that clothing made for their age bracket is either matronly, overly expensive, or lacking in variety.

Dressing for Yourself/I Dress for Me

The idea of dressing for yourself, and your own comfort, was a common sentiment that arose through the interviews with the participants. In its simplest form the idea of dressing for yourself came up through the words of “comfortable”, “comfort” and “comfy”: “I tend to wear things that are comfortable” (Participant 2 1); “... ‘I’m going to be me. I’m going to be comfortable and I’m going to enjoy it’” (Participant 3 8); “...comfort, I think, mostly. An attempt to be comfortable through whatever” (Participant 5 5); “I’m just going for what’s comfortable ...” (Participant 9 2); “...I wear it quite a lot because it’s got things that I like: colour, stitching, it’s comfortable ...” (Participant 7 1). This sentiment was echoed in a study conducted by Twigg, where respondents spoke about basing their clothing choices on comfort (Twigg, *Fashion and Age: Dress, the Body and Later Life* 51). It is clear that the idea of dressing for comfort is important to women as they age, and their bodies change.

As these women have aged and are transitioning into retirement they are less concerned about restricting, prescriptive dress codes and conforming to others’ ideas of how they should be dressed. Instead they are focusing on clothing they like, find comfortable and ultimately want to wear. The physical changes in the body as people age are a factor in selecting clothing. Clothing that was worn in younger years no longer fits like it used to, at times due to physical changes in body shape or weight. Most participants spoke of a change or gaining of weight, most often in their torso, and wanting to hide or cover this with their clothing. While describing her current outfit one participant said that her top was “... really comfortable to wear, and it hides a lot of

sins” (Participant 9 1). Another participant reflected on her typical choice of clothes, saying that she “...[likes] things that are kind of big and loose on top and comfortable, and skinnier bottoms that are kind of stretchier and comfortable” (Participant 10 1). Physical changes could also be more extreme, such as medical conditions or a deterioration in the body, resulting in limited mobility or the ability to wear certain garments anymore. One woman reflected on how “...as you get older, things like the function of your fine motor skills, your shoulders, zippers you can’t do anymore. Footwear and all that sort of thing. The reshaping of your body. You have to rethink your wardrobe again” (Participant 5 3). Another participant spoke about how she had changes in her body after a series of illnesses resulting in bruising along her legs which affected her summer clothing choices:

Now my summer wear I don’t wear shorts at all, period, partly because since I’m sick. My leg, the shin, part of the disease was bruising and I’ve got brown marks on my legs ... So I don’t even own a pair of shorts (Participant 1 4).

The idea of confidence was another recurring theme that came up when discussing comfort and dressing for yourself, rather than for others. Participants repeatedly expressed that along with age comes not only wisdom, but also the confidence to wear what you want and to be comfortable in your own skin. One participant spoke frankly about her experiences of aging and becoming more confident in her clothing choices: “And you get more confidence as you get older. You know, teenagers dress all the same, even if they think it’s unique, it really isn’t because they’re all buying into it” (Participant 6 7). She later elaborated on this point: “...you can wear anything if you feel okay in it, then what the heck?” (Participant 6 9). As you age there is less of a concern about what others are wearing, or what they think about what you yourself are wearing, unlike

your younger years where you were more concerned about whether you were wearing the “right” or latest styles. These ideas of dressing for comfort and for yourself seem to be strongly linked together, as one participant expressed: “...I think some of the idea of comfort is also just being, for most women, about being more comfortable with who you are and who you dress for” (Participant 10 2). In entering into their senior years, these women have cast aside their concerns about what other people think of their clothing and are focusing on what makes them happy, and dressing for themselves.

Self-Expression

Clothing is strongly linked to self-expression and identity performance (Goffman). Even when it comes to every day dress people select garments and accessories based on how they wish to express themselves. The idea of clothing being a form of self-expression was brought up repeatedly throughout the interviews. Getting straight to the heart of the matter of clothing and self-expression, I asked each participant “What do you think your clothing says about you?” The responses varied from self-deprecating and humorous: “[laughs] that I’m lazy” (Participant 9 4), to thoughtful and insightful with responses like, “That I’m not an old fuddy-duddy. That I have paid attention” (Participant 3 11) and “... it’s a self-expression ...” (Participant 10 5). As varied as the responses were, one commonality was that all of the participants felt that their clothing communicated something about themselves to those around them. Such statements link to Goffman’s theories that people perform their identities through their everyday clothing (Goffman 2). Goffman argued that people will perform through their clothing, in order to communicate aspects of their identity to others (Tseñlon, Erving Goffman, *Social Science as an Art of Cultural Observation*” 152). The way that an individual dresses may change depending on their setting or

the company that they are with (Tseëlon, “Erving Goffman, Social Science as an Art of Cultural Observation” 153); this can be seen in the idea of public vs private self, or front stage vs backstage identities (Tseëlon, “Erving Goffman, Social Science as an Art of Cultural Observation” 154).

While some women required explicit questions about what they thought their clothing said about them, others brought up the topic on their own. When asked about her relationship with clothing over the years, one woman said that clothing has always been important to her and that for her “... it’s still a form of self-expression, of decorating oneself. Clothes these days are fun for me” (Participant 10 2). Another woman spoke about clothing and adornment being a creative outlet and form of self-expression: “Something that makes me feel good in what I’m wearing and ... has a creative edge” (Participant 2 1). For those who work in non-creative fields, clothing can be “... a bit of an outlet” (Participant 2 11) for self-expression and everyday creativity. These women still take pleasure in putting together outfits, seeing what goes with what and playing with colour, pattern, and shape. Even those who are self-described as not being fashionable take time each day to consider what they want to wear, and how they want to present themselves to the outside world.

Age Appropriate

Women face many challenges when it comes to clothing and deciding what to wear. Looking put-together, but remaining feminine, yet not overtly sexual; there are many hurdles to overcome. Women entering into their senior years also face the hurdle of dressing to appear “age appropriate” (Clarke, Griffin and Maliha 714). Throughout the interviews the idea of age appropriate dressing was a recurring theme and concern for the participants. The term “age

appropriate” is highly subjective and meant different things for each woman interviewed. For some it meant knowing what looks good on them, what they felt good and confident in, and not being a slave to fashion trends. One participant summed up her idea of “age appropriate” dressing by explaining that, “... you have to know your own body type and what’s flattering to you. And I think you need to have enough confidence in yourself to dress that way, and not just feel pressured by design and fashion ...” (Participant 2 11). For others, dressing appropriately for their age comes from a desire to remain current and relevant, by staying up-to-date with their clothing and not being cast aside and viewed as an “old lady”. This fear of looking like an “old lady” or matronly could come from the concern of dressing or looking like their mothers in their senior years. One woman reflected on how her mother used to dress and her thoughts on it: “When my mother was my age I felt like, ‘Oh my god she’s so old’ [laughs] and you know because the clothing, there wasn’t a lot of choice in clothing, so it did make her look more matronly” (Participant 9 8). These memories show that clothing has the ability to age a person beyond their years, whether they are trying to hold onto their youth through wearing clothes that they would have worn in their younger years, or shapeless, neutral-coloured clothing that makes them look drab and dowdy. The care and concern of whether or not they are dressed to appear “age appropriate” shows that these women do still care about their appearances and the clothes that they select; that they are a vital, ignored market within the fashion industry. Some women reject the whole idea of dressing to appear “age appropriate” entirely. One woman made the observation that the notion of “age appropriate” dress is a subjective and elusive idea: “I certainly don’t do age appropriate – I don’t even know what that means!” (Participant 4 6). There does not seem to be a concrete definition for “age appropriate dressing”, leaving many older women to navigate this vague world of age appropriate dressing on their own.

The consensus from this group of women is that they do not want to look like “mutton dressed as lamb”, meaning that they do not want to deny their age and wear outfits that they would have worn in their 20s or 30s: “I don’t want to dress like I’m trying to look thirty again, or clothing I would’ve enjoyed in my thirties” (Participant 9 8). One woman expressed how she often does not feel like she is 68 but rather feels younger at heart. She reflected on a conversation with friends:

... I think when I talk to my friends I ask ‘How old do you feel?’ and they all say in their 40s or early 50, they don’t feel like they’re in their 60s. So they wanted clothing that’s kind of reflective of that age, but not trendy, not super trendy.
(Participant 9 8.)

Drawing on these interviews it seems that there is a gap in the market when it comes to making clothes for women that are reflective of these women’s lifestyles, while remaining flattering and fashionable. One woman spoke about the size of the baby boomer generation, who are entering into their senior years, and how they are a large market within the fashion industry: “...I’m not on the very leading edge of baby boomers, but I’m near the front. And there’s this huge group behind me, it’s a big market” (Participant 9 9). When I wondered aloud whether the fashion industry would ever catch up and cater to this market she responded, “I think the economics will dictate that you have to” (Participant 9 9). The 65+ age bracket clearly feels under-served and under-represented by the fashion industry and wish for this to change.

Based off of the experiences of these women, there is a societal expectation and pressure to dress in a way that is appropriate to your age but with little to no guidance as to what that means. This, combined with a market saturated in ultra-trendy pieces being sold to women in

their teens and twenties, or shapeless, bland clothing that creates a matronly appearance leaves much to be desired in terms of clothing options for the upcoming generations of senior women.

Life Narratives and Objects

Whether a participant described herself as a clothes horse or uninterested in fashion, one commonality amongst all of the participants was that they had sentimental attachments to certain garments and accessories within their wardrobes. Clothes can be “powerful memory objects entangling the events of a person’s life. ... Clothes thus capture the dynamic of life and the intersection between historical and personal pasts (Twigg, *Fashion and Age: Dress, the Body and Later Life* 76). This sentimentality often resulted in each woman holding onto garments that no longer fit, or are worn infrequently. Most often sentimental objects were connected to life events, family members, or friends. The act of holding onto garments for sentimental purposes directly links to clothing’s connection to life narratives, as shown in these women’s stories.

Two women selected their “mother-of-the-bride” dresses to be photographed for this project, retelling stories of the shopping experiences and preparation for each wedding. When asked if she’s held onto any garments she no longer wears, one participant said “I also still have a formal “mother-of-the-bride” dress that I got for my daughter’s wedding” (Participant 5 7). When asked why she has kept it despite no longer wearing it, she replied, “I guess sentimental. Just sentiment of an occasion...” (Participant 5 8). One participant said that she does not “have a lot of attachment to clothing persé, but I’ll show you the ‘mother-of-the-bride’ dress for [my daughter’s] wedding, that I guess it connects me to that day” (Participant 9 5). Both women hold onto these dresses as physical connections to events in their children’s – and their own – lives as a memento. Another mother, when asked about the garments that she has kept over time,

responded with “Oh yeah. All the [garments] that I’ve kept have memories” (Participant 7 6). She then recalled many memories attached to specific garments, mostly to do with her family. The stories and memories ranged from what she was wearing the day she gave birth to one of her children, to garments that her daughter brought back after a trip to Africa. Through these garments, these women have another way of recalling these memories and life events.

Garments were not only attached to life events and special occasions but also to people. One participant has held onto two pieces of jewellery that were made by friends that have since passed away. One is a “ring that actually made by a dear old friend” (Participant 10 1) which she regularly wears. Another piece is a necklace, also made by a friend who has passed away. Though these friends are now dead, these pieces connect this participant to these friend, allowing her to remember them each time she wears the pieces.

Some women spoke about holding onto garments for sentimental purposes, but also because they enjoy clothing and fashion, treating it as one of their hobbies. They find certain garments so beautiful that they cannot bring themselves to get rid of them. One participant is a self-described clothes horse as well as packrat: “I am somewhat sentimental about my clothes and all that. ... But there are some things that I must admit I have an attachment to but I have so many things going on I have to keep them all” (Participant 8 12-3). While she admits that she probably has too many clothes for one person, this participant cannot bring herself to get rid of garments whether for aesthetic or sentimental reasons.

All of these garments and objects connect the owner and wearer back to life events and memories. The consensus seemed to be that getting rid of these garments was not an option, because of the memories attached to them. These garments will either be passed on to family

members, such as children or grandchildren, or be kept in the backs of closets, out of sight but not out of mind.

Creative Work

These women's closets are representative of their life narratives and the many transitions that they have gone through. Their wardrobes are reflective of their careers and hobbies, as well as whether they are self-proclaimed clothes horses or if they see clothing as more utilitarian. Through the images that I have selected and put together in grid compositions, I aim to visually represent the women through what they might describe as a typical outfit (see appendix A, fig.1-8).

The starting point of the compositions was the image of the closet. This is the housing of the bulk of each individual's garments, giving a general overview of the women's wardrobes – a cross-section of their many and varied identities performed through their clothing (Tseëlon, "Erving Goffman, Social Science as an Art of Cultural Observation" 154). Next, I selected four smaller supporting images. The support images consisted of garments and accessories that each participant selected prior to the interviews. For the photographs, most women laid out the garments on the bed, mimicking the outfit selection process that they might go through when choosing a daily outfit, or an outfit for a special occasion. Other women displayed garments on hangers in order to be photographed. Each woman helped in the positioning and styling of their garments and accessories, ensuring that they felt well-represented through the photographs. The act of styling the garments felt very similar to the act of getting dressed: putting an outfit together, selecting accessories and shoes, styling hair and makeup. There was a certain degree of care and consideration when styling these garments, further showing that these women do still

care about their appearances and how they present themselves in public, even if they themselves are not included in the images (Twigg, “Clothing, Age and The Body: A Critical Review” 300).

Based on the layout that was designed for each composition, with the main image of the closet space accompanied by a set of supporting images, I decided to only include four support images for a consistent layout from composition to composition, creating a flow and cohesion within the overall series. To create a unifying theme between compositions, when organizing the photographs by person, I decided to select images of garments and accessories that represent a typical outfit for each woman. The purpose of making this selection is to show how these garments represent these women and what they communicate about each individual without them being present in these images (Goffman). Each set of images says something about the individual. The individual is trying to communicate or express something about themselves through their clothing; however, their outfit may be read differently by those around them. As previously mentioned, I asked each woman what they thought their clothing said about them, and they all had fairly clear ideas of what they want their clothing to say about them.

During the emailing stages between the participants and myself, the question of whether they needed to be included in the photographs came up frequently. Since this project was a collaboration between myself and the participants, I remained flexible and open to each participant’s preference of whether they wanted to be photographed or not. If they did not want to be photographed, we worked around that. If they did want to model their garments for me, I welcomed the opportunity. The result of this, however, was that only two of the ten women that I interviewed offered to model their clothes, creating an imbalanced effect within the entire series. Due to this imbalance, I left out images of participants posing in their clothes from the final series, at this stage of the project. If I were to continue with this project, and had more

participants model their clothes for the photographs, it would create a more balanced overall effect within the series, allowing me to include photographs with and without people in the frame when organizing the images by person.

The solution to including some of these images of the women in their garments appeared when I started organizing the images by other themes, such as “life narratives”. The new arrangements allowed for garments that were photographed on and off of the body to be included in the series. The garments included in *Sentimental 1* and *2* (see appendix A, fig. 9 and 10) have strong emotional and sentimental value for these women. These garments connect each participant to life events, from celebrations – weddings, births of grandchildren – to remembering loved ones; each garment carries a story or memory. Through keeping these garments these women are able to hold onto their memories, and stay connected to past life events (Bye and McKinney 484).

Contributions and Limitations

Senior women are a largely neglected demographic within the fashion industry, leaving gaps in representation, and stylish, comfortable clothing available to senior women. That gap created an opportunity for this project to investigate senior women’s experiences with clothing and fashion. Many people feel they are constantly being dictated to by the fashion industry so I, therefore, included the participants in the creative process of photography to ensure that they are being represented in a genuine and authentic way. That being said, this project, with a sample size of 10 people, is not necessarily representative of all senior women’s experiences with clothing and fashion.

When sourcing participants, I sought out a diverse sampling in the categories of race, gender, sexuality and physical capability, in order for this project to have a range of experiences and stories. While posting and sending out my call for participants, I sought out organizations and spaces where women of colour, as well as those within the LGBTQ+ community might frequent. Despite these efforts, this project does have limited diversity, with only 20% of participants being women of colour, only 20% of participants noted a physical disability, and only 10% of participants identified as gay/queer. Although there were more women of colour interested in participating in this project, due to time constraints I was unable to interview them at this stage of the project. If this project were to continue, I would seek out such women of colour to create greater racial diversity within the project, and make a more concerted effort to seek out a diverse sampling, most likely through snowball sampling of previous participants.

In considering that I myself and a cis-gendered white woman telling the stories of women from marginalized groups and communities, it is important for my work to focus on collaboration between myself and my participants. The mission of this project is to have participants be active in the image making process so they can ensure that they are being represented in meaningful and authentic ways.

Further Explorations

Due to time limitations that resulted in a sample with limited diversity, I would like to continue interviewing senior women about their experiences with clothing and fashion. As a sample demographic, women felt like a natural selection due to the historical connection between women and fashion (Breward, 170-1; Twigg 2007, 288). That being said, I would be interested in opening this project up to men since they also participate in fashion and have their own set of

struggles and issues when it comes to clothing. Due to the structure and open-ended nature of this project, it lends itself to being applied to many demographics: senior women, teenagers, young professionals, etc. The configurations for this project seem limitless, allowing for many potential future explorations and iterations of creating authentic representations of various demographics.

For the current iteration of this project, *I Dress for Me*, I plan to exhibit the images in a gallery setting. In order for the viewer to compare and contrast images, I would create large-scale prints so that all the small details, which would be lost or looked over in a small-scale print, are visible. Another avenue of dissemination would be to compile the images into a book. On average, there were 20-30 images per participant but only 5-10 images were per participant shown because of the composition layout. Were these images to be made into a book, this would allow me to include more of the images and explore further themes and topics that were not included at this stage of the project. As previously stated, due to the formulaic yet open-ended nature of this project, further explorations are limitless, allowing for endless opportunities to continue on with this project beyond the series *I Dress for Me*.

Conclusion

This MRP does not present a literal representation of the ten women who participated in this project; however, the interviews and photographs reveal the layers and complexities of each individual's experience of clothing in relation to life narratives and identity. Despite these women's tastes in clothes and life experiences varying from one another, there are common themes between them, including changes in wardrobe due to life transitions and physical changes related to age. The most significant commonality amongst participants was the relationship

between garments and objects that have a strong connection to memory and life narratives. The association with life narratives often resulted in such women holding onto garments that no longer fit or have gone unworn, because they are linked to life events or have a significant emotional memory attached to them. Through these interviews and photographs I also discovered that even into their senior years, women still care about how they are dressed and consider what their clothing choices say about them. Regardless of age, clothing and the act of adorning oneself can be a highly charged and deeply personal experience.

Appendix A



Fig. 1 *Participant 10*, photograph composition, 2017



Fig. 2 *Participant 3*, photograph composition, 2017



Fig. 3 *Participant 6*, photograph composition, 2017



Fig. 4 *Participant 7*, photograph composition, 2017



Fig. 5 *Participant 4*, photograph composition, 2017

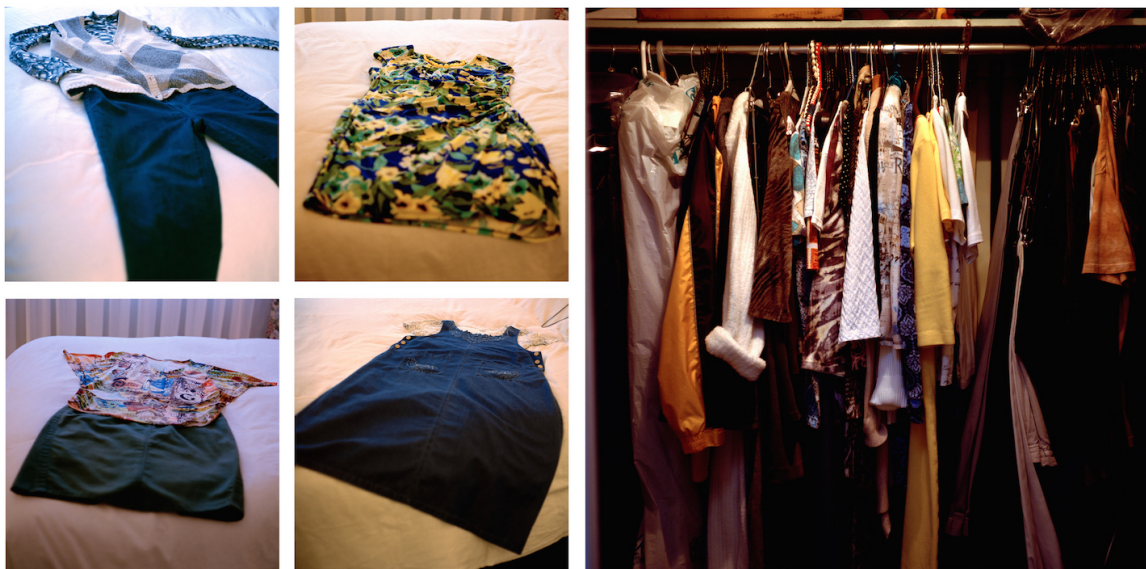


Fig. 6 *Participant 5*, photograph composition, 2017



Fig. 7 *Participant 2*, photograph composition, 2017



Fig. 8 *Participant 9*, photograph composition, 2017

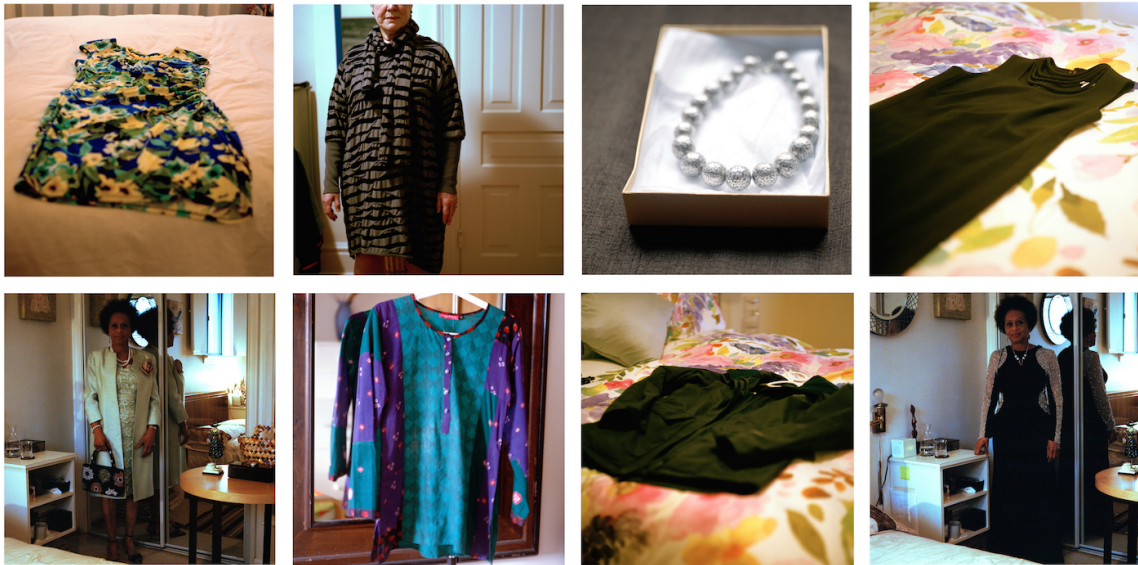


Fig. 9 *Sentimental 1*, photograph composition, 2017

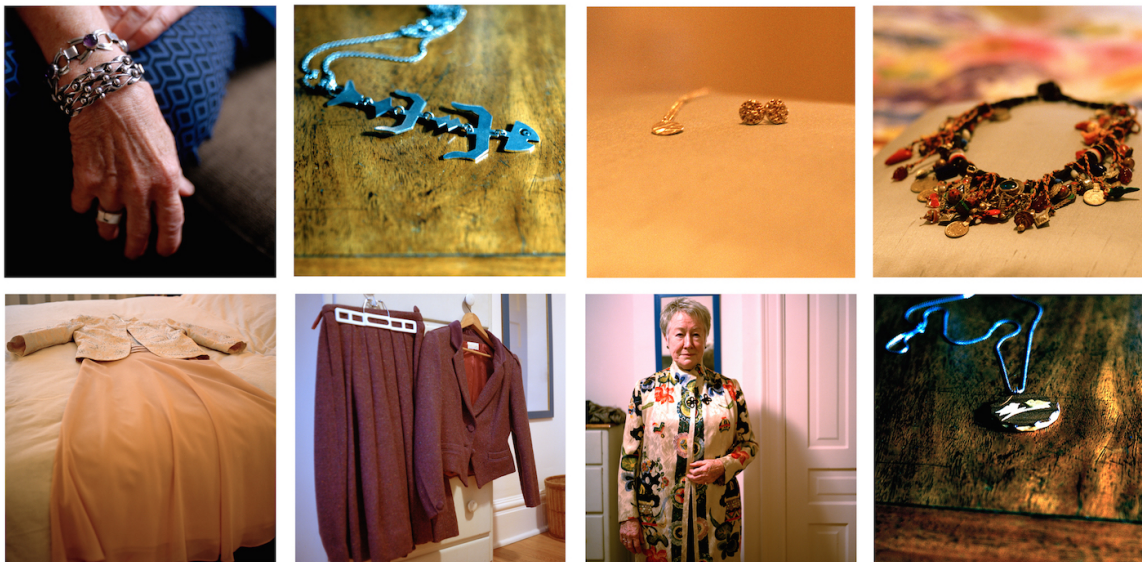


Fig. 10 *Sentimental 2*, photograph composition, 2017

Appendix B

MRP Interview Questions

General Questions

1. Can you tell me about your current outfit?
2. How do you get your clothing? (in-store, online, friends/family)
3. Where do you get your clothing? (specific shops)
4. Can you tell me about your relationship with clothing and fashion? Has it changed over time? If so, how?
5. Does your clothing change depending on the situation/occasion? If so, how?
6. What do you consider each day when getting dressed?
7. How do you approach fashion in your daily life?
8. What do you think your clothing says about you?

Age & Memory

9. Has the way that you dress changed over time?
10. Do you have any distinct memories attached to any garments in your wardrobe? (Past or current)
11. Are there garments you have given away or gotten rid of that you have strong memories of? What was the motivation?
12. Are there any garments that you no longer wear that you have held on to? What are they? What is the connection to them?
13. What have been your experiences of aging/getting older (in relation to clothing)?
14. Is there anything that you would like to add?

Appendix C

Call for Participants

Hello,

My name is Gabrielle Trach I am a graduate student in the MA Fashion program at Ryerson University. As part of the requirements for the fulfilment of my degree, under the supervision of Joseph Medaglia, I am conducting a research study investigating the relationship between clothing, identity and age. There is a lack of representation of older women within the fashion industry. The purpose of this study is to create a platform for older women to tell their stories about their relationship with clothing and fashion, through an interview and photo session.

This study is seeking individuals who identify as a woman/female, age 65+, who live in the GTA (Greater Toronto Area). This study will take place over one (1) day at the home of the participant. The study will include an approx. 45-minute wardrobe interview, as well as an approx. 1.5 hour-long documentary-style photo session of each participant's wardrobe, resulting in approx. 4-5 final photographs per participant. There will be a 30 to 45-minute break between the interview and photo session. The day of the interview and photo session can be arranged between participant and researcher. An example of the questions you will be asked as a part of the study are: "Can you tell me about your relationship with clothing and fashion?" and "Has your relationship to clothing changed over time? If so, how?" The final images will be kept as a part of the researcher's portfolio, and possibly be displayed in exhibition spaces, such as galleries, or in conferences in the future. Upon completion of the project, each participant will receive copies of the photographs of them and their wardrobe.

I especially encourage POC, people with disabilities and Aboriginal peoples to participate.

If you are interested in participating in this project, please contact

Gabrielle Trach
gtrach@ryerson.ca

This is a voluntary study.





VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY

Portraits of Closets: Age and Identity
Women age 65+ needed



There is a lack of representation of older women within fashion. The purpose of this study is to create a platform for older women to tell their stories about their relationship with clothing and fashion, through an interview and photo session. This study is seeking individuals who identify as a woman/female, age 65+, who live in the GTA (Greater Toronto Area). This study will take place over one (1) day at the home of the participant. The study will include an approx. 45-minute wardrobe interview, as well as an approx. 1.5 hour-long documentary-style photo session of each participant’s wardrobe, resulting in approx. 4-5 final photographs per participant. There will be a 30 to 45-minute break between the interview and photo session.

Some questions you might be asked are: “Can you tell me about your relationship with clothing and fashion?” and “Has your relationship to clothing changed over time? If so, how?” The final images will potentially be kept as a part of the researcher’s portfolio, and possibly be displayed in exhibition spaces, such as galleries, or in conferences in the future. Upon completion of the project, each participant will receive copies of the photographs of them and their wardrobe. I especially encourage POC, people with disabilities and Aboriginal peoples to participate.

This is a voluntary study.

Contact: Gabrielle gtrach@ryerson.ca	Contact: Gabrielle gtrach@ryerson.ca	Contact: Gabrielle gtrach@ryerson.ca	Contact: Gabrielle gtrach@ryerson.ca	Contact: Gabrielle gtrach@ryerson.ca	Contact: Gabrielle gtrach@ryerson.ca	Contact: Gabrielle gtrach@ryerson.ca	Contact: Gabrielle gtrach@ryerson.ca
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Appendix D

Table 1
Poster Tracking Sheet

Location	Intersection	Contacted	Posterred	Not Posterred	Notes
Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship (219 Front St E)	Front & Sherbourne	Nov. 22/16	x		Woman at desk seemed hesitant, who knows
Council Fire Native Community Centre (439 Dundas St E)	Parliament & Dundas	Nov. 22/16	x		Woman at the desk offered me suggestions of where else to poster; seemed positive
Ontario Black History Society (10 Adelaide St E)	Yonge & Adelaide			x	
Centre for Spanish Speaking People (120 Carlton St #201)	Jarvis & Carlton	Nov. 22/16		x	Located in office building; was a bit confusing as to whether they were still at the location; will email downtown and North York locations
Spanish Centre (46 Hayden St)	Between Yonge & Church/North of Wellesly	Nov. 22/16		x	Winter is slow season; younger demographic
The 519 (519 Church St)	Church & Wellesley	Nov. 22/16	x		Men at desk were v. positive; "pretty kick-ass thesis"
Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (34 Isabella St)	Between Yonge & Church/North of Wellesly	Nov. 22/16	x		Small location, but put up poster
Older Women's Network (115 The Esplanade)	Market St & The Esplanade	Nov. 22/16		x	This is not what I expected; it's a locked womens' living co-op. Email business office to put up poster, if can find email
Black Experience Project (33 Bloor E)	Yonge & Bloor E	Nov. 22/16		x	Could not find office within office building; look for email address and contact that way

Textile Museum		Nov. 22/16	x		Emailed Susan about sending call to museum volunteers, but haven't heard back
Ryerson Fashion Dept./Alum		Dec. 6/16	x		Emailed Audrey to send call for participants to mailing list; Audrey forwarded email to mailing list immediately
MA Fashion 2nd years		Dec. 4/16	x		Sent call to fellow 2nd years via Facebook
Ingrid Mida		Dec. 6/16	x		Emailed Ingrid to see if she has any contacts through the RFC or other projects that she may be able to put me in contact with
Paulette Kelly		Jan. 18/17	x		Emailed Paulette (Ryerson faculty) to see if she or anyone that she knows is interested in participating in study
Alice Chu		Jan. 18/17	x		Emailed Alice (Ryerson faculty) to see if she or anyone that she knows might be interested in participating

Appendix E

Participant Email Prompt

The interview takes about 45 minutes, and the shoot can take up to an hour. For the shoot, if you could pull out approx. 5 garments and 5 accessories that are significant to you (favourite, family heirloom, strong memories associated with it, etc). Also, if you could dress in an outfit that you feel best represents you/your taste in clothing (such as a favourite outfit, or an outfit you would typically wear). Lastly, one of the images will be a photograph of your closet/wardrobe. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Appendix F

Oral History Interview Consent Agreement

The logo for Ryerson University, featuring the text "RYERSON UNIVERSITY" in white capital letters on a blue rectangular background, with a yellow vertical bar to the right.

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Please read this consent form so that you understand what your participation will involve. Before you consent to participate, please ask any questions to be sure you understand what your participation will involve.

INVESTIGATORS: This research study is being conducted by Ryerson MA Fashion student Gabrielle Trach as a part of the fulfillment of her Master's degree requirements, under the supervision of Joseph Medaglia from the School of Fashion at Ryerson University.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: This intention of this study is to gain a better understanding of the experiences of women age 65+ in relation to their wardrobes and clothing, using both interview and creative methods. The interviews and photo sessions will be conducted by the researcher (Gabrielle). Documentary-style photographs will be taken after the interview to visually describe each participant's relationship with their wardrobe.

WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO: If you volunteer to participate in this interview, you will be asked to do the following things:

Participate in an approximately 45-minute audio-recorded interview, answering a series of questions about how you interact with your clothing ie. "Can you tell me about your relationship with clothing/fashion" and "How do you approach fashion in daily life?" This interview will be followed up by a 1.5-hour documentary-style photo shoot, after a 30 to 45-minute break. During the photo shoot you and your wardrobe will be photographed, documenting each individual's experience with their clothing. You have the following options of how to be photographed, based on personal comfort levels, and preferred level of anonymity:

- a) Photographed with their wardrobe, facing the camera (face will be visible in image)
- b) Photographed with their wardrobe, facing away from camera (face will not be visible)
- c) Not photographed with wardrobe.

The photo shoot will be held in the home of the individual.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

This interview will add to the research around the lived experience of clothing, and how individuals utilise it to curate their identity. This interview will also potentially broaden the research field of age, clothing and identity. There are no direct benefits to participants.

POTENTIAL RISKS:

Due to the personal nature of the questions asked, you may reflect on unpleasant memories while responding to a questionnaire or interview. At any point you are able to skip a question, take a break, or decline to participate in the study, either temporarily or permanently.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. If you agree to be photographed for this study your identity will not be kept confidential.

The images, and transcribed text from the recordings may be used in, but not limited to, future publications, presentations, or exhibitions (such as in a gallery, or at a conference), which you can consent to prior to beginning of study. Each interview will be transcribed, and quotations will be pulled from interviews to be displayed alongside the images in the final presentation. In the final written document, names will be changed to anonymous participant labels eg. “participant A”, etc. A legend will be made and kept by the researcher, which will be encrypted and stored on a password protected device.

HOW YOUR INFORMATION WILL BE PROTECTED AND STORED:

The recordings, transcriptions and photographs will be encrypted and stored on password protected devices. Only the researcher named in this study will have access to the data as collected. The negatives from the photo sessions will be kept in a locked filing cabinet that only the researcher has access to. Recordings will be destroyed once they are transcribed. The transcriptions and labeling legend will be destroyed six (6) months after the study is completed. The negatives and images will be kept indefinitely as a part of the researcher’s portfolio; negatives will be stored in a locked filing cabinet that only the researcher has access to. The images may be used in, but not limited to, future publications, presentations, online display or exhibitions, which participants have the option to consent to prior to beginning of study.

INCENTIVE FOR PARTICIPATION:

Upon completion of the study, each participant will be given copies of the photographs of them and their wardrobes (print sizes will be approx. 8x10”).

YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT:

Participation in research is completely voluntary and you can withdraw your consent at any point. By consenting to participate you are not waiving any of your legal rights as a research participant. You are welcome to review and suggest edits to the final transcript via email or by hard copy once the interviews have been transcribed, leaving final decisions to the interviewer. You may do so by contacting the researcher and requesting either a digital or hard copy of the transcription.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL:

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If any question makes you uncomfortable, you can skip that question. You may stop participating at any time either verbally or in writing. If you choose to stop participating, you may also choose to not have your data included in the study. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University, Gabrielle Trach, or the investigators involved in the research.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY:

If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact Gabrielle Trach at gtrach@ryerson.ca or Faculty Supervisor Joseph Medaglia at jmedaglia@ryerson.ca. If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board at rebchair@ryerson.ca (416) 979-5042.

This study has been reviewed by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. 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 Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
416-979-5042
rebchair@ryerson.ca



CONFIRMATION OF AGREEMENT:

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 interview and photo shoot 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.

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

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

I agree to be audio-recorded for the purposes of this study. I understand how these recordings will be stored and kept.

Signature of Participant

Date

I agree to be photographed for the purposes of this study. I understand how these negatives and images will be stored and kept.

Signature of Participant

Date

I agree to these images and transcribed audio-recordings being used in the future for the purposes, including but not limited to, being displayed (in exhibition spaces, such as a gallery, or at a conference), published, etc.

Signature of Participant

Date

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Participant 1. Personal Interview. 26 Jan. 2017.

Participant 2. Personal Interview. 2 Jan. 2017.

Participant 3. Personal Interview. 10 Jan. 2017.

Participant 4. Personal Interview. 22 Feb. 2017.

Participant 5. Personal Interview. 12 Jan. 2017.

Participant 6. Personal Interview. 9 Feb. 2017.

Participant 7. Personal Interview. 4 Jan. 2017.

Participant 8. Personal Interview. 7 Mar. 2017.

Participant 9. Personal Interview. 1 Mar. 2017.

Participant 10. Personal Interview. 10 Mar. 2017.

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