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# Artisanal Fashion Design: Entrepreneurs on Thinking, Process, and Decision Making

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# **ARTISANAL FASHION DESIGN: ENTREPRENEURS ON THINKING, PROCESS, AND DECISION MAKING**

By

Robert Ott, BAA (Ryerson, 1990)

A thesis

presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Management Science (MMSc)

in the program of

Management of Technology and Innovation

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2012

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# **Abstract**

## **ARTISANAL FASHION DESIGN: ENTREPRENEURS ON THINKING, PROCESS, AND DECISION MAKING**

Master of Management Science (MMSc)

in the program of Management of Technology and Innovation

Ryerson University

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This thesis examines the ways in which fashion designers think about themselves, the design process, and the fashion industry. Recent interest in design thinking has brought decision making to the forefront in an effort to resolve conflicts between creative individuals and managers during the design process. Within the fashion design literature there are studies of processes in large fashion manufacturing enterprises but very little has focused on small-scale fashion design entrepreneurs. In this inductive, qualitative study, I use grounded theory as the methodology in the analysis of semi-structured interviews of twelve Canadian fashion design entrepreneurs. The findings explore their perceptions of their identity as designers, their perceptions of design process, and their relationship to their business. This research has developed the concept of “artisanal fashion design” as a distinct subset of design for further study and for consideration by organizations, the fashion industry, and educators.

Keywords: fashion design, design thinking, design process, decision making, perception, artisanal, entrepreneur.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Author's Declaration .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Literature Review .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.1. Design and Design Processes .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.2. Forms of Cognition.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2.3. Designers .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2.4. Fashion Design Businesses and Processes .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>2.5. The Canadian Fashion Industry .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>2.6. Fashion and Culture: The Ecosystem.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2.7. Gaps in the Research Literature .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2.8. Situating the Researcher in the Study .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>3. Research Methods and Data Sources .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>3.1. The Relevance of the Study .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>3.2. Rationale of Research Method .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>3.3. Research Question .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>3.4. Expected Contribution to the Field .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>3.5. Scope .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>3.6. Sampling.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>3.7. The Participants in the Study .....</b>	<b>42</b>

<b>3.8. Participant Profiles.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>3.9. Data Collection .....</b>	<b>44</b>
3.9.1. Interviews .....	44
3.9.2. Documents .....	45
<b>3.10. Data Preparation .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>3.11. Data Analysis – Background .....</b>	<b>46</b>
3.11.1. Open Coding .....	48
3.11.2. Selective Coding .....	48
3.11.3. Theoretical Coding .....	49
3.11.4. Memo Writing.....	49
3.11.5. Theoretical Sorting .....	49
<b>3.12. Data Analysis – Cycles .....</b>	<b>50</b>
3.12.1. Cycle 1 – Open Coding.....	51
3.12.2. Cycle 2 – Categorization.....	51
3.12.3. Cycle 3 – Coding On .....	52
3.12.4. Cycle 4 – Data Reduction .....	52
3.12.5. Cycle 5 – Writing Analytical Memos .....	52
3.12.6. Cycle 6 – Validation .....	53
3.12.7. Cycle 7 – Synthesis.....	53
<b>3.13. Reliability and Validity .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>3.14. Description of Instruments .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>3.15. Discussion of Problems Encountered.....</b>	<b>55</b>



<b>4. Research Findings and Discussion .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>4.1. How Designers Think About Themselves – RQ Part 1 .....</b>	<b>60</b>
4.1.1. Theme: Identity and Self-Perception .....	60
4.1.1.1. Title of Fashion Designer.....	61
4.1.1.2. Talent .....	63
4.1.1.3. Skill .....	66
4.1.1.4. Perceived Respect for Self in Industry.....	68
4.1.1.5. Expectations .....	72
4.1.2. Theme: Perception of Others in Field.....	73
<b>4.2. How Fashion Designers Think About the Design Process – RQ Part 2 .....</b>	<b>77</b>
4.2.1. Theme: Definition of Design .....	77
4.2.2. Theme: Transformation .....	79
4.2.2.1. Design Process Roles .....	80
4.2.2.2. Designer to Artifact.....	83
4.2.2.3. Artifact to Consumer.....	86
4.2.2.4. Designer to Consumer.....	90
4.2.2.5. Level of Satisfaction .....	92
4.2.2.6. Work-Life Balance.....	94
<b>4.3. How Fashion Designers Think About the Business of Design and Their Role – RQ Part 3 .....</b>	<b>97</b>
4.3.1. Theme: Decision Making .....	97
4.3.1.1. Rational Decision Making .....	97
4.3.1.2. Irrational Decision Making .....	101

4.3.2. Theme: Organizational Effectiveness .....	106
4.3.2.1. Function .....	107
4.3.2.2. Approach to Work Practice.....	111
4.3.2.3. Relationship with Non-Creative Process .....	118
4.3.2.4. Risk Tolerance .....	121
4.3.2.5. Sharing Expertise .....	122
<b>4.4. Exploring Relationships.....</b>	<b>125</b>
4.4.1. Relationship between Decision Making and Label Type .....	126
4.4.2. Relationship between Label and Approach to Work Practice .....	128
4.4.3. Relationship between Career Stage and the Non-Creative Process.....	128
4.4.4. Relationship between Label and the Non-Creative Process .....	129
4.4.5. Relationship between Perceived Respect and Career Stage .....	130
4.4.6. Relationship between Personal/Professional Satisfaction and Career Stage.....	131
4.4.7. Relationship of Intensity to Innovation during Career Stages.....	132
<b>4.5. Design Thinking, Design Process, and Decision Making .....</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>5. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>5.1. Contribution to Existing Literature .....</b>	<b>136</b>
5.1.1. Artisanal Fashion Design.....	137
5.1.2. Design Thinking .....	137
5.1.3. Design Process.....	138
5.1.4. Decision Making.....	140

<b>5.2. Implications.....</b>	<b>141</b>
5.2.1. Fashion Design Entrepreneurs.....	141
5.2.2. The Fashion Industry .....	142
5.2.3. Government .....	144
5.2.4. Educators .....	145
<b>5.3. Limitations .....</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>5.4. Future Research .....</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Appendix A: Interview Participant Matrix.....</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Appendix B: Recruitment Script.....</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>Appendix C: Interview Script.....</b>	<b>170</b>
<b>Appendix D: Consent Form .....</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>Appendix E: Research Ethics Board Approval .....</b>	<b>179</b>
<b>Appendix F: Analysis – Phase 2&amp;3 Categorization of Open Codes / Coding On</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>Appendix G: Employment by Subsector .....</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Appendix H: Establishments by Subsector .....</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>Appendix I: Employment by Occupation, 2006.....</b>	<b>187</b>

## List of Tables

Table 1. <i>Steps and Actions of the Design Thinking Process</i> .....	14
Table 2. <i>Characteristics of the Design Process</i> .....	14
Table 3. <i>Classical Model of Decision Making</i> .....	16
Table 4. <i>Perceived Attributes of Designers</i> .....	20
Table 5. <i>Relationship Between Label and Decision Making</i> .....	127
Table 6. <i>Relationship Between Label and Approach to Work Practice</i> .....	128
Table 7. <i>Relationship Between Career Stage and the Non-Creative Process</i> .....	128
Table 8. <i>Relationship Between Label and the Non-Creative Process</i> .....	129
Table 9. <i>Relationship Between Perceived Respect and Career Stage</i> .....	130
Table 10. <i>Relationship Between Personal/Professional Satisfaction and Career Stage</i>	131

## List of Figures

<i>Figure 1. Design thinking process. Source: d.School: Institute of Design, Stanford University</i> .....	13
<i>Figure 2. Subsets of design</i> .....	21
<i>Figure 3. Percent of establishments by employment size clothing manufacturing companies, 2008. Source: Statistics Canada</i> .....	25
<i>Figure 4. Positions reported as difficult to fill in the Canadian fashion industry. Source: Milstein &amp; Co Consulting, AHRC Labour Market Update Study Survey, 2010.</i> .....	26
<i>Figure 5. Workforce group from which seeking new hires. Source: Milstein &amp; Co. Consulting, AHRC Labour Market Update Study Survey, 2010</i> .....	27

<i>Figure 6. Designations of fashion designers.....</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>Figure 7. Where talent comes from. ....</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>Figure 8. Where skill comes from. ....</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>Figure 9. Perceived respect for the fashion design industry.....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Figure 10. Designers’ expectations of themselves and others.....</i>	<i>72</i>
<i>Figure 11. Design process roles.....</i>	<i>81</i>
<i>Figure 12. Designers’ rationale for creating an artifact.....</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>Figure 13. Consumers’ emotional response toward the artifact. ....</i>	<i>86</i>
<i>Figure 14. Designers’ role in relation to customer. ....</i>	<i>91</i>
<i>Figure 15. Designers’ personal and professional satisfaction level. ....</i>	<i>92</i>
<i>Figure 16. Designers’ perception of their work/life balance.....</i>	<i>94</i>
<i>Figure 17. Designers’ rational decision making preference given different types of assumption. ....</i>	<i>98</i>
<i>Figure 18. Designers’ irrational decision making preference given an assumption.....</i>	<i>102</i>
<i>Figure 19. Designers’ functions within their organizations. ....</i>	<i>107</i>
<i>Figure 20. Designers’ approach to working within the organization. ....</i>	<i>111</i>
<i>Figure 21. Designers’ relationships to the non-creative process.....</i>	<i>118</i>
<i>Figure 22. Innovation intensity during the stages of designers’ careers.. ....</i>	<i>132</i>
<i>Figure 23. Artisanal fashion design as a subset of design.....</i>	<i>135</i>

# 1. Introduction

The releases of *Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation* by Tim Brown in 2009, and *The Design of Business* by Roger Martin in the same year, have stimulated both the research and business communities' interest in design thinking. Although the concept of design thinking has been widely studied since the 1960s, the applications largely resided within the sectors under investigation – such as system design, engineering, and architecture. Not until the beginning of the twenty-first century has design thinking been applied to business and, more recently, to the training of managers.

In the contemporary context, design thinking can be described as matching the sensibility and methods of creativity with business strategy and available technology to maximize a market opportunity (Brown, 2008). Instead of simply improving products, organizations want designers to create strategic consumer goods. The difficulty in meeting business objectives lies in motivation, and the approach creatives and managers take to making decisions. The argument about the process of how to resolve decision making conflicts has moved from the workplace to higher education institutions. By teaching business and management students how to think like designers, educators are attempting to overcome the obstacles to making good decisions (R. L. Martin, 2009).

Decision making is commonly approached in two ways. First, “rational” decision making involves analytic and deductive thinking where much of the design problem is clearly defined. Second, “irrational” decision making requires intuitive and inductive thinking when much of the design problem is poorly defined or even shifting (Tarter & Hoy, 1998). Martin (2009) introduces a third construct that falls between “rational” and “irrational”: characterized by a

“leap of mind,” it can be called “abductive reasoning.” First proposed by Charles Peirce, abductive reasoning is required for innovation, where old ideas no longer stimulate development. Designers are believed to use abductive thinking extensively in making decisions. They “challenge accepted explanations, and infer possible new worlds. By doing so they scare the hell out of a lot of businesspeople” (R. L. Martin, 2009, p. 65).

Decision making is enhanced by experience, which enriches “tacit” knowledge through the repetition of “doing” (Schön, 1983). In other words, tacit knowledge is acquired by being hands-on. Individual acts of “doing” lead to sequential steps and eventually to a process. The design process attempts to codify the techniques and rules that are used by a specific design sector. However, there is no single prescribed process within a discipline, which further complicates the relationship between design and business. In fact, the design thinking process does not result in a nicely packaged solution, even if guided by a step-by-step procedure (Ling, 2010; Merholz, 2009).

Research into the design process has been able to identify the tactical steps creative individuals undertake in developing new products. However, inferring strategic approaches in understanding how designers think has largely been constructed from the manager’s perspective. Little research exists in regard to how designers themselves see the decision making process. Further, research in design thinking has not specifically addressed the process of how decision making is affected when creatives act simultaneously as managers.

This study attempts to extend design thinking by examining artisanal fashion designers who must act both as creatives and as business managers in the design and decision making

processes. The focus of the study is to learn how these designers think about themselves, about design, and about their role in the organization.

Within the larger discipline of design, fashion belongs to the subset of artifact design, meaning the activity focuses on producing physical products. Within fashion, the design sector can be further broken down into artistic, commercial, and artisanal. Artisans can also be considered craftspeople and may make functional or strictly decorative items. While the goods are generally handmade, the use of technology in recent years has extended the product reach from local markets to global customers. An artisan is both creator and marketer of the product, and therefore serves as a designer and businessperson.

While the term “artisan designer” has been recently coined by Choi (2003), her focus is on information and communications technology (ICT) adoption by fashion designers. Choi’s study did identify differences among fashion designers by classifying them as either design-oriented, business-oriented, or a combination of the two. Referring to the design-oriented group as “artisan designers,” she describes them as “artists, rather than business owners. They believed their work to be an artistic process and their final products—designed garments—were the result of their artistic creativity” (Choi, 2003, pp. 6-7).

While business is obsessed with developing innovative—that is, new and useful—products, fashion design looks at innovation as finding and honing a unique element of a designer’s work. Ettlie, Bridges and O’Keefe (1984) describe this approach as “incremental” innovation.

The subject of this thesis is important given the growing significance of fashion design and creative industries in the global economy. Since the late 1990s, the creative industries sector



has governed the international economic agenda in many countries, including the U.S, France, Italy, Britain, Australia, the Netherlands, and Canada. Growth in this sector is driven by small business enterprises including artisan designers, not only in fashion, but also in the fields of graphic, interior, and industrial design. Understanding how these entrepreneurs operate and the factors influencing their success or failure is, therefore, of interest.

The scope of this study involves an inductive, qualitative approach to analyzing data obtained through interviews with twelve fashion designers working in or near Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The participants are small business owners who perform the chief design functions within their organizations. I have organized this thesis as follows:

**Chapter 2, Literature Review:** This chapter introduces concepts that inform and support the complexity of observations revealed by the data collected. The section on design and the design process provides a general overview of the practices employed in the creative sector. A section on forms of cognition provides an overview of rationality and decision making in the creative sector. Additional sections on designers, business, process, the Canadian fashion industry, and culture provide the conceptual context of fashion. Lastly, sections on gaps in the research literature and situating the researcher provide the motivation for this study. Because this thesis uses grounded theory, much of the literature review was actually completed after the data-collection stage.

**Chapter 3, Research Methods and Data Sources:** This chapter outlines the rationale and need for the study. The inductive, qualitative approach to data collection and analysis, which systematically applies the principles of grounded theory, is intended as one of my contributions to fashion design research. Sections in this chapter describe the participants and provide profile

information. Detailed steps describe the collection, preparation, and analysis of the data in this study. The chapter concludes with a short discussion of problems encountered.

**Chapter 4, Research Findings and Discussion:** This chapter delivers the results of the data analysis and is structured around the three parts of the research question. In this chapter, I discuss in detail the themes and subthemes that emerged during the inductive, qualitative evaluation of twelve semi-structured interviews and publicly available data. Figures, tables and extensive examples of text excerpts from the interviews provide visual and literary colour to the findings. The chapter continues with an exploration of relationships between the data as they emerged during the analysis. The concluding sections link the three key findings of the study to existing models and concepts.

**Chapter 5, Conclusion:** This chapter highlights this study's contribution to the literature, and discusses implications of the findings to entrepreneurs, the fashion industry, government, and educators. It closes with a reflection on the limitations of this study, and suggests opportunities for further research.

## 2. Literature Review

Designers drive innovation. According to Martin (2009), designers “actively look for new data points, challenge accepted explanations, and infer possible new worlds” (p. 65). Design plays a crucial role in where we live, where we work, how we entertain, what we eat, and what we wear. Design defines who we are and who we want to be.

Design is a central feature of culture and everyday life, but it has a variety of different meanings. Design can be both a noun and a verb. It incorporates not only the process of designing and the artifact designed, but also the solution resulting from the process in creating the artifact (Eagen, Aspevig, Cukier, Bauer, & Ngwenyama, 2011). “Design is a social phenomenon: it shapes behaviours, it relies on social interactions (e.g., feedbacks are of crucial relevance), and it creates new ways of perceiving the social setting” (D'Ippolito, 2012, p. 18). Historically, design has been considered a component of the development process, in essence simply beautifying a product without actually contributing to the solution of a specific problem. Now, however, design drives the development process by creatively defining the solution for a need or desire in ways it has not done so previously (Brown, 2008).

Petroski (1998) saw design as the disassembling and reassembling of parts of nature. In *The Sciences of the Artificial* (1996), Simon differentiated between natural and artificial phenomena by declaring the work and goal of a design “artificial.” Others have defined it as a new form of “practical” art and communication (Buchanan & Margolin, 1995). Design researchers have struggled to come up with an agreed-upon definition for “design” because of differing objectives in its application in different sectors, such as the creative industries (Olins 1986; Potts, 2009; Potts & Cunningham, 2008; Sparke, 1986), engineering and science (Hevner,

March, Park, & Ram, 2004; March & Smith, 1995; Simon, 1996), business and management (Acklin, 2011; R. Cooper & Press, 1995; Dumas & Mintzberg, 1989; Walsh, Roy, Bruce, & Potter, 1992), and innovation (Petroski, 1998; Verganti, 2003; Walsh, 1996). Design in the creative industries, for example, has expanded from sketching and drawing to encompass broader concepts including “product architecture, the formulation of innovation strategy, and the blending of aesthetics together with functional requirements” (D'Ippolito, 2012, p. 14).

There has been much debate about the nature of the design process. While it is seen as a distinctive discipline and method, debates surround such issues as the relationship of the design process to art and science, and whether design is innate or can be learned. Lawson's *How Designers Think: The Design Process Demystified* (2006), for example, traces the interplay between “technical” and “tacit” design knowledge, both of which are developed through drawing, interactions with technologies, and conversations. Further, he notes the challenges of teaching advanced technical and theoretical subjects to designers. The use of precedents for inspiration is an attribute that design shares with law, but also with artists. Clothing design, for example, has long been heavily influenced by what has been done before. While it appears that fashion trends are based on what people have been wearing very recently, new designs are also often based on much earlier ideas that have been “out of fashion” for a while and then revived (Lawson, 2006).

More recently, there have been emerging questions about the ethics of design, and the principles that should guide it. Some, such as Fry, insist that ethical goals should be the foundation of design (2008). The subject of ethics has entered the fashion industry through questions about the impact of the industry on diversity, on women's health, and on the environment, for example (Sparke, 2004).

Others see design as but one dimension. Mitcham (1994), for example, sees design as the intermediary between thought and action. Zaccai (1995) explores the role of designers in mediating the functional, aesthetic and ethical values of objects or projects. He asserts “great designers have an intuitive understanding of the true nature of the design process and the totality of aesthetics” (p. 12). There is also extensive debate about incorporating aesthetic value in mass-produced goods.

Fashion design, by definition, is about change and innovation. Generally situated between art and business, fashion design is one of the creative industries. Along with architects and professionals in interior design, industrial design and graphic design, fashion designers address both functional and aesthetic goals and objectives.

While the end results may be different—design is understood to focus more on the needs of the audience, client or consumer than does traditional fine art—the processes used by artists and designers are remarkably similar. Great artists—like Michelangelo – were also architects. Great architects, such as Frank Gehry and Arthur Erickson are often included in the realm of artists. Gehry’s work has been described as “large scale urban sculpture” (Yücesan, 2004, p. 5), and his collaborations with artists are well documented. Bentley (2002) notes that many urban designers, particularly if they are also architects, think of urban design as an art form, even though this notion is not widely accepted in the current conventional conceptions of art. He proposes that “re-imagining urban design as a performance art might unlock new sources of creative inspiration” (p. 143). Similarly, Duggan (2001) notes that as far back as the 1910s, “artists and couturiers collaborated to the point where the boundary between the worlds of art and fashion was creatively blurred” (p. 243). By the late 1990s, fashion shows were using performance art as one of the ways to communicate with audiences.

The influences between art and design are bi-directional: contemporary artists also frequently look to fashion for inspiration. Duggan maintains that the renewed interest in performance art has led to collaborations where contemporary artists and designers work across media to make lasting personal statements. The media and celebrity culture have fueled notions of “designer-as-artist” (Binlot, 2012a, 2012b). Some leading designers refer to themselves as “artists,” although others shun the label.

The fashion industry has been the subject of considerable discussion in management literature where there has been a focus on such issues as globalization and consumer behaviour. Fashion has also been a focus of extensive research and theorizing in the cultural industries, where it is seen as a reflection of culture, values and social relationships. And certainly fashion designers have been the subjects of biographical studies, given their growing celebrity status. But there has been surprisingly little empirical research on fashion designers’ perceptions of the design process itself.

This chapter explores the relevant background literature as it relates to: 1) design and design processes; 2) forms of cognition; 3) designers; 4) fashion design business and processes; 5) the Canadian fashion industry; and 6) the ecosystem of fashion and culture. Further, the chapter concludes with identifying gaps in the research literature, and situates the current research within that framework.

## 2.1. Design and Design Processes

The meaning of the word “design” can be ambiguous, referring to the practice, outcome, and appearance of an artifact (Fry, 1988). Defining the “process of design” presents a similar challenge. It is very difficult to create a “consistent *and* generic rationality for design work that would be appropriate in every design situation” (Stolterman, 1992, p. 147).

It has been argued that the design process is a basic human activity. The emergence of accreditation systems for design professions (such as those established by the Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario [ARIDO], the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario [RDG Ontario], and the Ontario Association of Architects [OAA]) attempts to codify design within a specific discipline, and to exclude those individuals who have not successfully completed specified training. In terms of “design as profession,” it is important to note that no such accreditation exists in the field of fashion design worldwide. “Design as practice” poses a different set of challenges, as individuals with little or no training are freely calling themselves designers.

In *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983), Schön discusses the use of Simon’s approach in the knowledge-intensive design of solutions to meet needs and desires, which he sees as the core process in the “professions,” or accredited associations. He suggests that all occupations engaged in transforming actual situations to preferred situations are concerned with design (Schön, 1983). Students in Simon’s design science are trained, like Schön’s professionals, to be able to solve field problems—starting with establishing specifications for the nature and the intended performance of the object to be realized. Often the training involves learning by “doing”—or a period of apprenticeship—as design requires mastery of tacit and practical knowledge, not just

theory. According to Schön, a good design process is iterative and reflective, and this forms the basis for increased experience.

Design science has generated systematic and formalized methodologies based on the assumption that design principles are made up of skills that can be taught and learned (O’Nolan, 2009). These are relevant to many design disciplines, including architecture (Baldwin & Clark, 2000), engineering (Banathy, 1996), urban planning (Cross, 1984), computer science (Long & Dowell, 1989; Romme, 2003; van Aken, 2004), and management studies (Warfield, 1994). Consistent with these approaches is the institutionalization of designers – design has become an accredited profession, and architects, graphic designers, and interior designers now have accredited training centres and professional organizations. In recent years, the ideas Simon set out in 1996 about the science of design have also led to the development of the scientific study of designing (Cross, Naughton, & Walker, 1981; Gero & Kannengiesser, 2008).

In 1987, Rowe coined the term “design thinking” in his seminal book of the same name. This term explains the underlying process by which architects (and, in the broader sense, all designers) go about creating an artifact. Boland and Collopy (2004) explored the idea of “design attitude” to describe how designers do not just choose among alternatives, but generate entirely new concepts. Their analysis of the experience of working with architect Frank Gehry focused on material and discursive practices, as well as on the ways in which design emerges.

At the start of the twenty-first century, the concept of design thinking was freely adopted in the business world and became part of the teaching of managers (Brown, 2009; Florida, 2004; Gladwell, 2008; Lockwood, 2009; R. L. Martin, 2007, 2009; Pink, 2006). However, the accounts of design thinking were often decontextualized and lacked reference to the artifacts that the



designers had used. Kimbell (2012) states that “design practices are habitual, possibly rule-governed, often routinized, conscious or unconscious, and that they are embodied and situated” (p. 135). In addition, Poulsen and Thøgersen (2011) emphasize the importance of a tacit or unspoken level of embodiment of the designer and the artifact.

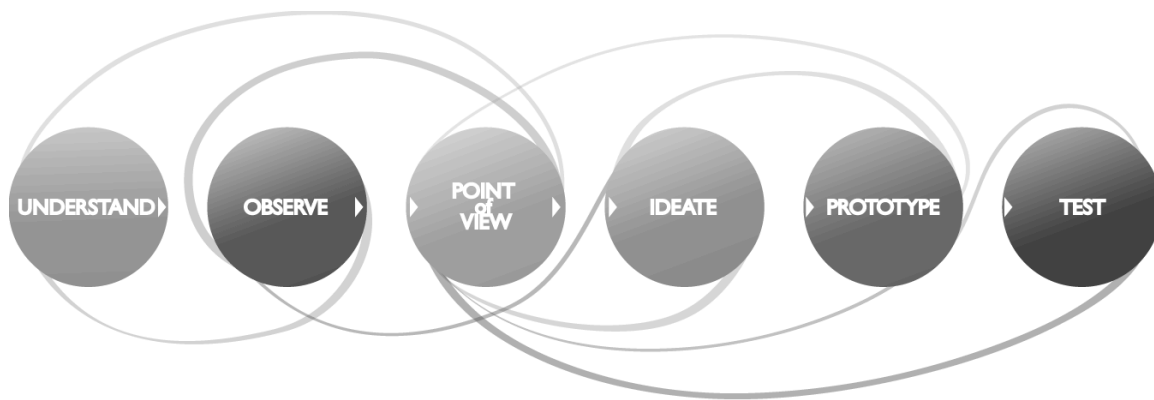
While in contrast to design thinking, analytic thinking is “effective in optimizing solutions for a defined problem with a defined goal and a defined solutions pace, [it] has limitations particularly in solving complex problems with undefined or unknown conditions. Design thinking has the potential to go beyond analytical thinking, by providing a more comprehensive alternative in dealing with managerial and organizational problems” (Eagen et al., 2011, “Design Thinking” section). According to Brown (2008), design thinking is a “methodology that imbues the full spectrum of innovation activities with a human-centered design ethos ... what people want and need in their lives and what they like or dislike about the way particular products are made, packaged, marketed, sold, and supported” (p. 1). In essence, design thinking is not a step-by-step process to ensure innovation, but a set of complex interactions that examine how the user evaluates newness and usefulness.

Design thinking has been advocated as a tool to drive innovation in organizations, and in particular as a method for designing “experience,” which is especially important for particular services and products (Bauer & Eagen, 2008). Design thinking rests on the notion that design processes are not purely rational and functional, nor are they entirely artistic and creative.

Design thinking can be described as a “discipline that uses the designer’s sensibility and methods to match people’s needs with what is technologically feasible and what a viable business strategy can convert into customer value and market opportunity” (Brown, 2008, p. 2).

Different approaches to describing design processes have emerged over the years across the disciplines. Early work focused on linear sequences of activities. But while such steps as briefing, analysis, and synthesis seemed logical, empirical research did not support them. Notions of design as “problem solving” were also not considered adequate (Lawson, 2004).

Models that followed were iterative. Incorporating a stage of reflection as part of the process in the emergence of the design allowed the designer to interact with the problem and materials, with continuous feedback loops.



*Figure 1.* Design thinking process. (Source: d.School: Institute of Design, Stanford University)

While there are a number of concepts surrounding the design thinking process, they share the following similarities: the steps are non-linear and repeatable. As an example, the steps of the process as described by d.School at Stanford University are shown in Table 1:

Table 1.

*Steps and Actions of the Design Thinking Process (Source: d.School)*

<b>Design Thinking Process</b>	
<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
understand	gather background knowledge, conduct research, immerse in learning
observe	watch people interact with their environment, ask questions, reflect, develop empathy
define point of view	become aware of peoples' need, develop insight, suggest impact on peoples' experiences
ideate	brainstorm, be creative, suspend judgment
prototype	work fast, encourage many failures, learn from mistakes
test	accept feedback, find improvements

In *Designerly Ways of Knowing*, Cross (2007b) defined a number of characteristics of the design process. The steps, similar to the d.School approach, are non-linear and iterative. These are set out in Table 2.

Table 2.

*Characteristics of the Design Process (Cross, 2007b, p. 560)*

<b>Characteristics of the Design Process</b>	
<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
client notions	in the broadest sense; who the work is "for"
planned vs. opportunistic	in both process and content; "Talk back" and surprise; consequences
uses of representations	to support "organizing things"; handling different "tools" for thinking
dealing with uncertainty	getting "stuck" and strategies for "unsticking"
evaluation and judgment	
guiding themes	setting and solving challenges
practical activity and transitions between modes of working	getting started and knowing when a work is "finished"

## **2.2. Forms of Cognition**

As pointed out earlier, designing is not simply an exercise in problem solving. Design cognition involves not only identifying and solving a design situation, but also structuring and formulating the design problem to propose an appropriate design solution (Cross, 2001).

Design processes often reflect notions of cognition and ways of knowing or “designerly” thinking (as noted above), and different modes of cognition come into play. While historically design processes have been defined to a large extent by the approaches used in engineering (which tended to be functionally driven, rational and linear), as aesthetic values became more important, so did other ways of knowing. Stolterman (1992) applied the concept of rationality in a broad sense, suggesting that it was difficult to predict the rationality of the design process before it actually happened. It therefore becomes difficult to consistently and predictably apply a model for every design situation. Stolterman described how individuals approach work practices and adapt them based on their own interpretation of what role they play in the process – either engineer, designer or artist.

Ultimately, design thinking employs cognition, emotion, sensation, intuition, and interrogation to deal with problems that are incomplete, contradictory, and shifting (Eagen et al., 2011). The process requires empathy, creativity, and rationality. As Whitfield notes (2007), design decision making is not framed by purely rational decision making; rather, it places the locus of operation largely outside of consciousness (Rogers, 1954). Decision making is often justified after the event, in spite of the fact that the process itself is often “felt” rather than chosen. Nelson and Stolterman (2003) discuss “design judgment” as a process that is multi-epistemic.

Decision making as a "rational, deliberate, purposeful action, beginning with the development of a decision strategy and [moving] through implementation and appraisal of results" happens at all levels of an organization (Tarter & Hoy, 1998, p. 212). Table 3 outlines the steps in the classical model of decision making.

Table 3.

*Classical Model of Decision Making (Tarter & Hoy, 1998)*

<b>Classical Model of Decision Making</b>	
<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
identify the problem	determine discrepancies between actual and desired outcomes
diagnose the problem	collect and analyze information that explains the nature of the problem
define the alternatives	develop all the options that are potential solutions
examine the consequences	anticipate the probable effects of each alternative
make the decision	evaluate and choose the best alternative, the one that maximizes the goals and objectives
do it	implement the decision

While there is no single approach to decision making, researchers agree on central elements that represent a best-fit approach; these are centred around a series of steps that aim to define, pick, and implement the appropriate solution (Griffiths, 1959; Hoy & Miskel, 1991; Miner, 1988). The resulting model assumes participants have access to all required information, have clearly defined objectives, and possess the cognitive ability to analyze the problem. These conditions are unlikely to be met in business situations and the ability to make a "rational" decision is mitigated by uncertainty, shifting objectives, and unanticipated consequences (Feldman & Kanter, 1965; Hoy & Miskel, 1991; Mintzberg, 1983; Thompson, 1967). A practical strategy of implementing rationality introduced by Herbert Simon (1993) encourages the

acceptance of “good enough” or “satisficing” solutions if these appropriately accomplish the stated objectives of the solution. “Irrational” decision making occurs at the other end of the spectrum where “good enough” solution may be less clear or non-existent. Barriers to effective decision making are ambiguity, unclear technologies, uncommitted participation by individuals, and ill-defined objectives (Simon, 1993; Tarter & Hoy, 1998), and these can lead to unsatisfactory solutions.

Designers acquire knowledge by “doing” – physically working with materials (Schön, 1983). During this process, analytic (or “business”) thinking forms an important component in generating solutions (Bauer & Eagen, 2008; Lawson, 2006; Lloyd & Scott, 1995; Schön, 1988). Reflecting on the knowledge gained by “doing” is an iterative process that enhances tacit knowledge; by “doing,” practitioners of design engage in collaborations between student and master (Schön, 1983). Kimbell (2012) argues that more focus is needed on the ways in which design is materially and discursively constituted. Indeed, she suggests that previous approaches have paid insufficient attention to the roles of objects in constituting practices. She also stresses the importance of understanding the designer in context.

The design thinking process seeks to induce empathy through observation, entice creativity through ideation, and confirm rationality through testing (Brown, 2008). Throughout, the process relies on decision making. Often design involves teams of one type of thinkers opposing another type of thinkers, normally innovators (inventive, independent) versus adapters (flexible, dependent) (Kirton, 1984). However, analytic, intuitive, and abductive thinkers apply different constructs in determining possible solutions, and recent research suggests that individuals may apply different approaches at different stages in the process. According to researchers studying creativity (Florida, 2004; Rogers, 1954; Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin,

1993), teams with individuals displaying contradictory attributes are more likely to engage in the stages of creative thinking than are teams of like-thinkers. This matching up of contradictory approaches challenges teams to balance brainstorming with discipline (Kirton, 1984).

Building on design-thinking theories, some researchers have focused on specific tools or techniques to facilitate design at different stages. Mougnot et al. (2008) examined the role of inspirational information (traditional and electronic) used to stimulate creativity and idea generation. Singh and Gu (2012) explored the use of generative techniques in architectural design with an eye to developing a generative framework for designers. Other research has focused on the role of sketching and the impact of introducing colour early into the process (Damle & Smith, 2009).

### **2.3. Designers**

The ways in which designers see themselves and are seen is the subject of much interest by researchers. Creative individuals are typically attracted to design by non-monetary rewards relating to process, product, and aesthetic. “Creativity is largely driven by intrinsic rewards. Surely some creative people are driven by money, but the studies find that truly creative individuals from artists and writers to scientists and open-source software developers are driven largely by internal motivations” (Florida, 2004, p. 34). Creative people rarely start a business to become rich. Instead they exploit opportunities to express themselves creatively.

Often design is differentiated from art because of its instrumental and functional objectives. “Artists and designers both create visual compositions using a shared knowledge

base, but their reasons for doing so are entirely different” (O’Nolan, 2009, para. 1). McDonnell (2011) explored the similarities and differences between fine art and design practices in approaches to constraints such as theme, material, procedure and aesthetic. Fundamentally, she said, in the fine art context, “*creative* is pre-eminent and clients, customers, users and audience are not a consideration [*italics are those of the author*].” (McDonnell, 2011, p. 559).

In a large-scale study of artifact design professionals (interior, industrial, graphic, furniture, and fashion), G. Smith and Whitfield (2005b) describe the characteristics of the designer as “ambiguous” when seen from the perspectives of the public, design educators and the designers themselves. This observation is not surprising. The lack of a clear definition of design (Margolin, 1989) actually emphasizes the diverse views of practitioners, researchers, and the public on the subject. While the question of creativity as an innate talent or a learned skill continues to be hotly debated, design educators believe that creativity can be developed through learning if the aptitude exists. Although designers see an even split between gift and skill, the public attributes the making of a designer to innate talent. While G. Smith and Whitfield (2005b) found that the public compares designers to artists, designers themselves resist comparison to artists; they see themselves as business persons who produce commercial, purposeful objects by means of creativity (G. Smith & Whitfield, 2005b). Table 4 summarizes the attributes of designers as they are perceived by the public and by designers themselves.



Table 4.

*Perceived Attributes of Designers (Smith, 2005b)*

<b>Public</b>	<b>Designers</b>
artistic	problem solving
creative	creative
able to draw	organizational skills
imaginative	confident
innate talent	analytical
not practical	adaptive
unconventional	objective
	quick thinking

Studies of designers have also revealed a tension between creative objectives and business goals. According to Bilton and Leary (2002):

Many creators have an ambivalent relationship with the business of creativity and may not share the broader commercial objectives espoused by the management. Yet they are drawn together by mutual self-interest; even if the artist is not “in it for the money” he/she has made the decision to work in a commercial environment, either because he/she wants to make enough money to continue with her “artistic” work, or because he/she sees the commercial market as a way of communicating with a larger audience. (p. 56)

The process of design thinking can initially feel chaotic as the stakeholders settle into their roles. Further, creative people are found to be self-motivated, committed, willing to accept complexity, open to uncertainty, independent and unconventional; they demand autonomy, work erratically, are bored by routines and are intolerant of authority and rules (Amabile &

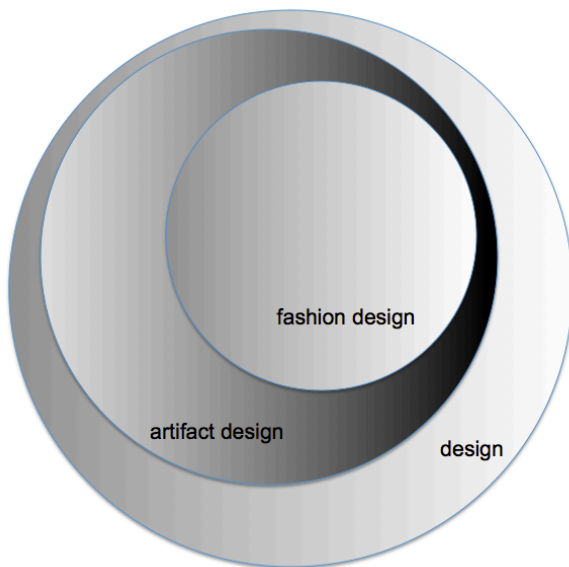
Gryskiewicz, 1987; Koprowski, 1972; Raudsepp, 1963; P. Smith, 1959; Stein, 1968, 1975; Steiner, 1969; Steiner & University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, 1965).

## 2.4. Fashion Design Businesses and Processes

Much of the literature on designers and design processes has focused on architecture;

however, there is some research that has focused on fashion designers and fashion design processes.

“Fashion design” is a subset of “artifact design,” which includes graphic, interior, industrial and fashion design. Artifact design, in turn, is a subset of design more broadly. These relationships are illustrated in Figure 2.



*Figure 2.* Subsets of design.

While research in the area of design is solidly grounded in understanding the process of problem solving, design of artifacts specifically is less extensively explored. Fashion design is just beginning to be recognized as a rightful discipline with its own frameworks (Gully, 2009; G. Smith & Whitfield, 2005b). While other forms of design, such as architecture and industrial design, focus a considerable amount of attention on defining the needs of the client and the end

user, fashion is considered less of a problem-solving exercise inasmuch as the functional aspects of clothing are relatively straightforward: clothing primarily exists for the purpose of keeping us warm and modest. However, fashion design is an extremely complex process that balances function with beauty, usefulness with identity, and creativity with emotion. Fashion design fills both a “need” (e.g., warmth and modesty) and a “want” (e.g., desire and materialism) and is interpreted through an individual or by a group (Aage & Belussi, 2008; Braham, 1997; Entwistle, 2000; Leopold, 1993).

Research on fashion design tends to fall into six broad categories: 1) fashion design and business strategies (Choi, 2003; Malem, 2008; McRobbie, 1998); 2) profiles and characteristics of fashion designers (Choi, 2003; McRobbie, 1998); 3) fashion design processes and techniques (Aage & Belussi, 2008; Rantisi, 2004); 4) fashion design and pedagogy (Au, Taylor, & Newton, 2004; Bailey, 2002; Drew, Bailey, & Shreeve, 2002; Greenberg, 1994; Gully, 2009); 5) consumer behaviour and public perceptions of design and designers (G. Smith & Whitfield, 2005b); and 6) fashion and culture, or the fashion ecosystem (Crewe & Forster, 1993; Forster, 2009; Sparke, 2004).

Attitudes towards designers generally and fashion designers in particular have been the focus of several large-scale surveys (Margolin, 1989; G. Smith & Whitfield, 2005a, 2005b). Margolin (1989) notes that the opinion of the public is important in the design/business relationship because the public acts as the medium that commissions and supports design, and therefore it has a direct link to the credibility and financial success of designers. The public tends to think that designers work in factories and make things, and they have an unclear understanding of the different functions designers perform. Most importantly, artifact designers are not all created equal:

Some, such as graphic designer, are moderately well understood. Others, such as industrial designer, are virtually non-existent within the public's occupational category structure, while furniture designer barely exists as a design category. In articulating these relationships it is clear that designers are positioned disadvantageously between the two powerful occupational constructs of artist and architect. (G. Smith & Whitfield, 2005b, p. 3)

The G. Smith and Whitfield study demonstrates that fashion designers rank only slightly above the lowest ranked design professions, such as graphic design, in terms of education, status and prestige. The profession is less well defined or institutionalized than other forms of design, such as architecture, that are accredited. Consequently, individuals practicing design are often underappreciated and misunderstood (de Forest, 1990; Evamy, 1994; McDermott, 1990; Sparke, 1986).

## **2.5. The Canadian Fashion Industry**

Fashion designers, which include technical and creative designers, are innovators working in a highly competitive industry. Technical designers commonly work as liaisons between creative designers and production departments in communicating the intentions and requirements of each design to the manufacturing environment.

Creative designers operate within three business models: 1) as employees; 2) as heads of larger fashion houses; or 3) as entrepreneurs. Fashion design underpins the Canadian fashion industry although there are significant differences in different areas of the sector in regard to the roles of designers. Apparel manufacturers and retailers with private-label product assortments

employ most of the creative and technical designers. Their fashion products are generally of a commercial nature, following the trends and capitalizing on what successfully sold the previous season. The role of the designer in this area could be described as “product developer” or “stylist,” as the measure for product adoption is generally governed by extrinsic values, such as price, colour, and size.

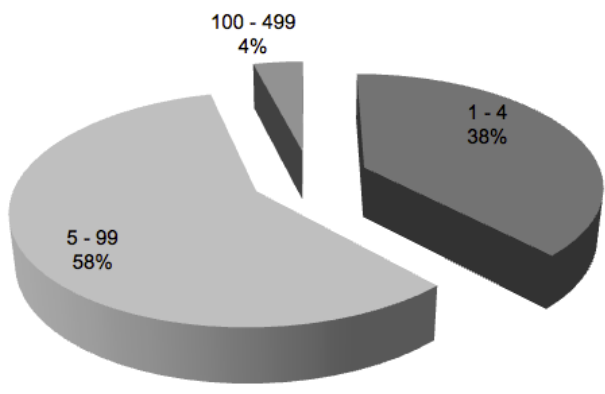
Fashion designers who head larger fashion houses often act as creative directors of several product lines, and work with a team of assistant designers in developing fashion products. These fashion designers are primarily involved in the research and overall merchandising, whereas the assistant designers play a closer, more hands-on role in developing new styles.

Fashion design entrepreneurs are small-business owners who typically work with few or no employees. They approach their work as a craft, by being hands-on from conception to final manufacturing. Although these businesses are design-centric, the individuals must balance multiple roles including creative, production, sales, marketing, and management. These designers consider their work important contributions to the local economy, very often serving a small clientele through their own studio stores or selective retailers across the country (and in some cases internationally).

Understanding the underlying issues and implementing effective strategies to secure a place in the creative economy are paramount to the success of the Canadian fashion industry. Canada finds its fashion industry at a crossroads, and according to industry reports, this trend is not unique (Apparel Human Resources Council, 2011). In fact the apparel sectors of many Western nations face similar challenges. The four primary fashion nations (Britain, U.S., France,

and Italy) continue to exert tremendous influence on global fashion sales, whereas the product is largely manufactured in Asia (Global Language Monitor, 2011). While secondary fashion nations such as Japan, Australia, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain and Canada may not have the impact on international trends of their larger cousins, they nonetheless are successfully exploiting niche fashion-market opportunities internationally.

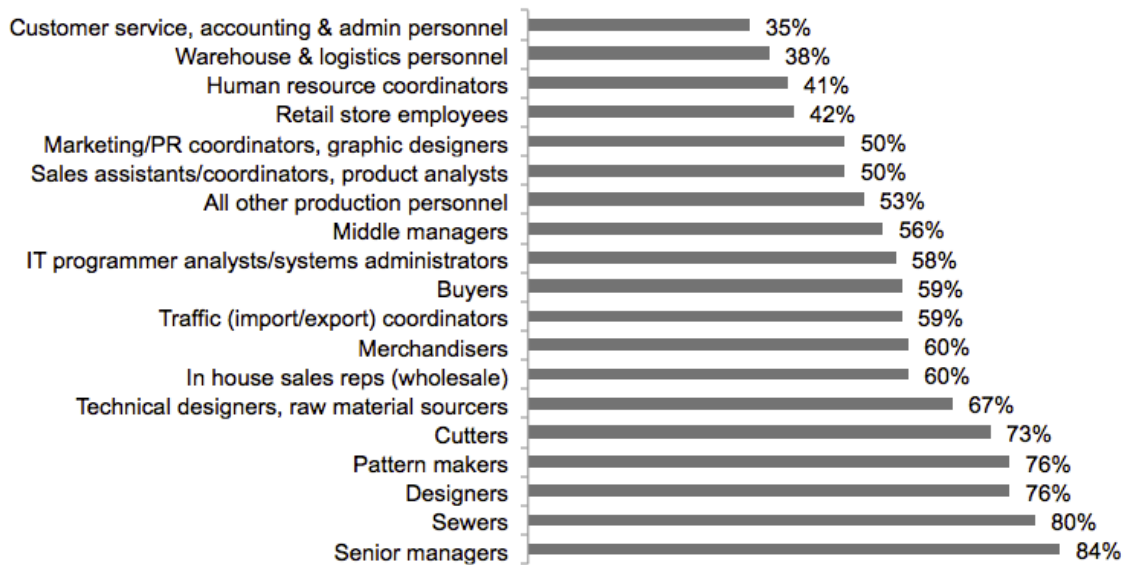
In 2009, approximately 73,000 workers were employed in the Canadian apparel industry (Appendix G), which was composed of nearly 6,000 companies (Appendix H). Most clothing manufacturers are small enterprises: 38% of companies have fewer than five employees, and 96% have fewer than one hundred employees (see Figure 3).



*Figure 3.* Percent of establishments by employment size clothing manufacturing companies, 2008. Source: Statistics Canada.

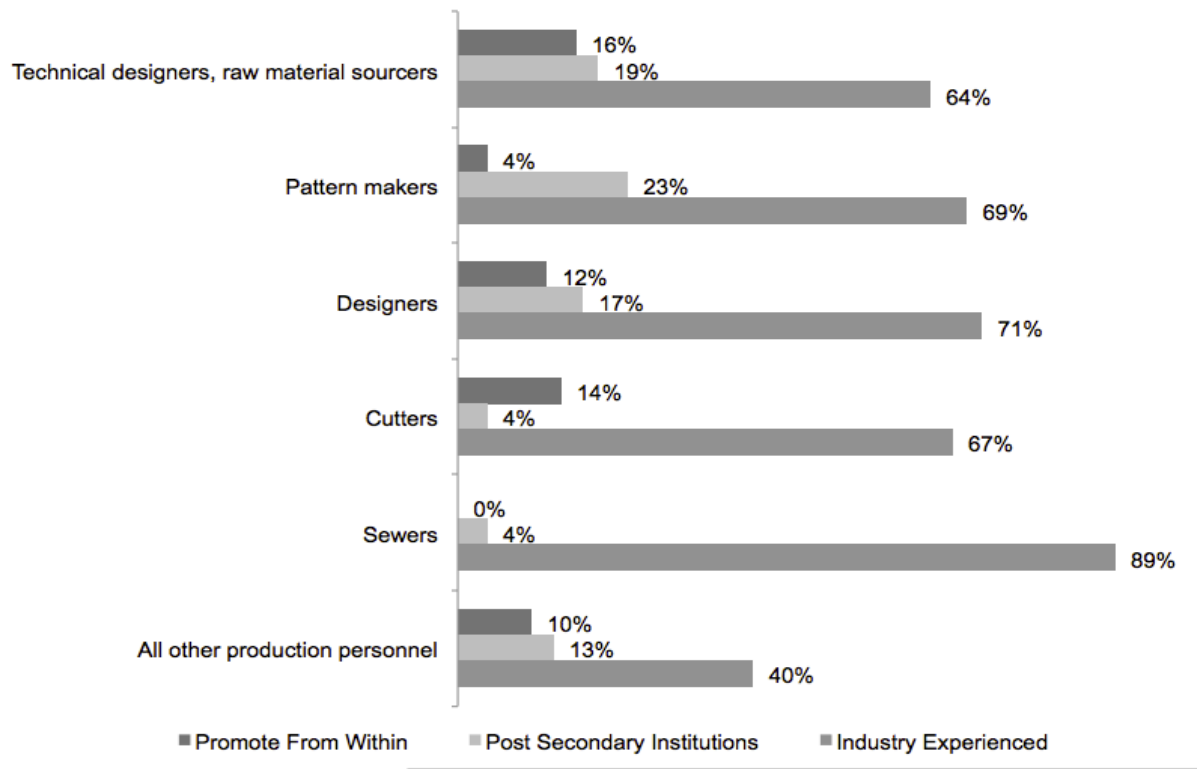
The majority of occupations within the fashion industry are found in manufacturing (47%), followed by business/finance/administration (14%), trades/transport/operators (11%), management (10%), sales (10%), and art/recreation/culture/sport (7%). The smallest category – art/recreation/culture/sport – includes designers, graphic designers, illustrators, patternmakers, photographers, and graphic arts technicians (Appendix I). While designers may constitute a

relatively small portion of the of the occupational category within a fashion organization, employers have expressed that designers are one of the most difficult positions to fill, followed only by senior managers and people who sew (see Figure 4).



*Figure 4.* Positions reported as difficult to fill in the Canadian fashion industry. Source: Milstein & Co Consulting, AHRC Labour Market Update Study Survey, 2010.

Further, a report found that the number of white-collar positions surveyed was projected to increase by 35% by 2013. Hires were projected to increase by 45% in sales, 37% in marketing, and 24% in design (Apparel Human Resources Council, 2011).



*Figure 5.* Workforce group from which seeking new hires. Source: Milstein & Co. Consulting, AHRC Labour Market Update Study Survey, 2010.

Figure 5 summarizes the percentage of respondents seeking new hires from workforce groups. The data suggest that employers feel that their organizational stability and future growth rely on the migration of workers from other companies in the field, and few are seeking hires who are coming from post-secondary institutions. In other words, the industry perceives that designers can be trained in the skills necessary to fulfill the creative functions required.

According to the 2011 Apparel Human Resources Council report, it is estimated that in 2006, 7,350 person were employed as “creative designers and craftspersons” at textile/clothing/footwear manufacturers and clothing/accessories and department stores in Canada. Within the apparel manufacturing sector, fashion designers are projected to tally 2,300



by 2013, representing 3.1% of the sector workforce (Apparel Human Resources Council, 2011).

While there are no specific figures available as to how many fashion designers work as employees compared to how many designers own their own companies, it is estimated that this split is about 90/10. This means that there are approximately 230 independent fashion design entrepreneurs in Canada.

As previously mentioned, in a 2003 Australian study, Choi interviewed lesser known designers who focus on low volume and exclusive retail boutique distribution. Based on their philosophical approach to managing a business, designers were categorized as “artisan designer,” “business designer,” or “intermediate designer.” Artisan designers viewed their work as a process and artifact of artistic endeavour. Further, they were reluctant to adopt new technologies but preferred traditional techniques for clothing design and production. In the context of the study, the 230 Canadian independent fashion designers identified earlier would be considered “artisan designers.”

Fashion designers who operate as entrepreneurs form a group of highly visible creatives who commonly showcase their collections at bi-annual fashion weeks across the country. The key fashion markets in Canada are Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Runway presentations are key marketing strategies in reaching both potential retail customers and end consumers, partly because the print and television media provide extensive coverage during fashion week and beyond.

The link between designer and artifact is an important factor in how each is perceived by the public. Fashion designers are more publically recognized if their product carries the full name on the label of the artifact produced, as does the “eponymous” label “Victor Chong.” Other

designers who choose not to operate a label under their own name are considered “pseudonymous.” For example Victor Chong may produce a line called “Bemused” that does not indicate his direct personal connection to the label. Other designers fall somewhere in the middle, using only part of their name or an abbreviation (“Victor” or “V.C.,” for example) to market their products as a “cryptonymous” label. How designers choose to present themselves through the means of an artifact may provide clues about the organizational structure of their businesses. Eponymous designers are the “face” of the company and consequently are closely associated with the success, intellectual property, and continuity of the company. In contrast, pseudonymous designers are not necessarily acting as the prime creative capital of a company and technically any qualified designer could step in to carry on the work without affecting the public’s perception of the organization.

Becoming a fashion designer in Canada is increasingly achieved by acquiring post-secondary education at a number of different types of institutions across the country. Over forty university, college and private-school programs offer studio-based training. The following universities offer four-year, degree-based programs: Ryerson University in Toronto; LaSalle College in Montreal; and Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Vancouver. Colleges usually offer two-year diplomas, while private institutions offer anywhere from a few courses to short-term skills-focused certificates. Since the profession is not accredited, neither are fashion educational institutions. Estimates based on the number of programs offered in Canada show that approximately 100 fashion designers graduate from a university program and 400 fashion design students graduate from colleges and private institutions each year. Yet less than one percent of graduates become famous eponymous designers in Canada; most become technical fashion designers or move into related industries. However, as mentioned earlier, virtually anyone can

work as a fashion designer. There are a number of individuals who are self-taught, such as Evan Biddell, or have migrated from related creative industries, such as architecture and interior design, to become successful fashion designers.

## **2.6. Fashion and Culture: The Ecosystem**

Fashion, which reflects and shapes social values and mores, has long been the subject of cultural studies. There are extensive bodies of research on fashion trends, the complex inter-relationships between fashion and society, and the connections between modern and postmodern art and fashion (Forster, 2009). History and cultural studies include examinations of fashion among the trends that reflect and mold culture (Sparke, 2004).

Examination of these interactions as they shape the design process or the fashion industry has been relatively recent. In spite of the focus on individual designers, fashion design is generally seen as a series of complex interactions among the designer, the artifact, the intermediary, and the consumer (Aage & Belussi, 2008; Blumer, 1969; Braham, 1997). Aage and Belussi (2008) concluded that “fashion is not just selected by the consumers, and it is not the result of a heroic creative act; rather, it is an open-source model of the collective creativity of taste” (p. 489). In order to understand fashion design, apart from its obvious role in making clothing, it is necessary to acknowledge that the paradigm consists of the individual (the designer), the process (designing), the artifact (the design) as well as the social context. This approach is consistent with an “ecosystem approach” to understanding creativity, and innovation more broadly.

According to Woodman et al. (1993), creativity involves the activities of the individual, the group, and the organization, as well as the interaction among them. Individual creativity is a function of precursive conditions, cognitive styles and abilities, personality, motivational factors, and knowledge. These individual factors are both influenced by and influence social and contextual factors.

Woodman et al. (1993) state that individual creativity contributes to creativity in groups. Group creativity is not the simple aggregate of all group members' creativity, although group creativity is clearly a function of the creativity of individuals in the groups. In addition, group composition, group characteristics, group processes, and contextual influences stemming from the organization influence group creativity. Consequently, the social and management context in which creativity is most effectively nurtured, harnessed, and mobilized is an important consideration (Florida & Goodnight, 2005).

Creativity is a critical component of the process when individuals, groups, and organizations are faced with complex and interdependent work (Drazin, Glynn, & Kazanjian, 1999). Fashion is a “collective cultural phenomenon generated by the individual but linked to actions of a very large number of garment designers aiming to create distinctive but similar clothes” (Eckert & Stacey, 2001, p. 113). Surprisingly, very few researchers have studied the process of fashion design or the implications of design thinking in the fashion industry.

## **2.7. Gaps in the Research Literature**

Fashion design has long been studied as a cultural phenomenon and, to a lesser extent, from the perspective of consumer behaviour. However, academic scholarship on the fashion business, on fashion designers and on fashion design processes is more recent, and there are relatively few studies that explore the perceptions of the designers themselves. The purpose of this research project is to examine a segment of the fashion design industry in order to explore how fashion entrepreneurs perceive themselves, processes of design, and their role in the industry.

## **2.8. Situating the Researcher in the Study**

Currently I serve as the chair of the School of Fashion at Ryerson University in Toronto, I am also a graduate of the program, having received my BAA Fashion Design / Production Management in 1990. The evolution of the undergraduate program reflects the changes the fashion industry has undergone in the past two decades. The production of apparel is largely done in lower-cost, offshore countries and employment opportunities in Canada lie in the management of design. The current program at Ryerson is predicated on the assumption that fashion design is a discipline requiring practical skills and a conceptual understanding of the industry. Studies include a balance of studio-based courses to provide students with technical and creative training, and theory and business-based courses to offer them a broader understanding of culture and the creative economies in general. Approximately 25% of Ryerson fashion school

students have some prior post-secondary experience when entering the school. Each year about 55 students graduate from the Fashion Design program at Ryerson.

Approximately 85% of graduates become fashion designers – primarily technical designers and well-known creative designers. Ryerson graduates include Lida Baday, David Dixon, Erdem, Jeremy Liang, Lucian Matis, Brian Bailey, Todd Lynn, Judy Cornish, Joyce Gunhouse, Arthur Mendonca, and Christina Remenyi. Many of the school's graduates work in top fashion houses in Canada and around the world.

After graduating from Ryerson, I worked for eighteen years at Jones Apparel Group Canada (now known as The Jones Group), a career culminating in diverse executive roles in production, sales, marketing, merchandising, and international business development. During this period, my contact with the fashion design process included the product development of large fashion-based programs for Canadian department and leading specialty stores. Some of the assumptions that I bring to this study about fashion design arise from my working as a designer, working with designers, educating designers, being a client of designers and promoting new designers.

### **3. Research Methods and Data Sources**

This chapter discusses my rationale for use of grounded theory (GT) as the research method, and for the approach I have taken in this thesis. An extensive review of the methodology and its inherent challenges provides the reason for this study and explains the development of the research question. The contribution of this thesis to the literature in the fashion design field is to apply the principles of GT to the data gathered by interviewing Canadian fashion entrepreneurs. Theoretical sampling from a narrow participant pool addresses the requirement to meet saturation.

Twelve Canadian fashion designers were selected to participate in a semi-structured interview to share their views and perceptions of: 1) themselves; 2) fashion design; and 3) their role as entrepreneurs. The data analysis follows seven discrete cycles of evaluating the data of transcribed interviews. Reliability and validity test factors are discussed. The chapter ends with a short discussion of survey instruments used in this study and the problems that were encountered.

#### **3.1. The Relevance of the Study**

This research study explores the ways in which fashion designers think about themselves, the design process and the fashion industry. The results will have practical implications for the fashion industry and, in particular, for the training and development of fashion designers. By looking at fashion designers as artisanal design thinkers, I hope to gain a better understanding of

the complexity of the work of artisanal fashion design entrepreneurs. An understanding of satisfaction of fashion designers as their ideas transform from artifacts to consumers' emotional experiences gives credence to the practice of "doing." Lastly, the importance of embodiment (Poulsen & Thøgersen, 2011) and materiality (Kimbell, 2012) encountered by the designer during the design process suggests opportunity for further research through deeper and richer design approaches.

### **3.2. Rationale of Research Method**

I chose to use grounded theory (GT) methodology. Through an inductive, qualitative approach utilizing GT, I attempt to describe/explain the concepts and relationships that affect Canadian fashion designers and entrepreneurs.

For me, observing phenomena is a satisfying element of conducting research. In contrast to the physical sciences, social science research looks at how human intervention continually generates new ways of interaction and organization. Researchers can "best understand those new modes of interacting and organizing by using a methodology that is attentive to issues of interpretation and process and that does not bind one too closely to long-standing assumptions. Fortunately, that's precisely what grounded theory is" (Suddaby, 2006, p. 641).

Specifically, I have chosen the Glaserian approach ("What do we have here?") to GT. I consider this approach consistent with my research goals and with the predominant methodology and assumptions used in similar studies.



In order to discuss the objective of the research, it is important to provide an overview of what GT is, and – perhaps more importantly – what it is not. It is only on the basis of this understanding that a potential researcher can fully utilize the methodology inherent in an inductive, qualitative approach.

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) proposed GT as a practical method for conducting research that focuses on the interpretive process of analyzing concepts and categories in real settings. Their method is built on two key concepts: “constant comparison,” in which data are collected and analyzed simultaneously; and “theoretical sampling,” in which decisions about which data should be collected next are determined by the theory that is being constructed (Suddaby, 2006).

Constant comparison counters the belief of a clean separation between data collection and analysis. In fact, the process alternates between gathering information and analyzing. GT is an inductive method that systematically describes and explains complex social processes (Glaser, 1978).

Suddaby suggests that researchers should not try to overextend the objective of GT research, and that they look for the elaboration of existing theory rather than “untethered new theory” (2006, p. 635). For the novice researcher—including me—in particular, the process surrounding GT is as much the act of “conducting” it as it is about developing new theories. Good examples of research using GT also require considerable exposure to the subject area that is being studied (Suddaby, 2006).

In his recommendations, Suddaby (2006) states “researchers must account for their positions in the research process. That is, they must engage in ongoing self-reflection to ensure

that they take personal biases and assumptions into account while collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data” (p. 640). He also says “the reality of grounded theory research is always on trying to achieve a practical middle ground between a theory-laden view of the world and an unfettered empiricism” (p. 635).

Suddaby does concede that there may be confusion between GT and phenomenology. Phenomenology research emphasizes the subjective experience of research participants. GT is less focused on the subjective experiences of individual participants per se, and is instead more attentive to how such subjective experiences can be abstracted into theoretical statements about causal relationships among participants. In GT research, interviews with subjects may start with a phenomenological approach involving subjective understandings, but the primary focus is not on the stories themselves. Rather, the stories are seen as a means of eliciting information on the social situation under examination.

The purpose of GT is not to make “truth statements” about reality, but rather to elicit fresh understandings about patterned relationships among participants, and to explore how these relationships and interactions actively construct reality (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Further, GT is an interpretive process where the researcher is considered to be an active element of the research process, and in which the act of research has a creative component (Suddaby, 2006). A key element of GT is identifying “a slightly higher level of abstraction – higher than the data itself” (P. Martin & Turner, 1986, p. 147).

GT offers no easily identifiable demarcations between collecting and analyzing data. Rather, the researcher must continue to collect data until no new evidence appears. This process, called “category saturation,” is one of the primary means of verification in GT (Strauss &

Corbin, 1998). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), category saturation is a practical outcome of a researcher's assessment of the quality and rigour of an emerging theoretical model: "[T]he criteria for determining saturation...are a combination of the empirical limits of the data, the integration and density of the theory, and the analyst's theoretical sensitivity" (p. 62). The signals of saturation, which include repetition of information and confirmation of existing conceptual categories, are inherently pragmatic and depend upon both the empirical context and the researcher's experience and expertise (Suddaby, 2006).

The inherent creative component in GT ultimately led to the parting of the ways between the founders of GT, with "Glaser favouring creativity and openness to unanticipated interpretations of the data while Strauss (and co-author Juliet Corbin) became advocates of adherence to formal and prescriptive routines for analysing data" (Suddaby, 2006, p. 638). Another way of looking at the emerging differences between the two versions of GT relate mainly to the coding paradigms each adopted. Strauss asks "What if?" while Glaser asks "What do we have here?" (Ng & Hase, 2008). Researchers are compelled to state which approach they are using, due to the intellectual and methodological differences in the two versions of GT (Ng & Hase, 2008). I chose the Glaserian approach because I wanted to look at fashion design without preconceived ideas of what I already knew as a former practitioner in the field.

### **3.3. Research Question**

GT was founded as a pragmatic and practical approach to help researchers understand complex social processes (Suddaby, 2006). Further, Martin and Turner (1986) observed that GT

is best used when no explicit hypotheses exist to be tested. In formulating my research question, I have not formed a hypothesis around my research interests. Consequently, GT is an appropriate methodology for me to use. The three parts of my research question are:

- ⇒ how fashion designers think about themselves,
- ⇒ how they think about the design process,
- ⇒ how they think about the business of design and their role.

### **3.4. Expected Contribution to the Field**

According to Turner (1983), GT is “not concerned with the production of schemes of cosmic proportions, which predict world-epochal movements: it is concerned with producing theoretical accounts of small fragments of the world in which we live, the work which affects our everyday life and the world which we need to cope with in handling many mundane but nonetheless pressing matters” (p. 346-347). The central outcome of any analysis of GT methodology is to determine how categories relate to one another. Considered half art and half science, the procedures of GT can be difficult to fully describe to novice researchers. Accordingly, it is a methodology that can be learned only by just doing it (Glaser, 2003). As a matter of fact, many of the techniques of GT research are developmental; that is, the quality improves with experience (Suddaby, 2006).

### **3.5. Scope**

The area of investigation of the current study focused on Canadian fashion design entrepreneurs. The data was collected during the summer of 2012. The possibility of collaboration with other researchers was excluded at this stage.

### **3.6. Sampling**

As is appropriate in qualitative research, theoretical sampling was used (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The benefit of theoretical sampling is that it allows for flexibility in the research process. It provides the researcher the opportunity to change the emphasis early on, so that data gathered are a reflection of what is occurring in the field rather than speculation about what is observed (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Based on the principle of theoretical sampling, researchers on one hand cannot predict what to sample for, and where sampling will lead. Only when no new patterns, or possible categories, emerge from the data is the sample size completed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). On the other hand, research on the number of interviews required to reach saturation has attempted to establish theoretical sampling requirements.

One finding determined that saturation was reached after twelve interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Another study specifically looked at the number of interviews required for qualitative research leading to a PhD, determining that the mean was 31 interviews; this conclusion was governed primarily by issues relating to the heterogeneity and depth of the

sample pool (Mason, 2010). The participants in my theoretical sample pool were considered homogeneous, in that they were all Canadian fashion designers working in/near Toronto with ideally at least ten years design activity. My intent was not to draw generalizations about design at large, but to develop concepts around a narrow set of questions. Therefore, I targeted the number of interviews for this study to a minimum of twelve, keeping line with the findings by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006).

The criterion for participants in the study was that they must be Canadian fashion designers who ideally had been active in the field for ten or more years. I compiled a list of potential participants from publicly available material (listings of Canadian fashion designers) and my existing contact information as a former practitioner in the field. (Appendix A lists the twelve participants who were interviewed.)

Participants were primarily recruited by telephone and to a lesser degree by email. I interviewed the designers either in their offices/studios or at Ryerson University, using a semi-structured interview (see Appendix C). The interview was designed to last approximately 45 minutes. However, during testing with a colleague, I found that an interview lasted about 60 minutes, and during the actual data-collection phase, the interviews lasted between 60 and 180 minutes – with the longer interviews punctuated by extensive and lengthy storytelling. The discussions were audio recorded. I collected demographic information about the subject during the interview, if such information was not readily available from public sources.

Due to my current position as chair of the School of Fashion at Ryerson University and my professional standing within the industry, the possibility that potential subjects may have felt obligated to participate posed a concern. However, as I needed only approximately 30% (12 of

35) individuals of the theoretical sample to participate, I had a sufficiently large pool from which to draw. Most of the potential participants readily agreed as long as they were available and were not preoccupied with designing their upcoming Spring 2013 collections. If there was any hesitation or perceived conflict, I was prepared to acknowledge that fact with the potential participant. Of the 35 individuals in the theoretical pool, I only had an existing professional relationship with three of them.

(Appendix B provides detail on process of participant recruitment.)

### **3.7. The Participants in the Study**

The twelve individuals (Appendix A) who participated in the study included seven females and five males who were small business owners (0-16 employees, with an average  $N = 4.25$ ) working in the greater Toronto, Canada area. Based on publicly available information and information gleaned from the interviews, these individuals styled themselves as owner, designer, president, creative director, and/or consultant of their respective companies. The majority of participants had been involved in fashion design for at least ten years (average = 23.8 years); the exceptions were two designers who had been active in either the study of or practice of design for three and eight years respectively. Eight participants had formally studied fashion design, resulting in either a diploma or undergraduate degree; three participants had studied arts or science resulting in undergraduate and graduate degrees; and one participant had partially completed non-fashion related post-secondary studies.

Well-known within the Canadian (and in many cases the international) fashion environment and acknowledged by fashion media, the participants enjoy relative celebrity in the public eye because of their current career stage, level of participation in fashion events, and distribution of product bearing their name. By nature of their prominence within the Canadian fashion industry and national media attention, aliases replace the participants' actual names to provide anonymity. Further disclosure of more salient information would compromise the anonymity these individuals were assured by the researcher.

### **3.8. Participant Profiles**

This section contains detailed information on each of the subjects and their businesses. The consent form (Appendix D) explicitly informed participant of their rights to confidentiality. Two subjects asked for assurances that this paper and future publications would preserve anonymity. (Note from the author: the remainder of this section will not be available in the published version of this thesis. I can be contacted for instances where further details are warranted.)



### **3.9. Data Collection**

Data collection for this study involved primarily semi-structured interviews plus, where relevant, documentation that was publicly available or provided by the participants in the study. This approach is considered appropriate by several studies (Browning, Beyer, & Shetler, 1995; Isabella, 1990; Sutton, 1987).

#### **3.9.1. Interviews**

I conducted one semi-structured interview between 60 and 180 minutes in length with each participant between July 16 and August 1, 2012. The questions were in three parts, with follow up to clarify or provide examples, and to provide general comments. After the first two interviews, I amended the questionnaire to include subjects upon which the first participants had appeared interested in elaborating. (Appendix C outlines the final list of questions.)

Participants were given the option to be interviewed either at Ryerson or at their studios. Two of the respondents (incidentally, the two first interviews) chose to come to Ryerson because of convenience and privacy. The remaining interviews were conducted primarily at the designers' studios or homes, or in a coffee shop. In all cases I specifically requested that each participant consider an appropriate space in their studio beforehand to ensure privacy. Apart from vibrating mobile phones, there were minimal distractions. The location and timing of each interview allowed for flexibility and convenience, since participants did not have to come to Ryerson. Instead, I went to see them in their own spaces.

At the beginning of the interview, I collected data about the career history of the participant, if this information was not already publicly available. The interview focused on how the designers thought about themselves, about design, and about their roles in their organizations. A detailed set of open-ended questions, asked of each participant in the same order, guided these interviews. I asked each respondent to relate what he or she knew about an issue — for example I would say, “Describe this factor from *your* point of view.” As subjects made observations, I probed deeper by posing follow-up questions to elicit rich details and graphic descriptions, or to learn why observations were important to the interviewee. I asked each participant to provide examples whenever possible. At the end of each interview, I invited participants to comment on other details and pieces of information that they felt were relevant. Unexpected but interesting topics were also pursued, and after the first two interviews these topics were formally introduced to the list of questions.

### **3.9.2. Documents**

I did not ask respondents if they had any relevant written documentation they wanted to share. Instead, I collected publicly available records to establish the participant profile matrix (see Appendix A).

The goal of the data collection was to understand the perspectives of each participant – i.e., how they saw design through their own eyes. Therefore, rather than probe for information or suggest ideas, I tried to understand and clarify the frames of reference, meanings and

interpretations each participant offered. This approach has been detailed in a similar study by Isabella (1990) and Browning et al. (1995).

### **3.10. Data Preparation**

In order to maintain the anonymity of each participant, I did not address the participant by full name during the interview. Each interview was recorded on an iPhone fitted with a directional microphone to maximize recording quality. Immediately following each interview, the recording was uploaded to my computer and was erased from the iPhone. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim by a transcription service in India. First, the recording was uploaded to a secure server. Then, a draft of the transcript was emailed to me as a Word document for initial review. I then provided comments to the transcription service where sections of the interview needed clarification or re-transcribing. The final transcript was formatted in Word to differentiate passages between interviewer and interviewee. There was some minor scrubbing of text from the transcript that I deemed inconsequential to the analysis – for example, when I had started to record while still giving instructions to the participant on the structure of the interview. All twelve transcripts were loaded into NVivo 10 for subsequent coding and analysis.

### **3.11. Data Analysis – Background**

The grounded theory approach formulated by Glaser and Strauss requires that data and theory be constantly compared and contrasted throughout the data collection and analysis

process. Evolving concepts and subsequent theory direct attention to previously established, important dimensions while the actual data simultaneously focuses attention on the theory's suitability as a frame for the most recent data being collected.

During the data collection phase, the researcher notes facts, specific details, and other pieces of information that a number of participants seem to repeat, and these notes augment the evolving concepts. Preliminary categories emerge. The researcher continually modifies these initial categories, eliminating irrelevant ones and adding new ones to account for newly acquired evidence. At the completion of the data collection, each factor description is systematically and thoroughly examined for evidence of data fitting these categories. The researcher reviews each interview transcript, and codes them into the final categories.

The transcripts are coded using constant comparative analysis, in which each factor is assigned to an emergent open coding scheme until all interviews (and relevant documents) have been coded. The constant comparative is intended to identify a core category whereby the data is analyzed through an iterative process of coding, memoing, theoretical sampling, and theoretical sorting (Ng & Hase, 2008).

Coding is the process of breaking down data into distinct units of meaning for analysis and thereafter systematically re-evaluating them for their inter-relationships. It is aimed at identifying as many tentative categories and their properties as possible. The researcher examines words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs of field notes and compares them, in order to find similarities or differences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Various forms of coding of the data, including open coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding, generate the higher levels of abstraction required.

### **3.11.1. Open Coding**

Open coding is the first step of a theoretical analysis toward the discovery of categories and their properties. It is done to highlight data that the researcher believes may have an importance beyond the simple description of the context of the data (Ng & Hase, 2008). According to Glaser (1992), the researcher shall compare all codes by asking key questions of the data:

- ⇒ what is the data a study of?
- ⇒ what category or property does the incident indicate?
- ⇒ what is the basic process that contextualizes the situation?

It is through the process of constant questioning that the identification of categories occurs during open coding and memo writing (see below).

### **3.11.2. Selective Coding**

As the analysis continues, understanding deepens and some characteristics will be merged together to form core categories (Glaser, 1978).

### **3.11.3. Theoretical Coding**

Theoretical coding “conceptualizes how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory. Theoretical codes give integrative scope, broad pictures, and a new perspective” (Glaser, 1978, p. 72).

### **3.11.4. Memo Writing**

As the analysis continues, theoretical memos—the written notes or records of analysis—lead to the development of the theory. Further, memos provide a bank of ideas that map the emerging theory and are used to identify categories and their properties (Ng & Hase, 2008).

### **3.11.5. Theoretical Sorting**

According to Glaser (1992), theoretical sorting is the key to formulating the theory. It is the act of arranging a significant number of memos into an integrated theory.

In the current study, in order to facilitate the analysis I used the software program NVivo 10 to assist in organizing and coding the data. It is important to note that software is not a substitute for the researcher’s interpretation of data. The organizer must make “key decisions about which categories to focus on, where to collect the next iteration of data and, perhaps most importantly, the meaning to be ascribed to units of data” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 638).

### **3.12. Data Analysis – Cycles**

It is important to point out that pre-defining the number of interviews (twelve in this study) is contrary to the classic method of GT, in which saturation determines the end of collecting data. The scope of this study represents a compromise between the amount of data collected and the available timeframe, but not a compromise in the quality, reliability, and validation of analysis. This section discusses the process of analysis used for this study.

There were seven discrete cycles in analyzing the data, involving three cycles of coding, two cycles of managing codes (categorization of open codes, and consolidation of codes leading to more abstract concepts), and two cycles of writing to prompt deeper conceptualization of the data (Bazeley, 2009). The cycles were iterative, particularly during the managing of codes where it was necessary to conduct additional coding.

Software technology served as a tool for efficiency during my analysis of the data, and assisted me in drawing conclusions. As Fielding and Lee (1998) explain, qualitative researchers “want tools which support analysis, but leave the analyst firmly in charge” (p.167). Software plays a key role in building an audit trail to establish transparency and track coding patterns. It helps the researcher develop more complicated conceptual categories than the physical mapping of building relationships may allow.

### **3.12.1. Cycle 1 – Open Coding**

Open coding involved processing the transcripts in chronological order based on when the interviews were conducted. The definitions of these codes were supported by labels and definitions which served as rules pertaining to when to include text segments in the open-code cycle (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). For example, in this study “Open Code 1e (‘relationship to non-creative process’)” was described as follows: “How does the designer interact with members involved with the non-creative process? Those members would include managers and other employees outside the direct circle of the designer. What is the relationship?” (A complete list of open codes is found in Appendix F.)

### **3.12.2. Cycle 2 – Categorization**

Once the transcripts were coded, the open codes were grouped into categories or themes. This process began to build a framework for further analysis of the data. For example, “Open Code 1e (‘relationship to non-creative process’)” was categorized under “organizational effectiveness.” This cycle often required revising or continuing open coding of the transcripts to ensure that the labels and criteria for inclusion were accurately captured.



### **3.12.3. Cycle 3 – Coding On**

“Coding on” involved breaking down the open codes (themes) into subthemes to allow a more detailed understanding of the data. Negative views, divergent cases, behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes coded to these categories offered clarification to the meanings. I found that participants might not have answered a question, but often at other points during the interview offered a subversive opinion. In the example of “Open Code 1e (‘relationship to non-creative process’)” the “coding on” variables became “trusting,” “ambiguous,” “adversarial,” and “interdependent.”

### **3.12.4. Cycle 4 – Data Reduction**

Data reduction refined the categories in order to develop a final conceptual framework by consolidating codes.

### **3.12.5. Cycle 5 – Writing Analytical Memos**

I wrote memos to summarize the content of each category and its codes, and proposed initial findings, by considering: 1) the content of the associated codes; 2) emerging patterns of shared beliefs and divergent cases; 3) the relationship of codes, and their importance in addressing the research question to build a narrative; 4) background information of participants

and profile patterns; and 5) primary sources in the context of relationships with literature and gaps in the literature.

### **3.12.6. Cycle 6 – Validation**

This step was a self-audit of the emerging findings in which I looked for evidence in the transcripts beyond the codes to support and expand on the deeper meanings in the data. This process involved the analysis of relationships across and between categories, and triangulation of literature, demographics, and observations. The result was that each finding was validated by the data itself.

### **3.12.7. Cycle 7 – Synthesis**

The final phase involved refining analytical memos into the structure and narrative for the findings and discussion chapters.

## **3.13. Reliability and Validity**

The processes involved in the constant comparative method included internal checks on the validity of the data. As data was collected and coded, I developed conceptual categories, and linked tentative, emerging relationships. I then collected additional data to test the bounds of

conceptual categories. This process was repeated until theoretical saturation was reached—that is to say, until no new categories emerged and no new information inconsistent with the categories and tentative hypotheses was being generated. This approach is consistent with the processes outlined by GT researchers (Browning et al., 1995; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

When more than one researcher is involved, at least two researchers independently code all the interview data, then compare the coded categories for overlaps and disagreements and arrive at a common set of categories, which then will be used to recode all the data (Browning et al., 1995). In the case of a single researcher, an independent reviewer will be asked to randomly code excerpts to verify the accuracy of the coding procedure (Isabella, 1990). In this study, I asked a colleague to review my coding.

### **3.14. Description of Instruments**

I used the recruitment script (see Appendix B) either via phone or email in order to reach designers and invite them to participate in the study.

Subsequently, I used the interview script (see Appendix C) to collect data from individuals who had agreed to participate in the study. Participants were required to sign the consent form (see Appendix D).

### **3.15. Discussion of Problems Encountered**

Although semi-structured interviews provide a balance between structure and openness, a considerable amount of time still needs to be invested in the development of the questions, conducting the interview, and transcribing the results (Gillham, 2005).

I was aware of the delicate balance of ambition and data collection required to achieve “category saturation.” I estimated that within the scope of the study, twelve interviews either achieved category saturation or allowed enough iterations of the methodology and analysis to achieve the objective of the study. While I would have appreciated an emerging theory as a result of the study, I considered an application of the methodology to be sufficient for the purposes of this thesis.

Often in this type of research, another concern is the skill of the researcher in conducting the interview to solicit as much richness in responses as possible. I have had more than twenty years of experience in managing interviews both in practice and academia. In cases where I knew the participant reasonably well, the length of the interview sometimes stretched from an estimated 60 minutes to three hours. The resulting transcript often resulted in repetition and drawn-out responses that made coding difficult and required extra time and concentration to tease out the essence of what the participant said.

In some studies respondents choose not to participate. Fortunately, this did not occur in this study. However, in cases where the interview exceeded the original time consideration, some questions were not fully answered at the end of the interview. In addition, two participants sought reassurance of confidentiality and anonymity at some stage during the interview. I do not

believe that either time constraints or confidentiality concerns undermined the validity of the responses used for the analysis.

## 4. Research Findings and Discussion

The research findings and discussion in this chapter focus on the observations and interpretations of twelve interviews conducted with Canadian fashion designers. The semi-structured interview approach was framed within the context of the research question, which attempted to answer:

- ⇒ how fashion designers think about themselves,
- ⇒ how they think about the design process,
- ⇒ how they think about the business of design and their role.

While the interview script (Appendix C) was divided into three parts, the questions themselves were not intended to elicit direct responses to each of the research questions' subparts. Instead each question was designed to triangulate the subparts to provide richer responses (see Suddaby, 2006).

The structure of categories (themes) in grounded theory studies is a construct of the simultaneous actions of collecting and analyzing data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which has resulted in the coding table used for the analysis in this study (Appendix F). It is perhaps important to note that the structure of this “findings” chapter follows the categories as they emerged during the analysis. The alphanumeric values assigned to the categories and the associated open codes are simply an attempt to manage the data. This approach should not be considered an attempt to sort the data into a preconceived, specific hierarchy. Further, the content within each category and open code may be applicable to more than one subpart of the research question. As such, I have chosen a systematic approach to discuss each open code in

alphanumeric order. The findings of this study are supported by quotations taken from the transcripts of the participants' interviews.

Among researchers, there is little agreement in how to present quotations. On one hand, a few select quotations may be considered sufficient to illustrate a point; on the other hand—and this is my preference—a large selection of quotations helps to underscore the subtle nuances of what respondents actually said. This option provides a richer, deeper understanding – not just for the researcher, but also for the reader. Within this paper, underlined text within longer quotations helps identify what I consider to be salient phrases. While this approach may tempt readers to validate the coding, it is important to recognize the scope of this paper: to learn GT by doing, and to gain experience that will improve the quality of analysis (Glaser, 2003; Suddaby, 2006).

Some of quotations have been modified to provide clarity without altering the meaning of the text; this was done by eliminating pauses, repeats, and in some cases correcting grammar. I found that during prolonged responses, the participants sometimes forgot the original question and deviated toward other ideas. Those deviations, however, were not edited as they were considered an important part of the study. The participants provided valuable insight into their beliefs and attitudes when they did not directly answer a scripted question and instead said what they wanted to say.

In presenting the findings I have chosen to express the data in percentages (and, in some cases, also in absolute numbers) and as pie charts, in order to accommodate as broad a perspective as possible. It has been suggested that when presenting findings on small samples of qualitative data, researchers should avoid expressing results as percentages as is commonly done with quantitative data. Instead, the results should be considered in relative terms (Meehan, 2012).

In addition, the choice to discuss the results in relative, not quantitative, terms should not be considered a weakness in the data nor suggest that saturation has not been achieved.

However, I do believe that there is validity in presenting quantitative figures. There are instances where the findings in this study reveal a different perspective when considering not only how many of the participants provided a response to match a coding criteria, but also the total number of responses given to match the same coding criteria. In this thesis, I am differentiating between the concepts of “dominance” (i.e., the number of designers who expressed a certain opinion) and “intensity” (i.e., how many times designers expressed a certain opinion). In my opinion, focusing on intensity helps to identify subtle nuances of themes, whereas dominance confirms or un-confirms the importance of a particular theme. Consequently, unless otherwise stated, the percentages and absolute numbers presented in the following discussion reflect the intensity toward a coding criterion. In cases where I found contradictions between intensity and dominance in the findings, those differences are discussed.

The findings and discussions are organized into broad areas focusing on the research questions, by providing a detailed account of each of the themes (categories) identified during phases 2 and 3 of the analysis (where responses were grouped by emerging themes). Subthemes (open codes) are illustrated with charts and samples of quotations from the interviews.

**Section 4.2** addresses the first part of the research question, “How designers think about themselves,” by discussing the themes “identity and self-perception” and “perception of others in field.”



**Section 4.3** addresses the second part of the research question, “How fashion designers think about the design process,” by discussing the themes “definition of design” and “transformation.”

**Section 4.4** addresses the third and final part of the research question, “How fashion designers think about the business of design and their role,” by discussing the themes “decision making” and “organizational effectiveness.”

**Section 4.5** links the findings that stemmed from the research question to the literature on design thinking, design process, and decision making.

**Section 4.6** provides an exploration of relationships between factors that emerged from the analysis of open codes. While outside the scope of this study, the results could lead to further investigation.

## **4.1. How Designers Think About Themselves – RQ Part 1**

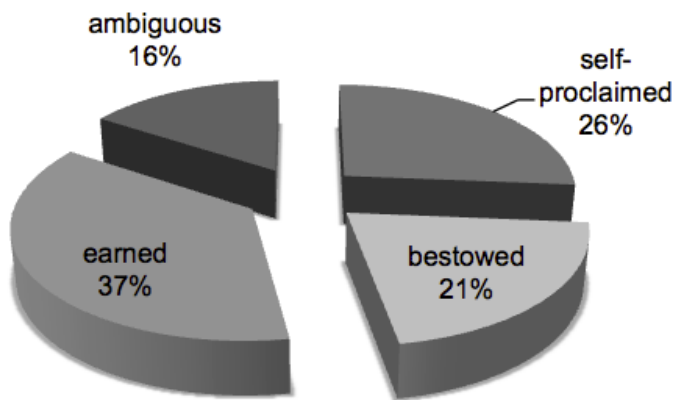
### **4.1.1. Theme: Identity and Self-Perception**

This sub-section explores how the participants see themselves and are seen through the eyes of others. The title “fashion designer” is not simply a description of the activities carried out by the participants. More importantly, the term also reflects experience, success and reputation. Acquiring the title “fashion designer” appears to be the result of hard work and acceptance by peers and the public, but while designers acknowledge that hard work is associated with

mastering the “skill” of design, they believe that “talent” is equally important. However, they are not in agreement exactly as to where talent comes from. Is it innate or learned?

This section also shows that the perception (or rather misperception) of outsiders suggests that the fashion design industry is misunderstood. Further, designers, by virtue of their passion, set expectations for themselves that they may or may not be able to meet.

#### 4.1.1.1. Title of Fashion Designer



*Figure 6.* Designations of fashion designers.

Margolin (1989) believes that public perception is important in positioning the role of the designer, and that it legitimizes the profession. The participants’ responses reflect that designers themselves feel that the title “fashion designer” is legitimate if it is given by the public and media. Although the majority of the participants accept “fashion designer” as a description of what they do for a living, the data suggests a varied approach to how they “accept” the term (Figure 6). In fact, only about a quarter of the respondents described themselves as “self-proclaimed” fashion designers, whereas the majority saw themselves as having “earned” the title (37%) or having been “bestowed” with it (21%) in recognition of their hard work.

The designers suggested that “earning” the title of fashion designer through consistent hard work that had been acknowledged by their peers provides them with the greatest level of personal satisfaction. Sometimes designers themselves do not think that they have yet earned the title until they have achieved a reputation or success:

Katherine: “In the process I developed a reputation.”

Grayson: “You know what? It’s funny because I think as a designer I am still waiting for that successful moment but if you ask a lot of other people I am very successful.”

“Self-proclaimed” suggests taking the title to describe and re-affirm one’s occupation as a professional or as having completed training:

Katherine: “Design is one of those professions that’s like being an artist, that’s self-proclaimed.”

Ellie: “I am a fashion designer.”

Victor: “When you go to fashion school you are a fashion designer after you graduate.”

A “bestowed” title indicates the media’s and customers’ role in anointing an individual:

Victor: “Other people started calling me an expert just because a television network said so. . . Interestingly my perception is that why do we live in a society where we put more value on a television network to title us and put a credibility on us?”

“Bestowing” generally has a less credible acceptance from designers than “earning” since “bestowing” often occurs following a specific event, such as a runway show, extensive media

coverage or an interview, and may be considered less attributable to hard work than good luck.

However, designers credit the “bestowed” title as an affirmative turning point in their careers:

Salome: “I think it was ‘bestowed’ because when I first came to Canada, I didn’t consider myself a designer, I wasn’t a designer.”

Victor: “I think it’s up for other people’s interpretation, up for other people’s judgment.”

Charles: “Well a lot of people use it more as an accolade.”

Katherine: “You can say I am a designer, I am an artist, I am singer whatever and it’s the public that sort of you know anoints you.”

When the validation of one’s profession is left up to others to decide (in this case, the general public or fashion media), it is possible to be misunderstood or underappreciated (de Forest, 1990; Evamy, 1994; McDermott, 1990; Sparke, 1986). The responses in relation to the word “bestowed” tend to indicate that the participants often felt they have no choice other than to accept what others think of them and then be prepared to deal with the consequences.

#### **4.1.1.2. Talent**

Whether talent is innate or can be learned through training is hotly debated within the art and design community (Margolin, 1989; G. Smith & Whitfield, 2005b). Similarly, the respondents in this study have diverging views on this subject, as Figure 7 describes.

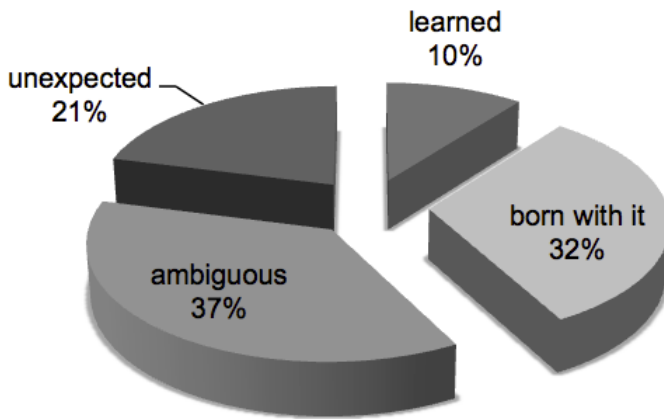


Figure 7. Where talent comes from.

Even though not strongly supported by all participants, the data suggests that “talent” is seen to be innate: the designer either has it or doesn’t have it:

Cooper: “Design is a talent, absolutely. I think that you are born with it.”

Grayson: “If you ask a real, like a naturally born talented person that does this, there is really no explanation. They have a hard time explaining because it happens naturally. So, I think the best designers tend to be naturally gifted, that they have it innately and then they listen to those instincts and then carry through.”

Paulina: “I think personally I find design a talent.”

Adam: “Design is a gift, talent yes yeah, I think when we get up into this thing, where we are talking about design as art and that’s why that’s totally a talent.”

Some designers suggest that talent can be improved by training, or can uncover a hidden talent and develop it over time:

Ellie: “I would say that it’s a talent first and then you can become skilled in it.”

Chloe: “So I think that it can begin as a skill and it could become and it can ...we all have talent, some of our talents are hidden.”

Chloe: “Okay, I had been in business for about eight years, seven or eight years when I really felt my real talent; I started to access my talent.”

Others are not quite sure. They are ambivalent toward the idea that talent is necessary to be a designer; instead they see talent as an attribute by which one acquires skills more proficiently:

Charles: “I just have a particular skill set and maybe I have a talent, I don’t know, right? Maybe it was only skill, right?”

Charles: “But then I think having talent for something allows you to ease, there’s more ease associated with having more talent to quickly pick up skills.”

One dissenting voice is convinced that talent is the precedent. Without it, skills do not matter:

Salome: “I could have all the skill and whereby I don’t have the talent for it, it doesn’t matter.”

Another participant suggested that focusing solely on developing skills can stifle talent:

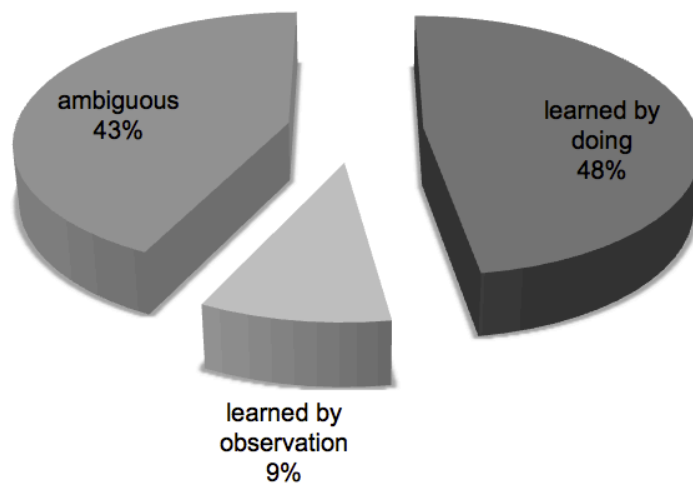
Alexa: “I can say I see some big talent which is just at the beginning and is probably a little bit squeezed by school that they have to follow their rules and some students just follow the rule – they have no imagination – and all of them have finished school.”

While the literature supports designers’ claims that talent is a gift, differing opinions question whether talent is a singular entity or a dynamic phenomenon that can be shaped or misshaped while learning the skills in an effort to become proficient. This observations ties

closely into Schön's (1983) principle of learning by "doing" as a precedent for acquiring tacit and practical knowledge.

#### 4.1.1.3. Skill

The relationship between skill and talent attempts to reconcile the conflict over whether talent is a prerequisite for becoming a successful designer. Schön (1983) puts importance on the repeated act of "doing" as a way to gain tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is an important factor in decision making as inferred in the process of rational versus irrational thinking (Tarter & Hoy, 1998).



*Figure 8.* Where skill comes from.

Figure 8 suggests that nearly half of the participants felt that learning a skill is achieved by "doing" and that improvement and expertise are achieved through continual practice. The close relationship between the designer and the material confirms Kimbell's (2012) notion of the importance of maintaining the designer's position in context of the process and the material:

Ellie: “A true designer has gotten their hands dirty, stained with the dyes of the fabric. It’s not just about being a designer – it’s about understanding construction of a garment.”

Nearly half of the designers believe that experience comes from repeating a task over and over to become proficient:

Katherine: “You achieve technical knowledge from school but then it’s just doing it over and over and over again so it’s experience.”

Chloe: “Repetition, repetition, repetition. It’s by doing it a lot, doing it when I didn’t want to do it, doing when I didn’t have any ideas, doing it because I had to – because I had over a 100 people who depended upon me to do it.”

Katherine: “You achieve technical knowledge from school but then it’s just doing it over and over and over again so it’s experience.”

Ellie: “As you get older you’ve got your experience which is telling you we’ve tried that, don’t do that, or I did something similar so if we’re speaking about creating we’re talking about doing the same thing over again.”

The process of repeated “doing” also includes the opportunity to make mistakes and to learn from those mistakes to reduce the likelihood of risk that will affect the business negatively. Designers discuss the benefit of making mistakes as a lesson in learning:

Chloe: “I’d have an intern and I’d say I expect you to learn three things everyday and I want you to write them down. I expect you to make at least one mistake every day because you’ll remember the mistake that you made—almost longer and more than you’ll remember what you learned.”

Salome: “Skill comes with making your own mistakes. You’ll always be impugning your skills but that’s a matter of practice; it’s a matter of studying; it’s a matter of learning.”



There is some indication that participants believed that a skill can be learned by observing someone else if the desire to practice is present. Desire invokes curiosity to learn the skill and to become proficient at it. It does not always involve formal instruction, but it does involve the repetitive act of “doing” it:

Grayson: “I got my training just from observing, asking questions, volunteering. Even though I didn’t know what I was doing, I just did it.”

Autumn: “You can teach someone the principles of how to design. For example a bra. You can teach someone how, what fits and what works and what stitches work and what stitches don’t work but I think that there is something that is a little intuitive that comes from it because you kind of just have to love it and have a talent for it.”

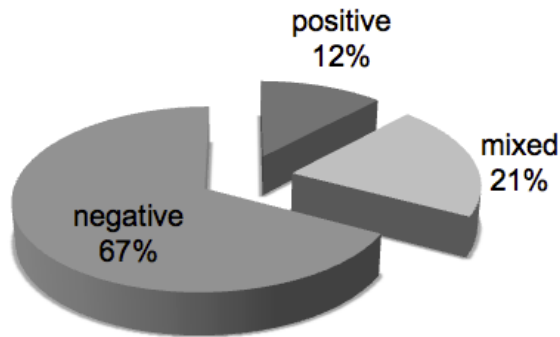
Alexa: “I didn’t have an idea how to create a garment from scratch. So I took a couple classes and learned to sew and there is stitching, drawing and design and I took some classes for pattern making and this is just like the missing piece to create a good, very well fitted garment.”

The responses strongly support the concept that ways of knowing involve the repeated action of “doing” to acquire experience and excellence (Schön, 1983).

#### **4.1.1.4. Perceived Respect for Self in Industry**

The promise of becoming a famous fashion designer is a powerful draw that attracts young people into the industry. Many who receive their training through post-secondary education understand the dedication required to succeed. They need to bring passion, endurance, and the ability to accept criticism. The motivation is based on intrinsic values that allow the designers to express themselves creatively (Florida, 2004). They see themselves as hardworking individuals. Unfortunately, the public’s perception is very different from the designers’

perception (Margolin, 1989). The dichotomy of misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the fashion design industry has a powerful impact on the self-perception of designers.



*Figure 9.* Perceived respect for the fashion design industry.

Participants were asked how they feel that others perceive their choice to work in the fashion design industry compared to other creative fields. Responses overwhelmingly point to the participants' awareness of negative impressions outsiders hold of the industry (Figure 9). Designers point to negative press headlines relating to scandals, frivolity, and eccentricity of individuals in the industry, which they say fuel these impressions.

Adam: "I'm not one of the designers who strolls in late, on the phone have a million ideas and opinions, and walks off to leave everybody doing the dirty work."

Katherine: "There is no pride... it's so raucous and sort of shallow and it's so based on fame and glory or celebrity."

Chloe: "Very early on in my career and I couldn't figure out this whole cult of celebrity that designers have. I think it's kind of strange actually. It happens. Lord knows I have benefited from the press and media but I have also been the target of negative press."

One designer admits to playing the part, getting caught up in the special attention lavished on a fashion designer:

Salome: “I figured I was different and special. I used to like going through airports where everybody turned around and looked at me and I liked ‘swanning’ into hotels with parties and eight garment bags. I really liked that. And I saw myself as this above-the-ordinary special person.”

While artists in the entertainment industry often benefit from negative situations by getting increased media attention (for example, Charlie Sheen, Lindsay Lohan, Paris Hilton, and Mel Gibson), this does not hold true of fashion designers. John Galliano, described recently by media as a “disgraced individual” (The Telegraph, 2012) after having been fired, likely will have no opportunity to acquire another high-level design position in the industry regardless of the reasons for having been dismissed. Further, to sustain the artists’ image, the entertainment industry intentionally and successfully markets the talent of individuals, culminating in highly anticipated, public awards ceremonies, such as the Academy, Grammy, and Tony Awards. There is no equivalent award in fashion—at least in Canada—and designers continue their struggle for acceptance by outsiders:

Salome: “You have a girl who writes, sings and writes jazz poetry getting an award and I said to him ‘How come fashion designers are not listed in this program?’ And he said ‘Well, you shouldn’t be. You’re commercial and you make money on it.’ And I felt ‘What about them and what about a piano company?’ I said ‘Yeah, when we do the creative things we want to do we don’t make money on it.’ And he said ‘Oh no, you are commercial.’”

A further point was made that there is a perceived motivation of preying on unsuspecting customers for the promise of easy money:

Grayson: “I hate to say North America is the only continent that looks at design solely as a financial game.”

Victor: “We do not live in a very nice society. Insecurities are driving our society to buy products, to buy things, to make ourselves more beautiful when they look great the way that they look. It’s pure money-grabbing.”

Designers realize that they are misunderstood:

Paulina: “I think in terms of design and society if there was more education there would be more appreciation.”

Salome: “We are very intuitive, we are very loyal but in some ways people don’t understand. We are quite shy and modest but we also have this ego thing too. “

The responses reinforce Margolin’s (1989) notion of an underappreciated and misunderstood opinion of others faced by fashion designers.

#### 4.1.1.5. Expectations

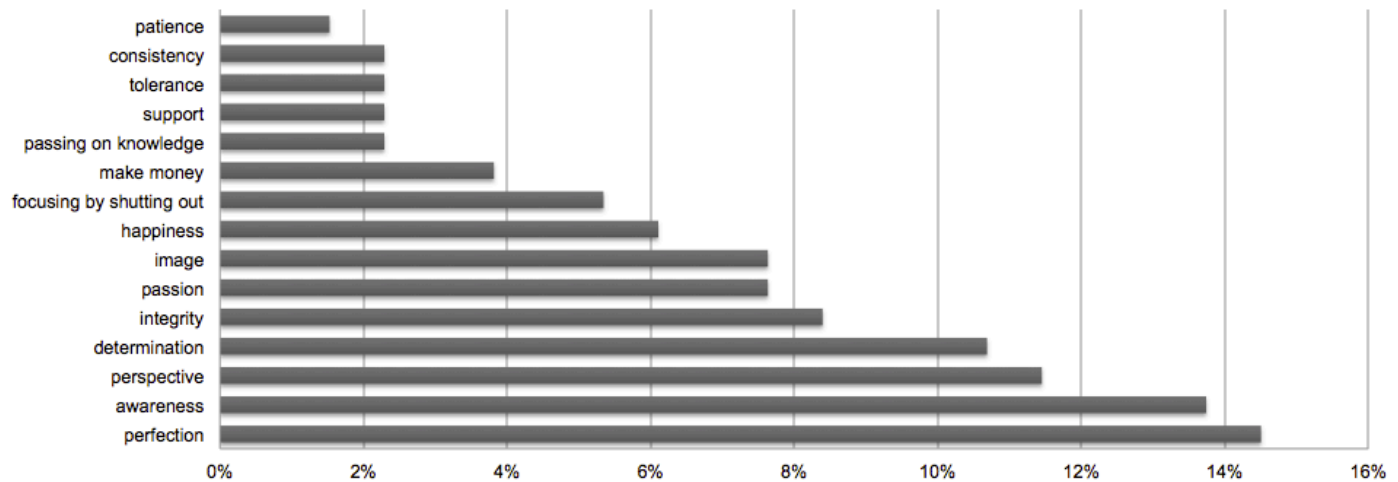


Figure 10. Designers' expectations of themselves and others.

Expectations can be viewed from the perspective of strengths and weaknesses as seen by designers. Designers set expectations not only for themselves, but also for those who work around them.

Designers' expectations of themselves (Figure 10) suggest an emphasis on inward attributes and intrinsic values driven by perfection, awareness, perspective, and determination. These findings are supported by Florida's work exploring motivation within the creative industries (2004).

Designers characterize themselves as often not meeting their own expectations. For them, a good job done is simply not good enough:

Salome: "We all need to do a collection down the runway to make us feel a bit better, and everybody says it's good. No, that's not true because I always feel, 'No it could have been so much better and it's not that good'."

Katherine: "I am never satisfied with what we do."

While outward attributes such as patience, tolerance, support, and making money were mentioned by the participants, these were not considered important factors in meeting self-expectations.

#### **4.1.2. Theme: Perception of Others in Field**

Although fashion design is often described as a profession, in fact the industry does not have a professional body that sets standards and regulates who is qualified to enter the field as a practitioner. Fashion design, consequently, is the only field within the artifact design sector (also including interior, graphic, and industrial design) that is unaccredited. Individuals are able to enter and exit the field freely without certification or specific training. For purposes of this study, I established classifications for the purpose of discussion. I assigned fashion designers to three broad categories based on their training and background: “classicals,” “cross-overs,” and “pretenders.”

I defined “classicals” as designers who have been “classically” trained by attending a post-secondary fashion-design program leading to a certificate, diploma or degree. “Classicals” may also have undergone an apprenticeship with an established designer, who often acted as master or mentor.

I defined “cross-overs” as individuals who have pursued the role of fashion designer after completing a non-fashion-based post-secondary education. They may have pursued formal

education in a non-design-related field and often afterwards registered at community colleges in skills-based fashion courses.

I defined “pretenders” as individuals who did not formally pursue fashion design education. They may have come from other industries within the creative sector or from any other industry. Pretenders are often characterized by their perceived style and influence as celebrities. They rarely practice by “doing”; instead their creative work is carried out by design teams.

While pretenders rarely enter the field without the substantial support of teams that possess the skills and experience required to develop and produce an artifact, they nonetheless have a significant impact on the perception of the industry. As the public already has a distorted view of the industry, pretenders tend to perpetuate these views.

Pretenders are largely used as marketing vehicles by large apparel firms that are hoping to capitalize on the popularity and influence of an entertainment industry celebrity, often with mixed success. Examples of fashion initiatives associated with “pretenders” are “Jessica Simpson,” a denim and casual line designed by The Jones Group; “Daisy Fuentes,” a private label collection manufactured exclusively for U.S. retailer Kohl’s; “Kanye West,” a women’s fashion line launched in 2011 at Paris Fashion Week; and actress Lindsay Lohan’s short-lived stint as creative director at Emanuel Ungaro in 2009. The data collected in this study suggests that while the participants are not directly affected professionally by pretenders, nearly all designers have mixed or negative feelings about their impact on the industry.

Designers who consider that the phenomenon of celebrities as fashion designers reflects poorly on the fashion design industry as a whole believe that these individuals simply lend their name to an apparel manufacturer to exploit the celebrity's current popularity:

Grayson: "And then with the influx of celebrity designers which drives a stick through my heart along with everyone else, it just frustrates the effort of all of us because they are riding off of their name, right? And where is the design, where is the innovation right? There is none. It's nothing but sales, it's marketing, right? And it's just riding off, because this person is a rapper or this one is a teenage sensation or these ones happen to be on TV and there are two young girls that have come up with this collection right?"

Grayson: "In the 2000s anyone can be a designer. No training, they just look through it and someone else does all the work. That person comes in and at most places doesn't even come in. It's his team, his team of stars, yes that's the Justin Bieber look or no that's not an Ashley Olsen and Mary-Kate look."

Grayson: "True designers like us have to compete now against all of them."

Ellie: "They are not a designer because there is no way that they can contribute what a designer contributes. They just don't. I'm assuming that they don't have the training."

Katherine: "It is a little discouraging because the implication seems to be that anybody can do it, that anybody can do it like if you're singer you can be a designer or if you're an actor you can be a designer, it's like it's a toss off, it's like anyone can do that."

Other designers take that aspect of the fashion industry in stride and recognize that even though some celebrities may have the talent, but not the skill, they still have access to financial backing. They also recognize that the term "fashion designer" may be used imprecisely:

Salome: "I think they've got some talent but some of the people don't have. The [real] designers who have the talent may not have the gift of money. If you have money, you can buy the rest of it."



Katherine: “A lot of people sort of use the term ‘design,’ ‘a designer’ and ‘stylist.’ They refer to a designer when really often it’s more styling.”

Cooper: “My take on it is, it’s an amazing marketing tool to make money . . . that’s what it is about.”

Cooper is ambivalent toward celebrities as designers. He sees no direct impact on his business and considers fashion to be characterized by a free enterprise spirit that has seen talented individuals cross over from other creative industries:

Cooper: “I don’t think it takes away from what I do for a living. I think there are people that have to employ great designers who can make it happen.”

Cooper: “So I think that’s perfectly fine, the same way Gianfranco Ferre was an architect, and like what do you know about fashion, or Armani an architect another one, or Versace.”

The responses from the participants suggested that celebrities further contribute to the public’s confusion and under-appreciation of the talent and skill required to be a fashion designer. Celebrities as designers are generally not considered entrepreneurs, based on the fact they appear to have unlimited funding, often from large apparel firms, to run the enterprise with which they are associated.

To summarize this section “How designers think about themselves,” I have explored the two themes “identity and self perception” and “perception of others in field.” The main findings include: 1) the title “fashion designer” has to be earned; 2) talent is a precursor to successfully learning skills; 3) designers perceive a low level of respect from those outside the industry; 4) designers set high expectations of themselves and those around them; and 5) the phenomenon of

outsiders styling themselves “designers” further adds to the confusion the public has about fashion design. In all, fashion design aims to provide functional artifacts whereby talent is innate and skills are acquired by repeated “doing.”

The next section will discuss the second part of the research question “How fashion designers think about the design process.”

## **4.2. How Fashion Designers Think About the Design Process – RQ Part 2**

### **4.2.1. Theme: Definition of Design**

Originally when I was envisioning the study, I did not intend to propose a definition of design. While researchers have postulated a number of different definitions, there is no single meaning that covers design as a whole. Instead, the literature contains definitions that seek to explain specific subsets of design.

I asked the participants in this study how they define the concept of design from a fashion perspective. To most participants, design is the response to a need and the process of meeting that need. The function and usefulness of the resulting product, or artifact, was an important consideration.

Victor: “Design serves a function.”

Paulina: “Design is the process, the journey.”

Cooper: “Great design is something that really is used everyday.”

Charles: “Design comes from a demand from another person.”

Chloe: “Design is a combination of meeting a need, working with a material, and building a model of something that can be manufactured.”

Alexa: “Design has structure, has to answer many, many questions for what, to whom, when, and why.”

The respondents’ use of words such as “function,” “used everyday,” “demand,” “manufacture,” “for what,” and “to whom” support definitions of design put forward by researchers looking at the objectives of design as a way to describe the process, solutions, need or desire (Brown, 2008; D'Ippolito, 2012; Eagen et al., 2011; Fry, 2008).

Participants also speak about design as a response to what happens around them. Observation of social phenomena shapes behaviour, communicates culture, and reflects our society (Buchanan & Margolin, 1995; D'Ippolito, 2012):

Charles: “Design comes from thought and observation.”

Ellie: “Design really reflects who we are.”

Adam: “Design is just an idea that comes into your mind and in some way, somehow you are able to communicate.”

Grayson: “Design elicits either an emotional or physical response. . . It’s really not quantifiable in words.”

Other participants talk about being inspired by beauty. As primarily a visual stimulant, beauty can be both a description of nature (looking at an irregular pattern on a rock or observing the colours in a sunset) or a description of the artificial (the harmony of a row of Ionic columns).

This is in essence the disassembling and reassembling of nature (Petroski, 1998) and the science of the artificial as stated by Simon (1996).

Salome: “Design is interpreting all the beautiful inspirations that come upon you.”

Cooper: “Design is seeing something that is beautiful.”

The variety of interpretations of the term “design” confirms what researchers have been struggling with in all sectors of design: there is no universal definition.

#### **4.2.2. Theme: Transformation**

The transformation of a design idea to a finished artifact that culminates in the wearer’s experience is an important part of the relationship between the fashion designer and the consumer. Rather than a prescribed series of steps, the transformation occurs tacitly, primarily through the function of “creator.”

In the current study, designer responses were evaluated to determine how designers see themselves in the design process, how they think and how they make decisions against a complex set of interactions.

The complexity of turning an idea into a finished garment (the artifact) requires tacit knowledge. The design thinking process as used by d.School at Stanford University (Figure 1) outlines a set of six steps that are non-linear and often iterative. From the fashion design perspective, the “understand,” “observe,” and “defining the point of view” stages of the design thinking process require an extensive understanding of the design problem and the customer.

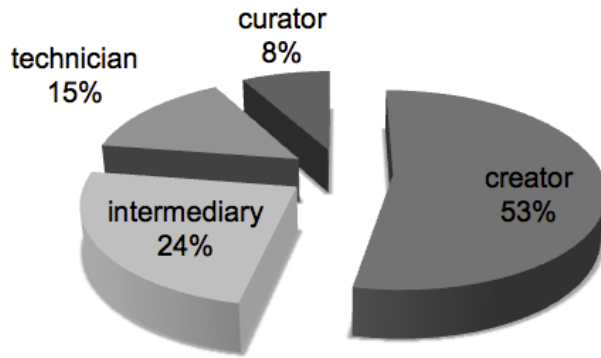
“Ideate” most commonly results in sketches and drawings, “prototype” allows for designer and material to define the shape and feel of the artifact in progress, and “test” assesses the suitability of the end artifact.

#### **4.2.2.1. Design Process Roles**

Most commonly, the timeline of the design process in fashion is governed by the launch of a new season’s collection. Often the launch utilizes fashion week—a bi-annual event—not only to maximize publicity for the designer, but also to sell the line to retail customers. By having to meet specific deadlines, designers may also face other constraints. For example, the availability of fabric mills’ new sampling of materials, or the lead times required for any special processing and development are often outside the control of the designer. From past experience, the designer is often able to gauge when to begin the process. Stolterman (1992) describes the design process as lacking consistency and generic rationality.

Each designer has a process that he or she follows during the development of the line. However, this process is neither defined within the industry nor within an organization, even from season to season (Ling, 2010; Merholz, 2009). The decision on how to introduce the actual fabric into the design process varies, for example. Some designers sketch the entire line before they look for suitable fabrics; others get inspired by fabric first and then sketch the line. This approach is consistent with the traditional decision making model (Table 3). The role of the designer during the design process (see Figure 11) focuses on being the “creator” – bringing to life new ideas. In fact, Roger Martin (2009) describes the “leap of mind” (p. 25) as the foundation for innovative ideas. “Leap of mind” activities are primarily a solitary undertaking for designers; they are points in time when the designer is able to transcend creativity to reach a

spiritual, “god-like” state. Designers speak of the creation of new ideas through which they work with the materials in shaping the artifact.



*Figure 11.* Design process roles.

More than half of the participants described themselves as “creators”; they “bring to life,” or “realize,” a “vision”:

Cooper: “Well I think design is, design is being able to see a vision; have a vision of what it is you are going to do, and to do that with great exuberance.”

Autumn: “The design process needs you to see things that a more tabular-minded person wouldn’t see because instead of looking at the task at hand, you know you are looking at the total, big picture of it.”

While in their role as “creator,” participants viewed themselves as the “intermediary,” the medium through which other function are allowed to flourish harmoniously:

Grayson: “What I bring to my team is actually a little bit of everything because as a good designer again over the years of experience I have to understand each of those areas. I understand management, I understand production, I understand sales and of course obviously I understand design.”

Charles: “He [the customer] is the creator really, not me. At that point, I’m just the person who puts it all together, so that you become a channel for what he wants, right?”

Some designers saw their role as encompassing that of curator and editor:

Paulina: “Curator, collector, direction setter, filter, collector of talent, be the captain of the ship.”

Designers use inspiration to develop themes, which serve to unite a season’s design process of many different items:

Salome: “You get this vision and there must also be some kind of psychic wavelength out there because this is kind of funny. Some four years back I decided I would do an Iceberg collection: global warming. I would get sort of the Al Gore thing and I used only fur that was protected by World Wildlife and we did pale blue, Mongolian lamb and we did icy fabrics and crystals.”

Salome: “I thought I am going to do it like Death in Venice. So I took the whole collection from the movie and I used the music from the movie and we did this collection. And then Karl Lagerfeld at the next spring collection he did this Venice collection. And not only was the music the same, the colors were the same.”

Salome continues: “And then I did the ice-cream collection. The only reason I did that was to get a sponsor who thought every garment had to be a flavor. It was really hard. So then I read that Karl Lagerfeld was paid ten million dollars for having the idea of linking ice cream and fashion together. So a client of mine comes in and she said ‘Does Karl Lagerfeld call you?’ No, but there has to be some linking in designers’ heads.”

To a lesser degree, designers also saw their role in the design process as consultant and technician; others suggested a focus on creating functional and useful artifacts. While many of

the roles are focused on executing a single—that is their own—idea, designers also exhibit team-oriented functions, such as collaborator, facilitator, or consultant.

#### 4.2.2.2. Designer to Artifact

G. Smith and Whitfield (2005b) described the public perception of designer as artist; however, designers themselves resist the comparison to artist. Design is considered different from art because the objectives are different and the artifacts are created for different reasons, even though designers and artists share the same knowledge base (G. Smith & Whitfield, 2005b). In the art context, the customer is not relevant (McDonnell, 2011); however, in fashion the customer is key. Without a customer there is no business. In other words, the reason why an artifact is created defines the fashion design process and the process itself determines if the artifact is art or design. Figure 12 measures the number of observations by the participants based on whether the artifact is created: 1) one-time without an intent to be worn (art); 2) in limited quantities as a decorative item (craft); 3) as a functional items to meet the need and demand of the customer (design); 4) as a mass produced item (commercial); 5) as a new application of an existing process from either the fashion industry or from the outside (innovative); 6) as an artifact both grounded in art and design; and 7) unexplained.

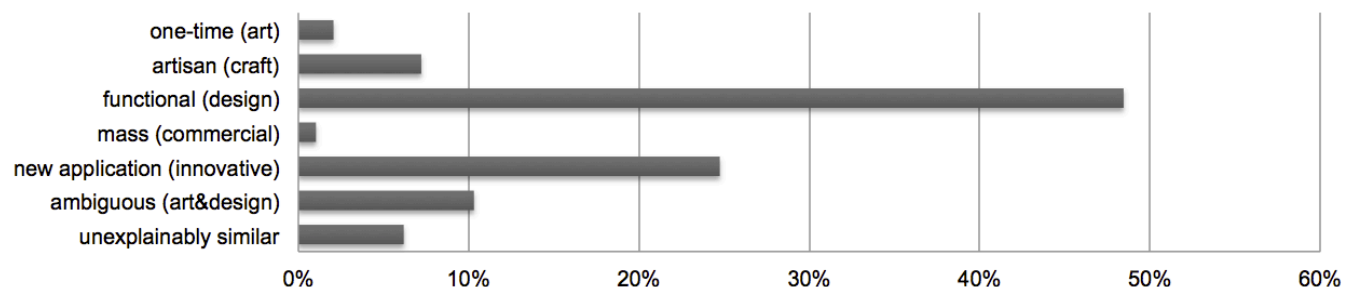


Figure 12. Designers' rationale for creating an artifact.



The initial phase of transformation takes place when the designer decides how to approach the idea of creating an artifact. The relationship to his/her work determines how the consumer will perceive the artifact. The perception can range from art at the most conceptual level to mass appeal at the most commercial level. The relationship is heavily focused on functionality. The artifact, if it is a garment, must still be able to accommodate a body getting in and out. This finding confirms the participant designers' view that the role of fashion design is that of function, and aligns with C. John Tarter and Wayne Hoy's (1998) views on the rational thinking closely associated with functionality:

Chloe: "Talk about constraints. I mean there has to be a place to put your head you know what I mean and it has to fit a size 18, 20."

Charles: "Function, very important to me. Several questions have to support what you're going to create, all pertaining to use."

Ellie: "I'm looking at the obstacles that people have and how we can get over those obstacles in an affordable, easy, functional way."

In addition, designers feel strongly about finding new applications for existing materials, either recycled from fashion or borrowed from other creative industries, to cross boundaries for making new and useful things:

Chloe: "Part of the process is to take materials that might be intended for one thing and to use them in a completely different way and incorporate them in a different way."

Grayson: "Innovation for me is more the concept of breaking the boundaries between men and women. 'Why can I not use women's wear fabric in men's wear, cuts in the men's wear, a men's wear collection and vice versa why can I not do men's wear tailoring, men's wear techniques, men's wear finishing, men's wear cloth in the women's wear?' That for me is the innovation."

Innovation is also described as carefully refining something, suggesting that fashion is moderated by incremental instead of radical innovation (Ettlie et al., 1984):

Salome: “So for me innovation is always honing, improving on what you did already, honing the things which express you and then adding things which you feel are new and the vision of the future.”

Ellie: “Push the boundaries as little bit every time and so that you continuously draw people back in and they want to see what you are going to do next.”

Salome: “Well actually it’s funny that the innovation . . . has been preserving the, what I would almost say, boring traditional pieces that I have done from the very beginning.”

Some try to reconcile art with design, while the least favoured view is creating a garment that is pure art in which the created artifact is not really meant to be worn by a person:

Adam: “With the idea that is never meant to be worn. It’s to be made and meant to be an art installation or something like that. Okay then you know it can be art.”

Designers understand that it is difficult to compete on price with mass marketers:

Autumn: “For us as a small company it’s we can’t really compete against these massive big buck stores if we’re going to do the same thing they do.”

An unexpected result in the fashion design process is the apparent coincidence of designers coming up with very similar concepts without consulting each other or consciously following established trends:

Chloe: “Someone asked, ‘Is it Miyake?’ And I go, you know, well this is mine. . . . I did this before Issey Miyake but sort of at the same time. This has got to be 18 years old.”

Autumn: “We’re finding that a lot of the colors we chose are exactly on par with what’s coming out. And it was sort of by accident.”

Chloe: “I just loved that feeling of creating something even if it might be similar to what somebody else did that’s purely a coincidence. It’s not intentional.”

While the designers responded in a variety of approaches to the fashion design process, the majority considered functionality as the primary objective in creating artifacts. The fact that designers were preserving and renewing existing components of their work over the artifact’s lifetime, confirms the observation by Ettlie et al. (1984) that incremental innovation is preferred over radical innovation in the field of fashion. The customer wants to see continuity from season to season, not unfamiliar, drastic changes.

#### 4.2.2.3. Artifact to Consumer

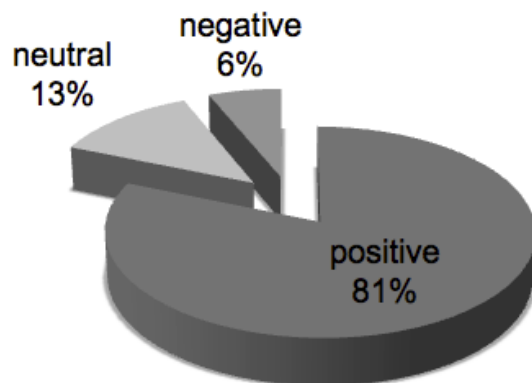


Figure 13. Consumers’ emotional response toward the artifact.

Once the designer has completed the artifact, the consumer experiences an emotional response after trying on the garment or wearing the garment for the first time in public. All participants expressed overwhelmingly positive feedback (81%) from their clients (Figure 13) after the artifact had been worn.

Designers are genuinely concerned about the impact of their creations on the wearer and the love the customer develops toward the artifact:

Victor: “There is something very touching about a woman wearing one of my pieces and then her eyes lighting up and saying ‘Wow.’”

Cooper: “There is nothing more gratifying than when a woman comes out of one of my change rooms and I can see her face light up. She is close to 70 years old and she suddenly realizes that she is really attractive and that she feels good and she feels this sense of sexuality about herself.”

Autumn: “People want to love the things that they buy and have a story to tell and know where the product is coming from.”

The self-confidence that the customer experiences from the artifact translates into a sense of respect for both the designer and the garment:

Autumn (talking about the effect): “It improves your self confidence. I think, you know, you sit up a little straighter you feel a little better about yourself when you are not kind of fidgeting with things and you know feeling things. You are just you, and it gives you a lot more confidence, and I think confidence leads to sexiness and leads to a sense of self and that leads to . . . I mean, like there is the door’s wide open when you feel confident.”

Charles: “He actually stood out of his wheelchair propped himself up and he was a tall man. And his nurse was amazed that he would . . . he would honour me with standing for a fitting when he won't stand for anyone else.”

Charles: “You will never take my suit and just toss it somewhere, right? I think that when you go through this you realize ‘No, I can’t do that, I have to hang it up.’ It’s no longer just a thing, right?”

Conversely, a great design has the power to make a positive impact on the person wearing the artifact. The impact can lead to a greater sense of self-respect on the part of the customer:

Ellie: “I’d given her more than a coat; I’d given her dignity.”

Grayson: “There is an emotional connection that can’t be quantified, that I have taken something that they’ve imparted in six or ten words and between five or six fittings I have distilled and extracted everything that they’ve hoped and dreamed in this one garment.”

Ellie (speaking of a customer confined to a wheel chair): “This woman in Northern Ontario bought one and she called to tell me that how much she loves her skirt and she wears it every day and that it makes her feel female again.”

Grayson: “Well, the cut could be interesting but basically it’s either some sort of big long gown or short gown. But it elicits the same emotion of euphoria, happiness, excitement, nervousness. It has nothing to do with the design but what the design elicits.”

Alexa: “Something that the woman wants to keep because it makes her feel good.”

Chloe: “Forgiveness: my clothes are very forgiving. That doesn’t mean to say they are all loose. Some of them are fitted but even though they are fitted they are forgiving, and if your clothes can’t forgive you, who can? I think women are very hard on themselves and I just don’t think your clothes should be judging you.”

In addition, the designer is able to exert power over how people feel:

Chloe: “I’d like to think that I could have charged more for my clothes but I didn’t. I’d like to think that a person would save up for

a couple of years to buy one of my alpaca [coats]. They really felt that they were getting good value. And I'd like to think that they didn't buy it because it was a Chloe original, but because it was well designed, well-executed, good fabric, good quality. It made them feel really good about themselves, gave them confidence."

Chloe: "I want people to put on my clothes and forget about them. It's not about the clothes it's about them. I want people to notice them not the clothes and when you feel comfortable you look better."

And designers say that for consumers, this sense of power can approach a near-religious experience:

Adam: "'Oh my God, it fits me like it's a glove, you know?' You know it's a damn good gown and somebody put it on. They come out of dressing room 'Oh my god, this dress fits me like a god!' You know, yeah? Yeah, that's good, that's good."

Adam: "'Oh my God, Donna, you have a waist you know?' Because she never felt that she had a waist. Her bust was never enough, and they are going, 'Honest to God, you have a waist.' Yeah you know and so it's yeah that's what fashion can do for you. It's that illusion."

The power of impact the designer has over the client can also be communicated to other individuals who are closely associated with the consumer. In the following quotation, the designer is suggesting the transfer of a past experience associated with an artifact from one wearer to the next:

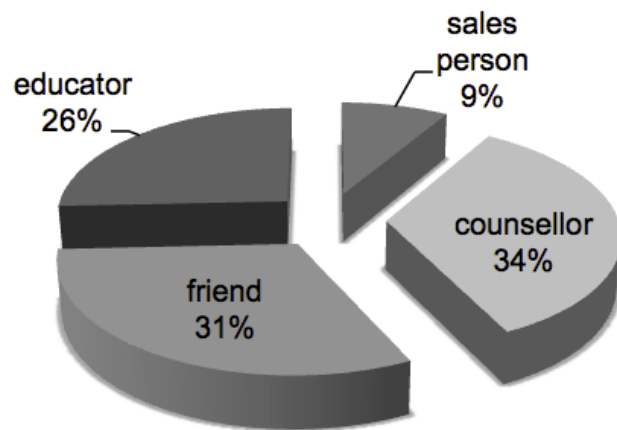
Charles: "His boys were really into the whole experience of it, having a tailor. It was the father passing along this sort of a manly thing to do, masculine thing to do, to have a tailor and how important it was and the relationship you try to have with your tailor. And he's speaking about it in front of the boys with me. His youngest boy, a seventeen-year old, came in the other day with a suit from his father and so I asked how his father is doing, he said,

‘Dad had a stroke. He’s not well and he’s in hospital and it’s really bad. He’s probably not going to be around much longer. But Charles, I wanted to know if you could do something for me. If you could take this suit and if you can make it fit me. It’s my dad’s old suit.’ That’s one of the experiences that makes you realize that what you do is a little bit greater than you. . . . He’s not asking me to make something new. He’s asking me to preserve a memory of his dad through what I do.”

Fashion can create a powerful connection between the customer and the artifact, leading the former to feelings of happiness, validation, self-respect, confidence, and preservation of memory. Design and fashion are united through a unique bond that goes beyond filling a need or want (Aage & Belussi, 2008; Braham, 1997; Entwistle, 2000; Leopold, 1993).

#### **4.2.2.4. Designer to Consumer**

The previous section described the relationship between the artifact and the consumer. Positive experiences develop not only from the impact the garment has on the consumer, but also from the impact the designer has on the consumer. The design process as outlined by Cross (2007a) seeks to capture empathy, creativity, and rationality by understanding the client’s needs and wants. It is accomplished through a planned-versus-opportunistic approach, using representation, dealing with getting “stuck,” evaluating, and overcoming challenges. Designers who are successful in meeting expectations and conquering obstacles are able to transfer the positive experiences of the customer with the artifact onto themselves.



*Figure 14.* Designers' role in relation to customer.

The professional relationship between the designer and the consumer is what closes the loop in the experience transfer. The interaction between designer and consumer has less to do with selling (only about 10% of the responses mentioned a traditional merchant/consumer relationship as the principal motivation) and more to do with providing and building emotional support. Figure 14 illustrates the roles designers take on when interacting with their clients.

After a positive experience, customers are eager to return to the designer's studio. A studio or store may take on the role of refuge. The clients feel a sense of security and relief. They are able to confide in the designer:

Grayson: "We become the psychologist then. We have to become like a counselor to reassure them that this is great. Because most people are very insecure; even the secure ones are always insecure. It is our sense of knowing, our trade. We provide security and confidence."

Ellie: "I usually try to read them and try to work within their personalities. You know, I'm a pretty easy-going person. I'm a good listener, you know, and very compassionate."

Alexa: "So, the designer to the customer is like a psychologist. We have to listen to the story of their life because they are coming here to feel better. It's not necessarily to buy something. They are



coming to feel better and to release the stress and we are creating this environment in here for that.”

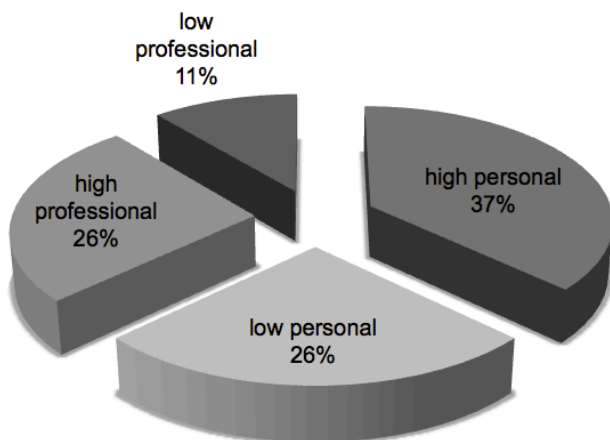
Cooper: “It brings the customer back to you again and again for them to trust you and for you to be able to take them to the next level of design and their personal style.”

Salome: “The clients that come to me honor me with their trust.”

Autumn: “[I like to be able to sell] a product that makes women feel good about themselves and makes women feel good about their clothes and fashion and style and everything like that.”

Designers take the trust their customers have in them seriously. It is a bond that connects through their clothes to the wearer. Margolis (1989) notes the importance of a positive public opinion in the design/business relationship because it lends credibility, trust and financial success to the fashion designer.

#### 4.2.2.5. Level of Satisfaction



*Figure 15.* Designers’ personal and professional satisfaction level.

Satisfaction in and on the job is determined by the passion, commitment, and—to a degree—the financial success of the designer. Florida states that intrinsic values provide motivation (2004), and our respondents agreed.

Figure 15 indicates that the variability of participants' personal levels of satisfaction with their jobs reflects the highs and lows experienced during a designer's career. The majority of participants expressed high professional and personal levels of satisfaction. Professional satisfaction comes both from others telling designers their work is important, and their own sense of achievement:

Cooper: "I believe that the greatest satisfaction in my work is people telling me that they love what I do."

Grayson: "It's achieving something that started off in my mind and to this day I am still awed by the fact that, oh my God!, that one is from my drawing and there it is on a person and it's exactly how I envisioned it. And when it comes exactly how I envisioned it I am honestly and genuinely humbled and awed by that fact, because it's amazing that you can go from two dimensions to three dimension, right?"

Adam: "One of my biggest things that I have accomplished in my life was that I ran that business for twenty years successfully self-financed."

Ellie: "I think that I have been able to affect people. The way that I have [this feeling is] through the work that I do. That would be the satisfaction."

Designers' dissatisfaction is characterized by their quest for perfection and sense of letting themselves down:

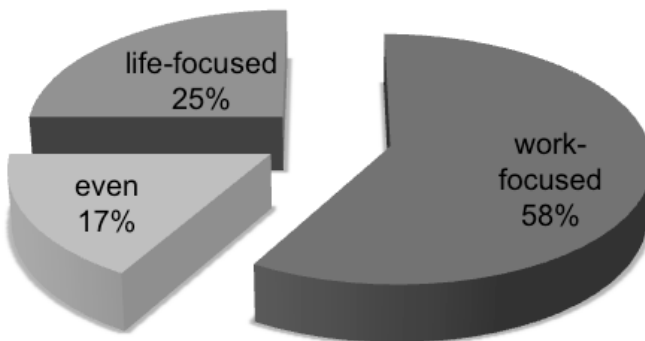
Salome: "What I found frustrating that at my stage of life, I don't want to be making mistakes I made before."

Another perspective suggests a designer is not necessarily motivated by purely making money:

Charles: “I think that’s where we don’t do it necessarily for money. It’s not for money; money is not the end thing why we do it. We do it for an appreciation of what we do.”

Satisfaction is an important determinant as to how designers see themselves. While the participants generally enjoy high professional and personal levels of satisfaction, they suggest low levels of satisfaction may be connected to unrealistic expectations stemming from, for example, the need to balance the responsibilities of running a business with having personal freedom to enjoy life — as described in the next section.

#### 4.2.2.6. Work-Life Balance



*Figure 16.* Designers’ perception of their work/life balance.

Entrepreneurs keep busy because of their desire to succeed, and this is also true of fashion entrepreneurs. Deadlines, the drive for perfection, and the many responsibilities a small business entails, cut into personal time.

Figure 16 shows that the majority (58%) of participants' work/life balance is skewed toward work:

Autumn: "I think my life would be lot easier if I could wake up at 6:00 in the morning on time, start my day early and everyday I just think that my life would be so much better if I could get just get up from bed and start the day earlier."

Chloe: "That was a big problem. I couldn't even take a month off. My big dream was to take a month off someday."

Alexa: "I don't have too much time extra to use for some personal things."

Some designers have been able to make changes within their organizations to focus on life and family. The changes involved a modified plan to the timing of showing collections, but more importantly allowed them to concentrate on being hands-on (Schön, 1983). While this tactic is in keeping with the participants' priorities, it nonetheless is at the expense of the business:

Katherine: "Actually, we decided to shrink our company back in late 90s very, very intentionally so that we can get back to the hands-on. . . . We've made it very clear that we will only do things on our own terms. We only show once a year. We don't show twice and that's because we don't show in the summer or in the fall because that would mean we spend the summer working and we'd rather go to the cottage. So, we make lifestyle choices and make our jobs fit into our lifestyle."

Those who wish to balance life and work sometimes do not have a strategy in place to achieve this goal:

Grayson: “I’m just recently married and I have the baby bug. I want to be a father. I want to have the family. So, that means shifting gears a great deal.”

Ellie: “I work a lot and I shouldn’t work as much because I do have two kids. And it is sometimes hard to put one before the other depending what their needs are.”

Grayson: “To juggle the responsibility of a home life, kids and a career, it’s a lot but I think I can do it and I think it’s a new, I guess a new vein for me to look into, go into.”

Salome: “I would like to have, however small, a nice home. . . . I would like to be able to take, it sounds little, but just to have some days off and be able to do a garden. . . . To just have a kind of perfect home that I can be arrange my flowers. . . . My sister in Portugal was living such a normal life. They had breakfast, lunch and dinner and then she did the ironing and I don’t do ironing and she hung the laundry on a line and I thought it would be so nice to hang washing on a line and iron it and cook. Just one day a week – I don’t want it every time. One day a week would be enough.”

While a lack of work/life balance is common to entrepreneurs, in this study the fashion designers reported that they did not have a strategy in place to find the desired equilibrium.

In summary, this section on “How fashion designers think about the design process” outlined the findings around the themes “definition of design” and “transformation.” The main points include: 1) no single definition of fashion design exists; 2) the role of the designer is that of “creator” shaping materials into artifacts; 4) design relies on the transfer of tacit knowledge during the process; 5) design elicits confidence, self-respect, happiness, and “divine” experiences by the wearer; and 6) designers’ satisfaction is tied to balancing business and personal life. The process is not a set of prescribed steps; instead, the process is a transfer of design emotion from the designer to the artifact to the consumer.

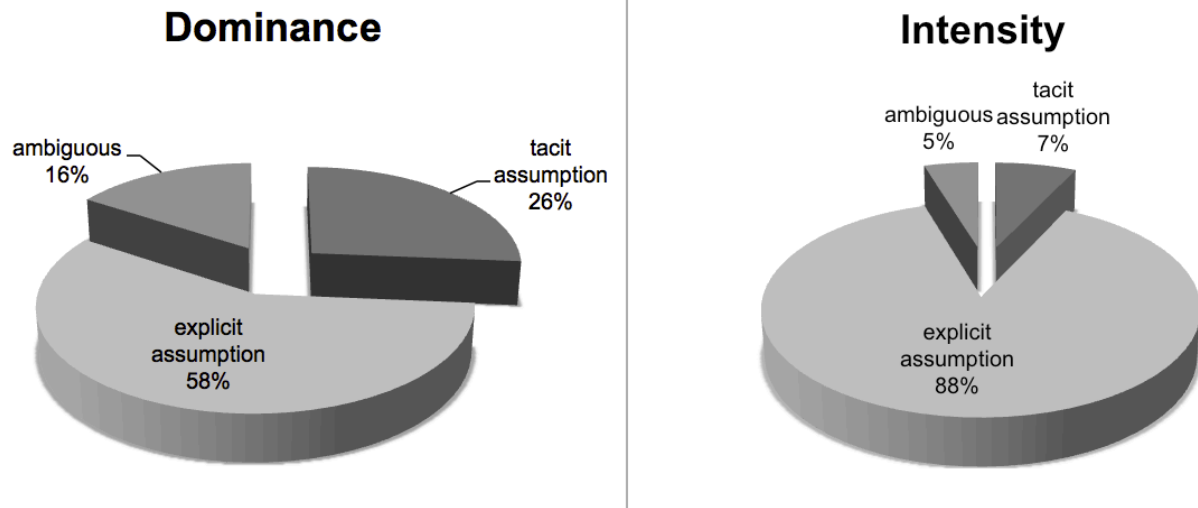
The next section “How fashion designers think about the business of design and their role” will discuss the demands entrepreneurs face when dealing with creative work and making business decisions.

### **4.3. How Fashion Designers Think About the Business of Design and Their Role – RQ Part 3**

#### **4.3.1. Theme: Decision Making**

##### **4.3.1.1. Rational Decision Making**

Tarter and Hoy (1998) describe rational decision making as a process of determined action that begins with the development of a strategy, continues with implementation, and concludes with an evaluation of the impact after the decision has been made. Further, they recognize that few business situations exist where all information is available and that the principle of “sufficing” as previously proposed by Simon (1993) is appropriate. “Sufficing” allows for a “good enough” decision in the absence of complete information. The responses by the participants in this study confirm this underlying concept.



*Figure 17.* Designers' rational decision making preference given different types of assumption.

Rational decision making is based on assessing the problem, coming up with a series of possible solutions, and selecting the best-fitting approach to solve the problem (Tarter & Hoy, 1998). The underlying assumptions can either be explicit or tacit. An explicit assumption involves scenarios that are quantifiable and measurable against a set of criteria, for example: if the price of fabric exceeds a certain value, profitability will be compromised; or, if designers produce a line, they will expect the sales team to maximize sales. In contrast, a tacit assumption involves a reliance on experience that is difficult to articulate – for example, knowing which fabric to choose over another, even though both are of similar price, weight, and fibre content. Other factors that need to be considered are: whether designers consider themselves mathematical and practical with financial matters; whether designers have procedures in place; and how designers acquire knowledge to expedite decision making.

Earlier I described the phenomena of dominance and intensity when analyzing participants' responses. When looking at the dominance of a preference—i.e., how many designers responded—the majority (58%) indicated that they make rational decisions when

dealing with explicit assumptions (Figure 17). Looking at the same question from the perspective of the frequency with which rational decisions are made, or the intensity of the action, respondents said they nearly always rely on explicit information (88%). This implies that fashion designers make rational decisions and will seek out the necessary information to make the best possible decision when it comes to the situations that directly affect the successful running of their businesses. In this, designers exhibit the traits of entrepreneurs (Raudsepp, 1963; Stein, 1968; Steiner, 1969).

The following responses reflect designers' aptitudes to be practical and work with numbers, and their ability to make good decisions:

Victor: "I think my mind works in that mathematical way."

Chloe: "And everything is about speed you know. If there are 250 working days in a year and most years for the last I would say fifteen years I was producing anywhere from 700 to 1000 designs a year. You do the math."

Grayson: "I hate to say this, the practical side of me coming out now, which scares me. I hate to say it's finance, it's money, it tends to be financial. So, a budget is usually set up as everyone else does and we go through it. Once all the calculation are there, it determines what we keep and what we lose or sometimes it tells us what we have to change."

One particular designer, who as a business owner, believes that the creative process of designing a line needs to conclude with great sales. She has very clear expectations:

Chloe: "I had put together a little line that they were just thrilled with. They just think it's so cool and they're excited to get out and sell it and they're inspired to go out and sell it and I think I rocked the world a little. You know what I mean in a good way? But now I'm saying okay where are the sales; like I hope you understand that I didn't just make those samples for the fun of it."



Designers understand the limitations of not only fabric price, but also the consequences when considering that an expensive fabric is not necessarily a good fabric, nor the right fabric.

Chloe: “Well, you can’t just go and buy fabric that’s \$75 a metre, you might have some constraints in terms of what fabric is available and then you might have some constraints in terms of production capabilities, technical capabilities.”

Schön (1983) points out that by “doing,” designers acquire tacit and practical knowledge, which further sharpens their business decision making abilities by drawing on past experiences that not only allow faster and timely decision making, but also helps them to avoid poor decisions. Responses by the designers confirm the importance of learning and retaining knowledge:

Katherine: “It’s going to take too long to produce, so then the practical side kicks in. Ok, get rid of a dress, get rid of a skirt, and we cut the collection back. Because we grade it all, we sew it all, we cut it all, we know the time involved. So, we are business people at that point and edit from a business standpoint.”

Victor: “I think I spend 90%, 99% of my time researching, researching and acquiring as much knowledge as I can.”

Ellie: “With experience you can achieve things quicker because you already know what is going to work and what is not going to work based on how you’re experienced.”

Chloe: “When I’m at the beginning collection I know I’ve got so many bottoms, so many tops. I have to have this covered. I’ve got to cover off the dresses. I’ve got to cover off the coats. I’ve got to cover off the... I got certain sort of information which I resist but I know what sold the best last year and it is a business after all. So you go, ‘I don’t know if I want to do that same coat but I better have a coat like that because that fills that same need’.”

The knowledge gained by past experiences allows designers to put procedures in place:

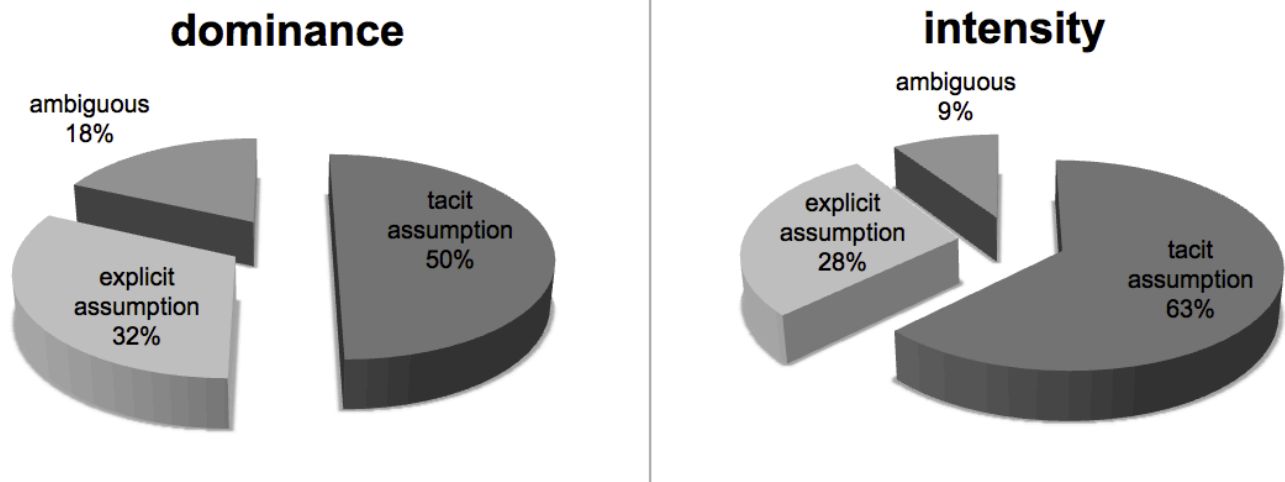
Katherine: “We buy fabrics first. We don’t design a thing without the fabric first.”

Autumn: “We never just pick something because we like it. We pick it based on many different factors and it takes us a long time to actually make the decision of whether we’re going to add that style or that item because it really does need to be tested before we choose.”

The above responses suggest that when designers are faced with making business decisions, they seek out information either by drawing on experience or by putting procedures in place to allow for the best possible decision. This behaviour confirms the constructs and attributes of individuals’ rational decision making (Simon, 1993; Tarter & Hoy, 1998).

#### **4.3.1.2. Irrational Decision Making**

It is unrealistic to assume that all business situations present themselves in a rational manner. An irrational circumstance exists when ambiguity, unclear technologies, uncommitted participation, and ill-defined objectives combine and do not allow the choosing of the best solution or a “sufficing” solution (Simon, 1993; Tarter & Hoy, 1998). The literature suggests that it is important to recognize that cognition, emotion, sensation, intuition, and interrogations of the constructs of design thinking provide an alternate way of dealing with problems that present themselves as shifting and incomplete (Eagen et al., 2011).



*Figure 18.* Designers’ irrational decision making preference given an assumption.

The irrational decision making approach is governed by resolving a design problem intuitively or arbitrarily when unclear, ambiguous, or spontaneous situations exist. When faced with tacit or explicit assumptions, half of the designers in my study tended to favour making decisions based on their intuition – whether or not that choice was the best of the options provided (Figure 18). Similar to the rational decision making approach, the intensity (i.e., how many times designers expressed a certain opinion) with which designers make irrational decisions is higher than under the scenario of dominance (i.e., the number of designers who expressed a certain opinion). In this case nearly two thirds of designers said they rely on their tacit knowledge to make decisions.

Cognition allows designers to trust their instinct to make decisions they cannot really explain. This approach infers that feelings and intuition are an integral component in decision making and that the result is often justified after the process itself is “felt” (Whitfield, 2007):

Victor: “I trust my gut instincts.”

Ellie: “I think in the beginning it was a little confusing and probably confusing for me as well and I was just kind of following my gut and not really knowing where it was going.”

Further, following instinct often manifests itself as “doing” something because it is the right thing to do or it needs no further justification. The participants talked about taking a different direction to what might have been expected, or having the prerogative not to provide a rationale:

Chloe: “I went inside and I thought curling sweaters. [Sweaters for the sport curling.] Well, I’m not a sweater designer but I took knitting in college. It was one of my majors. Why can’t I design sweaters and why can’t I design coats? So I just went ahead and did it and when my sales agent in Western Canada sort of laughed and said ‘Why are you doing knitwear and outerwear? You are a dress house!’ I said, ‘You are fired.’”

Salome: “My decision making is probably the worst in the world because my decision making is based on wanting my vision or wanting my perfection of what I want.”

Adam: “It’s interesting for me now because I know how to make a dress. Quite often now I don’t need to sketch. I can almost have an idea and I don’t have to put it down to reference it.”

Cognition can also express itself spiritually as though guided by an invisible force — an entity from another world:

Chloe: “It really felt like it was coming through me from somewhere else. I had visions. I was shown the garment very clearly. The colors were all soft like the color of the sky. I didn’t even offer black as parka color until I was about eight years in. And people said, ‘When are you going to do black? Can you do black? When are you going to do black?’ And I go, ‘Okay, here’s black.’ But the ivory always outsold the black. The pale, pale, pale, pale, pale pink, the palest pink it almost wasn’t even a pink. It sold better than the black.”

Salome: “Mother Theresa said that before we’re born there is a seed set in you, set in me and that seed whatever that seed is going to be will flourish and we’re all pencils in God’s hand. You are expected to take whatever seed is in you and write the message. And so everybody has that seed inside them for going somewhere and everybody has the opportunity to better the world.”

The relationship of the objects involved in the design process provides a sense of freedom. The designer allows the fabric to dictate design, in essence transferring the process to the object. Kimbell (2012) recognizes the importance of how design is materially and discursively comprised by paying attention to the object and designer him or herself:

Chloe: “Sometimes I wouldn’t do the sketch until I actually had the finished garment because stuff happens in the process of building that garment and you let the fabric fall. That’s kind of a cool hang and way nicer than what I was thinking.”

Charles: “The real act of creating something from nothing. I wish I could have the weavers here spinning the cloth so they can see, right?”

Chloe: “I always start with the fabric, always. If it’s not a fabric I’ve got in my hand it’s a fabric that I’ve used before and I know how it behaves. And this is one of the hardest things to get across.”

Chloe: “And that’s where the magic can happen its that dialogue between me and the fabric on a form so once I’ve got the I drape of the fabric then I’ll start cutting the fabric. Then I’ll just start...I’ve had these scissors for twenty-five years and these scissors are like an extension of my hand and I start carefully cutting the fabric.”

Decisions sometimes are made with a lack or clarity of rules:

Ellie: “The rules weren’t spelled out. The rules just sort of evolved into where they are.”

Alexa: “The process of thinking is not always very, very clear.”

Designers related instances where decision making was not governed by the impact on business or personal life; they almost conveyed a sense of indifference in cases where decisions did not seem to matter to them personally:

Adam: “Fortunately, early on in my career the success [didn’t matter]. I didn’t have a house I needed to worry about, I didn’t have a car, there were no kids you know. What I knew [was that] I could live in apartment for \$125 a month so you know. I didn’t have to worry about feeding myself.”

Victor: “Quickly, I don’t really care. Pick something and go. I don’t think . . . it’s not really relevant to me.”

Chloe: “I feel success is a feeling that I have: I really don’t care if it sells well or not.”

Paulina: “No, he does not want to buy it. I say please buy it. It will be the editorial, that's advertising dollars. I just think of it so in that sense and then as the collection moves further down the pipeline I tend to become more and more detached from it and then bored and then I'm ready for the next one.”

Adam: “And then the next season your buyer walks in and she goes, ‘What the fuck is...where are the dresses?’ ‘He wasn’t feeling it this season.’ [says the sales agent.] ‘Okay,’ and off they go.”

While irrational decision making attempts to situate a design problem as unclear and ambiguous, the model does not fully explain why fashion designers accept such decisions as valid or even necessary. Further, when looking at rational and irrational decision making attributes in design thinking, the literature suggests that while there is no single prescribed process (Ling, 2010; Merholz, 2009), any process is likely seen from a business manager’s perspective and not the designer’s perspective. Consequently, decision making research does not adequately address how designers in this study affect the process when they are both the creative force and the business manager.

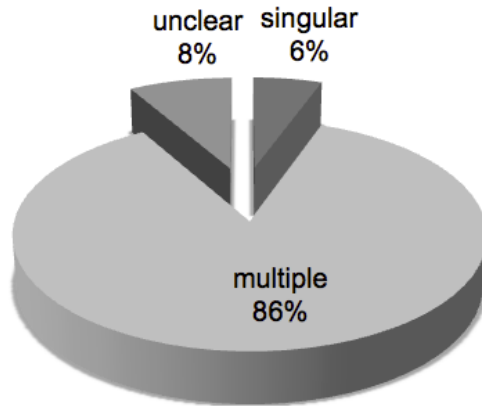
### **4.3.2. Theme: Organizational Effectiveness**

The focus on developing functional, new, and useful things is not simply to choose between existing alternatives, but also to generate new concepts (Boland & Collopy, 2004). While most of the literature on design thinking is business-based for the training of managers, the new design practice is not simply a set of routine rules. It firmly situates the designer as a tacit entity (Kimbell, 2012; Poulsen & Thøgersen, 2011). Thus, the designer embodies the design process through his or her own experience. As creatives, designers are different types of thinkers when compared to business people. Kirton (1984) describes designers as inventive and independent thinkers who often clash with business-focused managers.

Fashion designers in this study face challenges because they act as both the creative force and managerial restrainer embodied into one. This sub-section looks at the ways designers deal with and reconcile these two opposing functions in their work environments.

This discussion on organizational effectiveness explores how designers think about their role as leaders in their companies. Entrepreneurial in nature, these companies employ relatively few staff and operate out of small studios located in the city with easy access to the materials and vendors needed to develop products. Very often the participants employ interns as a means of bridging employment gaps, providing opportunities and exposure to new designers and passing on knowledge to them. How the entrepreneur structures his or her company has an impact on managing future business growth and the decision making process.

#### 4.3.2.1. Function



*Figure 19.* Designers' functions within their organizations.

Not surprisingly, as owners of small enterprises, designers perform several functions in the leadership role, including those associated with design, entrepreneurship, employer, production, sales, and marketing. Nearly all respondents indicated a responsibility for multiple roles within the organization rather than a single one, although they do see their role as designer to be their principal function. The intensity, that is the number of occurrences of responses, suggests that designers are overwhelmed by their non-design-related functions, as shown in Figure 19. Designers tend to dread non-creative responsibilities.

In an ideal world, designers would concentrate on design work and delegate the business decisions to someone else:

Victor: "And I think for me my goal or anyone's, any designer's goal should be to have people run the company and for you to design, just simply design the work."



However, in the real world designers find themselves multi-tasking many if not all of the functions that are required to run the business – sometimes by choice, sometimes by necessity:

Ellie: “I know [things] from a technical perspective so I can wear many hats. Sometimes I wear too many hats.”

Ellie: “Sometimes I am doing it all.”

Katherine: “We do not advertise, we do not pay for advertising and haven’t for probably twenty years. We don’t have a public relations company. We’ve always just done it ourselves – naively in some ways, I think, but it’s worked out okay.”

Some designers realize that they have to be generalists and understand all areas of their business. This trait they share with entrepreneurs in general:

Grayson: “What I bring to my team is actually a little bit of everything because as a good designer again over the years of experience I have come to understand each of those areas. I understand management, I understand production, I understand sales and of course obviously I understand design.”

The participants dislike a daily routine where sometimes little time is allocated to actual design work and the bulk of the day is focused on performing mundane tasks that are left to them as business owners to complete:

Autumn: “Well, designing a new collection took such a little – and it was a wonderful little – segment of time compared to the daily routine of getting up and overseeing emails and making sure that I am on top of, you know, of social media as well and payroll and hours and on top of what’s going on in the industry and in terms of ordering materials and looking towards the next step and over-running all this.”

In fact, designers often are so consumed with handling business issues that they are actually forced to neglect their core creative function. Managing a company is driven by schedules and due dates, whereas designing often has to accommodate the needs of the business. Designers develop an aversion to business because it limits their time to devote to creative activities:

Salome: "... that is horrible and this is horrible so it is becoming like this huge load on my head which means I'm not doing anything else. I'm not doing anything creatively."

Katherine: "Sometimes we'll say, 'Design!' And the collection takes five minutes because that's all we have for it, because all the other crap takes time, but at least being the business end of it we get to make the decisions for what happens."

Furthermore, the obligations to managing the business can become so overwhelming that designers ponder changing their roles, and crave the comfort of a business partner to take on the burden of overseeing the operations:

Autumn: "There is a lot of because you're just, you're completely multi-tasking. . . . If you're owning a business as a designer because you take on a whole other set of obligations. . . . I am very involved in every aspect of the company, but at some times I see myself . . . as less as a designer and more of a manager at times."

Salome: "But if I could just have the luxury to just design. To help in my dreams some wonderful partner who would look after the other but without thinking I was this crazy monster and I could concentrate on the designs and doing the fabric."

The challenges of multi-tasking, and having to concentrate on roles they must perform rather than those they want to perform lead to the recognition by fashion designers that they may be taxing their own abilities and consequently the business suffers:

Cooper: “I know how to run a store, I love retail, I love the whole merchandising part of it and the importance of a window creating a story, that’s like a pride to be able to work. So I’m lucky that way that I can do that but a lot of people can’t.”

Chloe: “And so I run my own business. . . . The weakness that I had which is around the financial part of things, that I never ever did anything for money. But I knew I had to be profitable in order for my bank loan to be renewed and for being able to pay people and to have credibility. So I married the person that would become my chief financial officer . . . chief executive officer so that I had someone I can trust to handle all that and he was at the helm when we had our most profitable years.”

Chloe: “It’s hard for one person to do the work of two teams.”

Adam: “I can remember when I made the decision to run my own business and I sat down with my advisors and they said to me, ‘Oh God, this is a mistake . . . so many designers . . . a year later you are going to be bankrupt’.”

Since their role as designer is central to the business model, the participants struggle with relinquishing control over some aspects of their business. Instead, they insist on remaining in full control:

Chloe: “Well, in my case I had to run my own business because I’m just . . . I have to do everything, I have to control. . . . I am a control freak.”

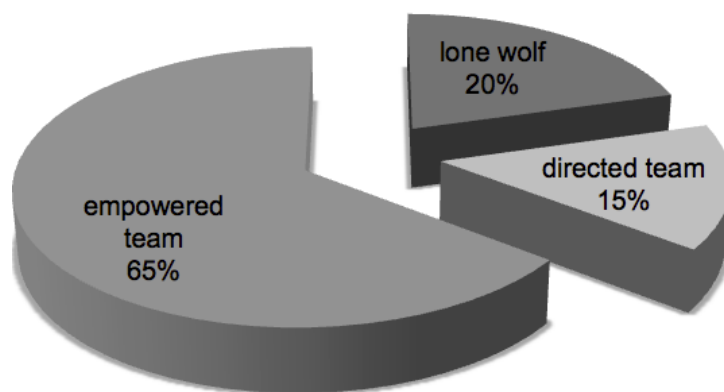
Chloe: “I was central to a lot of the product development, not as much production. But you see, what happens in product development completely sets the tone for what happens in production. You’ve got patterns that don’t fit together but the ability to keep the promise starts with how well those patterns are executed, graded, nudged and how well the samples are sewn and fit and look and fit and everything like that, and then the sell-through at the end – selling when it gets to the store totally comes back to how well it was executed at product development. So I made myself central to that and I put my name on it.”

It is important to note that the tension between designer and business person is pervasive. Even though the participants in this study are capable and prepared to perform all functions within their businesses, the realization that they cannot perfectly execute each function forces them to make decisions to delegate. While functions such as finance tend to rank highly as delegated functions, designers still deal with the mundane business tasks that consume their time. They much prefer working on creative activities instead.

The findings in this study confirm the statement by Bilton (2002) that the relationship between designers and their business is ambivalent at best.

#### **4.3.2.2. Approach to Work Practice**

Designers, while understanding that they cannot do it all by themselves, struggle to develop effective strategies in balancing control and delegation. One must keep in mind that the business model of these entrepreneurs rarely allows the hiring of staff to perform specific duties. While designers frequently rely on interns, casual workers are likely seen as stopgap measures to keep the business running at existing capacity, not to build a larger organization where interns pupate into future employees.



*Figure 20.* Designers' approach to working within the organization.

Whether the organization has several or no employees has an effect on how the participants approach the work practice. While half of the designers in the study acknowledged working alone during the design process, some of them were able to delegate non-design tasks or entrust specific business operations to others – either permanent employees or casual workers. Where possible, however, designers rely on those individuals around them to collaborate on primarily the non-design-related process. Figure 20 shows the relative distribution of working alone (“lone wolf”), instructing employees to execute tasks (“directed team”), and collaborating (“empowered team”). Two thirds of the respondents believe in the importance of engaging others in the business, but not necessarily in the direct design process.

Designers who took the “lone wolf” approach may be seen as control freaks, but on closer examination they need their own space to incubate ideas and perform the hands-on part of the creative process. In fact, the part of “doing it” cannot be delegated. Designers acknowledge the challenges of delegating effectively and therefore often have no choice other than to do the work themselves.

In Grayson’s mind there is no doubt who must be in charge, not just in the company, but more importantly during the creative process, to safeguard that the vision of his work is maintained:

Grayson: “Happily I can say that a lot of them can say that I am very easy to work with. I am demanding, I am exacting, I can be difficult at times but they say ‘He is difficult at times but the reason is he has a very focused vision but yet he is open, right?’ I can be a bitch at times and it’s just because I think that part of that is the control, right? And one thing that everyone will say I am very easy going, I keep a very low, I have a very easy, very casual demeanour about me, but I rule quietly with an iron fist because I want people who are working with me or who I work with to also

develop and grow but yet understand that if I am in charge, I am in charge.”

The act of “doing” (Schön, 1983) cannot easily be delegated and designers find it difficult to articulate a process with a vague outcome and an even more undetermined process:

Chloe: “So a weakness of that ability which is sometimes how I got my greatest ideas, but I had to do it, it’s not like I can say, could you please drape something that’s sort of like this, and pay attention if . . . but then change your mind in the middle of it, you can’t delegate that right? So sometimes I felt like . . . I sometimes chide people. . . . I sometimes slow down the process because I really needed to get that right and I really . . . I was working on something, and nobody else could do it.”

Adam: “I can’t delegate, I just I can’t, you know? That was my biggest weakness. I couldn’t let it go up, couldn’t delegate it. I don’t know how to tell somebody when I am looking at the pattern why I did what I did for the past three hours. You know what? I don’t know why I did it. Just I did it.”

Designers admit to having an ego at the expense of collaboration with their team. However, designers see their ego as an important attribute to ensure their design is accurately executed:

Victor: “I don’t see it without me.”

Salome: “We are very intuitive, we are very loyal, but in some ways people don’t understand we are quite shy and modest but we also have this ego thing too. And somebody said that one of my downfalls is my pride and my self-sufficiency. You want to do everything yourself your way and it pisses people off sometimes.”

At times seclusion is necessary for the designer to develop the relationship with materials and to focus on the task at hand:

Alexa: “When I am creating the collection for fashion I am spending plenty of time to do most of the items by myself, to seeing the fabric and then even sewing and the finishing, cutting everything just to see how under my hand this behaves.”

Katherine: “I prefer to spend a lot of time by myself and I sometimes find a big group environment isn’t really fun for me.”

As entrepreneurs, fashion designers are not afraid to take risks. They seize the opportunity to take the “leap of mind” (R. L. Martin, 2009) to innovate. The following comparison to gambling indicates a high degree of risk tolerance:

Chloe: “And that’s being an entrepreneur and being a risk taker, is a lot like being a compulsive gambler. You take risks, you don’t always have to have a whole marketing study, a whole research, proof that it’s going to work before you do it, because if I had done that, I wouldn’t have done the alpaca. If I had done a research study on making a [coat] they would have said, ‘Well, there’s already so many coat people on the market’.”

Sixty-five percent of the responses favoured a collaborative approach to designing. Often designers consider key employees who have earned their trust, share a similar design ethic, and possess unique technical skills as an extension of themselves. Empowering individuals or the entire team to participate in the design process, however, does not clarify roles or process. Instead, empowerment is a reflection and acknowledgement that the process is chaotic and that the buy-in from the team is an important consideration when the designer is making decisions. An empowered team approach transfers some of the decision making from the designer to the

team. This is not to infer that decision making is entirely democratic; instead there are nuances as to how designers approach the “empowered team” design process, and which decisions are allowed to be influenced.

Designers like to surround themselves with like-minded individuals, who share a passion for the fashion business, even if they are employees. Often designers are able to communicate non-verbally, almost working with their group intuitively. It is not uncommon for such employees to remain with the designer for a long time:

Victor: “It’s also important to surround yourself with people that mirror the kind of positive reflection of yourself in a realistic manner.”

Cooper: “I surround myself with great people, people that I take pride in. So pride is very important to me and the other people around me and the other part is I think they have to be open to looking at design on all levels.”

Autumn: “We think the same way and we almost can read each other’s minds and you know if I put something there it’s fine.”

Paulina: “I had go back with my assistant at the time—Jennifer, who is amazing—and she would be a second set of eyes, so she’d go through it and then tweak it.”

Alexa: “So, I have people working for ten years, seven years, the younger one three years and I’m not changing people.”

One designer sets extremely high standards when choosing employees. The intent is to select employees who are able to embrace the culture of the workplace and grow in their roles:

Charles (on being able to give and receive direction): “I remember when I was interviewing my apprentices and I said, ‘Make a flower arrangement.’ [They said,] ‘I came here to learn tailoring not to make a flower arrangement.’ That was it for me. I was testing their personality in terms of, ‘Yeah, you can be a master tailor.’ I mean that’s something you have to be told. So what are you going to be



doing in the meantime? And if you are not receptive to taking direction then that's not good because you're going to have to take directions to learn what you need to learn."

Designers face a dichotomy: understanding the benefits of delegating versus deciding what tasks to delegate. Even though designers generally have difficulty to entrust decisions to others, those who have the ability to let go realize the benefit of not having to do everything themselves. They may, for example, allow the team to work on the non-visible aspects of the design such as choosing lining colours to match the fashion fabric of a dress:

Cooper: "I am a good delegator. That makes my life a little bit easier."

One designer has chosen to attribute equal responsibility among employees in the business, recognizing the important contribution each of them brings:

Autumn: "My approach is really that it's not just my business, it's everybody's business. We all together make it work and I love my employees and each one of them brings something really important to the table."

Charles is proud to make his clients aware of the team members who are working on each artifact, and he sees it also as an opportunity to anchor employee commitment to the company:

Charles: "I like bringing my team out. I say, 'Here, hold on. Oh yeah, I did this part but nine other people here [did] too.' And that's important to me."

Charles: "I enjoy when my staff come out and they meet the patron [whose suit] they have been working on all week and they see the happiness when they look at their work. I like them getting

connected what they do and for whom. Then it's harder for them not to care."

The participants rely on employees to cover others when personal issues arise, for the benefit of the team:

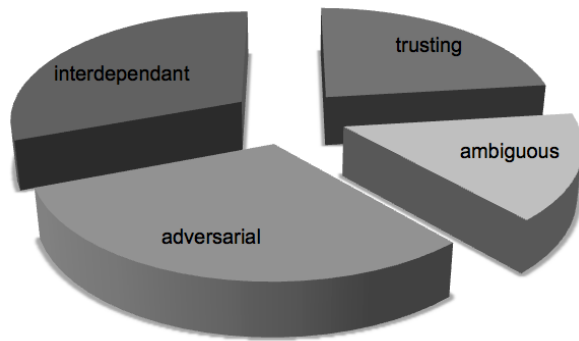
Katherine: "Over the years we've sort of evolved into these different roles but if you can see that someone is floundering in their role at that particular time because there is a personal crisis or there is whatever. What everyone brings really is an ability to step in and fill the role."

Grayson finds that engaging employees early in the process helps to communicate his vision and improve the outcomes:

Grayson: "I also work with input from others. A lot of designers sometimes work in a very insular and a very sort of 'bubble' way . . . like, they come up with a design and that's it. When I used to have a bigger staff, we'd make sure that when my drawings were done and we had made fabric selections – at that point, I would actually have a big meeting. I would sit and I would do a big critique with the boards and with all the drawings, all the fabric and everything was laid out. We'd have the theme, sketches, technicals, all that, and there was no holding back. Like I would let everyone, even my interns and my assistant at the time, they would give me honest opinions and I would welcome it."

While designers do not relinquish creative control during the design process, they nonetheless include a circle of qualified and trusted individuals to provide feedback and support to ensure success. These observations are consistent with the behaviours of entrepreneurs managing their businesses.

#### 4.3.2.3. Relationship with Non-Creative Process



*Figure 21.* Designers' relationships to the non-creative process.

As pointed out in the sub-section on function, designers are conflicted in their roles as both creatives and managers. Designers are not isolated within their studios collaborating with their teams, but consistently have to work others. Individuals involved include not only employees, but also outside stakeholders such as suppliers, sales agents, and customers. The designers' relationships with the non-design-related activities in and outside their organizations change over time. Working with individuals who are not employees and who do not share the objectives and values of the designer can lead to disputes. While there is recognition that design, production, sales, marketing, and management are interdependent, the participants in this study are design-centred and exhibit a variety of ambiguous (15% of responses) and in some cases adversarial (31% of responses) relationships (Figure 21).

Adversarial relationships can be triggered when non-designers push a one-fits-all solution to a production problem or do not understand (or refuse to understand) what a designer is trying to achieve:

Autumn (on lack of respect): “To be honest I think that being young and being female, it's hard to make people take you

seriously. I think I have to take a totally different approach with the contractors as well in that regard."

Chloe (on production strategies as described by a vendor): "The time it takes for him to save that fabric, you could be printing markers all night while you guys are home asleep. Just put it on an automatic marker-making and you can print all that and they're ready for you in the morning. And I say, 'Yeah, but . . . Well what is your fabric utilization?' I said, 'If something utilizes less than eighty percent of the fabric, I don't allow it to be cut, I don't even go to the duplicate stage.'"

Designers struggle to make others understand that as designers, they are the most important part of the business process that encompasses design, production, sales, marketing and management:

Salome (on respect): "I don't think the role of designers is respected enough because if your organization hopes to make money by selling a product, the product is stemming from the designer. People don't seem to get that in many areas. I find often when I've done a free job they will pay the sample maker, they'll pay the sewer they'll pay the cutter, they'll pay the pan maker and they'll go, 'Oh but you didn't do anything,' and you think 'Just a minute. None of those would have anything to do.' But unfortunately many organizations don't realize that design is the most important thing in there for their success."

Grayson: "And we as the designers are frustrated because where's the art then? Where is the innovation? Where is, you know, the way we have to then run through the different stages. . . . Sales becomes the number one, right? Then design becomes, I hate to say, number three because then sales then dictates production then production dictates design, right? And then management runs through all three of them still, but design comes number four, right?"

Salome (on meeting standards): "I'm having this problem now in designing for these people in China. They do not want to pay me for doing design that. . . . You know, first of all I said I could do the whole collection and I could sort of be creative director and I could figure it all out and I could give them sketches with patterns and muslins. 'No, we can't afford that; we will pay you for ten

sketches a month.’ Ten sketches. That is easy, but it is up to them to interpret them and to make them as they were, but I do not want my name on them because I do not know what they are going to do.”

Grayson at one time brought a partner into the business to help him manage the company.

However, differing expectations led to a split between the partners:

Grayson (on working with business partners): “Well, first it’s an opportunity because we’re sort of control freaks and it means that you can partner for a while. When we started out, he was a business guy and you know he just sort of got in the way because he had a different agenda.”

Similarly, Chloe still expected autonomy over the creative process after selling her company and becoming an employee for the new owner. A manager quickly overruled her decisions:

Chloe: “I was still the chief creative officer and I had this person who was managing me. . . . I had to get her approval on every single piece of fabric that I wanted to order or to meet a cut off even. But definitely, if I wanted to put it into the line, if I wanted to put it into the line she would go, ‘I don’t like that. It looks like potato sacking’.”

The frustration designers experience with vendors, suppliers and customers similarly reflects their perception of the importance of design. While designers argue that design is the most important activity in an organization, they do not think they get the proper support or acknowledgment from outsiders.

#### 4.3.2.4. Risk Tolerance

Eight of the twelve designers in the study said that they are willing to take professional risks and believe doing so is necessary to differentiate themselves from their competitors and to innovate new ideas. Designers are not averse to taking risks even if rational decision making would suggest they do otherwise:

Victor: “Too many people do not take chances.”

Charles: “I’ve always had a creative thought so I looked at this niche industry on a whole twenty years before where I’m now and knew that I had to position myself in such a way where no one else was going to be doing it this way.”

Charles: “I like risks. I like taking risk. I like exploring opportunities, and so I’m curious in that way.”

Grayson sees risk as a creative challenge:

Grayson: “I think all designers need to challenge themselves and, like, sort of break out of what people consider their signature because it’s . . . it’s interesting because sometimes you might find a different stride and a different step, right?”

Chloe: “I had more success with these experiments by taking chances, taking risks . . . and my company at that point had been inching along and then I started getting twenty-five percent growth every year.”

Particularly at the beginning of a designer’s career, risk taking takes on a special importance because of the perception that there is nothing to lose:

Salome on taking uncalculated risks: “I didn’t know and I hadn’t got a clue what I was doing. I got four Chinese tailors that somebody produced for me, working in my house basement, and the girl who then became the creative assistant. She was a pattern

maker so she came and started to make these patterns. I always look to fabric, I don't know why I do it. I always do it and we put together this little line and I didn't even know that you could take garments bags on a plane but I thought okay we ought to be selling this in New York. And I was really pregnant and my stomach was out here, so I put everything in the car and I could remember because it was the time of the Buffalo riots and I put everything in the car and I got as far as Buffalo and all people started to throw bricks and broke my windshield and so I had to stay in a horrible hotel in Buffalo. And then I got to New York."

If there is an indication that once a risk has resulted in the anticipated business objective, often the desire to undertake further risk is diminished. In one reported instance, the designer experimented with several fabrics, found the ones that worked, and accepted there was no further need to innovate:

Adam: "That's not my big thing. My big thing for me was give me your basic black georgette or black organza or whatever and I can give you a knock-out gown."

#### **4.3.2.5. Sharing Expertise**

Fashion, as an embodiment of "doing" depends on gaining tacit knowledge by repeatedly practicing a skill and passing on that knowledge from master to student (Schön, 1983). The act of creation as experienced by fashion designers provides many opportunities to share their expertise with others, either in their own organizations or with others in the field.

Passing on practical advice to students and interns allows designers to share lessons learned as a result of years of experience working in the industry:

Grayson: "When you leave me here you [should] feel that you have received the best sort of insight in all areas. Just not, I'm a really good pattern maker or I am really good sewer. [But] that you

understand the industry, you understand one tenth of what the industry is about.”

Grayson: “I always tell my interns, my students: ‘School is the best time to be innovative because you don’t have to worry about selling practicality and this is the time that you can play around with ideas, thoughts, patterns, cuts, anything you want that’s fun and frivolous, or that challenges you’.”

Designers are opening their studios to recent fashion graduates to collaborate and use available equipment:

Salome: “There are so many designers. I started that thing at the consortium when I picked up four fashion graduates. . . . When I saw his drawings I let him use my machines and my iron.”

Salome: “I said I am going to let each of you design one thing, put in the show room and you see how it sells and if it sells, I will pay you for your labour, and a commission. So that was a good challenge for them.”

Other designers share their influence by diverting appearance fees and guest-speaking honoraria to promote non-fashion causes:

Chloe (on using her influence): “All my public-speaking honoraria went to a special fund which I established up in [a Northern community]. I probably raised over \$200,000, just through \$2,000 here and \$5,000 there and \$500 there.”

However, if knowledge is considered intellectual property or the business’s competitive advantage, few designers are interested in sharing:



Autumn: “Nobody. You don’t share that knowledge because it took us a long time to figure out how to make something that’s unique and [in our business] there are so few variables.”

With few exceptions, designers felt the importance of sharing their experience with others in the field, particularly up-and-coming designers.

This sub-section has focused on my observations of organizational effectiveness as perceived by fashion designers running their own businesses. Function, approach to work practice, and the relationship with the non-creative process underscore designers’ ambivalence, and even reluctance, to act as business managers. They like to focus on their preferred role of being the creative force. While they are capable and willing to carry out both creative and management duties as entrepreneurs, they realize that one or both sides of the business may suffer. Unfortunately, they do not have effective strategies in place to mitigate these concerns and instead try to do the best to juggle competing responsibilities.

The traits of creative people are typical of entrepreneurs, and have been studied extensively (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987; Koprowski, 1972; Raudsepp, 1963; P. Smith, 1959; Stein, 1968, 1975; Steiner, 1969; Steiner & University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, 1965). Fashion designers exhibit commitment, self-motivation, complexity acceptance, independence, and unconventionality. They also are easily bored by routines, work erratically, demand autonomy, and reject authority and rules. While fashion designers studied in this research project may not make perfect leaders, they possess the energy and drive to take the “leap of mind” in their quest for succeeding as entrepreneurs.

In summary, this section “How fashion designers think about the business of design and their role” dealt with the final part of the research question. The themes discussed were “decision making” and “organizational effectiveness.” The findings include: 1) designers tend to make “rational” decisions when faced with explicit assumptions and “irrational” decisions when faced with tacit assumptions; 2) fashion entrepreneurs struggle with their dual roles as creator and manager; 3) designers dislike the business parts of running a company when demands compete with creative work; 4) designers will delegate work to trusted employees, but will stay firmly in charge of the creative aspects; 5) designers tend to mistrust outsiders who do not understand the role and importance of design; 6) as entrepreneurs, fashion designers welcome taking risks; and 7) designers share their expertise as part of embodying the “doing.”

#### **4.4. Exploring Relationships**

Sections 4.1 through 4.3 discussed my analysis and findings of the participants’ responses structured around the research question that looked at: 1) how fashion designers think about themselves; 2) how they think about the design process; and 3) how they think about the business of design and their role in it. During the interviews with the designers and specifically during the analysis of the responses, I became curious about possible relationships between the factors that had emerged from the themes and subthemes.

In this section, I am exploring whether or not there are indeed any connections between the designer responses (Appendix F) and the designer profile matrix (Appendix A). This analysis

is, in fact, an additional layer of examination that triangulates the data I collected in the interviews with the data I collected from publically available documents.

However, I am cautious to infer decisive conclusions from the relationships presented. While a sample size of twelve designers was considered sufficient for the previous parts of the analysis, I am reluctant to assume that the triangulation of the data from such a small sample size leads to robust conclusions. Consequently, the findings in the following subsections should be viewed primarily as opportunities for further study with larger participant pools. For a similar reason, I have not included quotations of designer responses gathered during the interviews.

#### **4.4.1. Relationship between Decision Making and Label Type**

As I previously pointed out, a key instrument of how designers communicate with the public is through the use of the “label.” In reference to the actual label sewn into the garments, the nature of the label demonstrates if the designer wants to have his/her actual name listed (eponymous), not to be directly attributable to the garment (pseudonymous), or vaguely identified with the product (cryptonymous).

Eponymous designers not only have their professional but also their personal reputations invested, and are highly engaged in having all artifacts meet their standard – in other words, they are recognized as having made the final decisions. These designers typically make a personal appearance at the conclusion of a runway show, and the audience awards applause.

Pseudonymous designers are not readily identifiable as the creative force behind the artifact. They tend to make collaborative decisions with their teams and will provide their stamp of approval even if the occasional garment does not meet with their personal approval, as long as the group's standards are met. These designers typically do not make a personal appearance at the end of a fashion show, preferring instead for the artifacts to speak for themselves.

Cryptonymous designers fall somewhere in the middle, and play a somewhat elusive role in how the public associates designer to design.

Table 5.

*Relationship Between Label and Decision Making*

<sup>u</sup>	irrational-explicit	irrational-ambiguous	irrational-tacit	rational-tacit	rational-ambiguous	rational-explicit
■ eponymous	13	5	34	3	1	42
■ cryptonymous	4	0	9	2	0	9
■ pseudonymous	4	2	4	1	3	24

When evaluating how eponymous designers make decisions, I became intrigued by the way these designers rely on irrational decision making where tacit assumptions exist, and rational decision making where explicit assumptions exist (Table 5). In other words, eponymous designers tend to look at a situation as black and white, when in fact the evidence suggests many gray areas. In contrast, pseudonymous designers appear to make primarily rational decisions with explicit assumptions; that is, they aim to avoid dealing with gray areas altogether.

#### 4.4.2. Relationship between Label and Approach to Work Practice

Table 6.

*Relationship Between Label and Approach to Work Practice*

U	lone wolf	directed team	empowered team
■ eponymous	12	10	16
■ cryptonymous	0	0	8
■ pseudonymous	2	0	20

Eponymous designers, often working with employees who report to them directly, tend to approach their work style in the same way they personally prefer to run their business (Table 6). They either work alone, give the team specific instructions, or collaborate during the design process. Conversely, cryptonymous and pseudonymous designers almost exclusively prefer to collaborate with teams during the design process.

#### 4.4.3. Relationship between Career Stage and the Non-Creative Process

Table 7.

*Relationship Between Career Stage and the Non-Creative Process*

U	early	growing	mature	late mature
■ trusting	0	8	2	2
■ ambiguous	0	1	4	3
■ adversarial	0	2	2	12

As designers move through their career stages from starting a business to maturing the business, their relationship with the non-creative process involving sales, production, marketing and management changes from trusting to adversarial (Table 7).

#### 4.4.4. Relationship between Label and the Non-Creative Process

Table 8.

*Relationship Between Label and the Non-Creative Process*

U	trusting	ambiguous	adversial
■ eponymous	3	6	13
■ cryptonymous	3	2	1
■ pseudonymous	6	0	2

Eponymous designers appear significantly more likely than pseudonymous or cryptonymous designers to experience adversarial relationships with individuals involved in the non-creative process (Table 8).

#### 4.4.5. Relationship between Perceived Respect and Career Stage

Table 9.

*Relationship Between Perceived Respect and Career Stage*

U	early	growing	mature	late mature
■ positive	0	2	3	2
■ mixed	0	4	3	5
■ negative	4	4	9	21

Designers were asked how they feel others perceive their choice to work in the fashion industry compared to similar opportunities in other creative fields. Designers tend to experience mixed or negative reactions the longer they worked in the fashion industry (Table 9). Further, based on responses from the interviews, it appears that designers perceive an unfair focus on sensationalism of fashion in the media, and often find it difficult to interact with colleagues in their field.

#### 4.4.6. Relationship between Personal/Professional Satisfaction and Career Stage

Table 10.

*Relationship Between Personal/Professional Satisfaction and Career Stage*

	early	growing	mature	late mature
■ high personal	1	6	10	3
■ low personal	1	3	1	2
■ high professional	0	5	4	6
■ low professional	0	2	0	4

As designers gain more experience in their careers, they develop a clearer understanding of their strengths in fashion design (Table 10). Consequently they experience a high level of personal satisfaction that tends to outweigh their professional satisfaction. In other words, designers feel good about themselves as their career develops. Conversely, designers in the late stages of their careers tend to feel a higher professional achievement than personal; that is, they have achieved success but have difficulty dealing with the pressure associated with maintaining success.



#### 4.4.7. Relationship of Intensity to Innovation during Career Stages

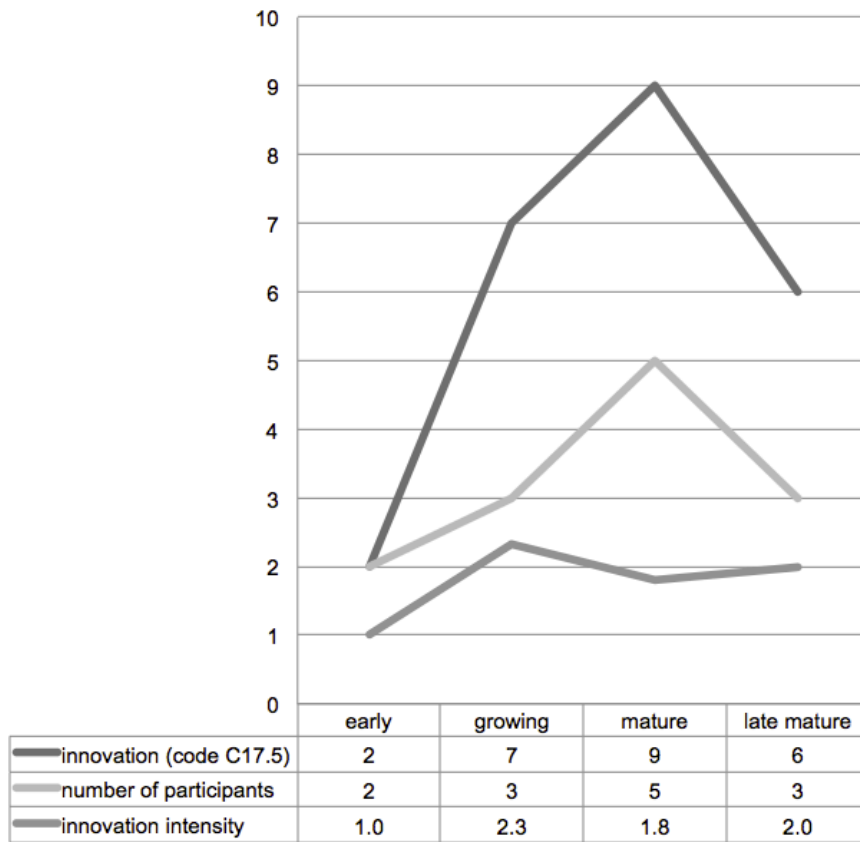


Figure 22. Innovation intensity during the stages of designers' careers.

In this particular scenario (Figure 22), I looked at innovation intensity in fashion design through the four stages of the business. I calculated the innovation intensity factor by dividing the number of participants active in each career stage into the number of responses to innovation. A high innovation intensity factor indicates a high desire to drive innovation in the business. It appears that once a designer has found his/her unique signature in creating artifacts, then more emphasis is placed on maximizing innovation by coming up with variations of the design without losing the signature look. For example, if a designer is recognized for the cut of a sleeve, he or

she will come up with variations on that sleeve to put into every jacket or coat produced. Once the mature stage has been reached, the focus shifts to maintaining innovation. In other words, the designer is putting the same sleeve into every jacket or coat.

Exploring possible relationships between the factors of the data that I collected suggests further, more targeted study of how fashion designers think, design, and make decisions.

## **4.5. Design Thinking, Design Process, and Decision Making**

In the previous sections I discussed the themes and subthemes that emerged from my interviews with the participants. The results suggest that artisanal fashion designers approach thinking, process and decision making differently than the literature suggests.

Fashion design as a process is not extensively studied and only recently has been acknowledged as a legitimate subset within the field of design (Gully, 2009; G. Smith & Whitfield, 2005b). As pointed out in the literature review, existing research is primarily limited to architecture, large organizations, and the manager's perspective. Further, such issues as the gaps in bridging rational and irrational decision making, the scarcity of empirical studies on the fashion industry, and the absence of research on designers as entrepreneurs perpetuate misconceptions about fashion.

This study attempts to validate three concepts employed during the stages of design to construct a fashion design process used by the designers in this research project. The three concepts are:

- ⇒ Design Thinking Process (d.School) (Table 1)
- ⇒ Characteristics of the Design Process (Cross, 2007) (Table 2)
- ⇒ Classical Model of Decision Making (Tarter & Hoy, 1998) (Table 3)

The three models described above do not accurately describe the composite picture of artisanal fashion design entrepreneurs. The findings of this study suggest: 1) design is functional, talent is innate, and skills are acquired by “doing”; 2) design emotion is transferred from the designer to the artifact to the wearer; and 3) the business places multiple and conflicting demands on the designer. However, the overarching result suggests a more encompassing phenomenon. This can be described in the following way: artisanal fashion design entrepreneurs are different thinkers when they encounter creative freedom at odds with business goals.

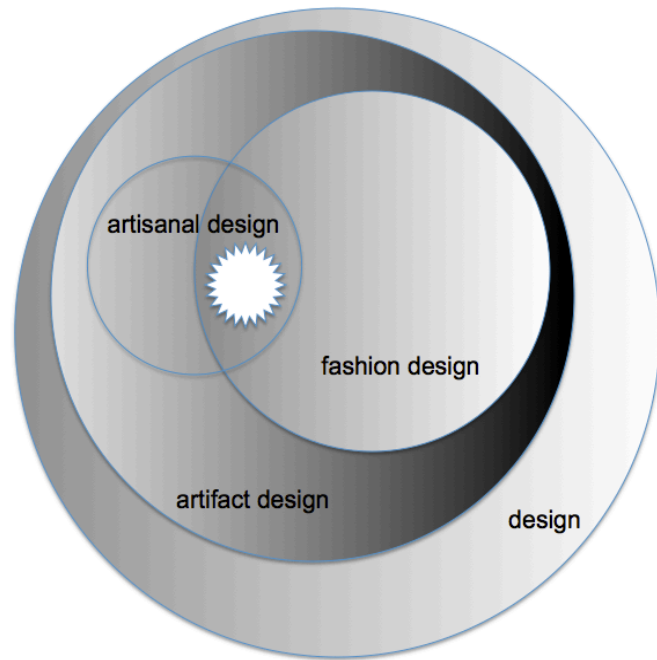
## 5. Conclusion

A review of the literature on the business of fashion reveals gaps in the empirical research on design thinking, the design process, and decision making. While work has been conducted in related design industries, no researcher has focused on the perceptions of fashion design entrepreneurs on the fashion industry

and design practices. The goal of this study was to elicit a fresh and deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced by fashion design entrepreneurs through in-depth interviews with twelve Canadian fashion designers. They shared their views of: 1) themselves; 2) fashion design; and 3) their role as entrepreneurs. Using a grounded theory approach, the data were analyzed for themes, and the findings were discussed in the context of design thinking, design process, and decision making.

In the broadest sense, “artisanal design” is a subset of design (Figure 23). While both fashion design and artisanal design are subsets of artifact design, this study focused on fashion design. Consequently, the contribution to the literature is in the intersection of artisanal and fashion design – that is, to the field of “artisanal fashion design.”

The key findings that emerged from the analysis of the perceptions of artisanal fashion design entrepreneurs reflect notions that:



*Figure 23. Artisanal fashion design as a subset of design.*

- ⇒ design is functional, talent is innate, and skills are acquired by “doing”;
- ⇒ design emotion is transferred from the designer to the artifact to the wearer;  
and
- ⇒ the business of fashion places multiple and conflicting demands on the  
designer.

The sections that follow summarize: 1) contributions of the study to the literature; 2) implications of these findings for fashion design entrepreneurs, the fashion industry, government and educators; 3) limitations of this study; and 4) opportunities for future research.

## **5.1. Contribution to Existing Literature**

This study applied a grounded theory (GT) approach, utilized seven cycles in the process of conducting the analysis, and developed concepts to better understand how fashion designers think about themselves, the design process, and their role in the business. As Turner (1983) states, GT is concerned with discovering small aspects of society to understand, and thereby improving how we handle everyday life.

This study provided insights in the following areas: 1) artisanal fashion design; 2) design thinking; 3) design process; and 4) decision making.

### **5.1.1. Artisanal Fashion Design**

While fashion design has long been studied as a cultural phenomenon, academic scholarship on the fashion business, on fashion designers, and on fashion design processes is more recent, and there are relatively few studies that explore the perceptions of the designers themselves. Through interviews with twelve Canadian fashion designers, this study has identified “artisanal fashion design” as a subset of design, and has described differences between fashion entrepreneurs and traditional fashion designers. These differences focus on the challenges the participants in this study face in running a business. The results indicate that entrepreneurs face additional demands that stem from owning and managing a business in addition to their primary role of designer.

### **5.1.2. Design Thinking**

This study suggests that artisanal fashion design entrepreneurs think differently from managers and other designers in the industry. This phenomenon can be attributed to the different—and often competing—objectives faced by the participants in this study. On one hand, research into design thinking has focused primarily on providing managers with strategies for working with creatives to develop innovative product; such studies have been limited to architecture and artifact design industries. This study considered the thinking process as described by Stanford University’s d.School (Table 1).

On the other hand, the design thinking process has been developed for “non-creatives” to overcome the obstacles associated with analytic thinking to solve complex problems (Eagen et al., 2011, “Design Thinking” section). Assuming that managers are primarily concerned with a focus on finishing a project on time and on budget, the process of design thinking is intended to free them of limitations that impede the design process. The literature, however, suggests that creatives and managers are at opposing ends of the process and meet in the middle. The results from this study suggest design thinking is not only a conflict *among* individuals, but also a conflict *within* individuals.

### **5.1.3. Design Process**

The design process, although acknowledged to have no systematic and formalized methodologies, has limited, empirical evidence in fashion. Cross (2007) developed a concept to explain the characteristics of the design process (Table 2), which seeks to define steps and actions required to solve a design problem. The model does not propose a strict, chronological guide to the design process; instead, it provides strategies to deal with individual components that at times challenge the design process. Designers define the client’s needs, investigate new opportunities, organize ideas, devise approaches to effective problem solving, set challenges, and decide when the work is finished. For example, designers investigate new opportunities by developing a signature item that helps them to differentiate themselves from their competitors or set themselves challenges by finding new uses for existing materials.

When preparing to put together a new season's collection, designers research trends, gather inspirations, select fabrics, develop the colour story, plan the individual pieces, edit, revise, drape and draft patterns, present to stakeholders, receive feedback, implement modifications, construct samples, and prepare for sales appointments with potential customers. The participants in this study confirmed that the process is not always carried out in the same order, and can change from season to season. There are many instances where a designer selects the fabric first, begins draping the fabric, and then researches trends. As a matter of fact, nearly all designers in this study had developed their own version of the process.

The ambiguity around the definition of design as proposed by both researchers and designers has further complicated the design field. Without a design definition paradigm, it is difficult to assess the steps of the design process and evaluate whether the outcomes of the process properly address the design problem. While this study confirms existing concepts, it extends the design process model by an additional factor. The participants in this study agreed that: 1) fashion design is a functional—versus artistic—activity; 2) talent is something one is born with; and 3) expertise is enhanced by the continual act of “doing.” And while the design process is considered undefined and iterative; it is not simply a step-by-step activity, but also one that is highly influenced by transformative emotion. This study has identified the importance of design emotion, whereby emotion *transfers* from designer to the artifact; from artifact to wearer; and from wearer to designer, and *transforms* the relationships among them. This finding suggest that the step of “evaluation and judgment” in the design process model (Cross, 2007) involves not only analytical, but also cognitive functions.



#### 5.1.4. Decision Making

As the role of cognition is an important factor in the design process, it is also important in decision making. Research into decision making has produced limited empirical findings that bridge the gap between rationality and irrationality. As Cross (2001) points out, design is not simply about solving a problem. It requires cognition to allow emotion, sensation, and intuition to guide and influence the design process (Eagen et al., 2011). Table 3 shows the classical model of decision making as proposed by Tarter and Hoy (1998). Participants identify and diagnose a problem, define many solutions, evaluate possible effects, then decide on and implement the appropriate solution. Based on rationality, this approach is favoured by managers. In contrast, fashion designers in this study said they made irrational decisions guided by what *feels right* as opposed to what *is right*. For instance, a designer may choose orange over blue, despite fashion trends advocating blue as the colour of the next season. However, the designers in this study evaluated and finalized decisions that directly affected their business at the same time as they participated in the design process.

Since little is understood about what links rationality and irrationality, there is uncertainty about what mechanisms drive decision making in the quest for “leap of mind” (R. L. Martin, 2009) when the individual is both the creator *and* the manager. This apparent conflict was expressed by the participants interviewed, and was identified as an over-arching challenge faced by fashion design entrepreneurs; that is, they agreed that the business of fashion places multiple and conflicting demands on the designer.

## **5.2. Implications**

Implications to the practice of fashion design should be of concern to: 1) entrepreneurs entering the field; 2) the fashion industry; 3) government; and 4) educators. Each stakeholder benefits from a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities offered by artisanal fashion design, and can offer solutions to improve current conditions and provide business growth in the creative industries.

### **5.2.1. Fashion Design Entrepreneurs**

Arguably, fashion design entrepreneurs have and continue to face challenges in their preparedness and skills in running a successful business. As suggested by this study, these individuals struggle to reconcile the desire to “create” with the need to “manage.” Artisanal fashion design entrepreneurs may place unrealistic expectations upon themselves.

The findings of this study are important because emerging talent often is catapulted onto the fashion stage by the fashion media without the designers having a network of supporters and advisors to plan and execute opportunities arising from the attention of retailers and consumers. Young designers feel they have to create and show a collection first, and figure out how to produce the collection second, when in fact these steps probably should be taken the other way around: it might be far more effective to first develop a viable business plan that relies on maximizing unique skills and ideas, develop a network with suppliers and customers, create revenue, and build a reputation, and then to create a collection. Further, young designers should

actively engage with their peers to share experiences and gain new knowledge. The practice of learning by “doing” may not only be useful during the design process, but also helpful in learning to run a business.

Established fashion entrepreneurs need to carefully consider and continually evaluate the structure of their business. If the objective is to market and distribute the product internationally, the business often requires a formalized description of roles and responsibilities for a team and a long-term business plan. The study suggests that this is usually does not occur. Designers are so busy managing the day-to-day activities, they risk not being able to create new and innovative products, and for the same reason they lose sight of the business objectives.

### **5.2.2. The Fashion Industry**

The fashion industry is fast-paced, competitive, and—as a business—a complex network of creatives, managers, communicators, and clients that involves designers, suppliers, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, marketers, consumers, models, photographers, stylists, journalists, and promoters. Artisanal fashion designers may feel overwhelmed by the demands not only of their business, but also of the industry.

There are mechanisms built into the industry infrastructure that aim to help and support emerging and established design talent. The following are examples of some of the initiatives offered:

The Canadian Apparel Federation (CAF) provides support and lobbying initiatives for Canadian apparel manufacturers.

The Fashion Design Council of Canada (FDCC) is an industry organization that aims to promote Canadian design locally and internationally.

The Toronto Fashion Incubator has nurtured and developed innovative design talent since 1988. Cities like London, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Melbourne, Auckland and Dunedin have looked to Toronto's Fashion Incubator, the first official organization of its kind, as a model of innovation, excellence and leadership in encouraging small business growth. Participating designers are provided with mentorship and studio space to launch their collections.

Regional fashion weeks in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver—and, to a lesser degree, local fashion weeks in communities across Canada—provide venues for designers to showcase their collections on a runway in front of media and industry representatives.

In addition, Canadian designers have access to seminars, competitions, and sponsorship opportunities, as well as to branches of international organizations such as Fashion Group International, Colour Marketing Group USA, and Cotton Inc.

However, accessibility of services to designers is limited. While the Canadian industry is still centred around existing fashion hubs in Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia, the growth of on-line business opportunities excludes many newer businesses from taking advantage of the industry network if they are not located near a fashion centre. While general internet-based resources are readily available, specific Canadian-based content is lagging behind.

The Canadian fashion industry should consider establishing a Canadian fashion design strategy that provides equal access to all designers, an improvement over the current fractured network of local and regional activities. A national strategy should consider: re-evaluating existing initiatives; strengthening communication to national and international stakeholders; promoting entrepreneurship, innovation, and a Canadian fashion identity; and defining fashion's role among the Canadian creative industries. The current infrastructure is outdated and fails to meet the opportunities of not only artisanal fashion designers, but also the industry as a whole.

By nature of the study, the findings are focused on the individual, including his/her view of self, design, and role in the industry. And while the findings of this study can only suggest that the participating designers may be ill-prepared and under-supported in part as a result of the limitations of the current Canadian fashion ecosystem, this phenomenon may be systemic. The Canadian fashion industry may be well served by raising the profile of its talent and acknowledging its achievements nationally and internationally.

### **5.2.3. Government**

The role of government to strengthen the creative industries, and fashion in particular, is important. However, interest by government in promoting fashion designers varies among countries. The French Ministry of Culture and Communication, the Italian Ministry of Culture and Environment, and the British UK Trade & Investment and the Arts Council recognize fashion as an important government initiative at the national level and provide financial support. Industry and trade organizations, such as the National Chamber for Italian Fashion, contribute

funding and other significant resources. However, even within a country, government support varies.

In this study, participants supported the notion that design is functional, not artistic, and government agencies agree. While Canadian fashion design entrepreneurs currently are not eligible to receive arts and culture funding from the federal government or most provinces, the Quebec provincial government has invested in its fashion sector. As of 2011, Montreal—Quebec’s fashion centre—was the third-largest fashion producer in North America (Peters, 2012). The debate over whether fashion is design or art appears to be not only a philosophical question, but also a government enigma. There would be value to a re-evaluation of the potential role of governments in helping develop Canada’s fashion industry.

#### **5.2.4. Educators**

Colleges and universities form an important link in preparing young talent for the industry. Evolving global trade, the trend toward moving manufacture to lower-cost countries, and shifting consumer tastes have lead to rapid changes within the fashion industry around the world. Programs that train and educate students destined to enter the fashion industry need to consider what skills are required in the new economic order. While hard skills acquired by “doing it” will continue to prevail in importance, soft skills to effectively manage the design process are likely to emerge that will differentiate fashion design professionals. As this study has demonstrated, fashion design entrepreneurs, acting both as creatives *and* managers, struggle with the demands of their businesses. Yet, both roles play an important part in the design process.

Fashion schools will need to offer greater opportunities for the use of experiential learning tools such as charettes, whereby students of different disciplines, such as design, science, and business, work out solutions that bridge rational and irrational thinking, engage in new ways of learning, and collaborate to deliver innovative products. It may not be sufficient to train students in design and offer business, marketing, and entrepreneurship courses as electives. Rather, all disciplines should be seamlessly integrated for a total learning experience that leads to successful employment opportunities in the industry, and the establishment of new small businesses to drive the creative economy.

### **5.3. Limitations**

Although this study has aimed to contribute to the literature by identifying artisanal fashion design as an area of research and providing further insight into design thinking, design process and decision making, it should not be considered to have made extensions to the concepts discussed in the literature. Rather, by way of in-depth interviews of fashion designers, the study has pointed to limitations of those concepts.

By focusing on words, in the form of verbal accounts by the participants, this study is limited to only one dimension. As Oak (2011) emphasizes, while conversational analysis helps us understand interactive processes, this strategy needs to be situated within the practices and objects of design. This study has identified the close emotional relationship between the designer and the artifact. In addition, understanding the role of the medium (in this case the material) is a necessary element of contextualizing design. Multi-method research that includes observation

and exploration of context, as well as the role of material and emotion in the process, will lead to an expanded understanding of artifact design.

## **5.4. Future Research**

This study's over-arching findings discussed the importance of cognition in the business of fashion: although design is functional, talent is innate; although skills are learned, they are mastered by repeated "doing." In addition, emotion manifests itself not only through the act of creating, but also through the transformation from idea to artifact to wearer to designer. Lastly, the struggle to balance multiple roles leaves designers dissatisfied. As pointed out earlier, the limitations of this study indicate future opportunities to conduct multi-method research. This study on fashion design entrepreneurs and their views affirms the assertions of researchers and theorists who have stressed the importance of materiality (Kimbell, 2012) and embodiment in the design process (Poulsen & Thøgersen, 2011). The description of the role of fabric in particular reinforces the notion that research on design process needs to incorporate the artifact as part of the process. Further, a deeper understanding of design emotion also suggests that approaches relating to Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 2005) may provide a particularly rich lens for further work.

Early work on developing design research protocols (Dorst & Dijkhuis, 1995) tended to focus on cognitive and problem-solving processes and advocated for the addition of multi-method approaches pioneered by Xerox and Stanford. As well Valkenburg and Dorst, reporting on a design workshop, stressed the importance of multiple sources of information including



design drawings, physical objects, non-verbal communications and the human body as an instrument of nonverbal thought in the design process (1998).

This thesis has examined the thinking and perceptions of self, design, and the business of fashion from the perspective of twelve Canadian fashion designers. A grounded theory approach to developing themes has resulted in a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced by entrepreneurs in the fashion industry. The findings have suggested further research into artisanal fashion design, the role of materiality, and the importance of embodiment in the design process.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Interview Participant Matrix

Designer	Gender
Victor	m
Cooper	m
Autumn	f
Charles	m
Grayson	m
Ellie	f
Katherine	f
Chloe	f
Paulina	f
Salome	f
Alexa	f
Adam	m

Attribute Values:	female
	male

## Appendix B: Recruitment Script

### Recruitment Via Telephone:

Hi \_\_\_\_\_,

As you may know, I'm with the School of Fashion at Ryerson and I am working on my master's degree. I am interested in how designers think about themselves, about design, and about their role in the organization.

Specifically I am looking at three parts: 1) Design and Process, 2) Perceptions of Self, and 3) Role in the Organization. Examples of questions I will ask you include "Can design be art and art be design?", "What gives you the greatest satisfaction in your work?", and "How do you work with others?"

Here is some of the background. We are surrounded by *Design*. Design plays a crucial role in where we live, where we work, how we entertain, what we eat, and what we wear. Design defines who we are and who we want to be. Design creates identity. Design as practice has been evident since early civilization, although design as profession is a modern ideology. Design can be a state of being. It is not only the process of designing and the artifact designed, but also the solution resulting from the process in creating the artifact. The goal of a designer is to understand the needs, analyse the context, and propose a solution (or several solutions) that works while managing a very complex design process.



Would you be interested in participating in my study?

IF **NO**, [thank the individual for their time]. END

IF **YES**, That's great. I'm approaching my study by interviewing you in your studio or office at a time convenient for you during the last week in July. The interview can also be done here at Ryerson University. The interview will take about 45 minutes and I'll be bringing along my iPhone to record the conversation. Is there a date/time when you would be available? Do you have any questions?

I will email you my contact information if you have any further comments or questions before we meet. I will also include a Consent Form, which I ask you to sign and return.

Thank you for your participation, and I look forward to seeing you on \_\_\_\_\_ for the interview. FOLLOW UP WITH SENDING EMAIL CONFIRMING POSITIVE PARTICIPATION

## Recruitment Via Email:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

As you may know, I'm with the School of Fashion at Ryerson and I am working on my master's degree. I'm interested in how designers think about themselves, about design, and about their role in the organization.

Specifically I am looking at three parts: 1) Design and Process, 2) Perceptions of Self, and 3) Role in the Organization. Examples of questions I will ask you include "Can design be art and art be design?", "What gives you the greatest satisfaction in your work?", "How do you work with others?".

Here is some of the background. We are surrounded by *Design*. Design plays a crucial role in where we live, where we work, how we entertain, what we eat, and what we wear. Design defines who we are and who we want to be. Design creates identity. Design as practice has been evident since early civilization, although design as profession is a modern ideology. Design can be a state of being. It is not only the process of designing and the artifact designed, but also the solution resulting from the process in creating the artifact. The goal of a designer is to understand the needs, analyse the context, and propose a solution (or several solutions) that works while managing a very complex design process.

I would be very pleased if you would be interested in participating in my study. I'm approaching my study by interviewing you in your studio or office at a time convenient for you during the last week in July. The interview can also be done here at Ryerson University. The interview will take about 45 minutes and I'll be bringing along my iPhone to record the conversation.

I hope you will be able to participate. If you have any further questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at 416-979-5000 ext. 6440 or [robert.ott@ryerson.ca](mailto:robert.ott@ryerson.ca). I will touch base with you in a few days to see if we can set up a day and time.

Thank you,

Robert Ott

IF **NO**, FOLLOW UP BY SENDING EMAIL ACKNOWLEDGING NEGATIVE  
PARTICIPATION

IF **YES**, FOLLOW UP WITH SENDING EMAIL CONFIRMING  
POSITIVE PARTICIPATION

### Email Confirming Positive Participation:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study how designers think about themselves, about design, and about their role in the organization.

I am with the School of Fashion at Ryerson and working on my master's degree.

Specifically I am looking at three parts: 1) Design and Process, 2) Perceptions of Self, and 3) Role in the Organization. Examples of questions I will ask you include “can design be art and art be design?”, “what gives you the greatest satisfaction in your work?”, “how do you work with others?”.

Here is some of the background. We are surrounded by *Design*. Design plays a crucial role in where we live, where we work, how we entertain, what we eat, and what we wear. Design defines who we are and who we want to be. Design creates identity. Design as practice has been evident since early civilization, although design as profession is a modern ideology. Design can be a state of being. It is not only the process of designing and the artifact designed, but also the solution resulting from the process in creating the artifact. The goal of a designer is to understand the needs, analyse the context, and propose a solution (or several solutions) that works while managing a very complex design process.

As agreed, I'll be coming to your studio/office on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

I am interested in interviewing you in your space, where you feel comfortable, provided the space offers complete privacy. If, for example, it is a studio setting, perhaps we can do the interview off hours.

OR

As agreed, you'll be coming to Ryerson University on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ in Room KHS148. Attached is a map to find your way.

The interview will last about 45 minutes and the conversation will be audio recorded. I have attached the Consent Form for your review and signature. Feel free to email the completed form back or have it ready for the start of our interview. If you have any further questions or comments, please do not hesitate to call me at 416-979-5000 ext. 6440 or [robert.ott@ryerson.ca](mailto:robert.ott@ryerson.ca).

Best regards,

Robert Ott

**Email Acknowledging Negative Participation:**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for your time considering my request to participate in a study how designers think about themselves, about design, and their role in the organization. I understand that your schedule unfortunately does not allow for you to take part in the interview.

I wish you continued success in your work.

Robert Ott

## **Appendix C: Interview Script**

I am interested in interviewing you in your space, where you feel comfortable. A limitation is the noise level, which needs to be subdued if not quiet. If, for example, it is a studio setting, perhaps we can do the interview off hours or at Ryerson University.

I am interested in learning more how you think about yourself as a designer, about design, and about your role in your organization.

The interview will consist of three parts. During the interview I may probe with further questions in the interest of clarification or expanding of points. The interview will be audio recorded.

### **Part 1. Design and Process**

Q A.1. To you, what is design?

Q A.2. Can design be art and art be design?

Q A.3. Is design a talent or a skill?

Q A.4. Explain the process you use to design.

Q A.5. How do you edit?

Q A.6. Given making a decision among several materials, what do you do to arrive at your choice?

Q A.7. Describe innovation in your work.

Q A.8. Innovation – earlier or later?

Q A.9. Other

## **Part 2. Perceptions of Self**

Q B.1. How did you achieve expertise in design?

Q B.2. How do you define success in your role as a designer?

Q B.3. What gives you the greatest satisfaction in your work?

Q B.4. How do your colleagues/employees see you?

Q B.5. Professionally, what besides your current work would you like to do?

Q B.6. What are your strengths?

Q B.7. What are your weaknesses?

Q B.8. How good are designers at managing a business?

Q B.9. Other

## **Part 3. Role in the Organization**

Q C.1. What is the role of design in the organization?

Q C.2. What are the differences between design, production, sales, and  
marketing/management?



Q C.3. What are the commonalities between design, production, sales, and marketing/management?

Q C.4. What do you bring to your team?

Q C.5. How do you work with others?

Q C.6. What does your company do to bring new and useful pieces to the market?

Q C.7. What do you bring to your audience?

Q C.8. Can your company exist without you?

Q C.9. Other

## **Appendix D: Consent Form**

### **Ryerson University Consent Agreement**

DESIGNERS: AN INDUCTIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

TO UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF DESIGN (working title)

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to be a volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

**Investigator:** Robert Ott, BAA (Ryerson), School of Fashion, Ryerson University;

Candidate for MMSc., Yeates School of Graduate Studies, Ryerson  
University

**Supervisor:** Dr. Wendy Cukier, PhD (York University), MBA, MA, BA Hon.

Purpose of the Study:

As the investigator of the study, I am collecting data for analysis toward writing my thesis as required to complete my master's degree in Management Science. I am interested in how designers think about themselves, about design and about their role in the organization. I am looking to interview 12-15 fashion designers ideally with at least ten years active experience, working and living in Canada. As a potential participant you are nationally recognized by media reports or are a member of an association in the field of fashion. If you choose to participate, I will interview you July 20-30, 2012 in the greater Toronto area.

## Description of the Study:

We are surrounded by *Design*. Design plays a crucial role in where we live, where we work, how we entertain, what we eat, and what we wear. Design defines who we are and who we want to be. Design creates identity. Design as practice has been evident since early civilization, although design as profession is a modern ideology. Design can be a state of being. It is not only the process of designing and the artifact designed, but also the solution resulting from the process in creating the artifact. The goal of a designer is to understand the needs, analyze the context, and propose a solution (or several solutions) that works while managing a very complex design process.

I am interested in learning more how you think about yourself as a designer, about design, and about your role in your organization.

I am interested in interviewing you in your space, where you feel comfortable, provided the space offers complete privacy. If, for example, it is a studio setting, perhaps we can do the interview off hours. Alternatively, I can interview you at Ryerson University. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes.

The interview will consist of three parts: 1) Design and Process, 2) Perceptions of Self, and 3) Role in the Organization. Examples of questions I will ask you include “Can design be art and art be design?”, “What gives you the greatest satisfaction in your work?”, and “How do you work with others?”.

During the interview I may probe with further questions in the interest of clarification or expanding of points. The interview will be audio recorded.

#### Risks or Discomforts:

During the interview, you will be asked questions about your professional experiences as a designer. You may reflect on difficult memories during your career. You may skip questions. You may discontinue participation, either temporarily or permanently for any reason.

#### Benefits of the Study:

The results and analysis of the study contribute to fulfilling the requirements of completing a master's degree. The findings of the study may be used in a thesis, reports, papers, presentations and other publications. It is unlikely that you will benefit directly from this study.

#### Confidentiality:

The interview will be voice recorded, saved in digital format, uploaded to a secure server for transcription. Transcribing involves hiring a company to convert the interview into a Word document. The transcription service will not have access to information that may identify you. The Word document will be saved on my computer using encryption to limit access to the information to only the investigator. The Word document will not contain any information that may identify you, such as name, places or dates. The recording will be erased six months after the completion of the study or approximately April 2013. The Word document will be archived electronically for three years and then erased.

The findings of the study may be used in a thesis, reports, papers, presentations and other publications. Your full name will not be disclosed. You may choose to be identified by first name only or by pseudonym.

#### Incentives to Participate:

You will not receive compensation or payment to participate in this study.

#### Voluntary Nature of Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

At any particular point in the study, you may refuse to answer any particular question or stop participation altogether.

#### 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 the investigator, Robert Ott at 416-979-5000 ext. 6440 or [robert.ott@ryerson.ca](mailto:robert.ott@ryerson.ca).

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

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  
Email: [rebchair@ryerson.ca](mailto:rebchair@ryerson.ca)

Participation 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 be 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.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Ott  
Name of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Audio Recording Agreement:

Your signature below indicates that you have agreed to have the interview audio recorded.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Ott  
Name of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix E: Research Ethics Board Approval



To: Robert Ott  
TRSM-ITM

Re: REB 2012-186: Designers: An Inductive Research Approach to Understanding the Role of Design (working title)

Date: July 11, 2012

Dear Robert Ott,

The review of your protocol REB File REB 2012-186 is now complete. The project has been approved for a one year period. Please note that before proceeding with your project, compliance with other required University approvals/certifications, institutional requirements, or governmental authorizations may be required.

This approval may be extended after one year upon request. Please be advised that if the project is not renewed, approval will expire and no more research involving humans may take place. If this is a funded project, access to research funds may also be affected.

Please note that REB approval policies require that you adhere strictly to the protocol as last reviewed by the REB and that any modifications must be approved by the Board before they can be implemented. Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication from the Principal Investigator as to how, in the view of the Principal Investigator, these events affect the continuation of the protocol.

Finally, if research subjects are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research.

Please quote your REB file number (REB 2012-186) on future correspondence.

Congratulations and best of luck in conducting your research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Walton".

Nancy Walton, Ph.D.  
Chair, Research Ethics Board



## Appendix F: Analysis – Phase 2&3 Categorization of Open Codes / Coding On

Theme/Category	Open Code	Open Code Description / Code On	Sources (Intensity)	References (Dominance)
<b>Identity &amp; Self-Perception</b>			<b>12</b>	<b>598</b>
	<b>12 title</b>	does the designer consider the title "fashion designer", taken on by self (self-proclaimed), given by outsiders (bestowed), or given by insiders (earned)?	7	37
		12.1 self-proclaimed	4	5
		12.2 bestowed	3	4
		12.3 earned	5	7
		12.4 ambiguous	2	3
	<b>13 talent</b>	how does the designer believe "talent" is achieved? Is this something they learned or innate (born with it)?	11	72
		13.1 learned	2	2
		13.2 born with it	6	12
		13.3 ambiguous	7	15
		13.4 unexpected	4	6
	<b>14 skill</b>	how has the designer achieved "skill". Did they "learn by doing", "learn by observation" (studying the subject)?	12	112
		14.1 learned by doing	10	32
		14.2 learned by observation	2	4
		14.3 ambiguous	9	20
	<b>15 perceived respect for industry</b>	how does the designer feel about how others perceive his/her choice to work in the industry, compared to other creative fields?	11	117
		15.1 positive	5	7
		15.2 mixed	7	12
		15.3 negative	10	39
	<b>15a expectations</b>	what expectations does the designer set for themselves (they may or may not meet those expectations)	12	260
		15a.1 accountability	1	1
		15a.10 integrity	6	7
		15a.11 make money	4	5
		15a.12 optimism	3	4
		15a.13 passing on knowledge	2	3
		15a.14 passion	5	10
		15a.15 patience	2	2
		15a.16 perfection	6	15
		15a.17 perspective	7	15

Theme/Category	Open Code	Open Code Description / Code On	Sources (Intensity)	References (Dominance)
		15a.18 reaching the 'aha' moment	2	2
		15a.19 respect	1	1
		15a.2 anticipation	2	2
		15a.20 support	3	3
		15a.21 tolerance	2	3
		15a.22 trust	1	2
		15a.3 awareness	9	16
		15a.4 consistency	3	3
		15a.5 determination	6	14
		15a.6 doing the right thing	1	2
		15a.7 focusing by shutting out	5	7
		15a.8 happiness	3	4
		15a.9 image	7	10
<b>Perception of Others in Field</b>			<b>11</b>	<b>49</b>
	1h classical	how does the designer perceive colleagues in their field. "Classical" is defined as colleagues who have "trained classically" by attending formal design education (or an apprenticeship) directly following secondary school	2	6
		1h.1 positive	1	1
		1h.2 mixed	1	1
		1h.3 negative	1	1
	1i cross-over	how does the designer perceive colleagues in their field. "Cross-over" is defined as colleagues who have pursued an occupation of fashion design after completing post-secondary education. This may include related design or non-design education.	3	7
		1i.1 positive	1	2
		1i.2 mixed	1	1
		1i.3 negative	0	0
	1j pretender	how does the designer perceive colleagues in their field. "Pretender" is defined as colleagues who have not formally pursued fashion design education. They may come from different industries within the creative sector or from the outside. A pretender may not actually do the design work, but instead be supported by a team.	10	36
		1j.1 positive	2	3
		1j.2 mixed	6	7
		1j.3 negative	7	9

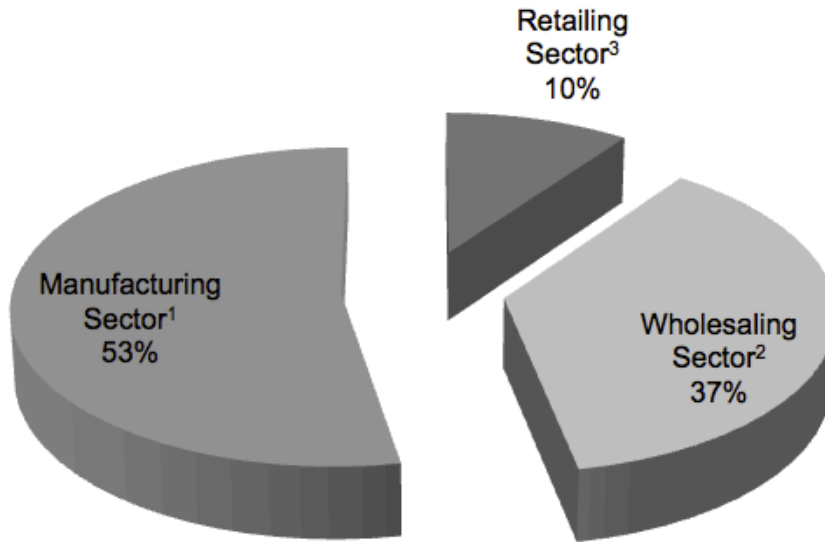
Theme/Category	Open Code	Open Code Description / Code On	Sources (Intensity)	References (Dominance)
<b>Definition of Design</b>			<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>
	1m DEFINITION OF DESIGN	how the designer defines the concept of design, from a fashion perspective	11	18
<b>Transformation</b>			<b>12</b>	<b>598</b>
	16 role of designer in design process	how does the designer perceive their role in the design process. See list below.	12	111
		16.1 artist	1	1
		16.10 guide	2	2
		16.11 independent	1	2
		16.12 innovator	2	4
		16.13 negotiator	1	1
		16.14 opportunist	3	3
		16.15 sober thinker	2	2
		16.16 visionary	9	11
		16.2 bringer-to-life	3	5
		16.3 collaborator	2	2
		16.4 consultant	3	5
		16.5 curator	4	4
		16.6 designer	5	6
		16.7 editor	1	1
		16.8 engineer	4	5
		16.9 facilitator	3	3
	17 designer to artifact	how does the designer approach creating the garment? What is the relationship to their work? one-time (art), artisan (craft), functional (design), mass (commercial), or finding new applications for existing practice (innovative)?	12	193
		17.1 one-time (art)	2	2
		17.2 artisan (craft)	3	7
		17.3 functional (design)	12	47
		17.4 mass (commercial)	1	1
		17.5 new application (innovative)	11	24
		17.6 ambiguous (art&design)	6	10
		17.7 unexplainably similar	3	6

Theme/Category	Open Code	Open Code Description / Code On	Sources (Intensity)	References (Dominance)
	18 artifact to consumer	how does the designer experience the emotional response the customer exhibits toward the garment either during the making or after wearing? Is it a positive, neutral or negative emotion?	12	96
		18.1 positive emotion	12	39
		18.2 neutral emotion	4	6
		18.3 negative emotion	3	3
	19 designer to consumer	how does the designer see themselves in their professional relationship with the consumer. Is the designer acting as a sales person, counsellor, or friend?	10	72
		19.1 sales person	2	3
		19.2 counsellor	5	9
		19.3 friend	5	9
		19.4 educator	4	9
		19.5 entertainer	2	2
		19.6 trustee	2	3
	1a level of satisfaction	what level of satisfaction does the designer experience at either the personal or professional level?	12	92
		1a.1 high personal	10	20
		1a.2 low personal	7	7
		1a.3 high professional	7	15
		1a.4 low professional	3	6
	1b work-life balance	what level of work/life balance does the designer (hope to) achieve?	9	34
		1b.1 work-focused	7	9
		1b.2 even	2	2
		1b.3 life-focused	3	6
<b>Decision-Making</b>			<b>12</b>	<b>343</b>
	10 rational decision-making	is the designer making rational (versus irrational) decisions? Decisions based on fact or best of many solutions	11	171
		10.1 tacit assumption	5	6
		10.2 explicit assumption	11	75
		10.3 ambiguous	3	4
	11 irrational decision-making	is the designer making irrational (versus rational) decisions? Decisions based intuition or arbitrary, not necessarily the best of many choices?	11	154
		11.1 tacit assumption	11	47
		11.2 explicit assumption	7	21
		11.3 ambiguous	4	7

Theme/Category	Open Code	Open Code Description / Code On	Sources (Intensity)	References (Dominance)
<b>Organizational Effectiveness</b>			<b>12</b>	<b>425</b>
	1c function	how many functions does the designer perform in the organization. Is it one or many, or is it unclear?	10	72
		1c.1 singular	2	2
		1c.2 multiple	10	31
		1c.3 unclear	3	3
	1d approach to work practice	how does the designer approach workpractice? Do they prefer to do the majority of the work by themselves "lone wolf", do they tell others exactly what to do "directed team", or do they collaborate with others "empowered team"?	12	136
		1d.1 lone wolf	6	14
		1d.2 directed team	4	10
		1d.3 empowered team	10	44
	1e relationship to non-creative process	how does the designer interact with members involved with the non-creative process. Those members would include managers and other employees outside the direct circle of the designer. Is this relationship trusting, ambiguous, or adversarial?	10	104
		1e.1 trusting	5	12
		1e.2 ambiguous	6	8
		1e.3 adversarial	6	16
		1e.4 interdependant	8	16
	1f risk tolerance	what is the designer's professional risk tolerance?	11	47
		1f.1 high	10	15
		1f.2 low	4	8
	1g sharing expertise	is the designer readily sharing their expertise with others either in their team or in the field?	8	66
		1g.1 yes	8	32
		1g.2 no	1	1

## Appendix G: Employment by Subsector

Total Employment: 73,000



Source: Statistics Canada, SEPH TABLE 281-0024

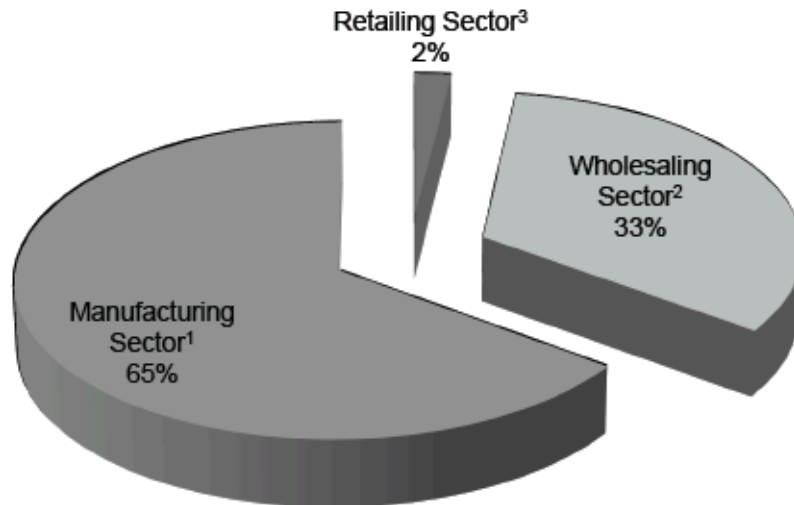
<sup>1</sup>Manufacturing sectors defined a clothing and clothing accessories manufacturing (NAIC 315), footwear manufacturing (NAIC 3162) and textile product mills (NAIC 314)

<sup>2</sup>Wholesaling sectors defined as textile, clothing and footwear wholesaling - distributors (NAIC 4141). See the profile of clothing wholesalers for further details.

<sup>3</sup>Retailing sectors includes only the retail employment of clothing & clothing accessory stores (NAIC 448) as well as department stores (NAIC 4521) that was deemed to be of relevance for this study (i.e.: product development and manufacturing occupations), limited to only job categories F and J, estimated at 2% of total employment for these codes.

## Appendix H: Establishments by Subsector

Total Establishments: 5,884



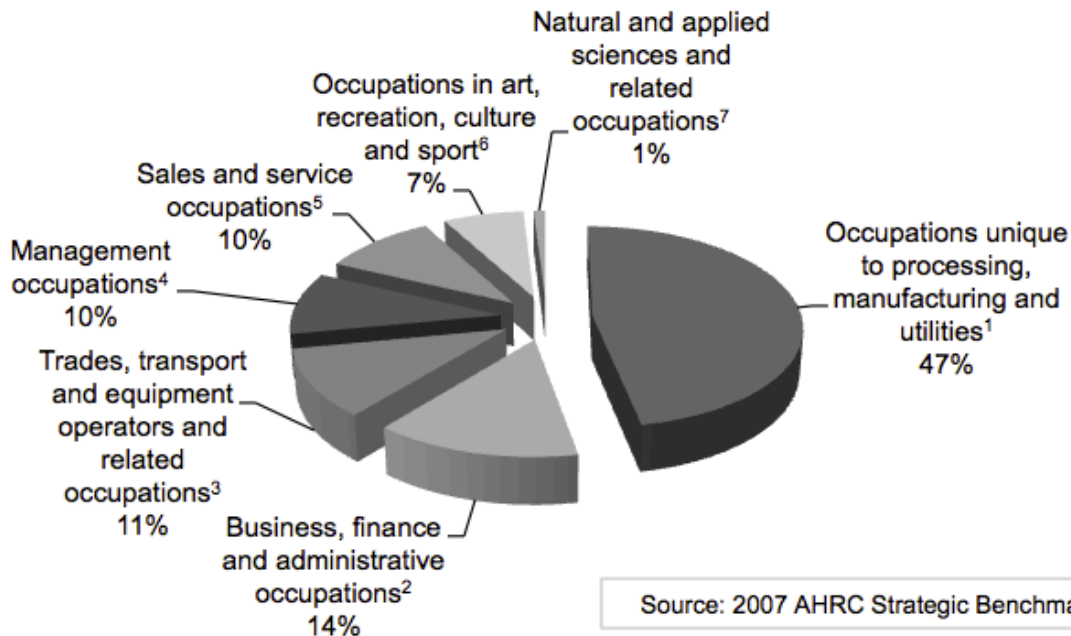
Source: Statistics Canada, subject to footnote 3

<sup>1</sup>Manufacturing sectors defined a clothing and clothing accessories manufacturing (NAIC 315), footwear manufacturing (NAIC 3162) and textile product mills (NAIC 314)

<sup>2</sup>Wholesaling sectors defined as textile, clothing and footwear wholesaling - distributors (NAIC 4141). See the profile of clothing wholesalers for further details.

<sup>3</sup>Retailing sectors includes only those establishments of clothing & clothing accessory stores (NAIC 448) as well as department stores (NAIC 4521) that were deemed to be of relevance for this study (i.e.: product development and manufacturing occupations). The number of establishments was estimated by Milstein & Co. See the profile of clothing vertical retailers for further details.

## Appendix I: Employment by Occupation, 2006



<sup>1</sup>i.e.: Manufacturing positions including: supervisors, sewing machine operators, cutters, assemblers and general labourers

<sup>2</sup>i.e.: Accountants, bookkeepers, human resource specialists, secretaries, clerical supervisors, clerks and shippers/receivers

<sup>3</sup>i.e.: Mechanics, machinists, tailors, dressmakers, furriers, truck drivers

<sup>4</sup>i.e.: Senior and specialist managers in the following areas: financial, human resources, purchasing, information systems, sales and marketing

<sup>5</sup>i.e.: Sales and service supervisors and personnel (retail and wholesale)

<sup>6</sup>i.e.: Designers, graphic designers, illustrators, patternmakers, photographers, graphic arts technicians

<sup>7</sup>i.e.: Industrial and manufacturing engineers, mechanical engineers, computer/information system professionals, technical inspectors



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